

Internet Retailing

Selling in the digital age

VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 4 | MAY 2011



DEBENHAMS:
Customer experience
driving cross-channel success

FOR MORE NEWS, INSIGHT AND DISCUSSION VISIT WWW.INTERNETRETAILING.NET



Waitrose

Retail REVIEW
Waitrose.com

P.16

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:
Enhancing the journey



P.22

M-RETAILING
The latest developments



P.42



©Yorkshire Post

NEUROSCIENCE

AND THE ONLINE PURCHASE

Guy Redwood, Managing Director, SimpleUsability, explains why it pays to get emotional about your online brand.

WHEN WE TALK about emotional engagement, we don't mean ordering an 'I heart [insert your brand logo here]' t-shirt and giving the CEO a bear hug, we're referring to the scientific study of emotions and how they have the starring role in the purchase decisions made by your customers.

Have you ever asked yourself how your users feel while they are using your product or your website?

It makes intuitive sense that if your users have a positive emotional experience on your site they're more likely to convert from browsers into buyers. Do you know exactly what on your site is converting using emotional equity, and what is failing?

We are irrational beings, and nowhere more so than when we are online and (believe it or not) when we are parting with cash. In fact neuroscientists argue that emotions drive between 90-99% of all decisions we ever make. We have evolved a highly sophisticated subconscious brain that effortlessly deals with the millions of inputs we perceive every second before delivering it to the attention of our conscious brains, via 'gut' emotions. Yet the most widely used methods in usability testing often involve asking a user's conscious brain why it did something. The truth is it simply doesn't know.

Traditionally, usability testing has been employed

WHY EEG?

The problem with traditional research techniques is that they rely on our conscious minds, the parts that are subject to cognitive biases and social influences. To find out what is really pushing your customers' buttons you need to be able to access their raw, unfiltered emotional reactions to your product.

WHAT IS EEG?

Electroencephalography (EEG) is the science of measuring brainwave patterns produced by the brain in response to internal or external stimuli. Every event, behaviour or feeling, from hearing your name called, being immersed in a video game to growing frustrated with a tin opener produces millions of tiny electrical impulses as brain cells communicate with each other. This activity is picked up by electrodes placed directly on the scalp. It is then amplified and processed into measures of real-time emotional states and reactions that can be visually graphed and mapped.

as a conversion rate optimisation tool by retailers, helping them iron out pitfalls and craft better user journeys. In recent years the addition of eye tracking technology has allowed us to go further by observing what users naturally do as opposed to what they think they do, revealing further opportunities to capitalise on. Whilst eye tracking alone lets us observe what a user actually does we cannot infer what was felt by a user.

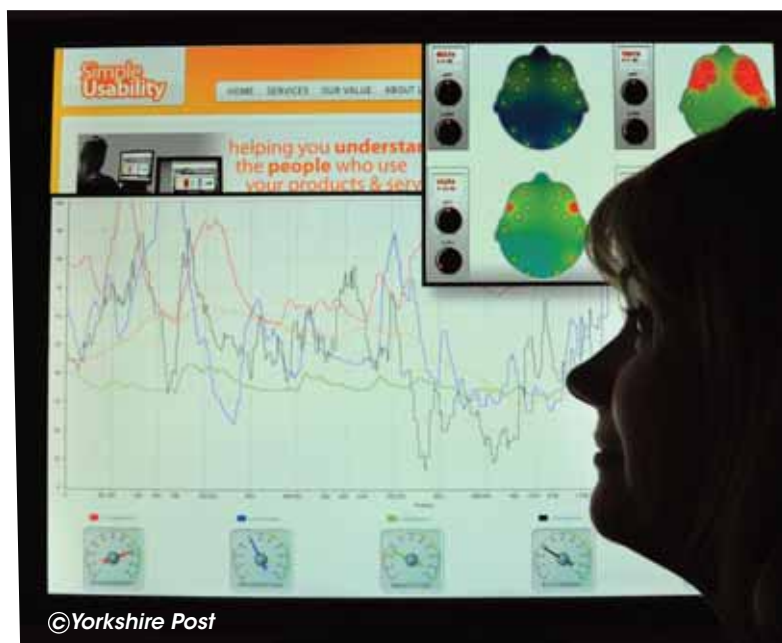
Retrospective interviews with the user (where their own eye tracking is played back to them as a reminder) go some way to revealing what they were trying to achieve at that time. Whilst they can give us an overall expletive as to how they felt when a payment form wiped their billing details for the fourth time, what no human can recall is the granular detail of emotions as they were building, and what exact part of the site or journey triggered them.

EEG - THE NEW KID ON THE USABILITY BLOCK

So, how do you know your site is pushing the right emotional buttons? The sophisticated measurement system offered by Electroencephalography (EEG) taps directly into electrical activity arising from the brain. Using complex algorithms and models of human behaviour from modern neuropsychology, key emotional markers of mood and emotional experience can be extracted. This represents a previously unavailable opportunity for marketers, advertisers, developers and more to see the actual emotional impact of their product, promotion or design and, as a technique it's set to join up the subconscious dots.

Until recently, most EEG solutions have been the preserve of academic or medical institutions, being prohibitively expensive and too inflexible for commercial use. Also they haven't allowed for a particularly comfortable or natural experience for the participant. Recent gains in this technology mean that EEG can now be conducted quickly and cost effectively using the very latest in unobtrusive, wireless hardware.

Users no longer have to wear cumbersome contraptions with dangling wires hooking them to machinery, nor sit rigidly in an electrically soundproofed room. SimpleUsability's system uses a wireless headset that is light and easy to calibrate and lets the user move around freely. Sixteen individual raw signals are synthesised in real time into the useful indicators of frustration, excitement, long term excitement and engagement. This allows users to complete a task without being constantly asked how they are feeling and provides a crucial extra layer of data to traditional usability studies conducted with eye tracking.



It's all very well tracking a person's emotion along a period of time, but what caused that emotion? The only way to remedy a negative emotion or capitalise on a positive one is to understand where they were looking at that moment, or the processes building up to that point. Eye tracking is a natural wing-man for EEG technology and the complimentary way the two fit together means that what eye tracking with retrospective interviews can indicate, EEG can now document.

Engagement: Having a smooth and non-eventful experience isn't going to be enough to embed

BIG BATHROOM SHOP

On behalf of the Big Bathroom Shop (bigbathroomshop.co.uk) SimpleUsability invited users who were looking to install a new bathroom in the near future to take part in usability sessions including Emotion Response Analysis with eye tracking. We used natural tasks that allowed users to browse freely for their requirements of a bathroom so that a true reflection of the emotions found in a typical user journey could be observed.

There were three key emotions that we were interested in observing on the Big Bathroom Shop. These are charted in real-time graphs allowing observers an instant view into the users' experience as it unfolds. Each emotion is listed below with the main findings from the research:

ENGAGEMENT

Users became more engaged within the process of browsing multiple products when there were bold colours within the room view. This could be from strong wall colours to accessory colours keeping users' attention.

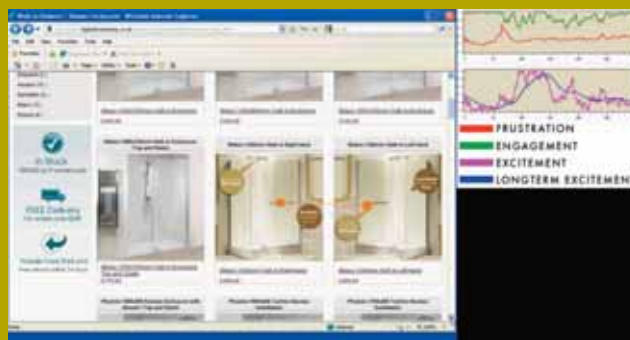
When different types of photography, particularly the use of a plan view, users often hesitated and engaged with the layout.

We saw users become increasingly engaged when moving towards choosing their bathroom. Users started to look closer at the detail and were looking for clues related to their requirements such as their perception of how easy a shower enclosure may be to clean.

EXCITEMENT (SHORT OR LONG TERM)

When users first discovered the relevant product that they were looking for there was a peak of excitement. This can help to identify when the user realised that the company catered for what they were looking for.

There was a drop in excitement when actual photographs



were replaced with black and white generated images. This affected the experience of browsing for this user and narrowed her choice.

FRUSTRATION

Users generally reacted positively to the website but became frustrated when loading times were slow.

Users were often making choices between products and frustration peaks could be seen here. Tools to help users compare, contrast and choose can keep frustration to a minimum.

memory of your product in the minds of consumers; for this you need genuine engagement, meaningful (not just passive) interaction. This measure relates to stimulation and interest and can indicate periods of concentration or novel experiences that recruit more mental resources to process.

Excitement: This is a measure that relates to psychophysical arousal with a positive value, much the same as is related to heart rate increase, pupil dilation and sweat gland stimulation. This can be measured in two ways; tied to specific events (short term), or indicative of a more stable emotional state (long term).

Frustration: Having a gauge of your customers' levels of frustration when engaging with your product or service is invaluable in guarding against those

negative states and experiences that will devalue your brand, or stick stubbornly in long term memory. This measure can often correlate with anger, giving you a useful yardstick to avoid potential pitfalls.

CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION

The technology has the flexibility of allowing site owners to quickly benchmark a sites' overall emotional performance (e.g. compared to the experience on a competitor site) but also to focus in on the emotional impact of individual parts of the user journey (e.g. checkout, browsing photography etc). Emotional Response Analysis (ERA) allows you to pinpoint exactly what's working and what isn't so that you can focus time and spend A/B testing more efficiently. Ultimately reaping the rewards of crafting an experience that helps you stick in customers' subconscious, in the right way. ■