INFM 605 - Project Proposal
An Observational Study of 'iPhone Users'

1. The Study

We found a concept worth investigating into, when we came across some statistics pertaining to iPhone users among students. We found to our amazement that 87% of students use the iPhone in the United States. Why are students such loyal users and repeat buyers of the iPhone? Students are known to be well-informed buyers and trend makers. How has the iPhone attracted this user group? What value does it provide to this user group in particular? Is there a specific feature in the iPhone that attracts student users to be loyal to its brand? If yes, what makes this feature unique? Is there a comparable feature for android or is there an opportunity for developers to emulate this iPhone feature?

We intend to find the answers to these questions by applying the UX research techniques we learned in our textbooks, 'Observing User Experience' and 'Thinking Like a UX Researcher' to students that are advocates and loyal consumers of the iPhone.

2. Intro & Background

The use of mobile devices, particularly smartphones, has become an essential part of our daily lives. Among various smartphone brands, the iPhone has a significant market share, especially among younger generations, including students. Students are an important demographic to study because they are early adopters of technology and are often at the forefront of trends. They are also a unique population because they are in a transitional period of their lives, where they are moving from being dependent on their families to becoming independent adults. Thus, students either buy a phone using the money they earn by doing a part-time job or money from their parents. Smartphones are essential to students, as it is the primary way they interact and communicate with others, friends and family.

The iPhone was introduced to the world back in 2007 by Steve Jobs, and quickly rose to fame. The operating system it runs on is called iOS which is Apple's proprietary operating system.

Studies also show that students spend up to 9[1] hours a day on their smartphones

In the US, the iPhone's share in the market is 54.74%[2] while it remains at a meager 27.6%[3] market share in the world. But looking at youngsters in the US, the iPhone's share goes up to a whopping 87%[4], while 88%[5] expect an iPhone to be their next phone.

With such a strong foothold amongst youngsters which amounts to 56% of the time they are awake, has a significant impact on their lives.

This could be due to a variety of reasons, like the App Store for example, which offers a wide variety of apps that can be used for studying, note-taking, and productivity as well as games and social media apps. The popularity of iPhones among students also makes them a target for

companies and developers looking to create products and services specifically for this demographic.

But there is another feature offered by the iPhone that is exclusive to the Apple ecosystem, it is called iMessage.

It is a proprietary messaging service offered exclusively on Apple devices that allows users to send text messages, photos, videos, and other multimedia content to other Apple users over the internet. The integration of iMessage with other Apple services like iCloud and the Apple ecosystem has made it a popular choice among students. In Recent years, Google implemented a messaging protocol called RCS (Rich Communication Services), which adds support for high-quality media transfer, tapback reactions, read receipts, and texting over Wi-Fi. Apple has been reluctant to adopt a protocol that would make iMessage irrelevant and this would remove the incentive for users to continue using iPhones. Therefore, we aim to investigate if this incentive is a significant factor for users who choose to purchase iPhones specifically for iMessage.

3. Project Goals & Questions

We want to identify the main reason behind why the iPhone has gained such popularity amongst youngsters and students.
How has the iPhone achieved such a monopoly amongst students?
Is it because of their amazing software and the Apple ecosystem or is there something that is not obvious to the naked eye?
Is it related to iMessage, a feature offered exclusive to the iPhone?

In order to achieve our project goals and answer the questions we have, we will use a combination of qualitative research methods that we learnt from the books Observing the user experience by Goodman et al. and Think Like a UX Researcher by Hodgson et al. The interviews will be conducted with a diverse group of college students who are iPhone users. We will ask them about the reasons behind their preference of iPhone over Android, and the challenges they feel they may face while using an Android over the iPhone. Additionally, we will conduct user studies to observe how students interact with the iPhone and to gain insights into their user experience.

4. Work Plan

In the beginning, We will need to recruit a diverse group of college students who use iPhones through an online survey using google form and filter the participants; whom to interview, set up a space for conducting user interviews and field visit, and develop interview and observation

protocols in order to carry out these research methods. Incentives for participants may also be required to encourage their participation.

After the recruiting, Firstly, we will interview a variety of college students who use iPhones. Depending on where the participants are located, these interviews will either be performed in-person or via video conference. We'll quiz them on why they selected an iPhone over an Android device, what the iPhone has been like for them, and whether they see it as a status symbol. We'll also ask them how they use iMessage and what factors influence their choice to keep using iPhones.

Secondly, we'll conduct a field visit to observe students' iPhone usage and gather more information about their experiences. We will select participants who own iPhones and offer them a list of tasks to complete on their smartphones while we observe and take notes. They'll be asked to use iMessage and other functions, and we'll keep note of any issues they run into. This will enable us to comprehend the functionality and usability of the iPhone from the perspective of a student.

During our research approach, we will follow the guidelines provided in the books "Think Like a UX Researcher" by Hodgson et al. and "Observing the User Experience" by Goodman et al.

Ultimately, we want to understand why iPhones are so popular among students and what part iMessage plays in this phenomenon. We anticipate that Apple and other smartphone manufacturers aiming to market to this group will benefit greatly from our findings.

5. Schedule and Project Management

We are focused on conducting the research study over a 7-week period. We have divided the project into four main phases, each with specific tasks and milestones, as outlined below:

Phase 1: Project Planning and Recruitment (Week 1)

- Define research questions and objectives (Conduct Micro-Usability Test)
- Develop interview and user study protocols.
- Identify and recruit participants.
- Schedule and plan logistics for interviews and user studies.

Team Members: All

Estimated Hours: 10 hours

Phase 2: Interviews (Weeks 2-3)

- Conduct interviews with participants.
- Record and transcribe interview data.
- Review and summarize interview data.

Team Members: Animesh, Aditya, Ritika

Estimated Hours: 10 hours

Phase 3: User Studies (Weeks 5-6)

- Conduct field visits with participants.
- Collect and record user study data.
- Analyze and summarize user study data.

Team Members: Srikanth, Usha, Pranav

Estimated Hours: 10 hours

Phase 4: Data Analysis and Report Writing (Week 7)

- Analyze interview and user study data.
- Draw conclusions and insights from the data.
- Write and edit the final report.
- Prepare and deliver the presentation.

Team Members: All

Estimated Hours: 15 hours

We will utilize WhatsApp to communicate with one another and arrange regular team meetings to review progress, address problems, and solicit input. Also, we will work together on the report and presentation using a shared online document.

We will construct a Miro board that details the duties, deadlines, and milestones for each stage of the project in order to visualize our timetable and work plan. Along with stating who on the team is in charge of what task, the board will also estimate how many hours are needed for each task. This strategy, in our opinion, will enable us to maintain our concentration, organization, and timeline in order to effectively complete the project.

References

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