

Information Needs and Seeking Paper

Introduction

When it comes to purchasing products in today's society, we are continuously assaulted with excessive possibilities. Whether it's as easy as a new electronic device or as sophisticated as an automobile, choosing the proper decision may be a daunting task. As a result, it is now usual for customers to conduct product research before making a purchase. The internet has made this procedure easier than ever before, but with so much information available, it's critical to consider a variety of aspects. When purchasing a product, individuals may examine its quality, price, brand reputation, and sustainability policies. This shift in customer behaviour emphasizes the necessity of knowing how individuals seek information when making purchase decisions.

For this paper, I interviewed one of my friends who recently purchased a laptop. He is a current master's student and did intense research before finalizing the product. I recall my experience of purchasing a new laptop just 5 months before and I know it requires a significant amount of analysis and that is a daunting experience. Because of this reason, I had a fair idea of what kind of questions need to be asked to users which gives genuine information to analyse the user behaviour and the experience. As mentioned in the book "Observing the User Experience" chapter 2 by Goodman, E., Kuniavski, M. and Moed, A. (2012), I followed the micro-usability test in finding the right audience and their goals, Created questions that address those goals and observed what kind of information they concentrated to address their goals. Chapter 6 in "Observing the User Experience" recruiting gave great insights about choosing the audience. Since my friend (audience/user) purchased the laptop last week, I found him as the right user to do an interview and know what information made him achieve his goal of getting a high-end performance laptop.

Methods

The first step that I performed when starting this assignment is to figure out who my audience/user is going to be and what they tried to do. In Chapter 1 of the book “Think Like a UX Researcher” by Travis, D. and Hodgson, P. (2019)., They gave brief information about who should be my user and what they’re trying to do in the topic “The Two Questions We Answer with UX Research”. I conducted field research and took an in-person interview from the participant’s home which gave me a fair understanding of “what problems users face?”. I also made use to avoid “The Seven Deadly Sins of UX Research” as mentioned in the same book chapter 1. This helped me in avoiding bias and manipulate the user’s outcomes.

Before starting the interview, I explained to the user what this activity is about and gave a brief overview of this assignment. There was no problem with the non-disclosing of any information as no confidential information was involved in this activity and the user was generous to do the user interview without any incentive. I made sure that the user is aware of the activity and why this was conducted and got the consent just like mentioned in chapter 3 of the book “Think Like a UX Researcher”. Just like how chapter 6 in “Observing User Experience” gave me insights on recruiting, it also gave me knowledge on how I should conduct the interview process. I followed the six phases of the standard interview process and also made sure to cover the main 5 stages of the field visit as mentioned in the book “Think Like a UX Researcher”, in which building rapport with the user already exists. So that I concentrated on the other 4 phases of the transition from a traditional interview to a master-apprentice model, observing the user behaviours and the information, interpreting the user’s response and summarising his response and repeating it to him to make sure that my understanding is correct. I remained neutral and made sure my behaviour or reactions manipulate the user’s response. I closely followed chapter 6 regarding scheduling and

interviewing the user. I made sure to take note of the user response so that whenever I do an analysis I can go back and check the note and avoid the assumptions. Throughout the process, I believe that I didn't impose any of my opinions on the user that could have altered his responses to the questions even though I have a fair idea of his process as I was also involved in helping him to decide the final product. I also never assumed any information based on the research that I did when I purchase my new laptop 5 months ago. Rather I professionally carried out this interview and asked all the prepared questions even though it seems like I knew the information to a few questions.

Interview findings

During approximately 35 minutes of interviewing the user about the detailed process of his laptop purchase decision, there is various information on how the data of the products altered the user's purchase decision. I started by asking why he is making a purchase to know the background. It seems the user's previous laptop having a few troubles attending zoom meetings and randomly shutting off. Because of this reason he couldn't able to concentrate on his academics properly. I also asked when the user started this research process if there was any product he had in mind. He responded that he had Apple's Macbook pro in his mind and because of the pricing, he started to look for other options. Throughout this process, he relayed on google to look for the laptop details and comparison between the different branded laptops. He also used different platforms like e-commerce websites (Amazon, the company's website). When he started to search for the laptop, he kept the pricing range between 700 USD to 850 USD. When I asked him whether he has any specific requirements and configurations that should exist for sure and requirements that he is flexible with? The user told that he didn't have any specific requirements or configuration in mind but all he wanted is a laptop that is better than his old laptop and in his price range. But when his process was

in progress, he found some requirements that he has to look into like RAM, graphics and CPU performance. He got this knowledge when he consulted his friend who had good knowledge of electronic devices, then he looked for laptops with those requirements without any price constraints. He compared all the laptops on different websites like companies websites, Amazon and Best Buy. The reason why he preferred these websites is because of the application's interface and the accurate details about the product.

The user found that there is a price difference with various discounts on each website. He came across an advertisement on Instagram regarding a sale in Best Buy for gaming laptops. There was approximately a 40% off discount from the actual price, he took advice from his friend who had electronic device knowledge. He recommended 2 laptops which had higher configurations in CPU performance, RAM, storage space and graphic version. The user looked for product reviews on youtube by some of the top tech YouTubers and decided to purchase Asus Zephyrus G14 over HP legion which was pricing 1160 USD. When I asked what made to decide on this model even though it wasn't in his price range which he set at the start, he told that since that is the high-end model of that brand and had a 40% of discount from the actual price and have the CPU power to support his desktop is the reason for him to decide that this is the model he wants to purchase. Throughout the entire interview, I remained a neutral interviewer as mentioned in chapter 6 of "Observing User Experience".

Discussion

After the interview, I followed lightweight data analysis which is mentioned in Chapter 15 of "Observing the User Experience". I went back and revisited the note that I took during the interview. This gave me a plethora of information that influenced the user to make a purchase decision. The main reason for him to purchase a laptop is out of necessity. He had a demand

of buying it and he started looking for the right one by doing research. The user already had a product in his mind even before he started to do research and the reason why he didn't pursue this is because of high pricing and the operating system. Apple laptops are expensive and have IOS software which is different from the existing software in his old laptop. The user doesn't want to switch the OS as he used IOS and didn't feel comfortable. Getting comfortable with new software requires time but the user thought that he don't want to learn an OS even after spending a high price. Apple products have created a mindset in the users that their products are expensive but there are products in other brands more expensive than Apple's Macbook pro model. This clearly states the bias of assumptions made without proper research and ruling out a product with incorrect reason. This reminds me of 2 sins credulity and bias that are explained in the book "Think Like a UX Researcher" where the user committed.

While starting the research, User didn't have any requirements or specifications, but over time when the user also consulted with a friend who had expertise in electronic devices, helping him identify the specific laptop requirements he needed to consider. He also had a specific budget in mind, but as he got the recommendation from his friend, he also started to consider specific requirements like RAM, graphics, and CPU performance even though the product is not in his pricing range. His decisions are altered by the person who had knowledge in the functionality, efficiency and desirability which are considered as a success for the end user in Chapter 3 of the book "Observing the User Experience" under the topic of Balancing Needs through Iterative Development.

He used a variety of online platforms to gather information and compare laptops, choosing sites like the company's websites, Amazon and Best Buy because of their accurate product information and user-friendly interfaces. Here we can see the how interface of an application can attract users to use their services. The user then came across an advertisement on

Instagram regarding a sale in Best Buy, which made him aware of discounts on gaming laptops. This was an important event for him in this process. Promotion for a product is very crucial and it has been proved in this case. To make the product reach the consumers and witness the profit, Companies have to invest in advertisements and market their product as mentioned in Chapter 3 of the book “Observing the User Experience” under the topic of success for a company is promotion. Users relied on product reviews on YouTube by top tech YouTubers to make their final decision. This shows how social media and influencers can shape consumers' purchase decisions. This is also a form of promotion where companies sponsor influencers to use their product and give reviews on their youtube channels.

Finally, one of the important factors that influenced the user’s purchase decision is discounting the price of the product. This was one of the successful strategies that most brands use to manipulate the users’ mindsets. They set their actual prices high on their websites but make them available for discounted prices on other e-commerce websites. After seeing the 40% off discount price and the product Asus Zephyrus G14 laptop is the highest model in that brand with high-end configuration, the user made up his mind to purchase it. The final product that the user purchased cost 1160 USD which is higher than the decent model in the Apple brand which he had in mind at the start. This reminds me of the topic “Applying Psychology to UX Research” from the book “Think Like a UX Researcher” I purchased Apple Macbook air laptop a few months back which has a great performance that is required for the activities that a graduate student required. As mentioned in the applying psychology topic, your users don’t think as you think. This is true that each individual has their own preference and thoughts so you can’t expect them to think, value and see things as you do. However, I didn’t express my views and thoughts on the user.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To summarize, the user's choice to acquire a laptop was impacted by a number of variables, including his original brand expectations, advice from a friend, internet research, product evaluations from social media influencers, and product discounts. The customer had a specified budget in mind but later he opened to higher-priced solutions that fit his Memory, graphics, and CPU performance criteria. It was also clear that advertising and marketing had an important part in making the consumer aware of the laptop offer via an Instagram ad. Finally, the customer chose the device because of its high-end setup, great ratings from famous tech YouTubers, and discounted pricing.

This case study emphasizes the importance of knowing user preferences and habits in UX research and design, as well as the critical function of marketing and promotion in influencing customer decisions that are stated in the various chapters from the books “Observing the User Experience” by Goodman, E., Kuniavski, M. and Moed, A. (2012)., and “Think Like a UX Researcher” by Travis, D. and Hodgson, P. (2019).,

A few of the recommendations that I can propose after this case study are to keep an open mind for all the brands, and evaluate the brand's value based on your own experiences if possible. Asking for reviews from the person you may know who used this product might be a more reliable source of information than a few YouTube reviews which are sponsored and could be fake reviews.

This process of interviewing a user and getting information and analysing it made me realise how important to perform these activities for the betterment of the user experience. I could able to put all my reading and theoretical knowledge into the practical analysis.

Reference

Goodman, E., Kuniavski, M. and Moed, A. *Observing the User Experience, Second Edition - A Practitioners Guide to User Research*. 2012

CA- Morgan Kaufman. and Travis, D. and Hodgson, P. *Think Like a UX Researcher- How to Observe Users, Influence Design, and Shape Business Strategy*. CRC Press; 1st edition. 2019