

Data Visualization, Part 2: Pre-Reading

How to tell your story with AI

What are UI and UX?

Two terms. You need to know both and you need to be able to tell them apart. UI stands for User Interface. UX stands for User Experience.

UI is how your product LOOKS. It is everything visual - the colors you choose, the fonts, the button shapes, where elements are placed on the screen, the icons, the images, the layout. Every single screen your user ever sees is UI. If you can see it, it is UI.

UX is how your product FEELS. It is the experience of using it. Can users find what they need without getting confused? Is the flow logical - does one step lead naturally to the next? Do users feel confident that they know what to do? UX is the full journey a person takes from the moment they open your app to the moment they accomplish their goal.

Here is an analogy that might help. Think about a physical store. UI is the store design - the lighting, the signage, how the products are displayed, how nice everything looks. UX is whether you can actually find what you came for in under two minutes without asking for help. A beautiful store where nothing is organized has great UI and terrible UX. An ugly warehouse with perfect logical organization has bad UI and great UX.

For your project, you need both.

If an app has beautiful colors and a gorgeous logo but the signup process takes fifteen steps, what is the problem - UI or UX? UX.

The visual design is fine, but the experience of using it is frustrating.

Now flip it: if your app has no design at all - plain white background, default fonts, nothing styled - but a user can complete their task in three taps, what is the problem? UI. The experience works but the interface does not build trust or feel professional. Both problems hurt your project.

So as you design, you are making decisions about both at the same time. Every time you pick a color, that is a UI decision. Every time you decide what button does what, that is a UX decision.

The audience notices when an app looks polished AND is easy to use. They may not be able to name UI or UX in the moment, but they feel the difference immediately. When you show a mockup that looks professional and has a clear, logical layout, you are signaling: this team thought through their product. They did not just have an idea - they built something.

Great UI and great UX: users love it and come back. This is what you are aiming for.

Great UI but bad UX: it is pretty but frustrating. Users might try it once and never return. First impressions do not save bad experiences.

Bad UI but great UX: it works well but looks unattractive. Users might appreciate it once they get into it, but getting them to try in the first place is hard because the first impression is weak.

And bad UI and bad UX: I am not going to spend time on that one.

When someone opens your project and sees your prototype screen, you have about three seconds before they form an opinion. Make those three seconds count.

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