

# USER INSIGHTS.

## // Feature phones and low tech functions

“My mobile phone is as old as 10 years or so. It’s a Nokia brand. It’s not the latest!”

“I have a Nokia mobile phone. It has internet, but it’s not too high-tech.”

“I have an ordinary phone; a simple one... I use it for the normal communications; calling and sms.”

“I have a Nokia phone that I use to connect to the internet and take photos.”

“On my mobile phone I’m able to access my email but I cannot upload or download attachments.”

The majority of participants were found to have feature phones, with the most popular brand being Nokia. The most popular functions were voice calling and sms, with a few participants also checking their emails. Reminders and the camera were also mentioned as frequently used features.

Although some users may have smartphones, it was also found in the research that “Chinese phones” are common, i.e. illegal copies of models such as the Blackberry. Thus it cannot be assumed that any tailor-made application developed would actually work on such phones, as they may not run on the official platforms.

Therefore it seems appropriate to focus on low tech functions in the delivery of mobile elements within the My.COOP training, in order to reach the highest number of people possible, and to avoid technical problems.

## // Need for mobile learning is dependent on nature of job

“I travel a lot in my job. A lot, a lot!”

“I’d say about 60% of the time I’m travelling, and I spend a lot of time in rural areas.”

“I’m always in the campus within the university. It’s only very rarely that I travel.”

Some participants are always on the go, spending a lot of time travelling in rural areas, and so have a need for mobile learning. Others spend almost all of their time in the office with a good internet connection, with a preference for e-learning. It is important to differentiate these different types of user and ensure mobile learning is offered where and when it can add value.

## // Need for customisation of training material to specific contexts

“to identify the specific technical assistance that we can provide to each group... we want each one to be different because each group is different.”

“each situation in every country, and even in different areas within the same country, is slightly unique”

The My.COOP training modules are standardised so that they can be used across the regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America, and for all kinds of agricultural cooperatives. However there is a desire from participants to have customised material related to the specific context of their country and agricultural sector, e.g. dairy cooperatives in Kenya. The mobile learning element can provide an additional “layer” of information that acts to customise the standard modules without influencing the standard nature of the modules themselves (which has the benefit of making the material applicable in different contexts).

## // Desire for a mobile learning toolkit

“I’m looking for innovative ways to empower the cooperatives”

“if it is practical and applicable, I can use the same to help in empowering the groups and cooperatives the project is working with”

“My expectations of participating in a mobile My.COOP training would be that we ourselves could then use this way of training to reach more cooperatives.”

“I would be very happy if we can also reach cooperatives through that medium; to use the mobile phone to also do our training.”

“You can reach the farmers through these new technologies, wherever he or she is. That can be very good for us.”

Almost all of the participants in the My.COOP training will go on to train others in the course material, thus the training of trainers (ToT) element is very important. It was found that the participants were not only interested in having their own mobile learning experience but that they would like to use mobile learning techniques in their delivery of My.COOP material too. In fact, this would be even more useful in the second wave of My.COOP training, which will be delivered directly to people at the base of the training pyramid who are more likely to be geographically isolated and have limited access to computers and the internet.

## // Willingness to contribute to training material development

“I can make time for follow up activities and discussions, I see it as a part of my capacity building, not only learning but contributing as well.”

One of the key lessons learned from MATCOM was that once this kind of training material is released into the public domain, participants take ownership of the material and actively adapt it to their needs. For example, unofficial grassroots translations of MATCOM were later found in the field, including a Swahili version.

Now we are in the 21st century and a connected society, so we can use this knowledge to offer participants new tools for adapting and sharing the material. Participants were found to be enthusiastic and willing to contribute to the ongoing development of the training material for the greater good of the cooperative movement as a whole. This willingness to collaborate should be supported and promoted, to facilitate crowdsourcing.

## // Need for social interaction during training

“I prefer to study with others...to share experience and discuss doubts. Face-to-face with others you can understand faster. It’s more “live”.”

“interaction, exchanging ideas and understanding each other formally and informally.”

Most participants stated face-to-face training as their preferred mode of learning, mainly due to the social element. One of the key factors in the development of mobile learning elements should therefore be to facilitate socialising at a local level and/or at a distance.

## // **Desire for professional networking opportunities**

“opportunity for us to share our experience among African institutions in cooperative sectors”

“interaction with people in different organisations is a very important part of it”

From the user research it was established that one of the aspects that participants appreciate most about face-to-face training is not only social interaction but also the chance for professional networking. One participant of several CoopAFRICA training events explained that these provided an excellent opportunity for likeminded institutions to get to know each other and that as a result, his institution (Ambo University in Ethiopia) is launching a joint project together with another institution (Moshi University in Tanzania).

## // **Desire to communicate with other coop stakeholders around the world**

“a platform where information can flow from different sources to the end user, and from the end user to the source...like a 2-way traffic”

“I thought about establishing an information centre”

“make sure that the farmers know what’s happening on the other side of the world, and to let the other side of the ocean knows what’s happening here”

“to build an international base, a critical number of cooperative development practitioners at 3 different levels; the international, national and grassroots level. A network, in short.”

“networking, and learning what is happening on the other end of the world”

Several of the participants (right from the base of the pyramid to the top level) expressed a strong desire emerged for connecting with the global cooperative community. There was a strong interest in communicating and sharing experiences with other stakeholders in the cooperative movement around the world and the lack of any current platform for facilitating this. This insight could have a greater relevance for the My.COOP training, not only utilising the mobile channels but also the functionality of the My.COOP website for example.

# PROCESS INSIGHTS.

## // The before, during and after of mobile learning

It was found that for participants of the blended course, the learning phase consists of 3 stages: “before”, “during” and “after”.

The “before” phase includes a Learning Needs Analysis, currently an online questionnaire hosted by the SurveyMonkey website, which is intended to assess each participant’s level of prior knowledge and expectations from the course. It can also include preparatory reading materials or activities assigned by the relevant ITC trainer.

The “during” phase consists of one week of face-to-face training and thus mobile learning is less relevant. However opportunities can still be explored for the use of mobile phones to enhance the face-to-face learning experience.

The “after” phase follows on from this week of face-to-face training and includes a longer period of distance learning based on an e-learning platform.

Thus these three phases of “before”, “during” and “after” should all be considered in the concept generation phase, with the potential to create mobile learning elements that take place in one phase only or that even span more than one phase creating links across the customer journey.

## // Mobile touchpoint opportunities aside from mobile learning

When analysing the whole customer journey of My.COOP participants, it was found that there are several stages they must complete that are unconnected to learning but that still contribute to their overall experience as an ITC user.

In particular, there is a lengthy bureaucratic phase for those who decide to participate in a blended My.COOP course, which takes place before their learning experience begins. In fact it was found that many potential ITC participants fail to complete the required admin procedures during this phase (making the course payment, applying for the visa for Italy, arranging insurance, etc) within the required deadlines, and thus are not able to go ahead and actually participate in the course.

In addition, those who manage to complete the procedures in time to participate in an ITC course often need to travel for several days in order to arrive to Turin, during which they are unlikely to be able to connect to the internet. Thus if any last-minute course changes are communicated to them by email these will not be seen.

Therefore it is important to consider these additional non-learning phases in the development of mobile touchpoints that can be integrated throughout the whole customer journey to create an improved user experience.

## // Opportunity to connect with indirect training participants

Apart from taking part in the ITC-delivered training courses (face-to-face and e-learning), people also have the chance to access the My.COOP training material by simply downloading the modules in pdf format (from the ITC or dedicated My.COOP website) and learning by self-study.

Furthermore, there will be a “second phase” of face-to-face training in which the former participants of the My.COOP training become the trainers, delivering the material to those at the base of the training pyramid.

People who access the My.COOP training material in these two situations have no direct link to the ITC, however there is an opportunity to design the system in such a way that establishes a connection.

In this way the ITC can keep track of all My.COOP participants (whether direct or indirect); capture their stories; bring them into a wider My.COOP community; and create new opportunities for interaction bottom-up innovation.