The Garden: Choice and Temptation

Tim van Oosterhout

Hogeschool van Amsterdam,
Duivendrechtsekade 36-38, 1096 AH, The Netherlands
T.J.M.van.Oosterhout@hva.nl http://www.create-it.hva.nl

Abstract. We describe an interactive installation that was showcased at a themed event. Visitors were prompted to make a choice but were seduced in words and presentation to favour one over the other. Visitors were allowed to choose more than once. We gathered and analysed statistics about the choices visitors made and we show that although the favoured choice was not made more often it was preferred as first choice for visitors who chose twice.

Keywords: Seduction, presentation, choice, judgement, installation.

1 Introduction

To celebrate Easter, music venue LVC held an event with a "Dead Celebrities" theme. The venue holds about 500 visitors. The ground floor of the venue was decorated as hell (Disco Inferno) and the second floor was decorated as Heaven (Stairway to Heaven). The middle floor held an interactive installation that we present.

To fit in with both the theme and the middle floor location we were inspired by the concept of passing judgement onto the visitors and the snake's seduction of Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The installation was styled as the scene from the garden of Eden, while the snake seduces the event's visitors with a modern dilemma. The seduction is shaped further by the presentation of the visitor's choices. Choices made by visitors during the event were logged and analysed.

In the next sections the installation is described in more detail. Then a summary of the gathered data is presented and finally we discuss the data.

2 The Garden

The middle floor of the venue was empty and dark with the exception of the installation in the middle of the 60m² and 6m high room. The installation was lit by a single spotlight from above and consisted mostly of big plants. The biggest central plant had a toy snake wrapped around its trunk. The snake extended out towards the visitor entering the room. The snake held an iPod (Apple) in its mouth. In front of it was a table with two buttons and the text

"Finders keepers, right?". One of the buttons was of the emergency mushroom button type. It was big, red and shiny and under it was the text "Sure, why not?". The other button was a modest doorbell. It was much smaller, bland and withered and accompanied by the text "No, that's not right!". See figure 1 for more details.

Fig. 1. The installation during the event. The snake can be seen in the centre, well lit by the spotlight. Left and right of the snake are the boxes that show an image when lit from behind. Directly above the left box the printer can be seen. At the bottom are the table with text and the buttons.

Pushing the big red button ("Hell" button) would make the single spotlight extinguish and a light in a box come on, lighting up an image from behind showing fire and human silhouettes. This was accompanied by a random sound out of a selection of screams, thunder or demonic laughter. Afterwards the spotlight would light up again and a sheet of paper would fall from above the visitor onto the table and buttons. The paper was a ticket to admit one to hell for demonstrated lack of morals, along with disclaimers and other small print. If the visitor pushed the smaller button ("Heaven" button) instead, the sequence of events would be the same except the lit up image depicted sunbeams shining through clouds, the sounds were selected from choir song or soothing classical music and the paper would admit one to heaven but still included disclaimers and small print.

3   Technical Realisation

The buttons were connected to and monitored by an Arduino microcontoller. The Arduino was connected to a laptop via USB through which it communicated button presses. The Arduino also regulated the timing and switching of

the overhead spotlight and the two backlit images. When the laptop received a button press notification a Java program would select an appropriate sound to play through the connected speakers that were hidden among the plants, and issue a shell command to print a document. The black printer was located among the plants on top of a hat stand and positioned so that the newly printed document would whirl down gently to land on the table in front of the visitor (see figure 1). The laptop would log the time, which button was pressed and the played sound. The installation would be ready for another button press after 15 to 25 seconds, depending on the length of the selected audio clip.

4 Results

In total 167 button presses were recorded in 4 hours broken down into 88 hell button presses versus 79 heaven button presses. We consider button presses that occurred within thirty seconds of each other a sequence. There were 35 isolated presses and 42 sequences of which 23 were of length two and 17 were longer than two presses. Single presses were 19 times hell and 16 times heaven. Out of the length-two sequences 16 were hell followed by heaven and 6 were heaven followed by hell. From the longer sequences 10 started with hell and 9 started with heaven.

5 Discussion

We expected visitors to either make a single choice or try both buttons to see what they would do. Longer sequences could have been visitors who had seen the installation but not interacted with it themselves, visitors who wanted to see if the buttons did the same thing or who wanted several printed tickets. The log confirms that a significant number of presses were isolated while sequences were mainly of length two with the second choice differing from the first.

Although the hell button was made more attractive with respect to size and colour, the fact that it was pressed more often overall was not significant ($p = 0.27$). However, if visitors tried both options then the hell button was pressed first significantly more often ($p = 0.046$). Reception of the installation was positive and many visitors kept the acquired ticket as a souvenir.

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