

USER RESEARCH FOR UX WRITING:

PART II: TESTING UX WRITING DECISIONS WITH RESEARCH

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Cheat Sheet

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Introduction & General Information

Definition of Validating User Research in UX Writing

“A process that is used to test the copy in the interface of a website, application, mobile app, or service.”

Definition by TestingXperts, modified by K.Grimm

Why do we need Validating User Research in UX Writing?

- It ensures the quality of your copy
- You will know how users perceive your voice and tone
- You can show the impact of your writing decisions to stakeholders
- You see how exactly to improve your copy
- You will learn about your users in general
- You can improve your writing skills
- You will learn about your biases

How do we prepare Validating User Research?

1. Be aware of what you want to find out
2. Define the purpose of the copy elements you want to test
3. Prepare the storing and organizing of your research results
4. Educate yourself about methods
5. Be sure about data privacy rules
6. Plan your incentives
7. Plan the costs and time scope of your user study

UX Writing quality criteria	General content quality criteria
Necessary, clear, useful, concise, conversational, branded	Readability, comprehension, accessibility, usability, navigability, searchability

Forms of Validating User Research

- Search Term Analysis
- A/B Testing
- Comprehension Survey
- Card Sorting
- Usability Tests
- Cloze Testing
- Highlighter Testing

General Tips & Tricks

- Be sure about the purpose of your copy and what you want to test for
- Define your sample really well
- Be aware of the limitations of your method
- Discuss conclusions extensively
- Become a tool expert – or consult one
- Keep in mind: your participants are human beings
- Presentation matters – even more

Search Term Analysis

Definition

“A quantitative method in which search terms are analyzed to prove what’s being used and how much, increasing or decreasing popularity, and whether it’s used as much as a similar term.”

Definition by BBC Global Experience Language

Goals

- Learn about absolute popularity or certain terms
- Learn about comparative popularity of certain terms
- See if and how popularity of certain terms has changed over time
- Improve Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective
2. Define the concepts you would like to find terminology for
3. Choose the tools and platforms you want to use
4. Conduct analysis
5. Analyze your data
6. Present your results and discuss decisions

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extensive data material = reliable insights• Low in costs• Data is easy to access• Data is easy to analyze• Results are easy to communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only suitable for interchangeable terms• “Garbage in, garbage out”• Reliability of data is not transparent• Insights are not deep• Popularity does not appropriate

What to keep in mind

- Terms must be interchangeable and have one assigned meaning
- Remember to adjust settings to your target market
- Get familiar with the functioning and logic of tools
- Use different tools to validate results

Examples

- Landing page of a wearable payment technology provider

A/B Testing (also: Split Testing)

Definition

“Quantitative testing where different versions of screens are put live in the short-term, and measured against the required metrics. The most successful version is chosen as the long-term solution.”

Definition by BBC Global Experience Language

Goals

- Show user behavior in a real-life situation
- Show conversion of single copy elements
- Show whether changes improve user experiences
- “It democratizes design decisions” (Zoe Gillenwater, Oliver Lindberg)

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective and your metrics (esp. time, success)
2. Create the challenging alternative
3. Talk to developers and decide on sample (size)
4. Choose a tool
5. Test both alternatives and collect data (also: reviews)
6. Analyze data
7. Present results and discuss decisions

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real-life data gives reliable insights• Low in costs• Data is easy to analyze• Results are usually clear• Results are easy to communicate• Helps usually both UX and company KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We don't learn about the “why”• Only tests one text element at a time• Only tests two versions at a time (but also see “Multivariate Testing”)• Might take a long time• Only solves certain problems

What to keep in mind

- Test only one option at a time (including design changes)
- Choose metrics and variables carefully
- Involve designers and developers and ensure infrastructure
- Understand the limitations of method
- Use method thoughtfully, but often
- Check significance

Examples

- Google Hotel Search
- Input field placeholder for social media platform

Comprehension Survey

Definition

“Quizzes that test whether a user understands a piece of content. You can test long pieces, short strings, and everything in between”

Definition by Annie Adams for UX Collective

Goals

- Find out whether your copy is clear
- Detect misunderstandings and ambiguities
- See which parts of your copy needs improvement
- Train your writing skills

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective: Which parts of your copy do you want to test?
2. Determine sample & metrics (When can copy be labeled as clear?)
3. Choose tool and develop questions
4. Recruit participants and run survey
5. Analyze data
6. Present your results and discuss decisions

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gives clear, empirical insights• Can be low in costs• Can test many text elements at once• Data is easy to analyze• Results are easy to communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We get to know the “what”, not the “why”• Subject cooperation is needed• Might be difficult to recruit enough participants• Product and flow context often not given

What to keep in mind

- Focus on basic UX Writing quality criteria
- Test for accessibility as well
- Test for voice and tone
- Involve open answer option to gain additional info

Examples

- Feature description in onboarding flow
- Pop up info about photo deletion in photo app

Card Sorting

Definition

“Qualitative and/or quantitative research to show how participants understand the labels and categories of the navigation menu. In card sorting, participants group together topics in a way that’s logical to them, and assess the category names.”

Definition by BBC Global Experience Language

Goals

- Learn about users’ expectations towards information architecture
- Learn about users’ expectations towards navigation
- Learn about users’ expectations towards naming conventions

How does it work?

1. Decide which part of the information structure you want to test
2. Define your sample and setting (physical, online)
3. Recruit participants
4. Hold card sorting sessions, collect data
5. Prepare and analyze your data
6. Present your results and discuss decision

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Valuable insights into users’ thinking• Relatively low in costs• No special research skills needed• Moderated Card Sorting tells “why”• Can solve problems on essential product level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No context provided = limited reliability• Results may be inconsistent or ambiguous• Data analysis can be complex• Subject cooperation is needed• Some types may not go deep enough

What to keep in mind

- Consider your resources and carefully select appropriate setting
- Choose a representative sample
- Sorry, context really can’t be involved!
- If you involve an interview, train your skills!

Examples

- Kitchen supplier app
- Voice and tone definition

Usability Tests

Definition

“Qualitative research in which a moderator interviews a participant about their experience. Usually, the moderator asks a participant to complete a task and then asks them questions about how they found it.”

Definition by BBC Global Experience Language

Goals

- Learn about how useful copy is in the context of flow
- Learn about how copy helps users to solve a problem
- Learn about misunderstandings and ambiguity
- Learn about general usability problems

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective and scope of testing
2. Prepare your test guide, choose tool (and build prototype)
3. Define sample, plan study (incl. resources)
4. Conduct usability test
5. Prepare and analyze your data
6. Present your results and discuss decisions

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate copy in context of a flow• Test several text elements at once• Learn about “what” and “why”• Learn about users’ expectations• Learn about users’ language• Learn about users’ habits, motives, needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High in costs (time, money)• Only small sample possible• Research skills required• Data might be complex to analyze• Subject cooperation required

What to keep in mind

- Carefully choose your participants
- Involve a second moderator if possible
- Put a lot of love into the building of your prototype
- Work closely with stakeholders

Examples

- Customized handbag online shop
- Banking app & online bank account registration

Cloze Testing

Definition

“Qualitative or quantitative test that hides every xth word from view, so that participants guess the word themselves, which shows their level of comprehension.”

Definition by BBC Global Experience Language

Goals

- Learn about comprehensibility of long copy
- Learn about how well users understand certain terminology
- Learn about expectations of users towards communication
- Learn about users' vocabulary

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective
2. Choose content passage and words to test
3. Choose sample and tool; prepare test
4. Recruit participants
5. Conduct Cloze Test
6. Analyze data
7. Present results and discuss decisions

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear on if and how to improve copy• Great insights into users' language• Great insights into users' expectations• Data is easy to collect and analyze• Results are easy to communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usually no to little context provided• Better suited for long copy, not microcopy• Insights are not deep• Subject cooperation is needed

What to keep in mind

- Give careful, non-biased instructions
- Provide as much context as possible
- Select text with critical keywords
- Consider giving a time limit

Example

- Checkout process of car manufacturer

Highlighter Testing

Definition

“Quantitative research for which a user reads a passage of text, and marks the parts that make them feel confident or less confident (or is clear/unclear etc.) with different colors.”

Definition by BBC Global Experience Language

Goals

- Learn about comprehensibility of long and short copy
- Learn about how well users understand certain terminology
- Learn about which parts of copy are clear
- Learn about what can be improved and how

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective
2. Choose copy parts you would like to test
3. Define sample, conceptualize study, choose tool
4. Plan research project and recruit participants
5. Conduct Highlighter Test
6. Prepare and analyze data
7. Present results and discuss decisions

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fast and cheap into clarity of copy• Easy to set up• No specific research skills needed• Data is easy to analyze• Results are easy to communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only suitable for certain copy parts• Moderated tests are costly• Non-moderated tests don't give deep insights• Not all questions can be answered

What to keep in mind

- Choose a simple color code and give clear instructions
- Choose your method type wisely! There are many options!
- Turn insights into statistics to make results clearer
- Mind the “phrasing vs. content” paradox

Examples:

- Service descriptions of UX/UI agency website
- Feature descriptions of tax app

Other Methods

Eye Tracking

“A quantitative or qualitative method to study the movements of participants’ eyes while they use a website or an app.”

Definition by tobiipro, modified by K.Grimm

Clickstream Analysis (also: Clickpath Analysis)

“A quantitative method that tracks and analyzes how users navigate through a website or app while using it.”

Definition by K.Grimm

Traffic & Conversion Data Analysis

“A quantitative method of tracking your website or apps visitors' actions to see whether they do what you hope they will, for example convert or drop off.”

Definition by Amplitude, modified by K.Grimm

Subject Matter Expert Interviews (also: Domain Expert Interviews)

“A qualitative research method in which researchers ask people with highly specialized knowledge questions in a planned conversational setting.”

Definition by K.Grimm

Readability Tools

“The tool-based testing of the readability of texts.”

Definition by K.Grimm