Proximity

To: Proximity Mobile Team

From:

CC: Paul Miers

Date: January 9, 2018

Subject: Winter 2018 Focus Group Session on Virtual Assistants

Here is my report on a focus group I ran with three college age males and two college age females about their use of AI powered virtual assistants (VAs) on their mobile devices. Most participants liked using VAs when driving and listening to music, although some reported they become frustrated when the VA did not understand what they had said.

Focus Group Rationale

AI powered VAs are growing in popularity as more mobile phone applications integrate with AI platforms. I wanted to find out how millennials are using these VAs and whether they have any privacy concerns. Information from this session will help companies understand how VAs are changing the way millennials get information from their mobile devices.

Setting and Participants

The hour-long session was conducted at my apartment on Saturday, January 6, 2018. The five participants were:

- Alex, 23, male, a [redacted] University graduate and economics major
- Anthony, 23, male, a recent [redacted] University graduate and history major
- Matthew, 21, male, a [redacted] College senior economics major
- Sophia, 19, female, a [redacted] University sophomore digital media major
- Kayla, 19, female, a [redacted] College sophomore economics major, history minor

Session Topics

We covered the following three topics during the session:

<u>Frustration with VAs not understanding users</u>

Almost all of the participants have been frustrated with the VAs not understanding their voices. They felt that Siri, Apple's digital assistant, was the most unreliable. Sophia was often "irritated" with Siri interrupting her when she was speaking. She found it was easier to type her question rather than directly asking Siri.

Favorite uses for VA technology

Participants who frequently use VAs found the technology was most helpful while they were driving. Other participants enjoyed the convenience of having VAs play music on their mobile devices or search for information online.

Kayla said that VA technology makes her a safer driver because she is able to communicate with friends without looking at her mobile device. While she found the technology useful for texting, she did not trust using Siri for important tasks such as setting alarms or making calendar appointments. She felt more confident typing those in the phone herself without the aid of a VA.

Concerns about privacy

Three of the participants had no concerns about privacy and were not aware of the privacy issues. The other two participants were more concerned with privacy and security but said that those concerns would not stop them from using the VA technology.

None of the participants knew that the microphone had to be on at all times for the "Hey Siri" feature to work. That requirement made them uncomfortable.

Findings

The two most important findings from this session were that participants:

- use VAs while driving and listening to music;
- find the limited voice recognition ability of their VAs frustrating.

Implications

Given the spread of connected cars, VAs with improved voice recognition are increasingly likely to influence where drivers stop to shop, eat, and find entertainment. National brands and local businesses must insure that their products and services are the ones recommended to millennial drivers. Our team should conduct follow-up sessions to determine the extent to which VAs determine where millennials consumers drive and what they do when they get there.