

Putting People First: The Importance of User-Centred Design for Ethical Business Practices in the Gems and Jewellery Industry

Anupam Rana

Abstract

The term "user-centred design" (UCD) refers to a method of product or service design that puts the requirements, desires, and preferences of the end-users first. To ensure moral corporate conduct in the gem and jewellery industry, this research aims to comprehend the significance of user-centred design (UCD). The jewellery sector has a substantial customer base, which enables producers to serve a huge market and make profit.

This paper's research methodology includes a careful examination of secondary sources of information. To get insight and a conceptual grasp of the subject, research papers and articles from reputable journals, marketing books, trend forecast publications, and online resources of related subjects were examined. As primary sources, the author's research also draws on his own opinions as well as conversations with design managers, bloggers, jewellers, start-up owners, and consultants.

User-centered design is essential for the jewellery sector to uphold ethical business standards. This study will aid in the exploration of research in the areas of user preferences, user privacy, promoting inclusivity, accessibility, creating trust, ethical certification, understanding user's perspective, user's feedback and empathy.

Keywords: User centred design, Gems and jewellery market, Ethical business practice, User experience, Empathy.

Introduction

User-Centred Design (UCD)

A design approach in which end users have a participation in how a design develops is known as "user-centred design" (UCD). Both the philosophy and the techniques used in user centred design are diverse (Abrams, Maloney-Krichmar, & Preece, 2004). The term "user-centred design" (UCD) refers to a method of product or service design that puts the requirements, desires, and preferences of the end-users first. It is a practical method for getting around the drawbacks of conventional system-centred design. Making deliberate design choices that are beneficial and do not purposefully or accidentally damage anyone is the fundamental of ethical design (Ghanchi, 2021).

User-centred design in the business world

Regrettably, some firms still put their own objectives above those of their customers, leading them to build a product first and then look for potential customers. The complete opposite is what user-centred design encourages. Find and speak with (representatives of your target users) before creating your proposal. This is so that you understand that even if you have amazing technological capabilities, fascinating features, and other awesome stuff, if you don't know your goal, you have a serious issue. In other words, user-centred design focuses on creating products from the viewpoint of how users will understand and use them rather than forcing consumers to modify their behaviour in order to use a product (Novoseltseva, 2022).

The advantages of user-centred design for your company may be numerous. For instance, it can be stated as below (nibusinessinfo.co.uk, 2023) :

1. Boost your sales because clients are more likely to purchase a good or service that fulfils their demands.
2. Increase competition if your product fits customers' needs, they are less inclined to prefer those of competitors. more successfully
3. Create satisfying user experiences Gaining insight will help you increase loyalty and build the reputation of your company or brand, which may result in the creation of ground-breaking new goods or services.
4. Save your company time and money by doing end-user testing while making changes are still financially viable.

Ethical Business Practise (EBP)

Ethics is everyone's responsibility, according to the foundation of ethical business practice-EBP. In order to make "doing the right thing" a part of the culture, it requires a collaborative approach including people from across the business. Making decisions and acting in ways that establish sustainable enterprises, consider the needs of all stakeholders, and adhere to one's moral and legal commitments is what ethical business practise (EBP) is all about (Clothier & Steinholtz, 2017). The study of business practises, judgements, and circumstances where right and wrong are addressed is known as business ethics. The key causes of this are that business now has more clout and influence in society than ever before. Companies now play a significant role in society by offering jobs, goods, and services (Abdullah & Valentine, 2009). The customer is now well aware of how "ethical" a company is, hence any moral transgressions by a company will result in a decline in earnings (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017).

Gems and Jewellery Sector

The value of the worldwide gems and jewellery industry is expected to grow at a CAGR of 5.1% from 2021 to 2029. Asia Pacific dominated the gems and jewellery market in 2020 and is anticipated to do so again in the next years. North America is anticipated to see the quickest market growth throughout the forecast period. In the upcoming years, it is anticipated that improvements in the jewellery manufacturing process as well as the availability of various certification bodies, including the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme, the Confederation, and hallmarking, among others, will spur the growth of the gems & jewellery market. In addition, one of the most recent trends that will catch the attention of customers more in the years to come is the introduction of novel and distinctive designs (ResearchAndMarkets.com, 2022).

Literature Review

User Centred Design is significant because it leads to greater usability and these days, user experience is commercial advantage. With user profiles and psychographics, it plugs into users' psychology and emotional backdrop to more deeply comprehend their desires and requirements (Wilkinson, 2022).

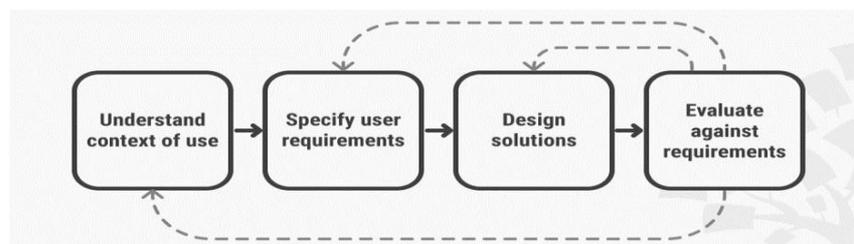


Fig.-1

Source: <https://public-media.interaction-design.org/images/uploads/2737d331018d4207a7bf7f5e90eebec0.png>

As shown in Fig.-1, all stages of design and development, user-centred design emphasises an awareness of the users and their context (InteractionDesignFoundation, 2023). The user-centred design approach is underpinned by a number of principles. Design is driven and improved by user-centred evaluation and takes into account the entire user experience. It is founded on an explicit understanding of users, tasks, and environments. Users are involved in the design and development process at every stage, and iteration is used. The organisation also possesses multidisciplinary expertise and viewpoints (userfocus, 2023). The foundation for many UCD approaches is the international standard, 9241-210:2019. It's crucial to remember that the UCD process does not outline precise procedures for each phase (ISO, 2019). Future technical complexity and the requirement to deliver seamless user experiences across numerous devices and platforms will make UCD even more crucial (Kim, Lee, & Choi, 2021). Designers must become more proactive in influencing the direction of technology, and UCD must change to address the broader social and environmental effects of technology (Bieling & Sadowski, 2018).

What ethical practises may firms adopt? A company must follow ethical business standards in all activities carried out across the entire organisation. Codes that focus only on certain areas, like as production, waste, marketing, or social responsibility, are insufficient; a holistic approach is required. It must not only exist at every level of the social groupings within an organisation, but also be guided from the top. To enable an unbiased assessment of whether an expectation of ethical behaviour is justified, it is critical to present evidence of trust that an organisation runs with ethical values. It is obvious that a company's assurances that it is trustworthy are insufficient. Mechanisms should be created to provide trustworthy proof of trust. Businesses should consistently show that they are committed to acting in a way that will win the respect of regulators, law enforcement officials, all levels of management and staff, consumers, suppliers, investors, and other stakeholders (Hodges, 2016).

Traceability is what ethical jewellery comes down to. A customer can choose a piece of jewellery with confidence about its provenance if the materials used in it are traceable. Making an informed choice concerning a jewel's ethical standing requires first knowing the nation of origin of a precious metal or gemstone. Sustainability is a crucial factor as well. Unsustainable practises are tragically widespread in the mining industry and range from human eviction and deforestation to soil degradation and hazardous working conditions. So, it's critical to understand exactly where a piece of jewellery's components come from, including the precise mine (Lebrusan, 2023).

All jewellery enterprises must have robust human rights protections; otherwise, they run the risk of enabling human rights violations. Particularly, businesses should have a strong supply chain policy that is reflected

in supplier contracts; Create a chain of custody for gold and diamonds by recording business transactions along the whole supply chain, all the way down to the mine of origin, and requiring suppliers to share specific supply chain documentation; Analyse the dangers to human rights in all of their supplier networks; Address to dangers to human rights across their supplier chains; Independent third-party audits are used to examine their own behaviour and that of their suppliers. Public reporting on their human rights due diligence, including risks discovered (HumanRightsWatch, 2018).



Fig.-2

Source:

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/styles/embed_xx1/public/multimedia_images_2018/201802crd_jewelry_graphic1.png?itok=S5RESY4s

Fig. 2 depicts a global picture of ethical jewellery business practises through responsible sourcing.

Objective

The objective of this paper is, To understand and discuss User-Centred Design's Significance in Ethical Business Practises for the Gems and Jewellery Sector.

Research methodology

The research technique used in this paper includes a thorough examination of secondary sources of data in order to comprehend the current situation regarding the significance of user-centred design in ethical business practises in the context of Gems and Jewellery Sector. In order to get insight and a conceptual knowledge of the subject, papers mostly from reputable journals, marketing books, trend forecast periodicals, and online resources of related subjects were read.

Discussion and suggestions

Because it prioritises user demands and interests, user-centred design (UCD) is crucial to guaranteeing ethical corporate activities. Businesses are more likely to produce goods and services that are secure, dependable, and trustworthy when they put the requirements of customers first. UCD can aid companies in avoiding ethical snares such creating products that are prejudiced, discriminating, or detrimental to consumers.

Here are some examples of how user-centred design (UCD) can promote ethical business practises:

- 1. Empathy:** User-centred design calls on companies to have empathy for their customers and comprehend their requirements, values, and preferences. This can assist companies in avoiding creating items that are offensive or insensitive to particular customer groups.
- 2. Inclusivity:** Regardless of a user's age, gender, race, or ability, user-centred design can help organisations design goods and services that are inclusive of all consumers. This can support social fairness and help to stop discrimination.
- 3. Transparency:** User-centred design can assist companies in developing goods and services that are open and truthful about their attributes, capabilities, and methods of information gathering. Users' trust can be increased as a result, and unethical behaviours like data breaches or unlawful data collecting can be avoided.
- 4. Accessibility:** User-centred design can assist companies in developing goods and services that are usable by people with impairments or other specific requirements. As a result, discrimination can be reduced and social inclusion can be encouraged.
- 5. User input:** User-centred design entails obtaining user input at every stage of the design process. This can assist companies in identifying and resolving ethical issues prior to the release of new products and can help guarantee that these items are in line with customer requirements and beliefs.

In the jewellery sector, where ethical questions are frequently brought up and customer trust is essential, user-centred design is particularly significant. Here are some ways that might promote moral business conduct in the jewellery sector:

1. Reducing environmental impact: Jewellery manufacturers can use user-centred design to identify and lessen the environmental impact of their products. Users can provide comments on materials, production techniques, and packaging, which enables businesses to make decisions that are environmentally friendly (Turner, 2022).

2. Ethical sourcing: Jewellery manufacturers can utilise user-centred design to create goods that incorporate components that are obtained responsibly. Companies may emphasise the value of ethical sourcing to customers and make sure that they give sustainability and responsible sourcing top priority by incorporating users in the design process (Munn, 2023).

3. Respect for human rights: User-centred design can work to make sure jewellery manufacturers uphold human rights standards all the way through the supply chain. By integrating users in the design process, organisations may highlight the need of fair labour practises, protect worker safety, and avoid the usage of conflict minerals (KPMG, 2017).

4. Authenticity and transparency: Jewellery manufacturers can employ user-centred design to create items that are honest, open, and moral. Companies can communicate the stories behind their goods and their dedication to ethical business practises by incorporating users in the design process (WGC, 2020).

5. Establishing trust: By including customers in the design process, listening to their feedback, and addressing their problems, user-centred design can help jewellery makers establish trust with customers. This promotes a good working connection between the business and its clients (WGC, 2020).

6. Community support: By obtaining materials from local communities and artisanal and small-scale mining communities and offering employment opportunities, jewellers can benefit local communities (KPMG, 2017).

7. Ethical certification: To prove their dedication to ethical business operations, jewellers can apply for ethical certification from reputable organisations like Hallmarking (BIS, 2018). The Responsible Jewellery Council certification enhances consumer confidence in the fine jewellery market by demonstrating that businesses follow ethical and sustainable business practices. RJC certifies its members once a rigorous audit process in accordance with the Code of Practice has been completed (RJC, 2023).

8. Educational resources: Jewellers can offer educational materials that describe their sourcing and production procedures, such as booklets, websites, and social media posts. These resources can also be used to discuss the significance of ethical and environmentally friendly practises in the jewellery sector.

9. Events: To inform customers about their procedures and the industry at large, jewellers can host occasions like workshops, seminars, and open houses. Customers may have the chance to learn more and ask questions at these events (Indianjeweller, 2023).

10. Social media: Jewellers can use social media platforms to inform their clients about moral and environmentally friendly behaviour. They can interact with customers through comments and messages while also sharing information, photographs, and videos about their procedures and products (Faulkner, 2020).

11. Energy efficiency: Jewellers can use energy-saving techniques including LED lighting, energy-efficient equipment purchases, and the use of renewable energy sources.

12. Reducing waste: Jewellers can cut back on waste by recycling materials, utilising water-saving technology, and minimising packaging waste (Macfarlane, Tallontire, & Martin, 2003).

13. Responsible water usage: Jewellers can use less water by buying equipment that is water-efficient and using water sensibly throughout production (Macfarlane, Tallontire, & Martin, 2003).

14. Chemical management: Jewellers can responsibly manage chemicals used in the manufacturing process by choosing non-toxic substitutes when appropriate and disposing of hazardous substances in the correct manner (Macfarlane, Tallontire, & Martin, 2003).

15. Active listening: In their interactions with clients, jewellers should engage in active listening. This entails paying close attention to the client, comprehending their needs, and responding properly.

16. Being empathetic and patient: When working with clients, jewellers can be kind and patient. This entails showing them compassion and support while also taking the time to respond to any queries or worries they may have.

Limitations

Due to time restrictions, only a limited number of literature sources could be examined in order to fully grasp the role that user-centred design plays in ethical business practises for the gem and jewellery industry. Furthermore, the research has not included any empirical work.

Conclusion

Businesses can benefit from user-centred design (UCD) by developing goods and services that support moral business conduct and user requirements and values. Businesses may develop products that are secure, dependable, and trustworthy by putting the needs of the customer first. This helps them avoid moral problems like bias, discrimination, and user suffering. By sourcing materials responsibly, being open and

honest, adopting sustainable procedures, encouraging fair labour practises, supporting local communities, educating both themselves and their clients, and pursuing ethical certification, jewellers can advance ethical business practises. Jewellers may contribute to the development of a more ethical and sustainable jewellery business by placing a high priority on ethics and sustainability.

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