

EXPERT SERIES: USER EXPERIENCE IN MOBILE

Introduction

Usablenet is committed to helping people successfully use mobile to achieve their goals. The company's early focus was on usability and web accessibility; its platform evolved to focus specifically on creating successful experiences for mobile users. In today's multi-channel environment, Usablenet has evolved its platform again to create unique experiences on mobile, tablet, social, kiosks and other channels.

About the Study

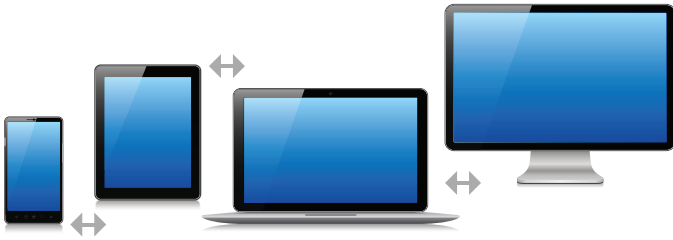
Recently, Usablenet conducted a UX qualitative research study of UK-based mobile users and mobile sites to assess the best practices for various stages of a consumer's journey – from browsing with no particular intent to purchase, to browsing with the intent to purchase, to the checkout process. Five males and five females ranging from 20-55 years-old were interviewed 1:1 on their experiences as they navigated critical journeys in mobile.

It was found that user motivations and requirements change in various contexts, depending on where the user is and what he or she wants to do – and with which device. That is why marketers must ensure they create a rich user experience across all channels. As this white paper will show, there are best practices every marketer should know and follow.



Our research was validated by a US study conducted by Google, Ipsos, and Sterling Brands called “*The New Multi-screen World: Understanding Cross-platform Consumer Behavior*” (August 2012). This study reveals that 90% of US mobile users move between various devices to accomplish a single goal; the device we choose to use is often driven by our context: where we are, what we want to accomplish, and the amount of time we have to do it. Because people use multiple devices both sequentially and simultaneously, consistency in user experience across channels is essential.

90% of U.S. mobile users move between various devices



Staying Connected With Users From Device to Device

The experience is mobile. What does this mean? Simply, that the experience must serve the user and that an experience that frustrates the user will not be tolerated. Winning brands will be those whose experiences across channels align with and facilitate the user's contextual behaviors. This doesn't mean incorporating lots of images and graphics, music and video, and things to fill in. The fact is, users both in the UK and the US are selective about how, when, and for how long they use their mobile devices.

Users tend to favor their smart phones for spontaneous rather than planned activities such as searching, browsing, and shopping. Not surprisingly, the average time people spend on an interaction on a smart phone is only 17 minutes, compared with 30 minutes for a tablet and 39 minutes for a PC/laptop.¹

Usablenet's research confirms that users tend to browse with their phones when they happen upon a product that catches their eye, but when it comes to actually making the purchase – which may require comparing products from a single brand or among multiple brands, registering for checkout, and entering a credit card number – they prefer to do so at the store's website or in the store itself.

Among the reasons this is so are:

- Concerns about security, connectivity, and speed
- Desire to see further product details and larger images of the product
- Difficulty of comparing products within and across mobile websites

Though there are reasons why sales may not occur via a mobile device. Increasingly, users accomplish this through a series of interactions with multiple devices, sometimes within a single day.

Marketers can help users in this journey by creating consistent and effective experiences across channels. Keeping navigation, taxonomy, and titles consistent across multiple devices is an easy but critical way to avoid user frustration. If there are negative feelings about mCommerce – either from bad past experiences or user misunderstanding of how safe and convenient it actually can be now that the market and technology have matured – they can be assuaged through marketing and incentives, as well as by demonstrating the seamlessness that is possible as users move from mobile to tablet to laptop.

Ten Tips For Creating Ideal Mobile Experiences

Smart phones are the backbone of our daily interactions and most common starting point for activities that span multiple screens and channels. For that reason, marketers may want to focus on the mobile environment and transfer lessons learned and best practices from there to the other channels.

With its extensive experience and technological leadership in the field, Usablenet has put together this list of 10 tips for creating ideal, user-centric mobile experiences, enhanced with quotes from actual users and relevant statistics.

1. Clarify your mobile strategy:

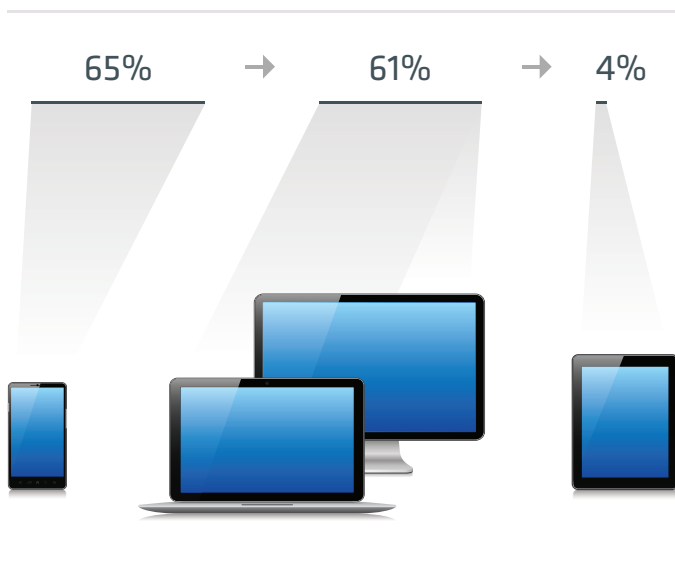
Set the business objectives for your mobile site. Do you want it to be a transactional site or an engagement tool for your most loyal customers? Is there a business or user need to merge social media tools with the retail experience to create a unique experience? These are just some of the questions that can clarify your goals in mobile.

¹ The New Multi-screen World: Cross-platform Consumer Behavior

2. Determine the experience:

Does your web site need to be optimized for mobile? How would a native app meet the needs of your business and customers better? What are your brand goals in mobile? What experience elements are currently supported by your website? How do you want to integrate 3rd party offerings with your brand? A clear blueprint for the experience will drive good UX.

According to "The New Multi-screen World: Understanding Cross-platform Consumer Behavior," consumers often take a multi-device path to purchase: 65% start on their smart phone; 61% then continue on to their PC/laptop; and 4% continue on from there to their tablet.



3. Create mobile metrics:

Develop a framework for measuring the success metrics of the mobile experience, focusing specifically on the return on investment. This will help you to apply the right resources to the right areas. However, the starting point should be to understand and focus on what drives value to the retail business. For example, shopping conversion rates, customer length of engagement on the brand, completed downloads.

"I always navigate to what interests me, then I look at the product and all the images. I might read about the product then also check what the delivery and returns policy is."

Usablenet Study, July 2012

4. Understand your target customers, their attitudes, expectations and behaviors toward mobile:

Essentially, focus on your target users and work on understanding what their natural behaviors are, what they expect from a brand, and how they respond to concepts. There are so many valuable research methods for designing the mobile user experience. By knowing this information, effective user goals and requirements documentation can be created to steer interaction design. For example, fictional characters such as Personas are ideal as they summarize the user research findings and provide a practical approach to understanding the requirements of your target audiences to help inform your mobile experience.

"I feel more comfortable purchasing on a laptop. Mobile does not feel secure."

Usablenet Study, July 2012

5. Understand and reduce barriers to purchase:

Do your homework. Speak to prospective users in order to understand what you need to do to prevent barriers to purchasing. Focus on eliminating typical barriers, such as the concerns around connection, speed and security. Other barriers could be lack of information and content that do not help customers in their shopping journey – but there may be more. Asking the right questions will help you identify where to focus on to reduce and remove barriers to purchasing.

"I couldn't do a purchase on something like this. I would have to go home and order it on the big screen."

Usablenet Study, July 2012

6. Evaluate and validate your current and future mobile offering:

Observe a small target segment of your customers to help identify what works well, what does not, what is missing and what needs improving in order to create a user-friendly mobile experience for your current mobile offering. Qualitative user research such as 1:1 usability testing or contextual inquiry will help you understand areas to focus on. Plus remember, further evaluations should be conducted iteratively at the design stages of a new mobile experience, prior to launch, in order to validate the experience and guide the design. Ideally, this should be embedded within your mobile strategy plan.



7. Analyze the competition:

It pays to take a close look at what your direct competitors are doing. Find out what your customers like about it. Explore benchmarks outside of your industry that influence consumer expectations. Evaluate the findings and use the information to create experiences your customers will prefer and recommend.

"I would like the mobile website to be as close as possible to the desktop website. If I found something on the mobile website, and then got on the desktop website and can't find it because it's different and in a different category... if it's the same it would be easier to find."

Usablenet Study, July 2012

8. Keep it simple and functional:

Research studies confirm that users want to be able to complete their mobile tasks as quickly, efficiently and as seamlessly as possible. We already know and understand why. Mobile use is contextual and usually not in isolation to other tasks and technologies. Therefore, a simple-to-use experience must match that environmental scenario.

"There are 14 pages to scroll. I am not going to scroll through 14 pages."

Usablenet Study, July 2012

9. Develop consistency:

Remember, we live in a multi-screen, multi-channel world. Consumers are using multiple devices to achieve their goals. Therefore, don't just focus on a single channel – consider how the experience plays out across every channel (mobile, tablet, web, kiosk, etc.). Ensure that the experience in mobile is in line with, and supported by other channels.

10. Make mobile important:

Once you have a mobile strategy in place, it needs to become the centerpiece of your marketing plan. Promote the benefits of your mobile experience. Use marketing communication to drive traffic to your mobile site. Leverage your analytics to understand how customers are using your site and identify areas to optimize the experience. Find ways to attract and reward mobile customers. If appropriate, encourage your customers to share their mobile experience of your brand.

Conclusion

Unquestionably, people love their mobile phones; it's rare that they are put down at all. Yet that doesn't mean that users want to spend all day on it and use it to accomplish all their tasks. Research shows that context dictates when, where, for what, and for how long mobile devices are used. The goal, therefore, is not to make the mobile channel all things for all people, but to optimize the mobile experience within a broader, more holistic program of delivering relevant multi-channel user experiences across the entire spectrum of devices that users often use.

The true goal is to stay connected to the user as he/she shifts from context to context, task to task, device to device, so that there is a single, consistent – and consistently satisfying – experience representing a seamless series of positive interactions with your brand. That's why we say the experience is everything. For as long as a user interacts with your brand, no matter how many screens are employed, the experience needs to remain consistent and relevant.

Until now, this has been impossible because there hasn't been a single technological platform that can address the specific constraints and characteristics of multiple devices and channels. It is possible now, thanks to Usablenet's third-generation platform, U-Experience. Leveraging and building on the company's remarkable track record of making the web and mobile environments more accessible, usable, and effective, U-Experience is an evolution that not only is ideal for today's multi-channel marketplace, it actually makes the promise of multi-channel marketing practical.

For more information, visit Usablenet at www.usablenet.com or email us at contact@usablenet.com.

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