



## Facebook

– En jämförelsestudie om användningen på  
smartphone vs. datorn

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# Abstract

This research aims at analysing how the usage of Facebook differs on mobile phones and computers from the view of an end user. 10 people were consulted in semi-structured interviews about their individual usage. Topics of the interviews included the amount of time they spend on Facebook on their mobile phones and how often, why they are using it on this device and when they rather use a computer.

The results of the interviews indicate that people mostly use their mobile phone on their every-day journeys, esp. while they use public transport and they are bored waiting for or being on the means of transport. Often they just check the Newsfeed to see what their friends are doing. They mainly want to be informed about the activities of their friends, therefore, produce less content themselves on Facebook Mobile rather than on their computer.

The questioned users do not have the feeling they need to log in on Facebook, instead they do it subconsciously all the time.

The small screen and keypad on the mobile phone are still the main reasons why the usage of Facebook on the computer is more convenient. Nevertheless, because Facebook on the mobile phone is limited in its features it also offers a good overview. The non-available features on mobile devices are simply not missed and for this reason not even used on the Facebook computer version. However, if a function should be executed, which does not exist on the mobile phone the users are waiting until they can access a computer but possibly they forget about it by then and the importance of the accomplishment disappears.

**Keywords:** Social Network, Facebook Mobile Application, Network Community, Mobile Internet, Smartphone

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# 1. Introduction

At the Google Atmosphere event in December 2009 Mary Meeker - Internet equity analyst at Morgan Stanley and described as the “queen of the Net” (Battelle, 2004) - was talking about the development and future of mobile Internet (eventsatgoogle, 2009). She provided data reflecting how people were using it, which trends she was seeing and how to use the technology in business concepts to achieve better results. Mary Meeker mentioned that usage of mobile phones switches from voice actions to data actions. While average mobile phone users (no access to mobile Internet) were still using 70% of their phone activities to make calls, an iPhone user was only using 45% of the time to complete voice actions. The remaining time was taken up by data actions like listening to music, playing games and communicating via social networks like Facebook. According to Niall Harbison, “2010 is going to be the year Internet usage on mobile phones really takes off“ (Harbison, 2010). One reason for its fast growth is apparently the use of social networks, as CCS Insight found out in their 2009 report of Mobile Internet (2009 cited in Caverly, 2009). Centering around this claim, this research paper takes a closer look at how social networks can be accessed by mobile devices. What are the reasons for using social networks not only at a computer but also on the go while being available around the clock? Furthermore, weak points in the user experience should be examined; which features would they like to access, how a social network can be improved to reach higher usage rates? To narrow down the research scope, this thesis was conducted with the example of Facebook, currently social network number 1 worldwide (Top Ten Reviews, n.d.).

## 1.1 Scope of the Research and the Object of Research

Research Question:

**How does the usage of Facebook differ on computers and mobile phones from the perspective of an end user?**

In order to analyse the two objects of research the study will:

1. Examine reasons for using Facebook on the mobile phone and on the computer

2. Examine the usage of Facebook on the mobile phone and on the computer

## 1.2 Research Methodology

The research was conducted in form of an empirical study which includes both literature studies and interviews. The interviewees consist of people who live in Sweden and use Facebook on both their smartphones and their computers. Furthermore, the interviewees in this research survey were a mixture of people who work in the technology industry and people who are not specifically interested in technology to receive a wider variety of experiences with surfing the Internet on mobile phones.

## 1.3 Definitions

To avoid misunderstandings about the usage of special terms, are the following definitions of technical terms used in this thesis:

### **Desktop Computer**

“A desktop computer is a personal computer built to be used at a desk. This is in contrast both to large mainframe computers, which are not meant to be used at a desk, and to portable computers, or laptops, meant to be taken around from one location to another easily.” (McGuigan, 2010) In this thesis the term desktop computer equals the terms computer and PC.

### **Mobile Application**

“A software application that runs in a smartphone or other portable device.” (PC Mag,a)

It can be distinguished between two types of applications (Mobithinking, 2010):

**Web app:** The content is accessed via a web page which is “executed by the browser” (PC Mag,b).

**Native app:** A programme has to be installed on the mobile device.

Usually there is a specific app for a specific smartphone but also apps which are running on several mobile phones.

### **Mobile Internet**

“Refers to gaining access to the Internet using a lightweight, handheld device.” (Your Dictionary) In terms of this thesis mobile Internet is accessed via a smartphone.

### **Smartphone**

“A telephone that provides additional information accessing features. Any mobile telephone that combines voice services with e-mail, fax, pager or Internet access is called a smart phone.” (CEVA) In this thesis a smartphone is also called mobile phone or mobile device.

## **1.4 Limitations of this Research Project**

In this research distinctions between different smartphones are not taken into account. Furthermore, the focus lies on the native app (in the following called Facebook Mobile Application) and disregards the web app (Facebook accessed via the web browser on the smartphone). However, the study doesn't distinguish different kinds of Facebook Mobile Applications. It is assumed that Facebook Applications just differ in small details and is therefore disregarded in this study (see next page for illustration). These decisions were taken to narrow down the thesis in its structure and length.

In addition, it was not possible to mention every feature offered by Facebook due to their high number and a steady upgrade of them.

The research does not focus on any possible addiction to the use of Facebook.



**Figure 1.4.1.** Facebook Mobile Application for iPhone 3G (Facebook Marketing, 2009)



**Figure 1.4.2.** Facebook Mobile Application for Android (Handy Sparen, 2010)



**Figure 1.4.3.** Facebook Mobile Application for Nokia E71/72 (Cellphoneforums, 2009)



**Figure 1.4.4.** Facebook Mobile Application for Blackberry (ITProPortal, 2010)

## 2. Background

*This chapter covers the key factors of Facebook and its evolution. It also names the most important Facebook features which are relevant for this thesis. Furthermore, the characteristics of network communities are highlighted. In addition, it aims to explain the theory of qualities of digital design according to Jonas Löwgren. It also explains the model of modalities in mobile computing and the closely connected user experience. The background lies the foundation for the analysis of the survey and examines how certain qualities are adopted on Facebook.*

### 2.1 Facebook's History

The world's at present most popular social network was initiated in the USA in 2003 by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg (Webhosting Report, n.d.). He and two of his fellow students started the website Facemash, accessible only for Harvard University members in the beginning, to rate other students' popularity. When in 2004 other people, schools and groups were allowed to use the website as well, Mark Zuckerberg reinvented the webpage and called it "The Facebook". In 2006 everyone in the world was permitted to become a member. Achieving such a big success, in 2007 Microsoft Corp. showed their interest and bought a 1.6% share in Facebook, which was worth paying 240\$ million. By the beginning of 2009 Facebook had gained 175 million users. In 2010 Facebook was voted to be the most popular social network in the world, followed by MySpace in second place (Top Ten Reviews, n.d.). According to Facebook's press releases, it counts 500 million active users by now whereat 50% of them access it on a daily basis. Altogether, the members of Facebook spend 700 billion minutes per month logged on to the network (Facebook, n.d.).

### 2.2 Network Communities and Facebook Features

In the following section important aspects of network communities are presented and compared with the features and possibilities Facebook is offering.

### 2.2.1 Members of a Community

In her article "Network Communities: Something Old, Something New, Something borrowed..." Elizabeth Mynatt (1998: 124) describes that being part of a community means to be in meaningful contact with different people. With the development of technology, especially the Internet, distances between these people are no longer a mentionable criteria. No matter if these people are living next door or on different continents, communication via the network is the same. The community consists of different people in different places and can even minimize the spatial distance by sharing videos and pictures of each other. The community does not need to exist in the real world but is now a virtual place where people meet and communicate. Network Communities develop out of the connection between social life and technology. In order to survive, network communities need a steady development (Mynatt, 1998: 128): on the one hand, by the users who constantly participate in the network's community life and on the other hand, a technical development where the community recreates itself and adjusts to different circumstances.

Members of a network community are active in the virtual life but also in real life. This redefines the word "local". While previously it referred to the distances between people, it now describes the differences between virtual and real world. Nevertheless, the virtual world is influenced by the real world, e.g. users communicating on the network about happenings in the real world and often presenting information about themselves and their activities in the physical world (Mynatt, 1998: 132).

#### **Members of Facebook**

Signing up on Facebook means to create a personal profile on the network. Other members have the possibility to see it and find out more details about them than they might in real world (Vander Veer, 2010: 2ff). It is possible to find other people and add them to the personal Friends' list. This could be members who are sharing the same interests but have never met in real life; they could also be friends and business partners who might or might not regularly meet. It is even possible to find people who have not seen each other for several years. Moreover Facebook is providing information about recent activities of friends, their birthdays and events in which they take part in real life (ibid., 2010).

### 2.2.2 Multimodal Communication

According to Mynatt (1998: 138/139), users must have the possibility to communicate in several ways depending on different subjects and the message which should be delivered, e.g. besides writing messages, visual content can be send and content can be public or non-public. The advantage of Network communities lies in the ability of using different modalities for interaction and the opportunity of changing the rhythm of communication as well. For active users it becomes very easy to get in touch with other users in several ways (ibid., 1998).

#### **Multimodal Communication on Facebook**

To stay in contact with friends, Facebook offers different ways to exchange messages. It is possible to send private messages which are similar to sending an email. Photos, videos and links can be attached as well. Facebook also offers its own chat where all online users are shown either with a green dot which means the person is right now logged in and active on the network, or a grey dot to show members are online but have not been active for some time.

Another form of message is to leave a public post on the friend's profile wall. In this case the message can also seen by the receiver's other friends. In this way photos, videos and links can be shared as well. Responding to the entry is possible by leaving a comment right beneath. Another form of sending a message is called a "poke". It is "the electronic equivalent of asking someone, "Hey, what's up?"" (Vander Veer, 2010: 73).

The personal main page contains the News Feed which keeps the user updated about the recent activities of friends. A different way to stay in contact with Facebook friends are automatic updates. Facebook is sending notifications if the user received private messages, a comment and so on.

Facebook offers the possibility to join different groups which is one of the most popular features on Facebook (Vander Veer, 2010: 107). This enables every group member to talk, discuss and share experiences with people who have the same interests. Groups don't only represent people with the same online interest but also groups which already exist in real life (e.g. local sports clubs).

If an event is taking place in the real world, Facebook offers the opportunity to send out invitations to other members to ask if they are planning to be part of the event.

A person can then show its interest in clicking on one of three possibilities: "Attending", "maybe attending" and "not attending".

### 2.2.3 Foreground-, Intermittent- and Background Interaction

Network communities bare the affordance to offer their users easy switching between different kinds of interactions. The focus can lie completely on the network but also on something completely different where the network is just running in the background (Mynatt, 1998: 139/140). Experienced network community users might know this behaviour; nevertheless, they need indicators to understand what is happening in other people's lives or if someone is active on the network in order to create communication.

#### **Interaction on Facebook**

The Facebook chat shows the activity status of other users which helps to understand if someone is currently acting on the network. Other people might want to check this status before starting a chat conversation. This kind of communication is considered to be foreground interaction. Background interaction includes to have Facebook open in the browser but surfing on the web or even working at the same time. The person might want to check Facebook from time to time and can easily switch between these interactions, which is for that reason assumed to be an intermittent interaction where the user does not need to be online or active right away.

## 2.3 Facebook Mobile Application

According to Facebook's press releases, 200 million users are actively using the network via their mobile devices. They also claim that Facebook Mobile users are twice as active as members who are accessing the network on their computer (Facebook, n.d.).

#### **Features**

Using Facebook via mobile phone offers the most popular features that are also preferred on the computer version (Vander Veer, 2010: 231). In addition, Figure 2.3.1. shows a picture of the Facebook Mobile Application on the iPhone taken from the webpage Facebook Marketing (2009):

- Updating the status
- Checking the status of friends

- Searching for people
- Seeing upcoming events
- Viewing the News Feed
- Seeing recent group activities
- Uploading pictures and videos

Additionally it is possible to connect to the Facebook chat and having the same conversations as on Facebook on the computer (Reiss, 2010).

Subscriptions to receive a note about friends' status updates and news are possible on the computer-based Facebook but also on the mobile phone (Vander Veer, 2010: 233/234). In this way the background interaction is enabled because the Facebook Mobile Application is indeed running in the background but it is hidden and does not necessarily attract the attention of the user each time the mobile device is used.

## 2.4 Qualities of Network Communities

According to Mynatt (1998:130/131), network communities offer five qualities by using the available technology. These qualities together with social life recreate a network community and change its appearance and usage in the society:

### 1. Persistence

Users take part in a community over a longer time by executing different activities. As a new habit it becomes a part of their life.

### 2. Periodicity

Periodicity is referring to the frequent usage of the community. Through different communication means the user develops a feeling for how long different communication ways take and if other users are still active. Technology plays an important role in the rhythm of communication. Users must be able to rely on the system and develop a sense for the communication speed with other members on the network (Mynatt, 1998:137/138).

### 3. Boundaries

Network communities offer their users the choice of who can be part of an activity and who is allowed to see different activities.

### 4. Engagement

It refers to the usage of the community, e.g. with how many people a member is communicating, in which ways and for which reasons.

## **5. Authoring**

This gives members the possibility to personalize their own profile and member page.

## **2.5 Use Qualities of Digital Design**

According to Jonas Löwgren (2002:1) and his text “The Use Qualities of Digital Design”, social communication is one of the most used activities when using a computer. The author claims that the option of choosing between different technologies is one of the most important factors. Artefacts can be chosen to be used by people, and Löwgren is presenting 20 qualities which an artefact should implement to offer good usage in order to be chosen frequently. In his opinion, good use offers to draw “more value, benefit and meaning from information spaces” (ibid., 2002). He grouped the qualities into five different categories:

### **1. Motivation**

This category describes that the user needs to have advantage of using the artefact and also reasons for using it more often. This could be reached by fulfilling the goals of the user and directly offering a new one to achieve (“playability”) (Löwgren, 2002:3). Another affordance is anticipation which describes how interaction challenges imagination. The user has some expectations for the future and will prove it by the interaction with the artefact. It links the past, present and future.

### **2. Interaction**

The author emphasizes the importance of continuous access to the artefact even if it is not used every time, but the user has to reach it whenever needed. The user doesn't need to interact actively with the artefact. The focus can lie on something else while the program is just running in the background (“fluency”) (Löwgren, 2002:5). Furthermore, the artificial product is offering a higher usability if it obtains human attributes and completes task the human being would usually carry out. The artefact needs to think on its own (“autonomy”) (ibid., 2007) and in addition has to adjust

itself to human needs and wishes (“pliability”) (ibid., 2002:7).

### **3. Actions and their outcomes on social levels**

“To project just the right image” (Löwgren, 2002:8) in an easily achieving way is an important quality for designing a useful artefact (“identity”). Through this way it is possible for the user to recreate its own image constantly. The quality “actability” Löwgren is mentioning in the text, is similar to the affordance “engagement” which E.D. Mynatt specifies in the article “Network Communities: Something Old, Something New, Something borrowed...” mentioned under 2.4. It implies the possibility of actions an artefact offers to the user.

### **4. Structural qualities and engineering ideals**

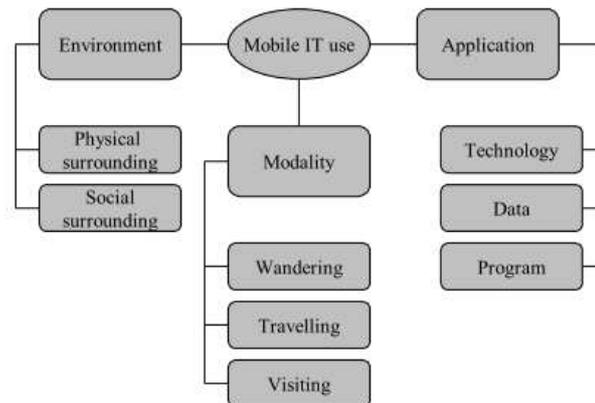
Artificial objects should work efficiently which means it should help to carry out a task in a faster and quicker way (“efficiency”) (Löwgren, 2002:10). At the same time the digital design should be very basic and not overload the user with possible actions (“functional minimalism and elegance”) (ibid., 2002).

### **5. Distancing**

This group is describing how the artificial product should surprise the user with its possibilities (“surprise”) (Löwgren, 2002:11). It should offer new ways of interaction which a person never thought of before and raises the desire of using it again. However, at the same time it should give the user space to reflect on his own usage behaviour (“parafunctionality”) (ibid., 2002).

## **2.6 Modalities in Mobile Computing**

A bigger screen, a fast Internet connection and the possibility to use both hands are responsible for a more convenient use of the computer than the mobile phone (Kristoffersent & Ljungberg, 1998). The Norwegian Computing Centre and the Viktoria Institute invented a model to explain how the usage of IT differs in varying mobile settings. It names three main parts which are crucial in the usage of mobile devices and how it differs to stationary computers. The graphic below (Figure 2.6.1.) shows the model taken from “Representing Modalities in Mobile Computing” (Kristoffersent & Ljungberg, 1998: Figure 4):



**Figure 2.6.1.** Modalities in Mobile Computing (Kristoffersent & Ljungberg 1998: Figure 4)

### **Environment**

Everything which is obvious and recognizable in the surrounding is described in the group **physical environment**. Items like a table or an antenna count into this group to simplify or complicate the usage. The opposite group is called **social environment** and describes social behaviours which are prearranged by rules (Kristoffersent & Ljungberg, 1998).

### **Modality**

When using IT in mobile settings it is crucial to understand what the person is doing while using it and when the need arises to use it. Kristoffersent and Ljungberg examine three different places and stages of movement for the usage. The first is called **wandering** and describes the activity of moving from one place to another. The stage **travelling** describes the same kind of movement but with the help of a vehicle, like a bus which carries them to another place. At this point the user is may be coordinating appointments and looking up information. The last stage is called **visiting** and refers to being at a place for a longer time, e.g. at work.

### **Application**

This group is divided into 3 parts. The first is called **technology** and in case of this research refers to the computer and the mobile phone. It is the medium which is used to carry out the activity. This medium is able to run a certain **program** - which is in this

case Facebook - and which enables to produce, receive or send **data**, e.g. pictures, videos or messages.

## 2.7 Value and Usability

According to van Welie and de Groot (2002), the connection between value and **usability** has to be taken into account when developing artefacts and programs for mobile use. They suggest offering a high enough motivation for the usage (value) so the user would accept bad usage (usability). Even if the technology is complicated, it is accepted as long as the result is satisfying. Still the two authors suggest to minimize the technical problems as much as possible.

## 3. Empirical Study

*In this chapter the analytical process of the thesis is explained. This includes the motivation of choosing a qualitative method and a comparative study. The strategy for evaluating data is defined as well as ethic decisions to secure the privacy of the informants.*

### 3.1 Comparative Study

With the help of comparative studies it is possible to examine differences between similar objects to develop and improve them and take one or both objects to the next level of design (Routi, 2007). Both similarities and differences are examined but the focus lies on the distinctions and the reasons for their appearance. This is a successful method to reveal characteristics which are usually already known but not proved or actively noticed. To distinguish these different features it is common to ask users about their perception of the object (ibid., 2007).

This type of study seems to be adequate for this research project because it compares the usage of Facebook on the computer and on the mobile phone. The user already has access to both mediums, and it enables the researcher to see the user's point of view and to follow up on advantages and disadvantages.

### 3.2 Qualitative Research

According to Steinar Kvale (1997: 66) (Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Aarhus), qualitative methods allow a deeper understanding of a subject or a person. John Creswell (2007: 40ff) (Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln) argued that qualitative research is conducted to get a deeper insight of quantitative results or when existing theories do not show a rich picture of a problem. He notes that qualitative methods enable the participants to inform the researcher about their own experiences. In addition, Creswell states that context is an important fact to consider in research because it is strongly connected to the participants' experiences. In the same manner the researcher's background and

experiences are playing a big role during the interpretation of the data. The researcher has to be aware of the context in order not to obtain adulterated results. Qualitative methods require a lot of time to gather and analyze the data as well as many different views on one topic. A large amount of feedback has to be sorted in a few selected categories to receive a valid result. Moreover, qualitative research does not offer a large amount of guidelines. The approach cannot be described in detail before the accomplishment because one characteristic point of qualitative research is that the investigator needs to adjust to the situation which is being explored “to learn about the problem or issue from participants” (Creswell, 2007: 39). Creswell says the aim of qualitative methods is to achieve a miscellaneous picture of the problem which includes the point of view of participants as well as the researcher’s own thoughts and interpretation, and should give reasons and sources for further research (2007: 37).

### 3.3 Interviews

Interviews are one of the most common methods to collect data within qualitative studies (Olsson, 2008: 49). They provide a suitable research method to understand an issue in its detail and get in personal contact with the participants. The aim is to explore what lies behind a phenomenon, which experiences the participants have with it and how they are influenced by it (Olsson, 2008: 7). The interviews executed for this study were semi-structured and conveyed the impression of a conversation. Questions were prepared to have a guideline during the interview (see appendices 7.1) and to obtain basic information about the participants. At the same time it was possible to receive additional information from different users since each interviewee had the possibility to talk freely about different aspects regarding the topic “Facebook on the mobile phone and on the computer”. Depending on the answers it was possible to follow up on different mindsets and experiences of the user as well as recognizing reactions. Hence, not every question and not the same questions were asked in each interview. During the interviews subjectivity was to be avoided by not evaluating or judging the answers.

In total, ten interviews were conducted, nine face-to-face interviews and one via skype and webcam. To ensure the interviewees felt comfortable enough to talk about all their thoughts the interviews were conducted in the language most suitable for them – English, German or Swedish - all interviewees live in Sweden but have different nationalities. Each interview was about 20 minutes long and recorded during the

conversation. They were transcribed right after the meeting to retain the information as detailed as possible. The interview guide can be found in the appendices under 7.1 Interview Questions.

### 3.4 Research Population and Sample

In this research project users of the Internet on smartphones are in focus. Furthermore, it is important that they are using or have used Facebook on the mobile phone and on the computer. In addition, it was necessary that the interviewees were able to tell some opinions and experiences about the usage. In qualitative research it is common to use a non-probability sample (Oliver, 2006: 128) to analyze and interpret the big amount of data collected in the interviews. This includes that less people were questioned than in a quantitative study but the results are more detailed and more individual. Several volunteers were recruited with both the help of Facebook and friendships on the network but also “realworld” friends. Both people with no relation and closer friends to the interviewer were asked to contribute. Finally, people who are working or studying in the technology and computer field were mixed with people who are not interested in technology and working in a completely different field. With this study design it was possible to receive information and opinions from two kinds of people: those who actively think about technology and their usage because of their experience, and those who have no idea how this specific technology works and what is possible to develop and how to improve the technology.

Which mobile phone each user is using is listed for possible further research. This thesis does not consider problems on different mobile phones although this qualifies as another suitable research topic. Furthermore, it was interesting to find out how often people use Facebook. Also, when they have access to a computer, under which circumstances do they log in on Facebook Mobile?

The age was not taken into consideration in this research because a person of any age is allowed to have an opinion about Facebook and its usage on the computer vs. a mobile phone. The following table (3.4.1.) shows the most important characteristics of the interviewees, e.g. how interested they see themselves in technology:

**Table 3.4.1.** Characteristics of the Interviewees

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Access to PC</b>	<b>Using Facebook via PC</b>	<b>Using Facebook Mobile</b>	<b>Interest in Technology</b>	<b>Mobile Phone</b>
P1	Female	At home	Daily	Connected by application	Less interestd	iPhone 3G
P2	Female	All day	Daily	Daily	Less interested	Nokia E72
P3	Female	At home	Daily	Daily	Less interested	HTC Desire
P4	Male	All day	Daily	Connected by application	Very interested	iPhone 3G
P5	Female	Different	Daily	Daily	Less interested	Nokie E71
P6	Female	Different	Daily	Connected by application	Very interested	iphone4G
P7	Female	Different	Daily	Connected by application	Very intersted	iPhone 3G
P8	Male	At home	2-3 times a week	2-3 times a week	Very interested	Blackberry curve 8900
P9	Male	All day	Daily	Connected by application	Very interested	iPhone3G
P10	Female	All day	Daily	Daily	Less interested	iPhone 3G

### 3.5 Evaluation of the Research Methods

The interview as a form of data collection represents a suitable tool to gain knowledge about individual problems and usage of Facebook. Furthermore, recording the interviews allowed the in-depth analysis of answers in order not to miss any details and to be able to reconsider the answers at a later point. Nevertheless, the result could have been further developed by combining it with additional advantages from observations (Creswell, 2007:38), e.g. the usage of Facebook could have been considered from a different perspective and might have identified characteristics the user does not know about his own usage. An observation could also have helped to prove the reliability of the answers given by the interviewees.

To gain a higher objectivity it could have been an advantage to interview only people who have absolutely no relation to the interviewer, which might have obtained different answers by the interviewees but also could have avoided eventual subjectivity in the analysis of the results.

## 3.6 Ethics

Sveningsson (2003: 48) refers to four guidelines provided by the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR) which were followed in this research. She describes how to treat the interviewees and how to protect them:

### **1. Informational requirement**

The interviewees received all necessary information about the survey and its purpose, e.g. they were informed that they assist in a thesis in the media technology field.

### **2. Requirement of consent**

The interviewees were informed about the optional participation in the interview, e.g. they were advised of the possibility to end the interview at any time

### **3. Requirement of confidentiality**

Interviewees were assured that their information will be kept confidential, e.g. that their real names are not used in the thesis.

### **4. Requirement of restricted use**

It was pointed out that the information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Creswell (2007: 141f) mentions that the anonymity of the interviewees is provided by not using real names and not revealing intimate experiences the users might have told during the interview. Each person received a short introduction what the survey is aiming for, in which context it is conducted and that it is possible to abandon the interview any time if the volunteer feels uncomfortable.

## 4. Results and Analysis

*This chapter presents the results of the ten interviews described in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. It is divided into three parts: “Qualities”, which takes up Qualities of Network Communities (see 2.4) and Use Qualities of Digital Design (see 2.5), “Environment” which refers to Modalities in mobile computing (see 2.6) and “Usability” (see 2.7) which relates to the technology of mobile Internet and mobile phones.*

### 4.1 Qualities

#### **“The daily usage increased”**

Informant 3 recognized that the daily usage of Facebook increased from 2 to 5 times per day. Interviewee 1 also recognized the increasing usage but is mentioning that the duration of the time on Facebook Mobile is much shorter than on the computer. Nevertheless, the importance of logging in on Facebook decreased because the access is almost given at any time says interviewee number 5. Most of the respondents do not know the feeling of missing Facebook anymore. They simply log in without thinking about it, at any time of the day with almost no restrictions.

However, the constant possibility to log in does not generally give the expectation to receive a quicker answer from the communication partner. Person 3 keeps in mind that other people are working or are busy with other activities. Informant 6 did not offer an answer to the question but indicated that she is responding quicker because of the possibility to answer via Facebook Mobile and by receiving real time notifications about the obtained message. Informant 9 has the feeling that writing a text message on the mobile phone is little less time consuming than leaving a message through Facebook Mobile but still adequately fast.

The possibility to check Facebook on the mobile phone could be the reason for a more frequent usage of the social network. A user is available around the clock if she or he carries a mobile phone on him. This can lead to quicker conversations and information exchanges. Since Facebook is available at nearly any time users lose the conscious

impulse of logging in on Facebook even though they are using it daily. Mynatt includes this symptom under **periodicity**.

Some users are not just changing their time behaviour but also expect others to do so if they have access to Facebook Mobile. The Facebook network offers the user a new method of communication, the participation in the network community accumulates, though in the case of Facebook the duration of the usage is shorter on the mobile phone than on the computer.

### **“It is kind of checking the Daily News”**

The majority of the respondents use Facebook mainly to check other peoples' life and to stay in contact with them. Volunteers number 9 and 10 think that this is a cheap, fast, comfortable and unique way of communication. In contrast, informant 6 also likes to get the attention of other people by means of composing posts and publishing on Facebook. Interviewee number 5 uses the mobile function to find information already published on Facebook so other people do not need to be disturbed by the same questions over and over again, e.g. by checking the address for an event on the Facebook event page. When asking the interviewees about the first thing they do when logging in on Facebook, the most common answer was checking the News Feed, no matter if on the mobile or on the computer version. Respondents 1,2 and 9 usually open Facebook on the computer the first time every day when they have breakfast, while interviewee 6 developed the habit to check Facebook on his mobile phone while travelling to work or university by bus. The same person is usually leaving comments about the events happening around him. In contrast person number 1 is usually directly closing the App after checking the News Feed and is used to wait with updates until the computer is available.

The main reason for using Facebook is to stay in contact with other people and to receive constant updates about their lives. According to the interviews, the **motivation** for using Facebook on the mobile phone is the same as on the computer. The only advantage of the mobile phone is that the updates happen faster; the **periodicity** is increasing. Clearly the answers show that the users have developed a routine of checking Facebook. Mynatt calls this **persistence**. Apparently there are no differences

between the computer and the mobile habits when it comes to what people do first when opening the network.

### **“Only checking the News Feed”**

The **data** sent by Facebook Mobile is “shorter” compared to the data sent through the computer says interview person number 1. She is often waiting to answer a message until she is in front of the computer. Important messages, however, are answered quickly and in a shorter form with the note a longer reply will follow later on. Mostly the respondents stated that they monitor friends on Facebook rather than being active and posting something. To get a short overview is the target – a closer look can be taken at a computer at a later point.

While interviewees 1, 2 and 8 rather use the platform to inform several people at one time, number 3 is restricting the information to a smaller group by sending private messages. Informant 5 is mostly taking advantage of the Facebook chat to communicate but for her it is not possible to use this feature on the mobile phone because she does not know how the installation process works.

Respondent 4 tried to delete people via the Facebook Mobile Application which was not possible, but by the time she was in front of the PC she forgot about the activity and never actually deleted these people.

Mynatt is talking about **boundaries** and **engagement** as two qualities that network communities are offering. Even if users have the possibility to communicate in several ways they are mostly just taking advantage of it on the computer. On the mobile phone they are more passive and are less engaged in producing content. As the model “Modalities in Mobile Computing” shows, **data** produced on Facebook differs depending on the medium. While users on mobile phones mostly check other people’s profiles computers are used to produce content. Nevertheless, there is no obvious change in how many people the user is reaching out to on the computer or on the mobile phone. The medium doesn’t influence the communication behaviour, e.g. if an activity should be public or private. However, it happens that the user is forgetting about activities because he or she is not able to carry them out on their phone and by the time they have access to a computer the activity is not important enough anymore.

### **“Different Facebook Friends”**

Informant 10 is using the possibility to add friends on the Favourite list in the Mobile Application which provides faster access to their profiles. The same person also personalizes the account by using notifications just for certain information not to be overloaded by advice notes. Interviewee 8 is restricting the content of the profile so just certain people can see pictures and information, nevertheless, the same content is viewable via mobile phone and computer. However, the procedure of restricting the content is carried out on the PC.

Deciding who can see the personal profile or just parts of it is a quality which Mynatt calls **authoring**. Facebook offers the opportunity to adjust the personal profile and the usage of the personal page. Because the application on the phone offers less features it is usually possible to only adjust the profile. The full usage has to be changed on the computer. Though on the mobile phone it is possible to receive notifications only on certain messages and to create a Favourite list of friends for quicker access.

### **“Always online on Facebook”**

All interviewees see the constant Internet access as the most obvious advantage of Facebook Mobile. Person number 10 enjoys the notifications about upcoming birthdays. These are available on both mediums.

Five informants are connected to Facebook all day via the application and the notifications. Informant 4 says he enjoys the possibility to focus on other activities while not missing out on interesting events on Facebook. It only takes one moment to open the application and be online. Interviewees number 1, 2 and 4 said while they just need between 1 and 10 minutes to check Facebook Mobile, they have a constantly open Facebook window running on their computer.

The Facebook Application on the mobile phone provides notifications to the user if something interesting happened in the community. This offers the possibility to focus on other actions besides Facebook but still not missing out on network news. The application runs in the background, the user only needs to wait for a notification but can simply open the application if needed. On the computer it is also possible to leave

Facebook open in a separate window or browser tab but it might distract easily. In contrast the application on the mobile phone might interrupt less because it is not a visible open window which attracts less of the user's attention every time he or she is looking on the mobile display. **Foreground-, intermittent- and background interaction** follow the same principles on both mediums – the user can without any problems change the focus of attention from being active on the network to running it in the background.

The second group of use qualities Jonas Löwgren is specifying for offering a good usage for digital design is called **interaction** (see 2.5). It describes the quality **fluency**. The user does not need to decide if Facebook should run just via mobile phone or via computer, both possibilities are feasible and easy to mix.

Furthermore, the user is offered constant access to the Internet via mobile phone and consequently to Facebook. All properties offer the user an independent work with easy access and just little adjustments to the medium. Facebook offers **pliability** to the user. It even supports human actions like reminding the user about friends' birthdays or even suggesting friends based on friends' friendships. It seems Facebook can think **autonomously**, but this impression does not depend on the medium.

With Facebook Mobile all these actions become faster, easier to access and an unconscious part in the daily life which would only be missed if the access was refused.

### **“Sharing it with 200 other people”**

Interviewee 7 is using the possibility to upload pictures to convey an individual impression of her life to her friends. The plurality of the interviewees like the idea to upload pictures via mobile phone but don't use it very often. Informant 1 has the feeling that most of the pictures uploaded directly are giving a deeper and closer look into the private lives of others, e.g. more party or holiday pictures. She is also mentioning that it is too easy to get intimate with 200 other users seeing this on Facebook. Also number 3 and 9 are aware of the fact that pictures can mediate a wrong impression of someone, especially if they do not see the person regularly.

Interviewees 7 and 9 are mentioning that it can become annoying that people update their status several times a day which increased with the option to access Facebook via the mobile phone.

Profiles can be changed in real time, e.g. by uploading pictures immediately to Facebook, literally projecting the right image as Löwgren is describing in the group **actions and their outcomes on social levels** (see.2.5). Compared to the computer usage the mobile offers the possibility to upload pictures directly from the phone in an easier way than taking the camera, connecting it to the PC, downloading the picture and again uploading it to Facebook. Furthermore, the user does not need to wait with showing the pictures. But it also gives users the possibility to think about what they want to upload on Facebook and what they want to reveal of themselves, especially because they see other people using status updates and pictures regularly and by this offering a too close look into private lives. Users are giving each other the possibility to rethink their usage and their picture they want to show other people. Mynatt describes this as **distancing**.

## 4.2 Environment

### “Mostly when I am bored I open Facebook”

Surrounded and pushed by many people in the subway or on the bus makes it really hard to take out the mobile phone and check Facebook, the respondents agreed. While interviewees number 1 and 3 feel that it is strange that other people can have a look on the display while surfing, number 8, together with the majority of the respondents, have no worries about other people seeing of their screen content. These interviewees simply do not care about such a privacy issue because they don't carry out any “secret” activities.

Respondent 10 says it happened from time to time that she was already relaxing on the sofa so she rather picked up her mobile phone to check Facebook instead of going to the computer. In general, however, people use either the computer when being at home or use Facebook less. During this time the mobile phone does not get much attention. The same is valid when being with friends, classmates and colleagues. Most of the respondents would feel strange to surf on the mobile phone while having company. One reason is that they are occupied at this point. Respondents 3 and 9 even feel uncomfortable to show they have the need to be connected to the Internet all the time. Person 4 feels that it is inappropriate to surf on Facebook during work time.

The **physical and social environment** is playing an important role when using Facebook, no matter if on the PC or on the mobile phone. Nevertheless, people feel less

disturbed when being alone. When using the mobile phone it can become uncomfortable being surrounded by people even if they are not engaged in direct conversation or social exchange. It seems Facebook Mobile is mostly used when users are alone and don't have company. Sometimes people also try to avoid Facebook when being with people not to show a certain addiction to be connected to a "virtual" world while "real life is running by".

#### **"Checking Facebook when waiting for the train"**

Each respondent said that they are using Facebook Mobile when they are travelling by public transport or waiting for something or someone. Boring situations (e.g. being alone on the subway) foster the usage of Facebook Mobile. When being at a place with access to a computer, apart from user 3 and 4, all others would prefer the computer. If the computer is available Facebook is more likely to run constantly in the background while using other programs.

Informants 2 and 6 would not use Facebook when they are in a hurry or busy with something else, e.g. running to catch the subway.

While the computer can just be used at home or at stationary places, the mobile phone can be used at any time and anywhere. However, people prefer the PC to the mobile phone if they have the choice. This is equivalent to the modality **visiting** Kristoffersent and Ljungberg are mentioning in their model "Modalities in Mobile Computing" (see 2.6). Mostly mobile phones are used when **travelling** on public transport where a computer is not available. When a second activity receives more attention the mobile phone is usually placed in the pocket or put to the side, which commensurates with the modality **wandering**.

### 4.3 Usability

#### **"The application offers the most important features"**

According to all interviewees, the reasons for using the computer rather than the mobile phone for communicating are the disadvantages of the small keyboard and the small display. Both reading and writing a longer message can be complicated and demand too much effort from the user. Furthermore, half of the respondents feel the interface on the

computer provides a clearer arrangement than the mobile phone. Respondent 6, however, thinks that both Facebook on the computer and the mobile phone are offering a high usability because on the latter the application is limited in its use and minimalized to the most common features.

The majority of the respondents said that it is not unusual to lose the Internet connection from time to time on the mobile phone. Problems can arise with the reception of Internet on the subway, but interviewees 2 and 8 already identified these particular usage areas and are not surprised by such disturbances anymore.

An advantage of Facebook Mobile is the possibility to answer straight away. Furthermore, it is possible to avoid commercials. Another advantage was given by person 6: it is much easier to surf on the computer, e.g. watching older pictures and get lost in time. This usually does not happen on the mobile phone since the possibility is not given, it would take too long and several steps are required to receive the same result, according to respondent 6. Interviewees number 2, 3 and 7 mention that it drains the battery to use the Internet and this is one of the reasons why they are trying to keep the usage short.

Respondent 2 is rarely watching pictures on the mobile phone because they take a long time to load. Watching videos is hard, too, because of a still too slow connection and occurring errors while loading the video, according to interviewee 1. Respondent 5 has trouble using the Facebook chat on the mobile phone but instead of fixing it she decided not to use this feature.

In general the respondents answered they are checking large data volumes on the computer if the immediate usage is not important for them.

According to the answers given by the interviewees, using Facebook on a mobile device contains several technical disadvantages. Even if the mobile phone is a possibility to answer in a quicker way, often it does not offer a quicker usage compared to the computer, e.g. when writing a long email it is more convenient on the computer where both hands and all fingers can be used at the same time. Jonas Löwgren describes these characteristics in his group **structural outcome and engineering ideal**.

The respondents use less features on the mobile, first because the Facebook Application is limited in its use and second because technical disadvantages of the mobile device complicate the usage of its full spectrum. A third point which seems to be important in the use of mobile phones is the status of the modality (wandering,

travelling, and visiting, see 2.6) in connection with technical disadvantages. If the user travels or wanders around the internet connection might be brittle; in general the internet connection is slower than on a stationary computer. However, if the status of modality is visiting it is possible to access the same internet connection with the same speed on the computer and on the mobile phone. In this case the user would possibly think again about the technical disadvantage of a mobile device and use a computer.

Nevertheless, it appears the **usability** of the Facebook Mobile Application is so high that users either accept inferior service features or stop using certain features on the phone. But each interviewee enjoys the usage of Facebook on their mobile phone, at least at times.

# 5. Evaluation

*This chapter discusses the analysis and its results and what it means in a broader view for the field. It includes the summary of the most important results and draws an evaluation of the thesis, its aims and the chosen method. The last section suggests suitable future studies.*

## 5.1 Discussion

As the result of the survey shows the usage of Facebook clearly differs on PCs and mobile devices. The following differences could be determined:

- Certain ways of communication are **not used on both mediums** because they are not useful (e.g. poke button)
- Longer and time-consuming communication is **mostly done on the computer** due to a bigger screen and a bigger keyboard (e.g. private messages)
- Visualized communication is **preferably uploaded with help of a mobile phone** due to a quicker process (e.g. uploading pictures)

Clear differences between Facebook Mobile and the desktop version lie in the time interval of usage. Due to wider technology options of the mobile phone, users have the possibility to log in on Facebook more often but they spend less time for each execution, e.g. they just want to receive a short update about the happenings on Facebook but do not surf around as they would do on the computer. Notifications reminding the user in real time about happenings on Facebook and the user himself are constantly available as long as the mobile phone is on him.

The interviewees participating in this study noted that they are using Facebook on both mediums though it is still easier for them to access the Facebook network via computer due to technical advantages. At this point in time the mobile phone cannot replace a computer. However, instead of giving up the usage on their mobile phones, users get used to some disadvantages, accomplishing certain tasks later on the PC, or

stop using those features at all. The Facebook Mobile Application offers a good overview of the program, however, this is only possible because it restricts itself to just a few features compared to the “all-inclusive” computer version.

Another notable fact arising from the survey results is that users obviously create less content on their mobile phones and only use it to receive short news on Facebook; the main reason being technical advantages and disadvantages. Seeing other people posting personal content regularly, users start to reassess their own behaviour on the social network.

While the computer due to being stationary offers limited access to Facebook, a mobile phone offers access almost regardless of the location. Nevertheless, also here the context plays a big role since “everywhere” also implies problems for the user, e.g. using it while walking, being bumped into by surrounding people. The status of the modality is significant and creates even more technical disadvantages, like a slow or brittle Internet connection. Although both mediums have their advantages and disadvantages the Facebook user learns to work with them by adapting usage accordingly.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The aim of the thesis includes analysing two objects of research regarding the different usage habits of Facebook on mobile phones and on PCs from the perspective of an end user. The results of the interviews and their interpretation allow the following summary:

### **Reasons for using Facebook on the mobile phone and on the computer:**

According to the conducted survey, using Facebook on the mobile phone usually happens when the user is bored, has nothing else to do and is mostly waiting for either public transport or friends. While a user is travelling it has become quite common to surf on the mobile phone. Most of the respondents agreed they did not purchase a mobile Internet contract to use Facebook, however, now that it is available it is a welcome side-effect. Facebook, no matter on which medium, offers fast, quick and cheap communication with people who might or might not live far away. It is providing an opportunity to meet new people with the same interest. The computer-based version of Facebook offers a higher overall usability.

### **The usage on the mobile phone and on the computer**

In general, interviewees actively log in on Facebook Mobile to check their News Feed and being informed what other people are doing and posting. It usually just takes a few minutes, if not a few seconds to do this on the mobile phone. On the computer they mostly run Facebook in the background as a default setting. Users also receive the notifications about the news stream on Facebook but are mostly logging in without a reminder, simply because they are bored, no matter which medium they use. Users take advantage of Facebook Mobile to read messages they receive but also to answer them. On the computer they produce more content and surf around on the Facebook network. Some respondents complained about the small display and keyboard on the mobile which are reasons for rather using the computer to use Facebook. The mobile phone is for most users suitable to post quick and short status updates.

## **5.3 How the usage of Facebook differs on computers and mobile phones from the perspective of an end user**

With the help of the above results several differences about the usage of Facebook could be determined. They result from individual experiences could indicate a trend to universal Facebook usage both on the mobile phone and on the computer.

The computer-based Facebook offers in general more features than the mobile version. While Facebook remains constantly open on the computer, a mobile device integrates the application in the background which is always available but invisible. The most notable difference between both mediums is likely that the interviewees are more active on their PC, e.g. writing longer messages or surfing through more friends' profiles and older pictures. The average usage span is longer on the computer, nevertheless, the mobile phone enables them to log in more often or to be logged in constantly. Facebook on their computer offers a richer interface with more features than the mobile version; at the same time the interface for mobile phones is appreciated due to its reduced feature set in a clearly arranged interface.

During the interviews it was noticed that the users did not care much about the missing features on their mobile phones. They found two solutions regarding this problem:

1. Not using the missing features and ignoring the possibility even on their home PC

2. They are waiting to pursue the feature on the computer later in time. As a consequence it might happen that they forget about this intended action completely.

Although messages written on Facebook Mobile become shorter, the received information level rises because the user logs in more often and receives more information. The questioned users do not have the feeling they need to log in on Facebook, instead they do it subconsciously all the time. The most important differences are summarized in the table 5.3.1. below:

**Table 5.3.1.** The most important differences between Facebook on the computer and on the mobile device

	<b>PC</b>	<b>Mobile</b>
<b>Activity</b>	Producing more content, Answering with longer messages	Just checking and reading, Answering short messages, Receiving information faster
<b>Time</b>	Logged in for a longer time to surf around on the network	Only opening Facebook for a few minutes or even seconds
<b>Connection</b>	Facebook is constantly open in the browser	Constantly connected and receiving notifications but the Facebook Application is hidden in the background
<b>Technical Advantages</b>	Bigger screen and keyboard, fast Internet connection and almost no interruptions	Constant access; uploading pictures and videos quicker and easier
<b>Technical Disadvantages</b>	can only be accessed where a computer is available	Smaller screen and (onscreen) keypad; brittle and might slower Internet connection
<b>Interface</b>	Well-arranged while integrating many features	Well-arranged due to less features
<b>Authoring</b>	It is possible to restrict content	Creating favourite Friends list for quicker access

## 5.4 Further Research

Two questions became evident during this research:

- a) Would it help to teach users how to avoid problems and therefore receiving a better user experience or would they not be interested in deeper knowledge?
  
- b) Will Facebook have the same appearance in a few years or will it one day even offer more features in the Mobile Application than on the PC?

Right now the network does not offer the same usage on both mediums, however, it remains unclear if users even want this. The aim could be to limit Facebook to its most important features and just offer reduced activities to mobile clients. In this case the mobile phone would just be a supplement to the computer. On the other hand, it seems possible to improve the mobile technology to such a level that almost everything can be done with Facebook or in a broader sense with the mobile device so a computer is not even necessary any more. Possible advancements of the Facebook Application produce equally interesting research topics for the future.

This thesis should be considered as an extension to previous research attempts, likewise it should motivate to keep working on this topic in the future. Topics to be considered for analysis could be:

- Which features will Facebook develop to use on the mobile phone and which features are most important to the users?
- How does the usage of Facebook differ on varying mobile phones and platforms?
- How do other social networks present themselves on mobile devices?

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# 7. Appendices

## 7.1 Interview Questions

### **Introduction and Facebook in General**

How old are you?

Are you studying or working? For whom or in which profession?

When and where are you using your computer (work, just at home...)?

Do you like new technology? Are you interested in technology?

Since when are you a member on Facebook?

How often do you approximately check Facebook?

What do you like about Facebook?

Do you see any disadvantages in using Facebook?

Why are you a member of Facebook? Why do you want to keep using it?

### **Facebook on the computer**

Which features are you using on the Facebook computer version?

What is your main activity on Facebook?

How are you communicating with people on Facebook? How are you staying in contact? (private messages, pokes, likes..)?

### **Facebook on the mobile phone**

Which mobile phone do you use?

How common, do you think, is the use of Facebook Mobile in general?

How long have you been using Facebook on the mobile phone?

How often do you log in on Facebook Mobile?

In which situations are you using Facebook on the mobile phone? Can you describe different places and times?

At which times and in which situations are you using Facebook less?

When is it harder for you to check Facebook (any places, activities)?

Which features are you using on Facebook Mobile (uploading pictures, chatting)?

Which features are you using in a different way on your mobile phone than on your computer?

How are you communicating with people on Facebook? (private messages, pokes, likes..) (Which feature are you using more than the other?)

Are you communicating with people in a different way on Facebook Mobile than on the PC?

Uploading pictures and videos on Facebook directly – how are you using this feature?

What do you like about this feature?

Which is your favourite and most used feature?

Are you expecting a person to answer quicker on Facebook just because he or she is using Facebook via mobile phone?

How does Facebook Mobile change your usage of Facebook (habits, frequent use, who is allowed to see your activities on Facebook, how are you communicating)?

Can you describe your usage? You are logging in on Facebook...

### **Comparison**

Why do you spend money for accessing Facebook on the mobile phone if u can have it “for free” on the computer?

Mobile phone and computer next to each other – which one are you using for checking Facebook? Why?

Do you write a private message on Facebook’s computer or mobile version? Why?

Which way is easier for you to check on friends’ activities, computer or mobile phone?

How is Facebook a habit in your life?

When do you feel you didn’t log on to Facebook for a long time?

### **End**

Can you describe in a few words what you think about Facebook’s mobile version (differences, advantages, disadvantages)?

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

**Thank you for participating!**