

CATEGORY: OBSERVATION

AIM: GATHERING CUSTOMER INSIGHTS



CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING



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What is it?

A customer journey map provides a vivid but structured visualisation a service user’s experience. The touchpoints where users interact with the service are often used in order construct a ‘journey’ - an engaging story based upon their experience. This story details their service interactions and accompanying emotions in a highly accessible manner.

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How is it made?

Identifying the touchpoints where user’s interact with the service is crucial. These can take many forms, from personal face to face contact between individuals, to virtual interactions with a website or physical trips to a building. Constructing a customer journey map involves defining these touchpoints by generating user insights. Interviews work well here, but maps can also be documented by customers themselves - blogs and video diaries provide insights in the user’s own language, which always makes for an engaging set of materials when constructing the map. Once the touchpoints have been identified, they can then be connected together in a visual representation of the overall experience.

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Why are they used?

Basing the map on user insights allows the it to chart both formal and informal touchpoints, which provides a high-level overview of the factors influencing user experience constructed from the user’s perspective. ‘Personalising’ the map - incorporating photographs along with personal quotes and commentary - can make it an even more immersive user-focused experience. The overview the map provides is capable of identifying both problem areas and opportunities for innovation, whilst focusing on specific touchpoints allows the service experience to be broken down into individual stages for further analysis. Having a structured visual representation allows several experiences to be compared in the same visual language, and also facilitates quick and easy comparisons between the service and its competitors.

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What are the tools of Service Design?

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CULTURAL PROBE



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What is it?

Cultural probes are information gathering packages. Based around the principle of user-participation via-self documentation, the probes are usually given to research participants for a prolonged period of time, during which they can produce richly engaging material for design inspiration.

How are they made?

The possibilities for innovation in the design of cultural probes are almost endless. They may be something as simple as a diary which the participant is asked to complete over the course of a set period. This might be complemented with a disposable camera, or a set of instructions designed to elicit the kind of behavioural reflection the researchers are looking for. Video can also be incorporated within the probe, with the participants following a simple script in order to self-document insights unreachable using traditional techniques.

Why are they used?

In order to gain the most intimate insights, researchers need to be as unobtrusive as possible. Cultural probes allow insights to be generate without the researcher even being present. Simple scripts and instructions, unobtrusively complimented by prompts such as text messaging, can structure the information that is

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gathered in order to deliver effective and consistent results. The intimacy of the insights generate also serves to build empathy with the participants. The probes often provide a highly impressionistic account of people’s beliefs and desires, whilst producing a richly evocative set of research materials. They are thus hugely effective in overcoming cultural boundaries, and bringing a diverse range of people and perspectives into design processes.

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EXPERIENCE PROTOTYPING



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What is it?

An experience prototype is a simulation of a service experience. These simulations range from being small-scale, informal ‘role-play’ style conversations, to more detailed recreations involving active user-participation, props, and physical touchpoints.

How is it made?

Usually a mock-up of a services systems will be created. The prototype can vary greatly in terms of tone and complexity, but the common element will be the capacity to test the service solutions being proposed in something approaching a ‘real-world’ environment. The prototype will generally be iterative, with suggestions and refinements being constantly incorporated.

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Why is it used?

Experience prototypes can generate a far deeper understanding of a service than is possible with written or visual descriptions. The principle of ‘learning by doing’ is prevalent throughout, with the focus on user experience meaning the prototype can also generate tangible evidence on which solutions can be founded. Prototypes also help iterate design solutions, as they can quickly incorporate and test the ideas and refinements they may provoke.

CATEGORY: OBSERVING

AIM: ANALYSING EXPERIENCE



PERSONAS



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What are they?

Personas are fictional profiles, often developed as a way of representing a particular group based on their shared interests. They represent a 'character' with which client and design teams can engage.

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How are they made?

The most common way of developing personas is to collate research insights into common-interest groupings, which can then be developed into a workable 'character'. The key to a successful persona is how engaging it proves to be, and thus a wide range of techniques - from visual representations to detailed anecdotal profiles - can be used to bring these characters to life. Most personas are developed from research insights; behavioural analysis allows the identification of trends, with these trends forming the basis of the common-interest groups from which personas can be developed.

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Why are they used?

Personas can provide a whole range of different perspectives on a service. They allow design teams to define and engage the different interest-groups that may exist within their target market. Effective personas can shift a design team's focus away from abstract demographics, and towards the wants and needs of real

people. Even though the personas themselves may be fictional, the motivations and reactions they exhibit are real; personas are a collation of feedback elicited during the research stage of a project, and as such embody the real-world perceptions surrounding a company's service.