Intention

The discussion with guest speaker Dan Lockton has evoked a discussion on how we are perceiving spooky technology. A point was brought up on how Native Americans were skeptical about the camera and the misconceptions they had because of their culture and familiarity towards the product. Honing in on that while branching further, I investigated the surroundings on spookiness and what can frighten a user. While looking at different ways technology and exposure is affecting how technology is portrayed I looked at media and language. Through a few examples like movies and raking down how other languages directly translate words, it became apparent that spookiness is a result of an environment, especially an unfamiliar one. Movies and media portrayal are a prime example of using uncertainty and suspense to create the spookiness in technology. In addition, the unfamiliarity with its context creates a space where users are not able to interact or be involved with unfamiliar technology. Ethical practices have a role in this as well as guidelines and regulations are a large part of how different countries or areas create a safe space for potential innovations and users. Overall, it is the combination of all these factors that are able to transition a user into thinking a technology is spooky into intrigue and comfortability. Therefore, I was thinking of how we can bridge the gap of information to better create a transparent environment to lessen the spookiness of technology.

Video + description of outcome

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https://vimeo.com/672107617

My project was an app that was able to provide exposure into spooky technologies so they would not be spooky anymore. Through information based on recent events, law and regulations, opinions and forums, users would be able to be comfortable because they are more informed about a spooky technology. My app works based on location and uses location as the primary factor to decide the information that the user is provided. That way they are given appropriate context and can integrate themselves into the community rather than being unaware or unsure. Through not only providing information and context, but being able to use the app to scan products, they are able to turn it into a learning and growing experience instead of one they have to fear.

I was able to pinpoint this idea and break down how they would learn by creating a user journey that was able to map a user's reactions, thoughts, and pain points to understand how I could alleviate some of their fears. Both before and during an interaction with the spooky technology provides gaps in which information and transparency can be beneficial. My app is able to generate information in a general setting based on location for cultural and locational understandings, but also a more intimate and personal understanding with a spooky technology that they are encountering. By creating an app that increases the ability to learn about new or unfamiliar technologies, users are able to socially integrate themselves without the fear of the unknown.

Process

While imagining a product that would be able to provide context and a better environment for users to learn and be comfortable, I started by breaking down the intricacies of their interactions. Looking at the users I am designing for and when they would use a product, I was able to create a scenario that I was able to examine and understand. Remembering how different cultures or societies have different standards, I was focusing on bridging international inconsistencies without miscommunication. Users would also be everyday people, mostly tourists, because of international travel and being able to explore and learn about a new area. By focusing on a simple, common, and relatable task like finding a suitable restaurant, I imagined how this would be difficult in an unfamiliar environment and interacting with technologies that are unfamiliar. Tasks like asking a waiter for their opinion, asking for extra condiments, or tipping are part of a process people are capable of doing.

However, with the introduction of new pieces of technology, these tasks may prove difficult. As these gaps motivated the design of my product I researched new technologies in different countries like autonomous vehicles, robot baristas, or augmented reality and their social perception. By combining my findings in the journey map and looking at different spooky technologies I brainstormed a few different ideas and concluded that an app that was able to answer these questions would be useful. While designing the app and deciding what to include, I looked at social implications of new technologies and how different knowledge and a group mentality can be more comforting.

Reflection

     Through the research process, creating scenarios, and designing the app I was able to explore the idea of cultural differences in technology and able to take a step back to objectively see what technologies can be spooky. While thinking of the components to include in my design, I reflected on what makes people comfortable or what are we currently exposed to that makes us able to go on our day un interrupted by spooky technology. Through this investigation, I learned that to look into the future, I have to acknowledge and appreciate both the past and the present.

     After the presentation of all the investigations by my fellow classmates, I drew the conclusion that an overarching theme whether it be about data, environmental factors, or cultural differences is that transparency and agency is a fuzzy topic. While thinking of whether transparency is necessary or appreciated, we have to start considering and weighing whether "ignorance is bliss". My project focuses on direct interactions of more apparent uncertainties, but the class investigations revealed that seamless design will not be spooky because users are unaware of them. Overall, my investigation, as well as the class investigations sheds light on our past and present interactions with spooky technologies, but being reflective of these features can create a future that is more familiar and less spooky.