Huge Implications Of iPod Classic In All Aspects Of Life

The iPod series ending in the iPod classic had huge implications in all aspects of life as we know it. It had an unorthodox beginning and the fist iPod was led by technological determinism. However, the subsequent generations were developed through iterations and the design process. Tony Fadell, Jonathan Ive and Jon Rubinstein were the leaders of the iPod project with Fadell being the one to prototype the exterior, Rubinstein was concerned with the hardware and I've was concerned with aesthetics and software. Jonathan Ive was greatly influenced by Dieter Rams and took lots of inspiration from him. Both in books and the design process along with Donald Normans hierarchy of design. The iPod had a huge impact on society, introducing the ‘era of the connected user and the idea of ‘ubiquitous access to content’.

The iPod classic was the first iPod to be made out of aluminium, before then it was a coloured plastic exterior. The cheapest version cost $249, weighed 4.9 ounces, held 30 hours of battery life on a rechargeable lithium-ion battery, 80 GB of storage (which equates to about 20,000 songs) and had a screen of 2.5 inches (diagonal) which gave 320 x 240 pixels and could produce up to 65,000 colours. (Costello, 2019). It came in a box with earphones, a USB 2.0 cable, a case, a ‘Quick Start’ guide and a dock adaptor. The screen was liquid crystal with a white LED backlight. (Kingston, 2007)

The user interface is what had always set the iPod apart from its competitors. However, in the iPod Classic, the User interface was given a complete overhaul and set itself well ahead of its previous models. It introduced a feature called ‘Cover Flow’. This allowed the user to flick through their albums by scrolling as though they were in front of the user being flicked through. This brought a new way of experiencing your albums and brought with it the feeling of flicking through your CD covers or Vinals in real life. The new interface also split the first screen and the user could see a partial image of their favourite album or song cover. In the beginnings of the iPod and the apple company, the devices worked with both apple computers and other software. You just needed to download the iTunes software. You could then buy or download any song, video, audiobook or podcast. Looking back this is an unusual setup as nowadays all your devices sync especially with Apple as everything has to be on ‘the cloud'.

One of arguably the most interesting things about the iPod is that it was led by technological determinism. Steve Jobs knew that the portable music player industry was where the company needed to explore next as the company was keen to create a digital hub with their products centred around the iMac (Edwards, 2011). At the time the standard of the music players on the market was poor, Leander Kahney describing them as “either big and chunky or small and useless”. The best one on the market at the time was the ‘Nomad Jukebox’ however this too had its major flaws. It was the size of a portable CD player but was twice as heavy. He discussed this with Jon Rubinstein who was senior vice president of hardware at the time and later became the head of the iPod department and set him the task of figuring it out. At the time there was no way to do what they wanted with the technology available. However, later that On a visit to Toshiba in Tokyo they showed Rubinstein a hard drive disk that they had developed but had no idea what they wanted to do with it. This disk was smaller than any out there. It was 1.8 inches (Kahney,2006). This visit was in February of 2001 and when told Jobs told Rubinstein he wanted it working by the fall of that year. It was put together using as many pre

existing components from different companies as possible, “the drive from Toshiba, a battery from Sony, some control chips from Texas Instruments.” (Kahney,2006) The earphones that came with the phone were designed by Jonathan Ive but were manufactured by a company called fostex and the chips that played the mp3s were brought in from ‘portal player’. (Edwards,2011) Jonathan Ive led the design of the product and not having much time to put into the UI they managed to get a working prototype the size of a pack of cards on the shelves for November 2001 (Sam Costello, 2019). With this product in their arsenal they made more and the iPod took the company and the design community to new heights.

Tony Fadell was brought to apple in the beginning on a six week contract and he was the one to start the design of the iPod. He started by using cardboard and roughly printed graphics, in the beginning, to roughly demonstrate the idea. Each prototype used led fishing weights which would give the approximate weight of the final device. He presented his ideas to jobs in a meeting where the problem with the scroll wheel was also solved. At the time the wheels were push-button only with plus and minus symbols to navigate menus and lists one at a time Phil Schiller introduced the scroll wheel so the user could navigate easily through long lists of songs easily the speed of the scroll would also increase the faster and longer you spun the wheel, making it easy to navigate thousands of songs. (Edwards, 2011) deciding that they wanted to sell the iPod by Christmas 2001 they had six months to get the iPod onto the shelves leaving very little time for iterations and the design process.Jeff Robbin was the programmer in charge of iTunes development and the software on the iPod. He brought in a company called Pixo and they worked together to debut a system for the iPod that would works seamlessly with the physical item and the iTunes interface. The first generations of the iPod were made from plastic as their shell however, the iPod classic was made from aluminium which then defined Apple aesthetic.

The aesthetic of the iPod was inspired by Dieter Rams. Jonathan Ive is clearly a fan of Dieter Rams and parallels can be drawn between his work and much of the work of Rams. The iPod is a clean, beautiful piece of design. The classic boasts such a flush design the only disruption to the flat of the front face a sight dip where you would use the capacitive touch scroll wheel and the buttons. This is a clever piece of intuitive design as it nudges the user as to what to do rather than outright tell you. It is geometric but has no sharp angle so can be seen as fancy and technical but in the most simplistic way. It resonates with the ideals of Dieter Rams in that it doesn’t have any extras. There is an on an off slide switch on the top with a colour indicator, it has clearly labelled buttons for play/pause, fast forward and rewind. The only wording on the device is ‘menu’ the other buttons have symbols indicating their purpose and the volume control is intuitive for one to click and clockwise higher the volume and anti-clockwise lower the volume. The First generation of iPod was designed by Tony Fadell with four buttons surrounding a scroll wheel in a circle and a select button in the centre. Everything about it is intuitive and positioned in a very ergonomic way. Your thumb controls everything and is within a very comfortable reach.

Just as he influenced the aesthetics of the design of the iPod he also had a major influence over the design process. It is clear that the designers also took great stock from his ten Design principles and took their time to clearly address each one. With the iPod Classic, we saw the definition form of apples company. They clearly built on each of the previous generations and worked to get the design right. With the iPod Classic they set a bar for their company of a high level of aesthetics, consistency and simplicity of use that we have come to expect from the Tony Fadell and Jonathan Ive put on the map and which set them apart from their competitors

through the iPod. It is clear through the design of the iPod that Jonathan Ive and Tony Fadell knew that putting into practice the teachings of the designers before them would work to a huge advantage as all designers should do.

The iPod classic was the final generation of the original iPod series and the one which design will remain as a very important point in time for the design world. The design of the iPod classic set a standard of good design for apple that they have to live up to. The iPod generations are arguably where apple found their feet as a design company. They went from the bubbly multicoloured standard of their home computers to the stainless steel metallic, sleek, expensive look that the iPod series especially this sixth-generation brought with it.

Taking for example Donald Normans hierarchy of design along with his 3 levels of design appeal. Normans 3 levels of design appeal are one; visceral, meaning the gut reaction that the user gets to an object. This is one of the key things that Fadell and Norman worked really well in to the iPod especially in the 6th generation. They made it look fancy and high tech but also easy to use and for the general public so it wouldn't be out of place in your possession but it would elevate you in society. Once bought there was a sense of pride in being able to show people that you had the best model and you had a sense of pride in knowing you owned a piece of excellent design. The second is behavioural design, this is concerned with the pleasure and effectiveness of use. Again this was a huge success for apple as they created a frenzy around their devices. They were viewed as creating a revolutionary design that would change the modern world. Jordan Selburn described them as truly ushering "in the era of portable digital consumer electronics, much as the Walkman did for analogue audio" (year). The third was reflective, this is concerned with how you feel once you own the item. How it appeals to your self-image and pride. It also concerns itself with the stories you might be able to tell and the experiences the product enhances. The iPod allowed you to share your music and the iTunes interface allowed you to take music from your CDs and put them on your iPod which in turn reduced your whole music collection from shelves upon shelves of CD's to something you could keep in your pocket. The cheapest oldest version of the ipod had a battery life of10 hours, sold for $399 and had 5 GB of storage which was about 1,000 songs (Costello,2019). This allowed you to play music through your whole work day if you wanted and could repeatedly let you forget about the mundane aspects of your day to day.

The iPod introduced the idea of ubiquitous access to content (Turner, 2011). This is a very important distinction to make about the iPod. As it is easy to forget these days that everything was new in 2001. It is natural now for everyone to walk around with a mini-computer in their pockets, we no longer even need a cable to connect our earphones to our devices as we now use Bluetooth so often. It changed society. It became the norm for everyone to be able to listen to music on the go. This is something that everybody in the 1st world is used to, the expectation that someone will not be able to hear you shouting at them if you see them in the street as you know they probably have earphones in even if you can't see them. This is not something that is limited to a certain demographic. Every age group is familiar with smartphones now. It is usual for people from the age 11 up to have access to either a phone or an iPod from full-time mothers to high-end businessmen. The access that the iPod brought to podcasts and general entertainment which was transferable from device to device changed most things about our day to day life. It changed how we get our news, it changed how we experience our commutes and how we fall asleep. With many people not being able to fall asleep quickly these days without listening to something in their earphones. The iPod also ignited the era of the connected user (Turner, 2011). We take this for granted but Rubinstein and Ive started the era of social media

in your pocket, an audiobook or a podcast on the dart and Netflix and YouTube whenever you wanted. You are now constantly able to access anything anywhere and this started with tv shows that you could download to a 320 x 240-pixel screen. This was the beginning of people not being able to hear you when you screamed their name on the street. The iPhone 5th generation was the device that allowed you to do it all. While it was not a phone yet and was not connected to the internet, you were able to carry around your music, videos, photos and audiobooks on one tiny device.

As discussed the iPod series had many implications in the world of design and in society. It came from technological determinism but became so much more than that. The team of designers each had their area of expertise. Fadell is the main designer behind the shape and style. Rubinstein was the senior vice president of hardware at the time and so he was in charge of the hardware. Jonathan Ive was in charge of the aesthetics and the software. The tree worked seamlessly together and created a device that echoed them taking inspirqation and learning from the great designers that came before them. The iPod also introduced the world to the ‘era of the connected user and the idea of ‘ubiquitous access to content’.