Assignment #1 – Affordances Paper

Douglas J. Koch

New Jersey City University

In Don Norman’s book, The design of everyday things (2013), an affordance is a fundamental characteristic that exists between an object and the agent utilizing the object and is the first of six psychological concepts upon which good design is modeled. They six concepts are affordances, signifiers, constraints, mapping, feedback, as well as the conceptual model of the system.

A subtle aspect of the definition of an affordance is that it is a relationship between the object and the one using the object and not an innate property. As such, there may be different affordances to an object depending on the one interacting with the item. This concept is particularly important for those that are differently abled. For example, pair of scissors may afford one to cut paper or cloth – assuming they have hands that function in a manner that allows for that interaction. A person without a hand or without strength in the hands will not have the same relationship or affordance with the pair of scissors.

In Human-Centered Design, which Norman describes as the assurance that a design matches the needs and capabilities of the intended user, both nature of the relationship is key and needs to be well thought out or planned. Form must follow function.

References

Norman, D. (2013). *The design of everyday things: Revised and expanded edition*. Constellation.