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Interview Part 2 for the Web-Seminar 2023

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**"Digital wellbeing has emerged as a reaction to negative consequences from the use of digital services".**

**Lisa Wiese, eye square**

Continuation of the interview with Lisa Wiese from eye square on the topic of Digital Wellbeing. The second segment focuses on the interface between digital wellbeing and customer experience. Specifically, about how software and



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apps can increase wellbeing and the question of what role digital wellbeing will play for brands and industries in the future.

## **Positive UX is now considered a prerequisite for a product or brand to be successful in the market. Do you see UX as part of the customer experience (CX) or as a completely independent area?**

**Lisa Wiese:** For me, positive UX is an essential part of a positive CX. As I mentioned earlier, users are increasingly reflecting on their technology use and taking action to protect themselves against negative consequences. They also strive to create a positive digital environment that matches their values and needs and sustainably improves their lives.

The decisive factor here is a positive experience or an increase in well-being during or through the use of the product itself. In order for these positive effects of product use - i.e., UX - to occur, however, the users must first become aware of the product. Of course, other CX touchpoints such as brand communication and marketing are also relevant here and must be synchronized with UX. For this, these needs of the users must be known in marketing.

If "digital wellbeing" is only understood as a trend topic and only addressed in marketing, but not at the UX level, users will sooner or later realize this and try out services from other competitors.

Digital wellbeing principles can also be applied to the optimization of other CX touchpoints, for example, to promote appreciative communication within customer support. If a company really takes the topic of "digital wellbeing" seriously, it should be reflected along the entire customer journey.





## **UX is about the user experience when interacting with a – digital - product, service or environment. What are the KPIs along the customer journey that should be used to measure and evaluate a customer's UX?**

**Lisa Wiese:** I would like to add: it's about the user experience when interacting with a digital product (on-platform) and beyond (off-platform). At least that's the case if we expand user experience in the sense of digital wellbeing.

Then, long-term effects in real life and on a societal level should also be considered. In addition to typical short-term UX metrics such as abandonment rate, error rate, time spent, joy of use, which can be captured behaviorally - for example, click paths - as well as via self-report and observation, aspects of eudaimonic wellbeing should be included.

Particular caution is required - from a digital wellbeing perspective - with behavioral engagement metrics ("what users do"), because this unfortunately does not always reflect the actual interest of users, especially against the background of AI-optimized algorithms in news or social media feeds. Therefore, as already mentioned, it is also important with regard to long-term effects to additionally survey users directly, for example in UX tracking studies. Finally, long-term CX metrics such as NPS, recommendations, or revisit rates also play a stronger role in digital wellbeing than short-term success indicators such as engagement or joy of use.

## **Your PhD is about how redesigning everyday technologies can promote respectful and friendly digital communication. Where are the big levers here?**

**Lisa Wiese:** In general, there are many ways to increase digital well-being through the design of interactive products and services. This is already being researched and applied both in academia (for example Positive Computing or Positive Design) and in interaction design (for example digital health applications). In most cases, determinants, i.e., conditional factors, of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being are supported by digital technologies.

My doctorate is based on the Positive Interventions described above as determinants of well-being because, on the one hand, they are very well researched, i.e. their effectiveness has been proven in intervention studies, on the other hand, they can sustainably increase well-being and, finally, they can be easily and inexpensively integrated into everyday life - i.e. they are accessible to everyone.



In the eHealth sector, positive interventions are already supported by digital applications such as gratitude diaries, nutrition or meditation apps. These so-called Digital Behaviour Change Technologies "translate" Positive Interventions from the therapeutic to the digital realm, so to speak. For example, instructions are no longer given in direct personal contact, but via videos or animations.

My doctorate follows a slightly different approach. It specifically focuses on the potential of everyday technologies (for example, email clients, websites or social media) whose main aim is not to optimise well-being, to support Positive Interventions. For example, when creating photo books, positive memories of past events are recalled and relived, prolonging the overall positive experience, and enhancing well-being. This corresponds to the Positive Activity of 'Savouring', which roughly means the "upregulation of positive emotions". The 'Memories' feature of Google Photos also supports this activity.

Currently, digital experiences such as creating a photo book are not yet designed with the explicit aim of enhancing well-being by supporting 'savoring'. In my PhD, I am therefore trying to derive appropriate design principles and measurement methods based on the literature in positive psychology.

The term and research interest around "digital wellbeing" has actually emerged in response to a growing awareness among researchers, companies and users of the negative consequences of using digital services and applications.

**Current discussions on "digital wellbeing" are mostly about the negative effects of using digital technologies. Shouldn't the positive effects be in the foreground for companies - especially with regard to UX - how do you see it?**

**Lisa Wiese:** A good overview of these negative consequences, which affect many areas of our lives and society, can be found on the website of the Center for Humane Technology and in the Netflix documentary The Social Dilemma. These include, for example, the spread of misinformation, influencing elections, cyber-bullying, an increase in mental health problems and even changes at a neurological level, such as a reduction in our attention span and memory problems.



Often these negative effects arise from the way the IT industry, the so-called "attention economy", works, in which UX research is embedded. Digital services are designed in such a way that users spend as much time as possible on the platform, interact a lot with its features and content elements (click, like, share, etcetera) and ultimately "convert". From a business perspective, it is about maximising attention or time spent on the platform.

Usability and UX optimisations should often positively influence these business metrics. Typical examples are interface elements such as autoplay, pull-to-refresh, which is based on the psychological principle of intermittent reinforcement, and infinite scroll. These elements are also called Deceptive Design Patterns, because they tempt users to do things, such as give up money, attention or data, that are not in line with their wishes or needs.

Such negative effects are not always intended or easy to foresee. An example is the interaction pattern 'Infinite Scroll'. It was originally invented as a solution to a usability problem, namely to make it easier to browse long lists of search results or offered articles. Indirectly, of course, it was also hoped to optimise business metrics in the sense of "time spent". Today, however, we know that this pattern works "too well" and can lead to negative usage patterns such as binge-watching or technology addiction.

As a counter design to this maximisation of "Time Spent", Tristan Harris, the co-founder of the Center for Humane Technology and the main protagonist in the documentary 'The Social Dilemma', coined the term "Time Well Spent" which was subsequently widely discussed within large IT companies in Silicon Valley and in public Valley and in public discourse. Unlike "Time Spent" as a target metric of the Attention Economy, "Time Well Spent" focuses on the quality and not the quantity of interaction with a digital product.

In addition, the Center for Humane Technology, a non-profit organisation dedicated to radically redesigning the the digital infrastructure, has raised awareness of the negative effects of digitalawareness of the negative effects of technology technology use and the non-user-centric focus on attention-targeting metrics within the IT industry.

As a result of the increased public interest, IT companies such as Google, Meta and Apple have been forced to address the issue of digital Wellbeing" and to give users the opportunity to control their platform use and, if necessary to control and, if necessary, restrict their use of the platform and, if necessary, restrict it.

As a result, for example, the "Digital Wellbeing" (Android) or "Screen Time" features (iOS), which are pre-installed in the settings of pre-installed in the settings of modern smartphones. However, these features limit not only the negative effects, but also the positive ones, associated with the use of interactive technologies and which can be which can be further enhanced by well-being-focused product development. product development. This also corresponds to the approach I am pursuing in my doctorate.



" In my view, both positive and negative effects on human well-being should be considered in the context of "digital well-being". A sole focus on the negative limits the potential of technologies, while a sole focus on the positive risks overlooking negative effects."

## **Which apps/websites contribute to your personal "digital wellbeing"?**

**Lisa Wiese:** There are quite a few. For example, I love podcasts and use both Spotify and Apple Podcasts. However, as with other audio or video streaming services, I would like to see fewer algorithm-based suggestions and more interest-driven browsing options.

I also like the memory feature of Google Photos, which brings long-forgotten moments back to my mind. I find social media services like Pinterest inspiring to eat healthier and try new recipes.

## **You have been Director Human Experience at eye square since the beginning of the year. Until 2013, you worked for the company as a Senior User Experience Researcher. After that, you were active in the field of online shopping for a long time. What made you go back to eye square and become active in market research again?**

**Lisa Wiese:** Besides the great team, I have always appreciated the psychological orientation, the scientific approach and the innovation orientation at eye square. Nevertheless, at some point I wanted to accompany the development of a digital product not only on the agency side, but from "beginning to end", i.e. from the product idea to the development of prototypes to the release and beyond. That's why I was drawn to the company's internal UX research. This gave me a good insight into how digital products are developed, what role different stakeholders play and what target metrics are optimised in practice.





At the same time, I became interested in "Digital Wellbeing" and the "Time Well Spent" movement and decided to take a closer look at these topics as part of a PhD. I am ultimately driven by the idea that the human experience needs to be considered more deeply, more comprehensively and with the help of the right metrics in product development when developing digital products. I am convinced that this can actually be a lever for personal development and positive social change. To achieve this, I believe that academic and industrial research need to work even more closely together. As Director Human Experience, I am now also pursuing this goal at eye square and hope to be able to incorporate knowledge about digital wellbeing into many client projects.

## **How do you see the future importance of UX and "Digital Wellbeing" for industries and brands on the German and international market?**

**Lisa Wiese:** There is currently a lot of movement on this topic and US companies in particular have already integrated "Time Well Spent" into their corporate target metrics, for example Meta and Twitter. But I also see a lot of potential for the German market. Ultimately, "Digital Wellbeing" takes into account the broader spectrum of digital products and services currently on the market by capturing their effects on the human experience in a more holistic way and presenting opportunities to specifically address this in product development. Digital Wellbeing also provides a conceptual framework for the development of new technologies that optimise the wellbeing of their users and better address their needs. This also provides a decisive competitive advantage.

The public discourse driven by the work of the Center of Humane Technology and the documentary 'The Social Dilemma' is leading to a higher awareness of how the attention economy works and its implications among users. In addition, the Digital Services Act within the EU obliges large IT companies in particular to be more transparent. This makes it difficult for companies to maintain a purely growth-oriented strategy that ignores the wellbeing of users in the long run. These developments will - in my view - drive the topic of "digital wellbeing" even further in the coming years.





**Lisa Wiese**  
Director Human Experience  
eye square



Lisa Wiese is an expert in qualitative and quantitative user experience research and is involved in the development of innovative methods in the field of user experience and digital wellbeing at eye square. She holds a degree in psychology with a focus on statistics, human-computer interaction and neuroscience.

In addition to her work at eye square, Lisa Wiese conducts research at the [Institute for Positive Design](#) at the TU-Delft in the Netherlands. Her PhD thesis is about how everyday digital technologies, e.g. E-Mail and messaging services, social networks or online stores can be (re)designed to enhance our well-being. Lisa regularly publishes in HCI journals and speaks at conferences.

