



The Intersection of Mobile UX and Qualitative Research



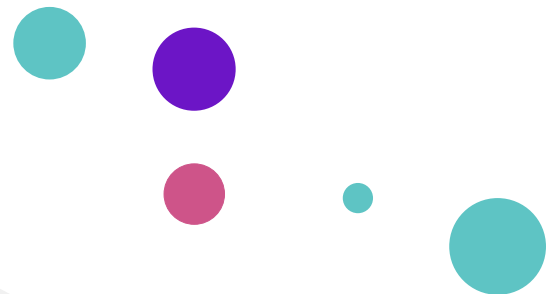
INTRODUCTION: REIMAGINING THE USER-CENTERED MOBILE EXPERIENCE

Small screens have the potential to make a big impact. Living in our pockets, purses and palms, mobile devices are more than just phones; they are conduits for connection to the world around us. And, a growing number of today's consumers are not just mobile-first, they are mobile (almost) always.

Increasingly, we turn to mobile for everything from banking to barbecue recipes. Although mobile usage is steadily increasing, mobile conversion rates are not following suit when compared to desktop conversion rates. A great idea alone does not make for a great app, nor does a great product outshine a terrible mobile experience.

That's where user experience (UX) comes into play to make interactions more intuitive. While creating human-centered digital experiences has been around since the early days of the Internet, many forget that a mobile phone isn't just a shrunken-down version of a laptop or desktop. From tapping, swiping, pinching and finger scrolling, mobile devices have unique interactions that do not exist on other devices.

To increase the number of daily active users who are completing actions, you have to deliver an outstanding mobile user experience: one that makes interaction delightful and provides a meaningful, relevant experience. Yet, few have cracked the code on this moving target, and there's more to it than just numbers.



“When the point of contact between the product and the people becomes a point of friction, then the [designer] has failed. On the other hand, if people are made safer, more comfortable, more eager to purchase, more efficient—or just plain happier—by contact with the product, then the designer has succeeded.”

*— Henry Dreyfuss,
Designing for People*

Since the dawn of the discipline, UX practitioners have leveraged qualitative research to develop intentional experiences that translate cross-platform. They seek to understand not just the taps and swipes, but the “whys” behind interactions to deliver truly impactful mobile UX.

But, rapid evolution of technology and shifts in consumer behavior have left even experts asking: how can I be sure that I am creating compelling, human-centered experiences that are optimized for today’s mobile environment? This guide explores where to start and the steps you can take to optimize your mobile experience using qualitative research techniques across the development journey.

What’s Inside:

- **DEFINE:** Set the stage with competitive research
- **DISCOVER:** Solve the right problems for the right person
- **DEVELOP:** Fail fast and learn with an agile process
- **DISTILL:** Create continuous feedback loops to optimize conversion
- **DELIVER:** Go further faster with the Discuss.io platform

Discuss.io is a qualitative research platform that offers all the functionality you will need to perform research in the mobile era, including a purpose-built mobile screen sharing app. Our platform is designed to streamline the research process at every step of the way. And that includes bringing the team along for the journey, whether that’s as a moderator, an observer, or a translator. With automatic transcription and video-bookmarking capabilities, Discuss.io makes it easy to capture user insights at scale to optimize mobile UX at every step of the development process.

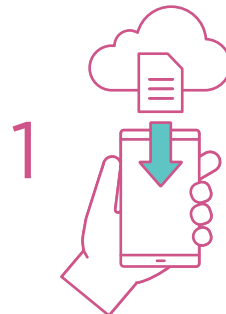
Our watchwords? User empathy.

Here is how we do it.

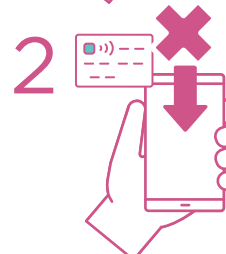


DEFINE SET THE STAGE WITH COMPETITIVE RESEARCH.


No mobile experience operates in a vacuum. Make no mistake, with billions of apps and even more mobile sites, your offering will be evaluated against incumbents across the Internet. And, with users more attention-starved and distracted than ever before, the table-stakes have never been higher to get mobile experiences just right.

- 

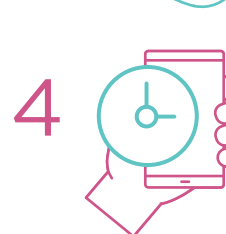
1 There were **218 billion** free and paid app downloads in 2020 ([Statista](#))

- 


2 **2.78%** of smartphone users will not download an app to complete a transaction ([Digital Information World](#))

- 


3 Around **55%** of all website views come from mobile devices ([Statista Jan. 2021](#))

- 

4 The average U.S. consumer spends more time using apps than watching television ([eMarketer](#))

- 

5 Consumers spent **3.5 trillion minutes** on apps from Android devices alone in 2020 ([Tech Crunch](#))

- 

6 Users worldwide spent **\$72 billion** in the Apple app store in 2020 ([Sensor Tower](#))

Here's how to set the stage for success.

Identify your competitive set

Who is really in your competitive set? Think broadly. You're not just competing against other adjacent products on-shelf anymore. You are also competing against consumer behavior such as multitasking and split-attention. Consider: what jobs are your users looking to get done? Who, or what else are they mulling over in this key moment? Create a list of not only who you'd consider to be your traditional competitors (in the same category or industry), but also of other alternatives consumers may be looking for to satisfy their needs.

Get face-to-face with the current state


Creating a great mobile UX experience starts with understanding the [entire user journey](#) - before, during, and after a desired interaction takes place. Mobile screen sharing allows moderators to follow a user's experience with an app or mobile site first-hand. One technique researchers employ in this stage is a mobile shop-along wherein they shadow users' experiences as they navigate the array of choices available to them and ultimately make a purchase decision.

When defining the landscape where their app or mobile site will live, researchers use mobile shop-alongs to look at interactions and experiences for both their competitors' sites and their own. Using digital tools, researchers can record which interactions attract immediate

attention, mark how long a user dwells on a specific step or product, and whether that's desirable or a hurdle. Probing the user's actions by asking, "why," questions can help expose what factors influence a buying decision - or rejection. Aim to profile the journey that users experience for competitive apps or sites, as well as your own.

For example, by using screen sharing when conducting a mobile shop-along, researchers can see each tap, scroll, swipe, or zoom in real time. They can see how a product shows up in search or on Amazon to determine what stands out in the language or visual imagery. Perhaps most importantly, they can probe to understand how users evaluate choices and make purchase decisions.





When conducting a competitive shop-along, here are a few questions you may want to answer:

- How does the content compare in terms of Images, descriptions, and reviews?
- What decision criteria goes into product selection for the consumer?
- What does the consumer find appealing about the competitor? What gives them pause?
- What features does the competitor's product have that most appeal to the consumer?
- Where are competitors being clearer than you are?
- Is the competitor's pricing structure more attractive than others?
- Are the competitor's user flows appealing to the consumer?
- Can the consumer identify any pain points in the competitor's UX?
- Does the competitor offer any additional incentives to purchase (ie. free shipping, discount for multiple purchases, etc.)?

Establish a benchmark and set expectations

Understanding what's going on in the competitive environment can not only help your offering stand out in the mobile landscape, but it can also help you to more broadly establish design guidelines that can set the stage for future work. Aim to capture benchmarks for the category where your app or mobile site will live. Then, set expectations with key stakeholders about what your offering will look to achieve, and the key points of difference you'll aim to deliver.

How Discuss.io can help:

Different from traditional UX testing where you might sit someone down, give them a test phone and watch them navigate an app or mobile site, Discuss.io offers mobile screen share capabilities that allow you to see both the consumer's mobile screen AND their face and voice as part of an online interview. Now you can reach anyone, anywhere, without the time and expense of in-person testing. Meanwhile, moderators can ask probing questions in real time to elicit valuable in-depth responses. Through a process of focused questions and answers, you gain valuable insight about your consumers' experience with the competitive set so you can meet your users' needs better than anyone else.





DISCOVER
SOLVE THE RIGHT
PROBLEMS FOR
THE RIGHT
PERSON.

In tandem with understanding your competitive set, to develop a truly compelling mobile experience, designers must also understand the people who make up the user base.

In tandem with understanding your competitive set, to develop a truly compelling mobile experience, designers must also understand the people who make up the user base.

User personas are now broadly considered an integral part of the UX process. From product managers to developers, everyone in each stage of the development process should be aware of, and invested in, personas. Creating personas will help put a face to the user and establish a design target to ensure that mobile UX solves the right problems for the right person.

Combining qualitative mobile screen sharing methodologies with in-depth video interviews will deliver key insights about your target's needs, wants, and desires, uncovering learning that can help to shape key design decisions when it's time to prototype.

“The biggest mistake designers can make when crafting their user personas is making the entire thing up - and it's a mistake that happens often.”

— Tony Ho Tran,
[InVision](#)



Already have a persona? Don't let that be an excuse for not talking to actual users. Even organizations that have already established personas use qualitative research in this stage to ensure their information is up-to-date. Interrogating existing assumptions in light of a new challenge may uncover new pathways forward and lead to new solutions you may not have previously considered.

While there are several ways to develop or refresh a persona, here are a few thought-starters you may want to consider:

- **Name & Role:** What should we call this persona? What is their personal or professional title? Are any other demographics important, such as age, race, gender, marital status, geographic location or salary?

- **Personality:** Are they introverted or extroverted? Do they embrace change or seek stability? Are they more proactive or reactive? Do they crave external validation or are they more intrinsically driven? Do they care more about status or substance?
- **Day-in-the-Life:** What does 24 hours look like in their shoes? Where do they go to work, eat, exercise, relax? What do they listen to or watch?
- **Goals & Motivations:** For what do they strive? What keeps them going?
- **Key Behaviors:** What are they looking for relative to your offering? What are they doing today?
- **Pains & Gains:** With what do they struggle; what delights them?
- **Current Solutions:** What are they using today? Which of your competitors also makes it into their consideration set? Who gets left out?
- **Key Influencers:** To whom or what do they look to help them make decisions?



Name, Role and Other Demographics



Personality Traits



Day-in-the-Life



Goals and Motivators



Key Behaviors



Pains and Gains



Current Solutions



Key Influencers

Ultimately, a persona will help you create mobile experiences that sell themselves, because they will address your design target's exact needs. But that doesn't mean you have to boil the ocean.

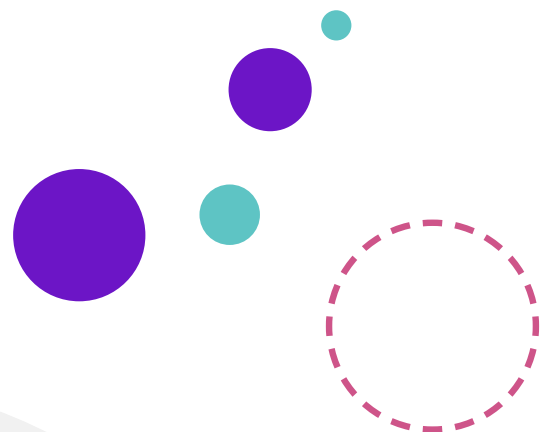
No matter what information you decide to include in your persona, make sure it's brief and memorable. A persona is a tool to which you'll need to refer again and again throughout the design process. So keeping it short and informative is important.



How Discuss.io can help:

While traditional researchers rely on either time-consuming and expensive in-person ethnographies or one-on-one interviews in cold, sterile facilities, Discuss.io enables you to talk to users via video interviews in the context of their actual lives, without the time and expense of going in-person.

In addition, the advanced features embedded within the Discuss.io platform make analysis a breeze. Clicking the "Save Moment" button during an interview will capture the fifteen seconds before and after the selected moment so you can easily find the key clips you need to develop memorable, impactful personas that bring the user to life.





DEVELOP

FAIL FAST AND LEARN WITH AN AGILE PROCESS

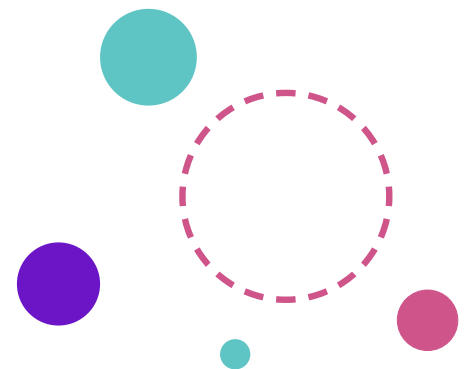
It's time to turn insights into action. Armed with your competitive research and your persona, you have a good idea of what you are designing, and for whom. Now, it's time to develop prototypes and test out some MVPs (minimum viable products).

Whether you are starting with a sketch or going direct to digital, leveraging qualitative research at this stage will help you to discern what's working and what isn't before you head down the wrong path.

“Fixing a problem in development costs 10 times as much as fixing it in design, and 100 times as much if you're trying to fix it in a product that's already been released.”

— Roger Pressman,
*Software Engineering:
A Practitioner's Approach*

Early on in the mobile era, it was enough to just put an app or mobile site out there and let the market judge. Sometimes it worked; other times, not so much. Now, with so many interactions taking place via smartphone, there's just too much riding on the success of an app or mobile site to leave it up to chance.



Thankfully, by leveraging an agile, test-and-learn mindset, you can go much further faster. This is where an agile approach really shines. By focusing on conducting continuous and iterative market research, rather than limiting the research process to a single, rigidly defined phase, you can identify problems before they become costly (or embarrassing) mistakes.

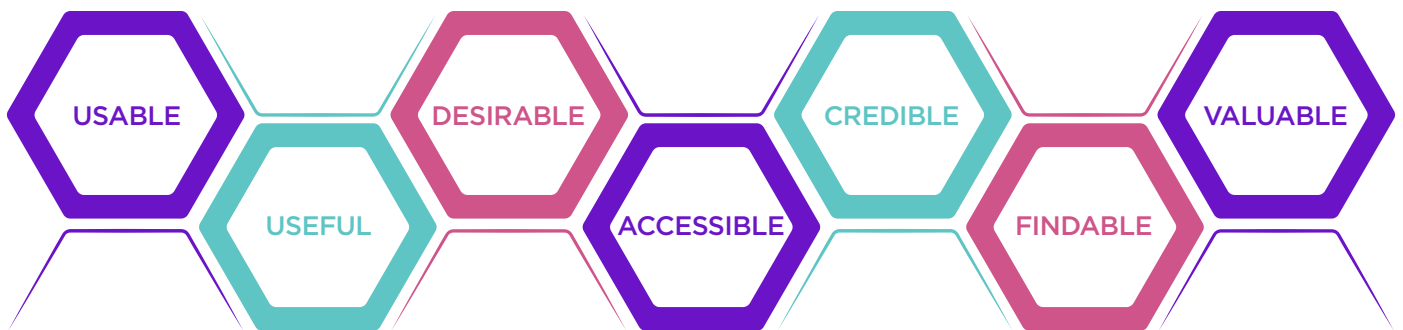
While the approach makes good sense in theory, many organizations struggle to execute an agile process. One reason is because their approach to research isn't scalable. Now, with the advent of mobile screen share capabilities, researchers can reach more users in less time and more cost-effectively.

By taking an agile approach to mobile development, you're looking to ensure:

1. The core tenets of user-centered design translate to the mobile app or web experience
2. The solution you're offering solves the user's needs in a meaningful way.

Often, talking to users once is not enough. Throughout the development process, you will want to define a few key milestones to check in with users and review prototypes. In an agile process, this typically occurs toward the end of a sprint.

CORE TENETS OF USER-CENTERED DESIGN



(Source: [Usability.gov](https://www.usability.gov))

Often, talking to users once is not enough. Throughout the development process, you will want to define a few key milestones to check in with users and review prototypes. In an agile process, this typically occurs toward the end of a sprint.

Having access to a scalable research solution allows researchers to iterate and refine their mobile UX as their prototypes increase in fidelity and move toward an MVP. Planning to engage users to co-create and provide feedback will ensure that you iterate efficiently and effectively toward the optimal solution. The key here is to keep a regular cadence of checkpoints with your users so development does not drift too far off from your goals.

How Discuss.io can help:

Avoid the long lead times and facility fees of in-person research or the generic low-quality responses you often get from random respondents on mass user testing sites by setting up interviews or focus groups on the Discuss.io platform. That way you'll have respondents always within arm's reach if sprint deadlines shift or if you need a quick read on a recent iteration. Then, with mobile screen sharing, you can test and learn to your heart's content.



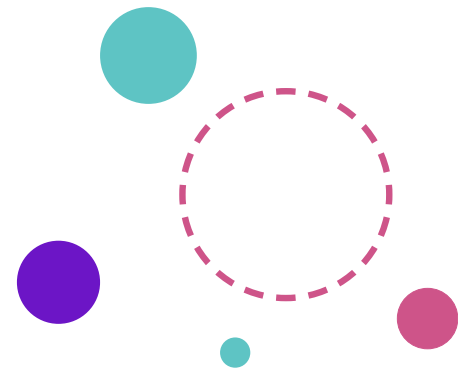

DISTILL
CREATE
CONTINUOUS
FEEDBACK LOOPS
TO OPTIMIZE
CONVERSION

Congratulations! You now have an awesome app or site to unleash on the world. Now what? Well, after you've virtually high-fived your team, it's time to get back to work. Now that the app or site is live, the next step is to start thinking about how it can be working harder for you, and even better for your users.

Conversion rate optimization, or CRO, is a key area that many UX researchers ignore because they think their job's done once their site or app is launched. But, if your team is not investing time and energy here, you may be left behind.

Mobile conversion rates are focused on both speed and efficiency. So in this step, researchers need to take a hard look at their mobile offering and pull out all the stops. One of the best ways to do that is to tap into users again and ferret out any friction points. By using mobile screen sharing, researchers can see users' faces and interactions at the same time to determine where apps or sites don't deliver on the intended effect.





Is your mobile offering optimized for conversion? Seek to assess:

- Ease of navigation
- The size of touch areas
- The usage of touch controls
- Simplification of forms
- Consistency of experience cross-platform
- Reducing clutter
- Thumb position
- Text size and hierarchy
- Visual clarity and distinctiveness

Because your users, your competitors, and your own organization are growing and shifting (sometimes in different directions), continuous feedback loops to optimize and refine your mobile offering should be a part of the mobile UX process. To determine which optimizations have the desired impact, you will need to test multiple ideas and designs to land on the exact approach to which your users will respond.

Here's the time when you also may want to bring back in some competitive sites or apps—particularly ones that may be performing better—to see how they compare to your mobile experience. Whether looking at your competitors' offerings or your own, screen sharing lends itself to comparison analysis so you can compare an old version vs. a new version, or a competitive site vs. your own. Armed with this capability, researchers can now create better A/B tests and ultimately identify the optimizations that matter.

Conversion rate improvements are incremental and iterative by nature. Most often, you will find that small shifts are all that are needed to help distill and refine your offering. But without testing, you'll never know if a tiny tweak stands between you and success.

How Discuss.io can help:

For a stage in the mobile UX process where the small things matter, Discuss.io lets you dive deep into the details with mobile screen sharing and video interviews. By observing real-time interactions, you can pinpoint and expose areas of friction in your user's journey, and improve the rate at which they take desired actions.

DELIVER

GO FURTHER,
FASTER WITH THE
DISCUSS.IO
PLATFORM

Great mobile experiences, like all great ideas, are not the result of chance.

They come about from hard work, dedication, and collaboration. And none of those are easy, especially when you're tasked with delivering a best-in-class offering. So why make life more difficult than it has to be?

Harnessing the power of mobile screen sharing and video interviewing techniques combined with tools like real-time clip tagging and virtual whiteboards isn't just some fancy new technology. It's also built intentionally for researchers, by researchers, to pay off your hard work and dedication, while enabling collaboration.

So, stop scrolling endlessly through transcripts, creating verbatim databases in Excel and editing video on your own computer. Step up, and step into the future so you spend less time in Word docs and spreadsheets, and more time with your users and teammates, where it really matters most!



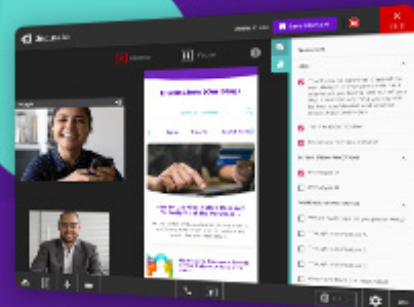
Discuss.io is already helping mobile UX professionals at every level unlock insights that transform the way that they define, discover, develop and distill mobile experiences. [Get a demo](#) today to learn how Discuss.io can help you deliver best-in-class mobile UX through the power of qualitative research.

Market research meets mobile.

Interview respondents, while watching them use their mobile devices.

[Get the Demo](#)

 discuss.io



ABOUT DISCUSS.IO

Discuss.io is the leading live video solution for enabling brands to discover actionable insights and build consumer connections at scale. When brands have frequent and direct conversations, they deepen empathy and understanding for the consumer, create better products, and deliver more effective marketing. Discuss.io provides a live video platform and end-to-end services, including recruiting and moderation, for an all-in-one or flexible solution to enable quick, easy, and scalable access to consumers around the world to stakeholders across the organization. Discuss.io makes it easy to ask questions when you have them and develop a more consumer-centric organization.





Ready to see Discuss.io in action?

[Schedule a free demo](#) today.

SCHEDULE A FREE DEMO

