



## Chapter V

# A Practitioner-Centred Assessment of a User-Experience Framework

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### Abstract

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*In this chapter, we outline a relational approach to experience, which we have used to develop a practitioner-oriented framework for analysing user experience. The framework depicts experience as compositional, emotional, spatio-temporal, and sensual, and as intimately bound up with a number of processes that allow us to make sense of experience. It was developed and assessed as part of a participative action research project involving interested practitioners. We report how these practitioners used the framework, what aspects of experience they felt that it missed, and how useful they found it as a tool for evaluating Internet shopping experiences. A*

*thematic content analysis of participants' reflections on their use of the framework to evaluate Internet shopping experiences revealed some strengths and some weaknesses. For example, certain features of the framework led participants to reflect on aspects of experience that they might not otherwise have considered, for example, the central role of anticipation in experience. The framework also captured aspects of experience that relate to both the sequential structure of the activity and its subjective aspects. However, it seemed to miss out on the intensity of some experiences, and participants sometimes found it difficult to distinguish between some of the sense-making processes, for example, interpreting and reflecting. These results have helped to refine our approach to deploying the framework and have inspired an ongoing programme of research on experience-centred design.*

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## Introduction

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As computers migrate from work to leisure and family life, new perspectives and conceptual tools are required to understand human activity and the participation of technologies in activity. Developments, such as the World Wide Web, virtual reality, cyberspace, the penetration of computers into homes, cars, and games, and the integration of information and communications technologies resulting in wireless, mobile, and ubiquitous computing, suggest a revision of how we construe both people and technology. A person's attachment to the mobile phone is not just functional, it is also aesthetic (Katz & Aakhus, 2002; Taylor & Harper, 2002), and their use of the Internet is as much an expression of their sociality as it is a mark of their productivity (Markham, 1998; Turkle, 1995). Interacting with computers is now as much about play, fun, entertainment, community, and personal identity as it is about goals, tasks, and work. It is as much about children playing with cyberpets, teenagers gender swapping, and elderly people socialising on the Net, as it is about the middle-aged executive managing knowledge assets (Blythe, Monk, Overbeeke, & Wright, 2003; Jordan, 2000; Norman, 2004). As Kuutti (2001) characterised it, the user, who started out in the 1970s as a cog in a rational machine and became a social actor in the 1990s, is now a consumer.

The transition that Kuutti described points to the fact that people need to be able to *live* with emerging technologies, not just *use* them. Therefore, the focus for designers has to move beyond usability to *user experience*. The general impact of an emphasis on experience with technology can be seen in the popularity of works such as Turkle's (1995) analysis of "life on the Internet," in which she explored the social meaning of computers, the cultures of computing, and the impact of the Internet on our sense of self. The specific impact can be seen in attempts to understand and act on the concept of *user experience* in consumer arenas such as electronic commerce (see, for example, Lee, Kim, & Moon, 2000; Pu & Faltings, 2000) and more generally

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