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Table Of Contents

Proprietary Notice.....	2
Table Of Contents.....	3
Introduction	4
Usefulness of having personality be part of the UI	5
Drivers for uptake of Mobile Web Services	5
How is the mobile User Experience different?	5
What's missing:	6

Introduction

Ever since the days of BT's (Genie) Ad campaign "Surft the net" back in 1999, people have been sold the idea of surfing the web on their mobile device, but with little success. The reason for this is that early adopters rushed to try out this new form of browsing, only to be disappointed by the lack of relevant or compelling services and the poor quality of the user experience.

The vision of anytime, anywhere and anyhow was then sold to users between 2000 and 2002 as the solution for providing compelling services to encourage usage and uptake. So Mobile Operators like Orange and Vodafone concentrated their efforts on designing products and services based on this vision. The success of this approach is more perceived than actual as it is overshadowed by the huge hype and marketing push surrounding data and entertainment services. The fact remains that the majority of mobile device users do not browse the WEB on their device because they do not know they can and for the minority that do, it still remains a "painful" experience.

I do not think that users will ever browse the web on mobile devices in the same way they do on a PC based interface as the limitations of screen size, processing power, cognitive functionality, environment and most of all time are against them. A mobile web experience is about quality not quantity because you aren't really surfing when you are looking at a mobile site. You are trying to get specific information that is relevant to you at that moment in time.

In order for this to happen, the user needs to be aware of what is available to him/her at that specific moment in time and space. The key thing to drive adoption and encourage people to use the mobile WEB is thru marketing/awareness and discovery using WAP Push or any other type of alert message.

Think of SMS. It started to take off when you received one and figured out how to open and read it. Same with a PC browser, you didn't go on a training course to figure out how to use Netscape or Internet Explorer. A colleague at work just showed you as you peered over their shoulders. So it is an issue of discovery and the best way for the industry to expedite discovery of the mobile web is to push a WEB url to a user (using wap push) and the person is browsing without having to do anything. Most people still do not know how to bookmark a site on their phone in fact most don't even know that they can!!!! So it is an industry awareness issue, but all the technology is out there to enable mass adoption of mobile internet. Especially since huge brands like Coca-Cola are getting into the game through mobile marketing and singers like Madonna will have their own mobile site soon.

People are drawn to an experience initially (fun, sex, etc, anything emotive) ...then as the industry and usage matures, people will use devices functionally (for services, finding information etc).

In this paper I will talk about mobile lifestyles and compelling services plus the usefulness of having a personality be part of the UI. I will also touch upon the need to understand how environmental factors affect how people consume information whilst they are mobile and the drivers behind uptake of mobile services. These are some of the factors that need to be taken into consideration when designing a UI or service for mobile browsing.

Usefulness of having personality be part of the UI

Ease of Use from my perspective, refers to our ability to apply our innate knowledge, and our acquired knowledge collectively, towards understanding an environment. The more that environment aligns with our knowledge, the easier it will be to learn how to function in that environment, and the safer we will feel. What is more natural, than to be able to relate to a UI as though it were a person. This is the basis of anthropomorphism.

Therefore in order to encourage emotional attachment and long term usage, mobile web services will need to have a distinct "personality" which is attributable to that service or brand.

Drivers for uptake of Mobile Web Services

Anytime anywhere anyhow is about lifestyle and not about compelling services. The definition of compelling is "a strong irresistible force on...". Research has shown that when users are asked to describe a compelling service or experience they use emotive words like satisfying, rewarding, seductive, friendly, simple, valuable, entertaining etc. These are emotional drivers that exert a strong irresistible force on the user and have nothing to do with lifestyle.

Therefore we need to be aware that users perceive compelling services as emotional experiences. So in order to encourage uptake of the mobile web we need to design and build "compelling" services. But in order to reach a level of emotional interaction with users we need to address some fundamental issues first.

I believe that the user needs to trust the product/service and receive value from a relationship with it and will only then be willing to invest emotional equity in that relationship.

Most marketing campaigns around mobile services talk a lot about visual elements and the emotions they are targeting, but miss the interaction elements required to give it credibility. They are going straight for Emotion without considering the Trust and Value elements of building that emotional bond.

As the information required is time and context critical, the user needs to trust the information provided by the web service in order to encourage long term usage. If over a period of time the information proves valuable to the user then he/she is willing to invest some emotional equity in the relationship with that service. i.e. they "bond" with it and will continue to use it until it lets them down. This is much like a real world relationship. Hence the need to build in personality as part of the UI.

How is the mobile User Experience different?

Lifestyle

In order to understand this we need to look at how users feel about their mobile devices and what role they perceive it to play in their lives. This brings us onto the subject of mobile lifestyles. During a research programme, users were asked to name some of the factors that influenced their lifestyle and they named things like time, season, job, family, politics, religion, income, location, health etc. So in order to build lifestyle services to encourage greater adoption and usage we need to understand how these drivers affect the creation of these services.

Research has also shown that mobile devices are first and foremost relationship tools, and a key aspect of the mobile lifestyle is the need to manage many different types of relationships at any time. Secondly the desire to experience unexpected and new things is high on the agenda. This key mobile lifestyle trend describes a need to have a sense of discovery in

everyday life through connections with friends, family and brands. The desire to be linked to “New Worlds” is high amongst mobile users.

So the mobile web could be the place where users can go to manage their accounts and organise their activities, they can find, browse, monitor, buy, communicate, play, entertain, be entertained and much, much more.

It would seem that the mobile device is seen as a tool for social connectivity by users. Today users interact with a variety of different interfaces which are not consistent nor are they integrated. Only when we design and build a coherent interface experience, across all access platforms and devices, can a service publicly claim to be the “fuel for social interaction” that enables “social connectivity”. Coherency and consistency is brought about by service/brand personality, not by making the interface look the same on all channels.

The following factors also need to be taken into consideration:

1. Environment, Location, Weather, lighting etc
2. Goal or task the user trying to complete
3. The mental state/model of the user at the time of interaction.
4. Device personality. i.e . The cognitive capability of the device and ability of the user.

What's missing:

- Interaction Principles & Guidelines
 - i. Basic guidelines for the design of mobile sites.
 - ii. The does and don'ts of application design.
- Etiquette guidelines for interaction with mobile users
- Understanding of the implications and impact on content strategy.
- Loyalty creation to encourage long term adoption and usage.
- Coherency and consistency in terms of interface personality
- Coherent way of controlling users experience and journey from one interface type to another. E.g. WEB to mobile. – Slingshot.