

## Chapter 6

# Examining Mobile Search Adoption

### The Swedish Experience in the Uptake Phase

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*The multimedia features brought by the rise of the mobile access to internet are tightly linked to the massive access of the public to mobile search. To date, there is limited knowledge on how distinct groups make use of mobile search in their everyday life. Attempting to fill that void, the purpose of this chapter is to describe and explain how mobile search behaviours have gained traction among distinct groups in Sweden from 2010 to 2012. The findings evidence a growing uptake among all groups over time. Smartphone ownership and age score the highest odds ratios, revealing smartphone users and 16–29 year olds as most inclined to use mobile search. In addition, a high education and use of a personal or company subscription show significant results.*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Amid the widespread development, diffusion and appropriation of mobile-specific information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially smartphones and tablets, the mediascape is changing in a multitude of ways. The pervasive nature of mobile devices enables timely and prompt mobile media and communication (Koivumaki et al., 2008), and the patterns of use formed are typically easy to maintain and routinise (Oulasvirta, Rattenbury, Ma, & Raita, 2011). Technological developments and convergence, alongside the rise of mobile ecosystems nowadays totalling more than a billion mobile applications for Android, Apple iOS, Microsoft Windows Mobile and so forth, have made mobile media an increasingly

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8838-4.ch006

important area to understand, and upon which to strategically act (Westlund, 2013). It has implications for the diverse agents of media firms trying to stay relevant in relation to their audiences through media innovation (Lewis & Westlund, 2015; Westlund & Lewis, 2014). Mobile search is becoming increasingly important to both citizens and diverse actors (e.g. companies and authorities).

Search engines, which have long since been the main gateway for most Web users, have turned towards facilitating mobile search experiences. Similar to the wired Internet, a prerequisite for the mobile web and its applications is supplying data, content and utility services in an efficient and user-friendly manner. Mobile content and mobile search have been marked as representing truly important areas of development (Feijóo et al., 2009), not least for the salient case of the European Union (Reding, 2008; Gómez-Barroso et al., 2010).

Much previous research in mobile media and communication has focused on “who” (types of users) or “how” (types of uses) (Wirth et al., 2008). Scholars have pointed out the need for deeper research on mobile media (Scolari et al., 2012) and its impact on users’ behaviour, which includes mobile search. This chapter integrates these two perspectives by focusing on mobile search usage on a daily or weekly basis (“how”), depending on distinct socio-demographics (“who”). Importantly, the chapter does not focus on the adoption and use of mobile devices in general. Instead, it focuses on a sort of second stage of adoption (Westlund, 2008; Li, 2013), here involving the more specific use of mobile search functionality.

Various kinds of reports—both from academia and the industry – have witnessed the rapidly increasing appropriation of mobile media use around the globe (Campbell, 2007; Chan, 2015; Kitamura, 2013; Martin, 2015; Sasseen et al., 2013; van Damme et al., 2015; Verbrugge et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014; Westlund, 2014; Westlund, 2015; Westlund & Färdigh, 2015). In addition, several studies have documented and compared mobile media use from a cross-cultural perspective involving the United States and Germany (Humphreys et al., 2013), Europe and the Americas (Newman & Levy, 2013) as well as Sweden and Japan (Westlund, 2010). A salient finding from many of the studies is that mobile media have become interwoven with the rhythms of everyday life, being used off and on over the course of the day and night when users are awake, while they are at both home or work/school, and while on the go (Dimmick et al., 2011; Ericsson, 2011; Taneja et al., 2012; van Damme et al., 2015; Westlund et al., 2011). Some empirical evidence finds that mobile Internet enhances rather than replaces Internet desktop use (Ongena et al., 2012). On the other hand, a number of more specific analyses on news access via mobile devices and computers suggest that some groups use both resources in a complementary manner, some have displaced computers in favour of mobile, whereas others have not adopted mobile news at all (Westlund & Färdigh, 2012; 2015).

As demonstrated from assessment by the World Economic Forum, for instance, Sweden has achieved comparatively significant advancements of digital media (Dutta & Bilbao-Osorio, 2012). It is a country with a broad diffusion of Internet and mobile media, in which the prominent position of legacy media such as newspapers and (public service) broadcasters have been accompanied by a plethora of agents offering media content and services (Westlund & Weibull, 2013; Westlund, 2010). The Swedish case is particularly illustrative of the uptake of the relationship between smartphone ownership and mobile search use, which comprises the 2010–2012 period. When looking at developing markets that are transitioning from feature phone to smartphone widespread ownership, it is feasible to sustain that prior experiences can lead from a better understanding of transitional processes to a higher use of ICT-related devices. The global dimension of the communication phenomena seems to support this argument (Campbell, 2007).

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