What does it take for a mobile device to survive in today's market? Being cool is not enough, a new study reveals.

Study shows that a person's feelings towards the mobile phone changes over time and that negative feelings from problematic usability affect consumer decisions.

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL, June 25, 2013 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The mobile phone innovation race may be in for a change of direction given the results of a new Finnish-Israeli collaborative study that set out to understand how a person's feelings towards their mobile phone changes over time and how that affects their decisions as consumers.

This new study has found that negative feelings that a user experiences because of problems with a device's usability over time outweighed those positive feelings that are associated with initial enthusiasm, impacting the consumer's overall assessment of the device. This leads to a suggestion that mobile developers will need to understand and consider this emotional aspect.

Until now it was thought that an initial positive emotional experience with an interactive product would directly lead to a positive user experience, and that in turn would guarantee its commercial success. But the current study, conducted by Dr. Talya Miron-Shatz, Director of the Institute for the Study for Medical Decisions at Israel's Ono Academic College and CEO of CureMyWay, together with Dr. Sari Kujala, a senior lecturer in the Department of Design at Aalto University, Finland, suggests that this is not necessarily the case.

"Our study has revealed that the connection we make between our emotional experiences and product evaluation is not so clear-cut. Our feelings change over time and some experiences become more memorable than others. Cellular companies invest millions of dollars in development and design to 'wow' consumers, but do not always completely understand which factors, besides price or user experience, might affect how their product is truly perceived by end users," says Kujala.

"Before beginning this study, we already knew that the highs and lows of using a technologically advanced product create a basket of experiences for the user, and these are not all equal in their impact, some overcoming others. Now we set out to determine how these emotions and memories come into play when a consumer evaluates a product – in this case, the mobile phone," explains Miron-Shatz.

Over the years, many studies have examined this issue, but this study followed the behavior of users over an extended 5-month period and with participants from varied professional backgrounds and ages, whereas earlier studies sufficed with surveys that were conducted over a few hours, days or weeks and with homogeneous groups.

The current research recruited dozens of employees at a large university in Finland, just as they were transitioning from their old phones to smartphones. All were asked to fill out detailed questionnaires about their user experience, ease of use and other measures at several different points in time: upon receiving the mobile device, after 2.5 months of use and again after 5 months.

The researchers found that positive feelings were connected to enjoyable user experiences, while most of the negative feelings resulted from low product usability, i.e., lack of ability to operate the device properly. For example, the study found that some users did not know how to end a conversation on their new devices, even 2.5 months into using them. "Not being able to figure out such a basic function is likely to challenge a user's self-image and create a dominant negative feeling that over time will determine the overall approach to the product," says Miron-Shatz. "We found that

usability problems that lead to embarrassment in front of other people were especially memorable. When we looked at what affected the participants' assessments of their new generation mobile phones over time, we found that the negative feelings associated with low usability actually outweighed the positive feelings associated with initial enthusiasm. So, even if a particular product is considered 'cool', that won't hold for long if usability isn't simple and problem-free."

According to Kujala and Miron-Shatz, this study provides a strong research base that is likely to have tremendous significance for mobile manufacturers and designers around the world. "A user's experience does not only lean on a set of emotive reactions that are expressed when a product comes to hand. So a developer's deeper understanding of how the mind of the average consumer organizes and categorizes feelings toward a product and how those feelings affect a user's self-image, is likely to lead to better consumer satisfaction and loyalty to a brand," they say.

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