



UNDERSTANDING CROSS-DEVICE USAGE TO OPTIMIZE DIGITAL CAMPAIGN PLANNING

Facebook asked us to explore how consumers use computing devices and how they switch between them for different tasks during the day.

The client

Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.

Situation

Our research shows that people have different relationships with the many computing devices they own and generally use them for different purposes. For example, many use smartphones for inspiration, tablets for planning, and PCs for buying goods and doing chores such as managing their finances.

More than 60% of online adults in the UK and the US use at least two devices every day, while a quarter of Americans and a fifth of Britons use at least three. Facebook wanted to explore how people use different hardware for various tasks to help its advertisers target their customers with greater precision.

The company also wanted to know if advertisers could gain further reach into their target markets by planning cross-platform campaigns on a single-source log-in site like Facebook. Equipped with this information, it would be able to help these advertisers optimize their promotional spend across those devices and avoid reaching the same people repeatedly with the same message.



Approach

We conducted an online survey of 2,000 consumers each in the UK and the US. The online behavior of 20 people per market was tracked using our LEOTrace tracking technology. Then, we analyzed the behavioral data we gathered and conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with half the people we monitored. This gave us a better understanding, at a more emotional level, of their behavior, attitudes and opinions.

With our location-tracking technology, we could see where and when our respondents were using their devices. This allowed us to analyze which devices they were most likely to use away from home and for which purposes. The combination of quantitative data and qualitative analysis helped us build a rich understanding of consumers' online behavior across a range of devices.

Outcome

We discovered that more than 40% of adults in both countries sometimes begin an activity on one device and finish it on another. In general, people move from the small screen of a smartphone to the larger screen of a tablet or laptop. The main reasons for switching from one device to another mid-activity are comfort and convenience.

“I’ve been greatly impressed by the quality of work that GfK has produced for the cross-device usage study. Throughout the process they provided fantastic service – thoughtful research design, thorough preparation and execution, and fantastic project management. The study has been well received in both the USA and the UK, highlighting an important area of consumer behavior and driving conversations with a number of our partners.”

Mark Bulling
Custom Market Insights Lead, Facebook

Other factors also play a role in prompting users to switch between devices: urgency, the time it takes to complete a task, security, privacy and the complexity of the information the user needs to input to complete the task. Actions associated with a purchase journey frequently trigger a consumer’s decision to switch devices.

People most often switch between devices at home in front of the television, when all their devices are within easy reach. Because audiences switch so frequently, marketers must reach



them across all platforms with consistent brand experiences. This will enable consumers to begin an activity on one device and complete it on another.

The research showed how a single log-in site like Facebook allows brands to target people more efficiently across multiple devices. With an understanding of how and why people use different devices every day, marketers can plan their advertising more effectively.

Other key findings suggested how consumer behavior is likely to evolve in the future and how brands should adapt their approach:

- Multi-device usage and switching are expected to increase, presenting more opportunities for companies that are able to track and respond to usage behavior.
- Where purchase journeys are long, multi-device usage lasts for weeks in and out of the home. Advertisers attempting to influence the journey need to understand and adapt their messages to this behavior.

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About GfK

GfK is the trusted source of relevant market and consumer information that enables its clients to make smarter decisions. More than 13,000 market research experts combine their passion with GfK’s long-standing data science experience. This allows GfK to deliver vital global insights matched with local market intelligence from more than 100 countries. By using innovative technologies and data sciences, GfK turns big data into smart data, enabling its clients to improve their competitive edge and enrich consumers’ experiences and choices.