COMPARING MOZILLA FIREFOX AND OPERA

a Study in Usability

ABSTRACT

A ten-point comparison on the usability of two web browsers

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INTRODUCTION

This white paper describes the findings of a usability study comparing two web browsers: **Mozilla Firefox** and **Opera**. This study looked at how each of these browsers performed when the user was told to perform normal, but not *common*, tasks. Because this is a comparison of their usability, rather than analyze how each performed in speed or anything that quantitative, the study utilized Likert scales to have the user rate each task on a series of metrics. All the tasks performed are not necessary daily tasks, but certainly an important component of a modern web browser (like changing the homepage, installing extensions, etc.).

In order to avoid bias, the two web browsers that were tested have both **never been used by the user before**. This eliminated the two more *popular* browsers from comparison, Google Chrome and Safari, but allows for more accurate comparisons. The user is quite computer 'savvy,' but this should not be a huge factor, as both of the platforms being tested have not been used by the user before.

The purpose of this paper is to give an unbiased analysis on the comparative usability of the two web browsers on the following metrics: **effective**, **efficient**, **engaging**, **error tolerant**, and **easy to learn**.

METHODOLOGY

TASK LIST

The following tasks were assigned to the user in order to evaluate the two platforms' usability:

1. Installing the respective browser
2. Installing an extension
3. Change the default font size
4. Change the homepage
5. Change the default theme
6. Change the default search engine
7. Clear the internet browsing history
8. Save the login information of a website
9. Uninstall an extension

10. Open the browser's developer console

TEST ENVIRONMENT

The test was performed on March 24th, 2019. It was performed in the user's home, on a MacBook Pro running macOS Mojave. The versions of Mozilla Firefox and Opera that all tasks were performed on were the most recent versions available, so Firefox 62.0 and Opera 55.0.2994.61.

Given the varying complexity of the tasks, the efficiency metric was not timed and was instead left up to the user to determine 'reasonable' times for each task. This could be improved upon in future revisions of the test, but works fairly well for most tasks, as users have a good general idea of how long any given task *should* take.

TEST METRICS

In order to assist the user in assessing each metric of the two products' usability, short criteria statements were written for each product, task, and metric. These give a small description of how the user is to evaluate each matric. Although the criteria statements might bias the results a little bit, they also create consistency in the test as it reduces the interpretation by the user. A short list of these criteria statements is provided below:

1. I was able to install Mozilla Firefox without many unnecessary interactions
2. The interface of Mozilla Firefox made changing the default font size easier
3. I was able to change the default search engine

Clearly, these statements are all worded in such a way that both guide the user, and allow for clear response in a Likert Scale format. I chose the following scale:

1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree