

ARTICLE 13 - UX DIFFERENCES PER CULTURES

As we have demonstrated in a number of previous blog posts, providing customers with a good user experience is key to creating a successful product, given that well-thought out **UX Design can produce higher conversion rates, increased customer satisfaction, and stronger client trust in a company or business.** Just as business must anticipate a user's needs before designing its product features, UX Designers must understand users' desires before creating a navigable journey on the product interface.

One issue that many professionals on homogenous design teams often run into is failing to meet the specific needs of users from different socio-cultural backgrounds. While their business's app or website might adequately cater to a certain demographic group, the same interface could be confusing and result in high bounce rates among users outside of that locale.

How to optimize your UX based on socio-demographic patterns:

Perform Site-Specific Usability Tests.

In order to avoid making consequential design oversights that frustrate users from different countries or backgrounds, **UX professionals should test the usability of their interface in the same environment that customers engage with the website.** In many cases, teams made up of predominantly one nationality, race, or gender may assume that their clientele will have the same demands regardless of locale, age, or religion (etc), and thus make crucial errors that affect the user's journey from reaching the landing page to performing their final task.

For example, on a chart with a spectrum from "highly emotionally expressive and confrontational" to "inexpressive and non-confrontational," Spain is located on the furthest extreme of emotionally expressive and confrontational, whereas the U.S. is decidedly in the middle, and the United Kingdom is closer to the emotionally inexpressive end [3]. These cultural characteristics then influence how users feel about filing complaints, interacting with chatbots, and exerting their individualism while navigating on a business's webpage.

If designers are ignorant of these distinctions, they may miss the opportunity to create separate websites with landing pages and navigation options that make users from different geographic areas feel more comfortable as they complete their tasks online.

Create Personas based on Culture-Specific Desires.

One way to understand and improve differing design options for different socio-demographic groups is to create user personas that exhibit culturally-realistic desires. **By thoroughly analyzing user data, UX and marketing teams can create fictitious representations of their target users and then build different user segments, map potential journeys, and reduce wasted time designing features that certain users do not want.**

For example, Jenny Shen, an Independent Cross-Cultural UX Designer, shared the following anecdote on her blog about interactive UX Design [1]. While designing for a European e-commerce/travel site that catered to users from both the Netherlands and Germany, she found that landing pages with visible trust badges and travel distances measured in kilometers, not hours, were far more successful among German customers than among the Dutch users. She had to customize the latter pages to ensure that Germans felt protected and satisfied while booking trips and car rentals, otherwise facing the threat of losing potential clients due to mistrust.

Had they created user personas to test the initial interface, the business might have saved the time and money they spent hiring a consultant to identify the culture-based problem.

Create copy with localized language.

Finally, UX Designers should ensure that their copy includes localized language and can be adjusted to different character counts for translated phrases. **Though many languages use the same set of “core vocabulary,” there are certain phrases and idioms that do not make sense to users in one country versus another.**

Users from the United States, for instance, refer to temporary accommodation with an entirely different set of words than those from the United Kingdom or Singapore, although all three use English as their national language [2].

With in-depth knowledge of these differences in syntax, designers working for international companies can avoid using vocabulary that might confuse users in different locations. Furthermore, they can format text that might expand or contract when translated to afford for different white spaces and word lengths.

As you can see, marketing professionals without the personal insight or experience to know otherwise might make simple oversights; these oversights, as a result, might produce a poor user experience for their customers in different countries or who come from underrepresented cultural groups. Designers can avoid these problems by performing in-depth iteration runs, user testing, and data analysis from the very first stages of product development.

Sources: [1] <https://blog.prototypr.io/ux-design-across-different-cultures-part-1-1caa12a504c0>
[2] <https://uxplanet.org/ux-design-across-different-cultures-part-2-761c911e875>
[3] <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/outcomes-vs-features/>
[4] <https://www.nngroup.com/courses/personas/>