

Research Method Section

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Contents:

Summary
Research Question
Prospective User Research Methods
Research Methods To Be Conducted
References

Summary

This document's purpose is to identify and describe user research methods and how at least two such methods will be used to answer the following research question.

Research Question

What compels a person to receive app notifications from a news service?

More specific research questions:

- What compels a person to receive app notifications from a *local* news service?
- How often do users opt out of news app notifications? Why do they opt out?
- Why do users choose to enter the news app upon receiving a notification?
- What kind of content are users seeking to receive from an app notification?

Prospective User Research Methods

- Interviews
 - Focus Group
 - Online Survey
 - Diary Studies
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- Interviews

Interviews are essential to understanding a user's experience. To know what his or her real user experience is, you must ask them about it (Kuniavsky, Goodman, Moed, 2012, p. 129).

In this case, interviews can be conducted to gain insight about what kind of value, if any, an app user finds in push notifications. More specifically, an interview can reveal what a user (or perspective user) finds valuable in a local news app's push notifications and what he or she may find frustrating. Moreover, an interview can reveal a user's tendencies when using a push notification service.

Questions can remain open-ended (Sharon, 2012, p. 91) to ensure the interview reveals information about his or her use of competitor's push notifications. Such interviews will yield qualitative data which can help lead quantitative research methods.

- **Focus Group**

A focus group is supposed to reveal a target audience's conscious preferences, recalled experiences and priorities (Kuniavsky, Goodman, Moed, 2012, p. 141).

A focus group comprised of people who receive local news app push notifications will allow the research team to learn about their attitudes, beliefs and desires about such push notifications, and reactions to concepts (Focus Groups).

The research team wants to hear about the participants' experiences and expectations (Focus Groups) for local news app push notifications. Such information is vital to understanding what the app push notifications should provide a user.

This is another qualitative research method which will reveal areas where quantitative research can be conducted (Sharon, 2012, p. 93). Example: If our focus group participants discuss why they enter an app through a push notification based on certain content or how the content is portrayed, this could lead to quantitative research such as a survey with specific, close-ended questions about push notification content.

- **Online Survey**

An online survey can reveal who the users are, what their level of technological savviness is, what they want from the service at question and what they like or dislike about it (Kuniavsky, Goodman, Moed, 2012, p. 328).

This quantitative research method offers the research team a way to collect information from a broad audience for very little cost (Online Surveys). This is an ideal situation to conduct an online survey of app users to have them rank the app's content (Online Surveys) — specifically the content in push notifications.

Kuniavsky, Goodman, and Moed (2012) describe three types of surveys: “profile,” “satisfaction” and “value.” In this case, all three types of surveys can apply, but a value survey may be the best fit. Here's how: The research team seeks to learn more about the app user population (profile survey), how satisfied the users are with the push notification content and display (satisfaction survey), and what people find important, or valuable, about the service (value survey).

Online survey questions will remain close-ended to ensure the data is quantitative.

- **Diary Study**

As Kuniavsky, Goodman, and Moed (2012) explain, diary studies ask a group of people to report their activities with a product or service over time. The participants track their own activity, mistakes they make, what they learn, and how often they use the product or service (Kuniavsky, Goodman, Moed, 2012, p. 243).

For this research, a “usage” and/or “behavior” diary study should be conducted to reveal how app users interact with the app push notifications (usage) or, from a broader perspective, a “behavior” diary can be conducted to learn how and where users receive news in his or her daily life (Kuniavsky, Goodman, Moed, 2012, p. 245-246).

Diary studies can yield both qualitative and quantitative data.

Research Methods To Be Conducted

- **Interviews**
- **Diary Studies**

- **Interviews**

Why:

Conducting interviews is an ideal research method for this scenario based on feasibility and the desired qualitative data being sought. Interviews can be conducted in a relatively short amount of time. Participants from a target audience can offer data to help answer all of the listed research questions by answering specific, yet open-ended, questions.

Conducting interviews can yield similar qualitative data as would a focus group without the need to recruit a larger group of people who would work well together. There is not enough time to recruit participants for a focus group. It’s also tougher to schedule a focus group. Getting everyone in the same place at the same time can be problematic, and it’s a lot of work for a one-member research team to undertake. Moreover, individual interviews allow the participants to answer questions without being swayed by focus group members’ views and opinions.

Recruiting, planning, conducting the interviews, analyzing the data and reporting the data all can be completed within the time allowed — about two to three weeks.

How:

Three 20-minute interviews with recipients of news app push notifications will be conducted at the participant's desired meeting location. The location could be a home, coffee shop or remote (online via a service such as Google Chat or Skype). The interviews will include open-ended questions.

• Diary Studies**Why:**

Diary studies can be conducted within a set amount of time by the participant alone. Since there is limited access to the target audience, diary studies are ideal because such a method focuses on expert users. Expert users can compile their own data, which then can be analyzed and reported by the research team.

As noted, there is a time constraint to this research and not a big enough window to access a large sample of the target audience, which excludes a quantitative method such as an online survey. Diary studies allow the research team to focus on a few expert users who can do a lot of the research themselves.

A potential drawback to diary studies is reliability of the participants. A heavy emphasis will be placed on recruiting the correct participants. They should receive a fair incentive for their time and effort.

How:

Three expert users will conduct a one-week diary study. Participants will be asked to:

- Keep a log of news app push notifications they receive during a given day
- Log how he or she interacts with such a push notification
- Log what he or she was doing when receiving the app notification
- Log what he or she thinks of the content (the quality, the timing, etc.)
- Log whether or not he or she entered the app upon receiving such an alert.

References:

Focus Groups. (n.d.). Retrieved April 03, 2016, from <http://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/focus-groups.html>

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