THE TRUTH BEHIND
SMARTPHONE BEHAVIOR

How the six elements of a mobile mindset can impact your business
In under a decade, mobile technology has become ingrained into nearly every aspect of our lives. The impact on the way we consume information and buy goods and services has been phenomenal.

According to Statista, the number of smartphone users in the world is forecast to grow to 2.5 billion in 2019, up from 2.1 billion in 2016. This year, just over 36% of the world’s population is projected to own a smartphone, up from about 10% in 2011.

Alongside the rise in smartphones, global mobile e-commerce revenues have risen sharply, from (a not insignificant) $184 billion in 2014 to reach $669 billion in 2018. In real terms, this amounts to well over a third of all online purchases now being conducted via a mobile device. This surge in the number of people favoring a mobile device when it comes to shopping and consuming information means that it is more important than ever for brands to understand how mobile devices are impacting customer experiences, demand, buying behaviors and on-site actions.

But, while the internet is awash with stats on mobile behaviors, the reality is that very little firm research exists to explain the thought processes behind these behaviors.

The results of the Wharton School’s combined research with Clicktale, for the first time presents emerging empirical evidence that smartphone use involves a distinct psychology – a “mobile mindset”. This unique emotional and cognitive mindset influences the way consumers interact with websites and brands and bears important practical implications for firms and marketers, who need to understand how their customers are using smartphones in order to deliver great mobile experiences, informed by psychology and behavior.

*Dr. Shiri Melumad and Dr. Robert Meyer*
Understanding the mobile mindset

Academic research, carried out by researchers from the Wharton School, points to the fact that engagement with a smartphone triggers relaxation and psychological comfort while the device itself often serves as an attachment object that people turn to at times of worry or stress. This creates a fundamental shift in the behavior of the user and evokes distinctive patterns in the types of online content consumers seek and how they express themselves through self-generated content. The research revealed that this ‘safe zone’ fosters preferences for content that:

- is entertaining (e.g. pop culture, sports over news)
- is edgy (vs. work appropriate)
- has “guilty pleasure” appeal
- is fast (vs. slow) functional

Together with Dr. Melumad and Dr. Meyer from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Clicktale has combined its proprietary global behavioral data, from over one million unique consumers and 12 million session recordings, on smartphones and PCs, with deep academic analysis of the psychology behind this behavior.

This report provides new insights on how the six elements of a mobile mindset can impact your business and how you can ultimately tailor your content for maximum engagement, and the best possible customer experiences.
An entertainment-led approach

The researchers’ hypothesis proposed that if smartphones are considered a “safe zone”, then users should be much more drawn to safe and unchallenging content. As such, smartphone usage fosters a preference for entertaining content, such as pop culture and sport rather than science, facts or hard news.

This entertainment-led mobile mindset also has a direct influence on how people use their smartphone, favoring expression that is more emotional when sending messages or posting content. The physical nature of the device, with its small form factor, keyboard and screen, also leads users to shorten the content they post, for example reviews on websites, when using a mobile device.

Using Clicktale’s experience analytics, the researchers from the Wharton School compared click-through patterns for people browsing a major online news site on a PC and people browsing the same site on a mobile device.

The team found that browsers were 35% more likely to engage with content that was entertaining and sports-related on a mobile device. In contrast, interest in science, education and regional-specific content was much lower.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Optimize entertaining content**

If consumers are using their smartphones as a 'safe space' to avoid the worries and realities of the world, then mobile content should be tailored with this psychology in mind. It should be seamless, stress-free, and focus on entertaining consumers just as much as informing them.

For brands, these findings highlight the importance of optimizing entertainment-led content for mobiles and providing this content to consumers in an engaging and digestible format. Marketers, app developers and product managers need to be able to step into the shoes of their customers and experience exactly what their customers are experiencing. Through experience analytics they can visualize all of the key customer experience metrics and then make proactive, strategic UX optimizations.
Fast-functional content

In addition to news sites, the researchers also used Clicktale’s data to analyze click-through patterns for people browsing a major online retailer’s website from both smartphones and PCs.

In this context, the research results found that smartphone users aren’t looking for long-form, factual content. They want quick results and as short a journey as possible.

Users demonstrated clear preferences for “fast-functional” content, such as clearance items, coupons and store locators. Whereas on PCs, users headed for search, gifts and customer services in higher ratios. All three fast-functional criteria reveal a heightened sense of purpose, suggesting a goal-oriented approach. Coupons and clearance items are both associated with fast rewards and immediate gratification. Use of store locators is likely to have a more obvious explanation with mobile customers on the move and trying to navigate to a physical store. However, this also suggests a more subtle reason, where an external stimulus is impacting on attention span and decision making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Make things easy for goal-based consumers

When developing mobile content, brands should use this fact to inform their strategies, putting speed, convenience, and the customer experience first.

Retailers can use this to their advantage by using mobile redirects and responsive designs to tailor their mobile sites, pushing offers, discounts and ‘fast-functional’ content to the front.
Content that works on mobile provides instant gratification

Fast-functional

- Coupons
- Clearance
- Locator

Slow-functional

- Gifts
- Customer service
- Bridal registry
- For home
- Bed bath
- Men

Standardized proportion of traffic per area of the site

Mobile
Desktop

0.15 0.25 0.35 0.45 0.55 0.65 0.75 0.85
To buy, or not to buy

A new consumer survey by Retail Dive found that two thirds of consumers said they research products online – at least occasionally – before shopping for them. Adobe’s mobile retail report goes further by offering an explanation for why browsing sessions don’t necessarily equate to purchases. According to Adobe, retail ecommerce conversion rates are likely higher on desktops because consumers are frustrated when browsing via mobile.

Clicktale’s research found evidence for this when exploring the role that a mobile device plays when purchasing gifts. According to Clicktale’s data, desktop users are 36% more likely to purchase gifts than smartphone users.

This is also true for festive periods, with desktop users being more likely to purchase Christmas gifts, compared to smartphone user. A report by Adobe Digital Insights reveals a possible cause for this with nearly half of respondents saying mobile browsing is too slow, and nearly as many saying they are frustrated with the device’s small screen. Poor navigation was another hindrance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Make navigation sticky

The psychology of web design comes into play here; sticky elements increase visitors’ confidence as they scroll up and down the page, giving them a sense of control while interacting with the site. They know what their options are and have no reason to feel uneasy because everything they might need is right in front of them.

Simple tips include limiting the length of the mobile page so visitors can more easily scroll to the bottom. Instead of adding more and more sections to the home page, place them in easily visible menus or links.
Personalization at a price

The rapid nature of mobile interactions means that smartphone shoppers want their content now and, as a result, they’re prepared to pay a premium. According to Worldpay’s latest global report on mobile consumer spending, The Mobile Payment Journey, there is a rising demand for brands to offer a more luxury, personalized shopping service. Worldpay’s research found that a third (31%) of consumers would be happy to pay more for a product or service if the mobile shopping experience was better. This number rises to 43% among millennials, who are the most willing to favor brands that give them a “five-star” shopping experience.

Clicktale’s research validates these claims and reveals that smartphone users are more interested in fast shipping, compared to desktop users. Smartphone users are willing to pay on average 6.5% more for shipping compared to desktop users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tailor shipping options according to device

Every company today understands that having a mobile-friendly site is imperative. And obviously the way visitors interact with your site on a mobile device is quite different from how they interact with a site they’re viewing from their desktop.

Use A/B testing to check the differences between mobile and desktop. Just as importantly, use A/B testing to check the habits of mobile users so that you can optimize your mobile site to promote the actions you’d like your customers to take.

Average shipping cost

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<th>Mobile</th>
<th>Desktop</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>$3.3</td>
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The mobile generation

It’s well documented that smartphone use makes us selfish. The results of a study, dubbed The Effect of Mobile Phone Use on Prosocial Behavior, show that smartphone use could make users less socially minded. This is because smartphones directly evoke feelings of connectivity to others, thereby fulfilling the basic human need to belong. While exploring the various elements of a mobile mindset it’s clear that they share a common thread, from a desire to be entertained to a need for fast-personalized content. Smartphone use allows us to enter a more individualistic and self-involved mindset. Clicktale’s research further enhances this idea by revealing that desktop users are more likely to think about others while shopping and browsing.

The research revealed that desktop users are 16% more willing to donate via the give-back program compared to smartphone users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prioritize individual experiences

With mobile users adopting such an individualistic mindset, providing personal experiences that appeal to their sense of self is more important than ever. Tailored content that appeals to the individual will prove far more effective on mobile devices than emotional content and appeals to pathos. For this reason, charities and non-profits may struggle to encourage direct donations on these channels – needing to focus on content marketing instead.
Stick with the default

With so many emails already flooding our inboxes on a daily basis, enticing people to sign up for even more emails is a growing challenge for brands. However, it seems mobile users could be more receptive to subscribing to mailing lists. Our research found that when website visitors were confronted with ‘subscribing’ as the default option, 59% of desktop users were inclined to change the default, while smartphone users were inclined to stay with the original option of subscribing. This preference for sticking with the default adds further weight to the theory that the ‘safe zone’, fostered by the smartphone environment, encourages users to favor speed over considered decision making, as well as causing them to be less alert when interacting with the content on a mobile device.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep website and app options simple

When we shop online, we don’t realize we have a model for where the “Add to Cart” button or the “Support” and “Contact Us” links should be located, but we do. It’s a model that has developed over time through all of our experiences online. When we interact with a website or an app, we are doing much more than looking at prices, text and colors. We are scanning for the familiar. Unusual or non-standard designs are great, but they aren’t always practical. Be as creative as you want, as long as your thinking is rooted in the practice of customer experience – using buttons and tabs as standard.
Conclusion

A few years ago, the main discussion point for brands was around optimizing sites for mobile, and subsequently there was a sharp rise in the number of mobile-optimized sites. However, the findings highlight that the conversation around mobile websites needs to become more sophisticated. By understanding your customers’ mindset and intent, businesses can tailor their sites to accommodate the needs of different customer segments and use this knowledge to build better customer relationships and positively impact the bottom line.

*It all starts by listening to your customers’ digital body language and responding accordingly. Digital body language is a combination of all the digital gestures and micro-signals made by customers, from which we can identify patterns and anomalies to infer behavior.*

By remembering that smartphones and desktops trigger different behaviors, businesses can tailor their experience on each device to the particular mindset it activates and craft exceptional cross-browser experiences that help build customer loyalty and stickiness.
Learn more about how Clicktale can help your business

Contact us

About Clicktale:
Clicktale taps into the wisdom and behavior of millions of visitors so that businesses can deliver the best digital experiences and drive amazing business results. Complex behavioral patterns are synthesized based on millisecond-level actions such as hovers and scrolls, enabling businesses to interpret their customers’ digital body language to understand intent. The pioneer in experience analytics, Clicktale marries cognitive computing, machine learning and psychological research to automatically surface issues and answer questions that keep executives up at night. With unique behavioral data, clear visualizations, and world-class customer experience expertise, Clicktale is driving the "experience era" at the world’s leading brands and Fortune 500 companies.

Clicktale. Answer anything.