2. My Friends vs. Design

Daniel Kim

The TV and its Remote
One of my friends talked about his new HD LCD TV that his family had bought recently. While agreeing that it’s a very nice TV, it is easy to see how complicated TVs are becoming with all of their added features. My friend complained about how it was always difficult to connect devices to the TV since the input ports are always on the back. He often moves his game systems around the house and to friend’s places and trying to connect the cables to the back of the TV was always difficult and annoying for him. We both agreed that the ports should be placed in an area where it’s easier to access, such as the front of the TV or the sides. I figure the designers put the inputs on the back to hide the numerous cables that can run from the TV.

He also complained about the TV’s remote. The remote had a small disc used to navigate the TV’s interface. While it looks cool, it is apparently frustrating to use. The disc can rotate and be pushed in to confirm a menu choice. The disc rotates too freely, which caused my friend to choose the wrong menu option as he tried to push the disc to select the choice. We both also agreed that the remote should’ve had a more standardized design, such as a directional pad as seen on most remotes. We weren’t sure why the designers decided to implement a disc instead of a directional pad, but I suppose it might be used to scroll through the TV menus faster.

Finally, he disliked the TV’s interface. On other or older TVs, the input source can be switched simply by pressing the Input/Source button on TV remotes. However, on his TV, he has to access the menu to list the source menu and then select the source. He had to often access the source menu to switch between his Blu-ray player, game consoles, and the TV. We felt that one button press should be enough to cycle through the source inputs. I think the interface designers used the menu system because the newer TVs have many input sources, from RCA, S-Video, Component, HDMI, VGA, etc. It would require many button pushes to cycle through the sources instead of going through a menu.

Cell Phones
Another of my friends complained about how difficult it can be to use cell phones. As each year goes by, phone manufacturers add on features that don’t seem necessary to call someone. One thing my friend complained about was the small buttons his cell phone had. His phone was designed for making text messages easier, while keeping the small flip-top phone design. However, the buttons were so small that he needed to have fingernails to push some of the small buttons. He also placed his concern for colder days, when he might have gloves on his hand. In that case, this phone would barely be usable. He thinks that it would be better to sacrifice size to have the buttons bigger, like designing a phone that can slide down to show a keyboard, instead of a flip-top phone.

Another design issue my friend had with his phone was the media player buttons found on the front of the phone. While it was useful to access and play music without having to open up the phone, the buttons kept getting pressed while being in his pocket, activating the music player and playing music at inappropriate moments. It would’ve been better if the phone had an option to turn off the media player buttons on the front so it wouldn’t be activated by accident.

Lastly, my friend disliked how the design of the phone prevented him from charging his phone and talking through a headset at the same time. To reduce the size of the phone, the designers combined the charge slot and the headset jack into a mini-USB port. This prevents my
friend from charging the phone in his car and talking to his friends at the same
time through his headset while driving. He said the phone should just have a separate headset jack to fix the problem.

**Digital Watches**

A friend of mine had talked about his digital watch. Like any electronic made today, it is packed with so many features that people get confused easily trying to do one simple thing. My friend had received his as a gift from his family. His watch has multiple displays, which he always complained about. He says that watches should just tell him the time. He never understood why his had another screen to tell him the date or times of other cities around the world. The two screen design made the display that told the time smaller, which frustrated him. We both agreed that having two screens on a watch was unnecessary and should have the other one removed to make the main display larger.

My friend also complained about the odd mapping of the buttons. Depending on is being displayed (or what mode the watch is in), the five buttons on the watch do different things. For example, on the main screen where it tells time, two of the buttons can be used to light up the display. On the alarm mode, one of those buttons would be used to reset the timer. The different mappings of the buttons increase the complexity of the watch, which no doubt requires a manual to use it correctly. He says that removing unnecessary features (such as the alarm) from his watch would definitely fix the problem.

My friend disliked how his watch had a metal strap to stay on his wrist. Since it was initially too big on him, he had to go to a jeweler to help him remove some of the links on the watch in order for it to fit snugly on his wrist. This design choice never made sense to us. It doesn’t make sense to force the owner of a watch to travel to a jeweler to have them remove the links from the watch. He says that the links should be made so that the average person can remove them on their own without requiring a trip to the jeweler.