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Designing Blended Experiences: Laugh Traders Design Fiction

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The increasing ubiquity of interactions that involve complementary digital content, physical objects, and spaces, brings about new challenges for designers. There is a need to embed designs in legacy systems, whether those are existing physical structures or existing digital platforms. Traditional approaches to product design, interaction design, and user experience design often do not take this new context into account. Many systems do not consider how designers produce new digital and physical experiences that work harmoniously, while supporting new interactions and relationships with people (Imaz and Benyon 2006; Jetter, Geyer, Schwarz & Reiterer 2012). To address this, we propose the idea of blended experiences and offer a framework of constructs and techniques that can help designers work in this emerging area of design (O’Keefe and Benyon 2015). Using “*Laugh Traders*”, a storyboard Design Fiction created through practice (Sturdee, et.al. 2016), we propose a means of evaluating speculative experiences utilizing the Blended Spaces Framework influenced

by emerging user experiences, devices, products, systems and services.

INTRODUCTION

With a view of exploring and developing a place of practice for designers, we created an annual international program recruiting undergraduate students from SUNY Farmingdale State College, USA and Edinburgh Napier University, UK. The primary goal of the twelve-day “*Blended Spaces Workshop*” was to apply the Blended Spaces Framework to real-world problems during the 2019 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is the world’s largest performing arts festival, featuring over 3,500 shows during the month of August, shows include; comedy, theatre, dance, and more. The festival coupled with our workshop, provided students with hands-on, human-centred challenges when designing emerging user experiences, products and services for numerous festival participants – both attendees and performers.

Our Design Fiction, “*Laugh Traders*”, addresses problems uncovered during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in a number of ways. The Design Fiction (Fig. 1); (a) explores the role of audience emotion as feedback through the novel detection of bio data captured by smart watches; (b) addresses visitor scepticism of prescribed poster reviews from ambiguous hyped-up comic reviewers; (c) includes a novel democratization approach to authentic audience reviews; and, (d) pulls away wasteful print-based advertisements.

In this abstract we: (1) demonstrate how the principles of conceptual blending and blended spaces can be successfully coupled with a Design Fiction storyboarding using the Blended Spaces Framework. The nature of this storyboard is speculative, highlighting potential future interactions and products; (2) evaluate our blended experiences against the constructs of the Blended Spaces Framework and; (3) discuss how these constructs impacted our Design Fiction strategy by reflecting on evaluation outcomes.

Keywords—*Mixed Reality, Designing Blended Experiences, Design Fiction, User Experience Design, Fringe Festival, Edinburgh, IoT*



Fig 1. “*Laugh Traders*” Design Fiction

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