



Theories don't ask for Opinions

Theoretical Product Redesign

Opinions are subjective. Theories are objective. When looking at designing a product, opinions can shape a design in many ways and determine physical and underlying properties. Opinions can bring a design quite far, but some rules can be applied which enhance design. This is called theory based design and theories don't ask for opinions. The top picture is a project I completed in my first year of university. This project was mostly driven by ergonomics and ease of use. Without the context, both of those factors become irrelevant. It is not immediately clear how to hold the product and users found it difficult to understand how it works. I used my opinion to determine what I thought was important about the design. But if I were to apply a theoretical perspective to this design, I'll bet the product would become much easier to understand and use.

The product was redesigned in the bottom picture based on three theories. A product metaphor, similar to a linguistic metaphor, but more literal, references physical properties of another entity (Hekkert, Cila, 2015), in this case a mango is referenced. There are different reasons designers use metaphors, but I applied a metaphor for pragmatic reasons. A pragmatic metaphor is used to make a complex product more clear and understandable, and communicate the function and use of the product (Hekkert, Cila, 2015). The first theory applies a metaphor to communicate identification, this allows users to infer the use of the product, allowing users to infer that this is a tool to cut a mango (Hekkert, Cila, 2015). The second theory applies a metaphor for the purpose of use and operation, this type of metaphor alludes to the interaction with the product (Hekkert, Cila, 2015). The third theory applies color theory, I used complimentary colors (red and green) to create visual interest, contrast and emphasis (Interaction Design Foundation, n.d.). Analogous colors make the product blend nicely and feel harmonious. Warm tones are present, which are inviting to users and reference the idea of summer (Respicio, 2021). The colour red is used to attract attention to the handle (Cherry, 2020). Red can also communicate danger (Cherry, 2020) but it was more applicable to attract user attention to the handle than to the blade.

