PhD Title: Enhancing the Digital Products Experience for Vision-impaired People using Empathic Design

Keywords: Digital Products Experience, Vision-impaired People, Empathic Design

Research Abstract:
The project objective is to assess and to elucidate the needs of visually-impaired people in order to propose innovative solutions to enhance their experience in the digital world. Empathy would be the core value and the main point of departure throughout the research. I will focus on the facilitation of traveling by adding interesting elements for visually-impaired people since independent traveling is the most crucial activity for visually impaired people. In this project, the intuitive ability to identify with the thoughts and feelings of visually impaired and to recognize their mental models, and values will be the key.

Research Methodology:
This study will use a hybrid empathic design research methodology to uncover the vision impaired users’ real life stories and experiences.

1) The qualitative part of the research will include: Observation. I will venture into the field (such as Hong Kong Blind Union) to observe and document through photographic means how visually-impaired people interact with the existing digital products in their daily life. Observation is an effective method for gathering authentic emotional responses.

Empathic modelling. Empathic modelling is about physically experiencing the physical situations of others. It is a strategy to stretch a person’s empathic horizon.

2) The quantitative design research assets the market context of digital apps and websites and potential impact of improved digital products through empathic methods. Around 30 interviews, including structured interviews and unstructured interviews will be conducted with visually impaired participants aiming to get further insights. Through prototyping different models with expert users, possible design solutions and outcomes will be refined and developed while existing ones can be matured.

Results / outcomes:
1. The findings of this study fill the research gap that exists in the studies of digital design for visually-impaired people.
2. The results contribute to providing empathetic solutions for designers; UX/UI digital product designers are given an essential method that would ensure more relevant design outcomes and make their products more accessible.
3. This research will ultimately reinforce the existing understanding that aims to help visually impaired community to excel within society and further contribute to a better living of people suffering from disabilities.

Key Publications: