

# Mind Maps: An Evaluation Method of Web User Brand Experience

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## ABSTRACT

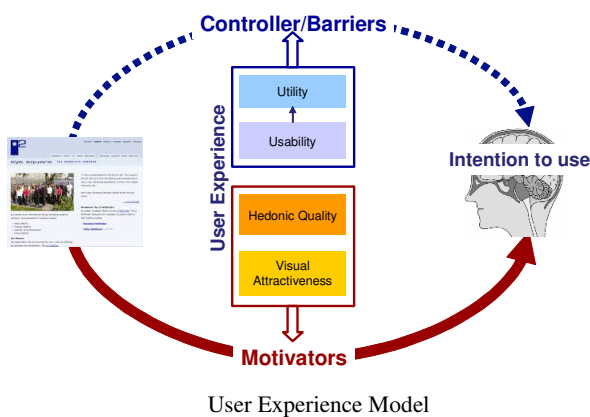
In this paper, we describe a web user brand experience evaluation method we apply: mind maps.

## Keywords

User Experience, Brand Experience, Evaluation Methods.

## INTRODUCTION

We have a holistic understanding of user experience. The intention to use a website or product is determined by both motivators and barriers such as usability and utility, hedonic quality and visual attractiveness. In this context, criteria like navigation, offered services on the website, gimmicks or an appealing design play an important role.



Our user research approach combines qualitative observation with quantitative assessment and integrates as well branding aspects, since the image is an incentive for usage.

## WHAT IS A MIND MAP?

A mind map is used for noting thoughts in an associative manner: it "is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea." (Wikipedia)

We use mind maps in our user research to collect users' associations with a brand – especially to measure how users' brand associations change after they have explored a certain website.

Mind maps are integrated in a usability test: users create a mind map before they explore the website, and they revise the mind map after exploration of the website. The before-after comparison is very insightful. Users' reasons behind the changes in the mind map are explored by in-depth questions by the moderator.

Procedure and instructions are quite simple: The logo of the brand to be evaluated is presented on a large blank paper. The users, who were given a number of empty cards and a pencil, are asked to write down on their cards what they spontaneously think and what they associate with this brand. The stronger the connection to the brand, the closer the card is placed.

It is advisable to point out that the researcher's interest is to find out about the test person's associations and emotions and not about products the company is offering or facts.

The data received by this method vary, depending upon users' ability to freely associate.

Mind maps can be used with small sample sizes, since it is a rather qualitative approach. A sample size of 12 users is appropriate.

In data evaluation we create categories and count the items in each category. These categories can be broader or smaller, or can be just positive and negative. Data evaluation requires a skilled person trained in qualitative data evaluation. The changes in the mind map after website exploration is the most meaningful data.

Mind maps can be applied not only to brands and websites but as well to products: how are certain products, e.g. hair dryers, generally seen, and how is this influenced by exploring a certain new product, e.g. a very stylish hair dryer with new features. Does this new hair dryer provide a real distinctive, new user experience?

## EXAMPLE OF A USER STUDY WITH MIND MAPS

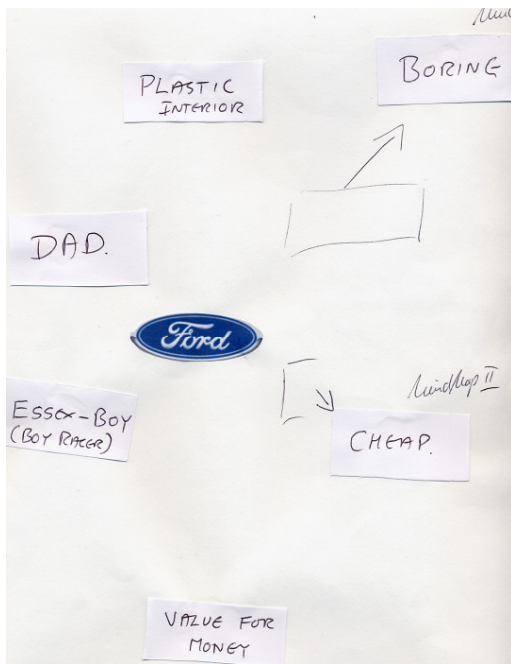
### Study Concept

The user website study with mind maps was conducted in London and Berlin. Twelve subjects in London and twelve subjects in Berlin each completed 8 tasks during a single test session of about 1 ½ hours. Applied methods were: behavior analyses, interview, rating scales, eye tracking and mind mapping.

We addressed research questions regarding site navigation concepts, user acceptance and brand experience. Two methods were used to assess the impact of the website on the brand perception: Quantitative assessment with semantic differential scales and qualitative assessment with mind mapping.

**Results Mind Mapping**

Users have positive associations overall. In total, 174 spontaneous associations were made of which 158 may be viewed as positive. Examples of positive associations are "value for money", "trusted", "reliable". Examples of negative associations are "not trendy", "cheap", "not sporty".



Mind Map of one user: after having seen the website the brand Ford was experienced as less boring.

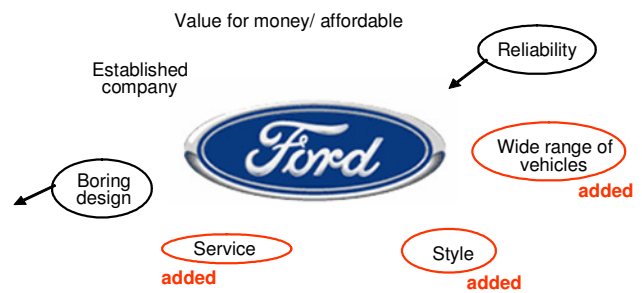
Spontaneous associations can be divided into four basic categories:

- **Value for money / affordable** (18 of 25 users) includes associations such as "good value", "affordable", "economical".
- **Reliability** (11 of 25 users) includes associations such as "reliable", "good reliability", "trusted".
- **Style** (10 of 25 users) includes associations such as "good design", "stylish", "modern".
- **Established company** (5 of 25 users) includes associations such as "well established", "tradition".

Positive associations were added or moved closer. No positive associations were removed or moved further away. "Service" was added by four test subjects. "Style" was added by three test subjects. "Reliability" was moved closer by two test subjects. "Wide range of vehicles" was moved closer by one test subject and was added by two test subjects.

Negative associations were moved further away. No negative associations were added or moved closer. Negative associations concerning the design were moved further away by five test subjects.

Mind maps suggest that working with the site leads to changes especially concerning the "Style" and "Service" categories: After site exploration mind maps showed an increase in positive associations for "Style" and for "Service", and a decrease in negative associations for "Style". Working with the site also seems to lead to a perception of a wide range of products and a sense of increased reliability.



Summary Mind Map: Categories "Service", "Style", "Wide Range of Vehicles" were added after website exploration.

There are significantly more positive than negative changes, both in the UK and in Germany. There is no significant difference in the amount or direction of changes across countries, or across expert and novice users of the site.

	No Change	Positive Change	Negative Change
UK	69	18	0
Germany	69	20	2

Summary of Changes in the Mind Map