Bachelor in Industrial Design • 2022

Student

Interface Redesign

Implementing the Gestalt Principle of Proximity in Smartwatch Interface

Gestalt principles offer an explanation to how humans perceive components in a specific environment or interface. Applying specific gestalt principles to a user interface can improve the clarity and overall useability of the system. Specifically, in smart-watch interface design, in a swift glance of the wrist users should be able to check the time, date, step count, heart rate and potential notifications from their phone. Human beings have the ability to cluster and add context to design elements without instructions or explanations when designed correctly (Lidwell, Holden & Butler, 2003). Which is why the proximity of components in an interface hold great importance for clarity and usability. The Gestalt Principle of Proximity states, "we perceive objects which are positioned closely to one another as being somehow related to one another useful" (MacNamara, W, 2017). Thus, elements that overlap or remain connected are usually perceived to hold multiple common attributes, this can be seen throughout digital interfaces.

Currently, the Garmin Forerunner smart-watch allows users to customize watch face to their specific liking with twelve pre-set options. These pre sets include, distance travelled, sleep, notifications, sun-up, battery life, activity minutes, stairs climbed, steps taken, calories burned, date and calendar events. Yet, this watch interface lacks grouping, clear progress bars and colouration forcing the user to guide themselves through the entire watch to find this information. Implementing the Principle of Proximity into this smart watch combines colour, spacing, and grouping common attributes to communicate progress. The combination of user lifestyle and goals will determine which pre-sets on the main display the user will choose. Based on the selection of activities, a daily movement goal is shown with a colourized horizontal bar on the main screen. Progress is viewed in a quick glance on the main screen for movement goals and similarly for other specific activities throughout the watch interface. Each screen layout is offset to the left side and slopes diagonally giving the impression of natural progress. Through the application of the Principle of Proximity the added clarity and consistency of visual elements will guide a more intuitive user experience.

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