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Assignment 1105

In this paper I will be looking at the usability study conducted by Pfieffer Consulting titled: *How iOS7 Stacks Up: Smartphone OS User Experience Shootout*. This study analyzed in depth the new iOS7 released for the iPhones. It looks at several usability metrics and compares them to the four leading competitors’ operating systems on the market. These include Android (Samsung), Windows 8, Blackberry 10, and the previous iOS, IOS6. The usability metrics that are tested for each operating system are cognitive load, efficiency, customization, and user experience friction.

The first metric, cognitive load is “the sum of elements you need to get familiar with in order to use a device spontaneously and intuitively” (Pfeiffer). For this metric they counted the number of apps, widgets, icons, or any user interface element that is pre-installed into the system. These elements are things that the user must learn how to use. The assumption made by Pfeiffer is that the more of these elements that there are, the worse it is for the user because it means that they must learn more before they can use the device properly. This ties directly into the usability metric of learnability. It may be unfair, however, to give an OS a bad rating based solely on cognitive load. One OS may have more elements to learn than another, but if they are designed in such a way that they are more user-friendly then they might have a higher level of learnability. This is the reason why they must test multiple usability metrics.

The second metric, efficiency, was measured by analyzing “access to key settings, integration with notifications, multitasking, and camera access, among others” (Pfeiffer). The unit of measurement for this was a scale from 1 to 10 of how efficient they thought each OS was.

The next metric, customization, measures how customizable each device is. Pfeiffer says that “consumer-level customization is one for the key user experience aspects of connected digital devices”, giving it a large amount of importance in their final reports.

The last metric, User Experience Friction (UXF), is described by Pfeiffer as “the bad stuff, the aspects of a device that can annoy you in a niggling way, or, in extreme cases, drive you crazy. Basically, UXF occurs whenever a device does not do what you expect it to do – or lacks a key feature that should be available.” At the end of the report they combined each metric to create each OS’s final overall score.