

Motivational elements in user instructions

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Concerning the design of user instructions, two views can be distinguished. The traditional view considers instructions as purely instrumental documents. The more and more emerging affective view still assumes that above all, instructions should enable readers to perform tasks. But in order to accomplish this goal, the instructions should *motivate* readers to keep on reading long enough and carefully enough to perform a task.

The studies presented in this dissertation were aimed at giving insight in the use and effects of so-called *motivational elements* in user instructions (e.g., testimonials, control steps). For most of these studies, the *ARCS Model of Motivational Design* (Keller, 1983, 1987abc, 1999, 2010) was used to design the motivational instructions. According to this model, instruction design should be aimed at four goals in order to motivate readers, namely Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction.

The described research shows that when things go smoothly, motivation does not seem so much of an issue. In such cases, motivational elements may increase text appreciation, but such elements are unlikely to affect user confidence or usability aspects. In those cases, instruction does it all. In those cases, advocates of the traditional view on the design of user instructions seem to be right. When setbacks are met, however, the affective view seems more fruitful and motivational elements could do the trick. In those cases, instruction does not do it all. Then, in Von Goethe's words, "instruction does much, but encouragement does everything."