

PANDORA®

Extras Usability Test

Findings and Recommendations
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Executive Summary

Overall, this test of both new and long-term users showed that while the addition of Extras has not diminished the usability of the Pandora site. However, the Extras also are not compelling enough to lead users to interacting with them. Users frequently state they come to Pandora to “listen to music” and the Extras are outside of this basic experience that users seek and in fact most users saw the area as promotional or advertising until they had an opportunity to interact with the Extras.

Observation Highlights:

- The basics of music listening (creating and playing stations) continue to be a big success.
- New users are able to quickly get started with station creation and music listening.
- For a significant number of users, some interactions such as thumbing and creating bookmarks become a basic part of the Pandora listening experience, although they may only interact when the music that is most interesting (or least interesting) plays.
- The addition of the Extras has not diminished the usability of Pandora or interfered with the basic listening experience.
- While it is common for users to mention that they *did* notice the Extras, few actually interacted with them on their own initiative.
- Users see the Extras as being outside the experience they came for (“listening to music”) and so don’t try to interact with the Extras.
- Users make incorrect assumptions about the kinds of content that will be available within each Extra, often misunderstanding the labels.
- The Extras area is frequently interpreted as being for advertising or promotion, particularly of new artists or music (leading to some degree of “banner blindness”)
- Once users have opened and looked at the Extras, Now Playing and Genre Stations are well-received.
- They understood Friends was about social networking in some way, but did not have an interest in this or were reluctant to give email addresses of their friends.
- What’s New was frequently assumed to be promoting new artists or music before users opened it.
- “Pandora Presents” was assumed to be the promotion of artists or music. The name of this so strongly influenced users and the content was so unclear that even after opening it most users still thought Pandora is promoting a specific artist with this Extra.

Possible Courses of Action

Scenario 1: Redesign

Factors to consider:

1. Rename some or all of the Extras
2. Redesign some or all of the icons
3. Add contextual help / tooltips / rollovers
4. Consider design features that would attract attention, e.g. animations
5. Consider defaulting to the Now Playing Extra. (This would require rethinking the Extras navigation.)
6. Consider event-based actions, e.g. animations, opening particular Extras, etc.
7. Create a hint system that helps point users toward Extras

Scenario 2: Rethinking Extras

Factors to consider:

1. What are the goals of the Extras area overall?
2. What are the goals of each individual Extra?
3. How do the different Extras relate to each other: in content, in presentation, and in function?

The answers to these questions may lead us to consider solutions that may look quite different from the Extras of today. Some possible examples:

1. Listings of Genre Stations may be more useful to listeners if presented as part of the station creation process.
2. Now Playing information may more naturally live within the tuner.
3. What's New content may best be presented in a more ad-like format, or as tips
4. Extras may need to be separated into two broad categories – musical and non-musical, which categories could be treated very differently in the UI as appropriate.

Goals and Objectives

The Current Goals and Objectives of Each Extra

Now Playing

Encourage traffic to backstage pages

by: exposing some of the backstage content as a teaser

Increase retention and add additional value to the listening experience

by: providing music content when and where relevant

What's New

Promote new things to our site listeners (e.g. Pandora Everywhere)

by: providing space for promotional-style display

Friends

Help encourage viral growth

by: providing an easy process for importing addresses, for sharing and creating bookmarks

Help users discover more music

by: making "bookmarked" friends' music more accessible

Genre Stations

Provide a method for genre-focused users to get to their music

and

Help listeners discover new music (especially where they've run out of artists names to try or are new to a type of music)

by: making users aware of our Genre stations

Pandora Presents...

Promote awareness

by: displaying current episode information

Provide a new vehicle for Advertisers

by: increasing viewership of video podcasts

Study Goals

- Determine whether users can notice and successfully interact with the Extras
- Determine whether users understand what the Extras are
- Assess navigation within the Extras
- Assess desirability, usefulness, and engagement of each of the Extras
- Determine what other features users would like to see in the Extras
- Identify any navigation issues within the Extras

How The Study Was Conducted

Methodology

This study consisted of 12 one-on-one usability interviews, each lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. Testing was conducted remotely. All participants were recruited a customized version of the Ethnio web recruiting tool. Users' screen movements and commentaries were digitally captured using UserVue software while the test moderator spoke with the user on the phone. Analysis was performed with a focus on users' habits and behaviors.

Target Audience

Two user segments, each spanning a range of demographics:

- Long-time (at least a few months) users of Pandora who use Pandora at least once a week
- Users visiting Pandora for the first time

For a detailed description of the participants, please refer to Appendix A.

Detailed Observations

What Users Say vs. What Users Do

What Users Say

“I just want to listen to music, I don’t want to interact.”

Across both groups, this study saw users using Pandora in a very consistent manner and for similar reasons. Users tended to have Pandora running in the background while they did work, interacting relatively little with the features on the site, particularly the Extras.

The main reason for this was that they claimed that they were at Pandora “just to listen to music”, that they didn’t need anything “extra”, and that they didn’t want to interact much with the site.

What Users Do

“I want to find out more about the music I’m interested in.”

In contrast to what they said they wanted, many users reported that they were interested learning about new artists and genres and often used Pandora to do so by clicking on the songs to look up this information.

So it’s clear that users do want to interact with the site when it’s easy, clear, and helps them learn more about the music they’re interested in.

The overarching theme running through this is to make it easy to find the information users want and encourage musical exploration.

Users Don't Need Extras

In a literal sense, users saw “Extras” as being extra – outside of what they came for. While users were more-or-less aware of the Extras section, very few of them interacted with that section, claiming that it didn't seem like they had anything to do with just listening to music.

Many users reported that they initially overlooked the Extras because they were not “eye catching”, it was obscured by the browser, or because it was separated from the main section.

Supporting Quotes

User 01: I don't play around with it a lot. I pretty much just go here to hear the music.

User 02: I've noticed [the Extras] but I've never clicked on any of those options, it's not... I don't need it. I don't know what any of that is.

User 04: Down here, the Extras? No, I haven't used any of that at all. I guess because I just go to Pandora just to listen to music.

User 08: [Besides creating stations, do you do anything else?] I don't know what else it does. The only reason I set it up was for the music.

User 09: This sounds like something I might be interested in if I go on a lot, but it just kind of seems like something you already know about that, you know? Somebody who comes here a lot would probably, like the friends thing, you know, I don't really...The only time I've heard about it is from the people who told me.

User 10: I've noticed it but I've never clicked on any of those before...

User 11: I don't know if I'd click on that. As long as the music's running and you can see the title and who it's from and so forth, I think that's everything I'd need, I don't think I'd be clicking around below it to see what else is out there.

What Do Users Think Each Extra Is?

Before opening the Extras

Since most users had seen but not interacted or paid much attention to the Extras, we were able to get their perception of what the Extras are before actually using them. This can help us understand why users might not use the Extras and what might make it useful to them.

- **Now Playing:** Most users interpreted this to be about what OTHER users were listening to or possibly about new music or artists.

- **What's New:** Most users expected to find information on new music that was available at Pandora although some did guess that this might be news related to Pandora.
- **Friends:** Users tended to assume this feature was used either to invite their friends to Pandora, or that it was Pandora's social networking component.
- **Genre Stations:** Users generally guessed that this was some kind of pre-programmed station.
- **Pandora Presents:** Almost every user assumed that Pandora was getting into the business of promoting artists in this Extra

After opening the Extras

Now Playing and Genre Stations received the most interest after users opened them and understood what they are. In fact Genres received a large number of "wows". Once users understood that there might be something useful here, it increased their level of interest in Extras somewhat. The remaining three Extras were less enthusiastically received:

- **What's New:** Most users were uninterested in what was being promoted here
- **Friends:** Most users were uninterested in the Friends section, for varying reasons:
 - They were uninterested in social networking
 - They didn't want to give out their friends' email addresses (despite the "No Spam" disclaimer)
 - They didn't have many friends who used Pandora
 - They'd rather make their own stations than use other peoples'
- **Pandora Presents:** While some users stated that they might check out Pandora Presents "at some point", the general expectation was that users were only interested in Pandora Presents features if they were relevant to their music tastes and selections. Some users continued to think Pandora was promoting an artist here, even after opening the Extra.

Supporting quotes

User 01: I wouldn't click Friends unless... like, once I forwarded this to the people on my contact list, I probably wouldn't go back.

User 02: I probably wouldn't use the Friends thing, like unless all of my friends started using it, but I probably wouldn't be the one to initiate that.

User 04: I don't do the online community thing, you know, I don't visit forums or chatrooms or anything like that.

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User 05: [I'd use] Genre Stations and Now Playing... I don't see myself using any of the others.

User 08: Friends looks like some sort of a networking site... I doubt I would have any interest in that.

User 10: [Looking at Pandora Presents]: I've never heard of this gentleman here... that doesn't mean I wouldn't listen to him, but at work I pretty much I like to hear pretty much something I like.

Navigation

There were only a few minor navigation issues.

- Some users did not recognize right away that Genre Stations are added to their station list when a genre was clicked on.
- Two users who were relative computer novices mistakenly used the Back button to try to get back to the Pandora Extras main menu, exiting them from the site.

Appendix A: User Matrix

Long-time users

	Name	Age	Frequency of visits	Listens to music mostly...	Member since	# of Stations	Reason for visiting
1	Ann	35 to 44	Every day	At work	One week to three months	Between one and five	find likeable music
2	Camille	19 to 34	Every day	At work	More than three months	More than five	Listen
3	Seaandra	19 to 34	Every day	At work	One week to three months	More than five	listen to music, like every day!
4	Sean	45 to 54	At least once a week	At work	More than three months	More than five	listen to music
5	Grant	19 to 34	Every day	At school	More than three months	Between one and five	listen to radio
6	John	45 to 54	At least once a week	At home	More than three months	More than five	listen to music

First-time users

	Name	Age	Listens to music mostly...	Reason for visiting
7	Lois	55 to 64	At work	Listen to my music playlist
8	Alexis	35 to 44	At home	listen to music

9	Sammy	19 to 34	At home	find music with the same feel as the kinks sunny afternoon because i feel my favorite songs of now such as spoon are deeply rooted in that style of music
10	Andre	35 to 44	At work	A referral
11	Ivan	19 to 34	At work	listen
12	Katy	19 to 34	At work	listen to music

Appendix B: Observation Notes

Existing Users

Questions	User 01	User 02	User 03	User 04	User 05	User 06
Do you use any other online music services?	Live365, but now completely Pandora. Pandora gave songs more in line with her tastes.	None	Accuradio, AOL	No	AOL radio, XM radio	No (claims to have used Pandora for 2 years)
Where do you usually listen to music?	at work, in the car, in the morning getting dressed. Mostly on the Internet	At work	At work, At home on the weekends	at work	While doing school work	Home or car
Do you own most of the music you listen to?	Yes	No	More on Pandora	80% Pandora	No, a few albums from iTunes	mix of radio and CDs
What % are CDs, MP3s, etc.	CDs, iPod		MP3, iTunes			65% CD, 35% radio (terrestrial).
How did you originally find out about Pandora?		Friend told me	Friend	a blog		Read an article
How many stations?	3 stations	15 stations	14 stations	5-6 stations		at least 20
What do you like/dislike?	Very user friendly. 365 had a lot of clicking	Like the randomness		flexible - tailor it to what I like		Like: discover artists I probably wouldn't have know about Dislike: no song on demand (understand the licensing constraints)
Other Observations			Most of her stations have customized names			

Pasionate tasks						
	Creating station (did not see thumbs or menu before)	thumbs music - if in another app, will swith to Pandora to give thumb Created stations for different moods	Make new stations all the time because I like all kinds of music Gives lots of thumb feedback	Creates a station then skips through the first few songs to get a flavor of what the station will be like and decides whtether or not to keep it. Frequent bookmarking to make shopping list Too many seeds limits the playlist, so doesn't THUMB as much Use QuickMix for to create variety	Doesn't create a lot of stations Use the thumbs from the guide us panel bookmark artists and songs	Often uses QuickMix "pretty static experience" About artist, album from menu on slide
Extras Questions						
Notice before?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	not sure - wasn't asked	Yes
What did you think it is	If I come to listen to specific music, it will take somewhere else (away from that music)	Don't know what it is Guess: Educate me about the site	Knew what friends was for			
Interacted before?						
	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
If no - why not?						
	Just wouldn't click down there	I was never drawn to the extras		Just go to Pandora to listen to music. Extras would be for sitting down and doing stuff.	When I'm loading Pandora I'm using it for radio - I don't really need the Extras	
If yes, which ones?						
Now Playing						X
What's New						
Friends			X			
Genre Stations				"Prefab stations" - prefer my own		X
Pandora Presents						
Before Opening- What is it?						
Now Playing	Find out what do others think of an album before I buy it	What other people are listening to	What others are listening to	What is now playing on other user's stations	? - moderator did not ask before user opened it	
What's New	What's new in music	What is popular or Pandora, or what is new on the site	New artists	(couldn't hear him)	"	New things on Pandora
Friends	See what friends are listenting to	Attempt at social networking	o	facebook sort of thing (note- facebook house ad is showing)	"	Interact with people you already know on Pandora

Genre Stations	I would click this	Give examples if I don't know an artist	Might use it (gets what it is about)	Prefab stations	"	
Pandora Presents	"I wouldn't go here, I don't even know what this is"	Sponsored artists	She had clicked on "Pandora Presents" from the about the music menu previously	featured artists	"	Pandora is getting into the music promotion business
After Opening - What is it?						
Now Playing		Not what I expected. Would not use much - its just not what I expected	About music - usually use the menu on the song slide	Information about the music - had seen backstage before	Did not expect this much information	Tell you about the artist, opportunity to buy. Nice feature
What's New		I think I will have to buy something (its trying to sell me something)			Advertisements	Selling products to use to listen to Pandora (not what expected)
Friends	I would do that (invite friends)	What I expected. Not useful "Pandora is more useful than my friends"			Not interested in community	Enter your friends emails - I don't want to put friends' emails out there because of spam. Don't other people on Pandora
Genre Stations	Seems to be what she expected	"WOW!" (goes on to select a genre and then listens and then deletes it from station list)			Pre -selected. Gives me the opportunity to branch out a little more	(saw already) Lost connection to the user at this point
Pandora Presents		What they are trying to sell me. Its not for me.			Like AOL Live - hosting an artist	championing artists and giving them more exposure
				NOTE: Extras wouldn't open - Was only able to open Now Playing		
What would you like to see in Extras?						
	Connection to Ticketmaster	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer
Navigation						
	Used back button on browser to try to navigate within the Extras Not clear that clicking in a genre station put a station in the station list (genre station extra didn't change - no feedback)	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
Other Extras comments						
		Some (extras) are ambiguous	Really like genre stations	Even though he does lots of bookmarking and thumbing, he claims only to listen to music	especially like genre stations	

New Users

Questions	User 07	User 08	User 09	User 10	User 11	User 12
				Couldn't use, not a new user		
Do you use any other online music services?	Yahoo Launchcast	No	No. Girlfriend uses Limewire. Some YouTube music videos		online version of a radio station	YouTube
Where do you usually listen to music?	at work	car or home	Home or work		at the gym	at work
Do you own most of the music you listen to?	own most (90% of music listened to)	own	Own 75%		50/50	own
What % are CDs, MP3s, etc.	CDs	CDs	mostly CDs		use a Zune	MP3s
How did you originally find out about Pandora?	saw it online yesterday	a link in an article that she heard about on a blog	Friend		heard about from coworkers	coworkers
Other Observations			Use Pandora to find out about bands			probably not a new user, but can't tell for sure
Passionate tasks						
	opened from alias on desktop - links to her profile page clicks on station name, goes to station page and the clicks on play now	Register came up as this began. Registered successfully She had created one station and had been listening	Easy to use. Made a station off of a song he found and liked on YouTube Used guide us panel		created a Linkin Park station. There were no other stations when he logged in. Clicked on Profile	Someone had been at the site before. Started on the registration page. Says that she had used a co-workers account before.
Extras Questions						
Notice on their own?	Yes	Yes	No. Didn't register		Not able to tell	
What did you think it is			Something I might be interested in if I go on here a lot. Something you have to know about already			
Interacted before?						
	Yes	No	No			
If no - why not?						
		The only reason I set it up was for the music	came in to find out about new bands. It would take me away from what I am listening to. Something for members.			
If yes, which ones?						
Now Playing	X					
What's New						
Friends	X					
Genre Stations	X					

Pandora Presents						
Before Opening- What is it?						
Now Playing	see below	Something about music other people are listening to, or background on music I am listening to	did he click on the "I" ? (screen was scrambled)		No idea	
What's New	New services	New artists in the genre, or new features in Pandora			New artist, song or music	
Friends	see below	"I don't do networking" (bad experience from MySpace - I just got a bunch of emails from all of these creeps)			have friends who have similar taste in music. I wouldn't use it - I don't have a MySpace account	
Genre Stations	see below	I would click to see what I would get if I type in "blue grass"				
Pandora Presents	Don't quite know . Maybe a special broadcast	Introduce new artists			Featured artist. Maybe it changes every week	
After Opening - What is it?						
Now Playing	She uses it read more about the music and opens links to backstage	Background info on music I am listening to Interesting	Information on the artist		Information about music clicked "buy" button	
What's New	Other services. Not interested.	Not clear if this is what she expected	New music that Pandora/record companies promoting		Other features offered on the web site	
Friends	Used it to let my family know about music I found - we like the same kind of music Entered emails by hand	"I don't want to harrass my friends with email advertising from a website"	Not interested in social networking		see above	
Genre Stations		Wow. (I think she likes it) But expected to find Blue Grass under Blues, not Country	Station with bigger, more popular bands. I prefer making my own stations.		You can narrow it down without plugging in an artist	
Pandora Presents	features an artist - highlighting an artist	Not what I expected. It would teach about the music I would listen to (it happened to have a podcast about blues and she is listening to blues) "Pandora Presents sounds like you are telling me about new musicians in the genre"	Music that Pandora is showcasing.		didn't ask him	
What would you like to see in Extras?						
	Not at this time					
Navigation						
	OK	OK			OK	

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Naming the Extras						
		Extras - I thought it was telling me about things I would have to pay extra to get				
Other Extras comments						
	Very simple to use the site		NOTE: sound dropped in the middle of the video, screen was scrambled.		NOTE: based on his behavior and that he was registered yet had no stations, and that he new about it from coworkers, it is questionable that he is a totally new user	