Parisian Flea™
A Paris Flea Market Guide

M2 - DESIGN RESEARCH

Developing Empathy
The primary goal of conducting design research is to develop empathy for the user. Regardless of how much time you spend with your users, some time is better than no time. Empathy requires you to get on the same page and walk in the same shoes as your user. It's not about you at all. In fact, a design is never about the designer and is always about the customer. That is what distinguishes designers from artists.

Interviewing people will undoubtedly result in more surprises than predictions. There is no better way to inform the design process initially than talking to the people who will use the system you are designing. "Beyond simply gathering data, Steve Portigal believes that interviewing customers is tremendous for driving reframes, which are crucial shifts in perspective that flip an initial problem on its head. These new frameworks (which come from rigorous analysis and synthesis of your data) are critical. They can point the way to significant, previously unrealized possibilities for design and innovation" (Portigal 5).

In essence, design is a participatory process. In the end, if the user is not part of the design process the chances of success are slim to none. Proactively interviewing customers should become part of practice for designers. Doing so can lead to time and cost savings during the project lifecycle. "Interviewing creates a shared experience, often a galvanizing one, for the product development team (which can include researchers, designers, engineers, marketers, product management, and beyond). In addition to the information, we learn from people and the inspiration we gain from meeting them, there's a whole other set of transformations we go through. You might call it empathy – say a more specific understanding of the experience and emotions of the customer – which might even be as simple as seeing "the user" or "the customer: as a real live person in all their glorious complexity" (Portigal 10).

Portigal's Deep Dive
> "It's become increasingly common, perhaps even required, for companies to include user research in their design and development process. Among many different approaches to user research, interviewing (by whatever name you want to call it) is a deep dive into the lives of customers" (Portigal 11).
> - *Interviewing can be used with other techniques, such as identifying key themes through interviews and then validating them quantitatively in a subsequent study.*
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> - *At a distance, interviewing looks just like the everyday act of talking to people, but interviewing well is a real skill that takes work to develop.*

- *Interviewing can reveal new "frames" or models that flip the problem on its head. These new ways of looking at the problem are crucial to identifying new, innovative opportunities.*

- *Interviewing can be used t help identify what could be designed to help refine a hypothesis about a possible solution that is being considered, or to guide the redesign of an existing product that is already in the marketplace.*

- *Teams who share the experience of meeting their users are enlightened, aligned, and more empathetic.*

Everyone Should Do Research

Planning to conduct design research can depend entirely on resources, time, and the type of system plus a whole host of variables. The common denominator is that it should not be overlooked. Everyone should do research. The phrase "design research" can be intimidating to some as is "user interviews". To demystify design research one could think of it in terms of trying to understand the people that we are designing the system for. "Design research requires us to approach familiar people and things as though they are unknown to us to see them clearly. We need to peel away our assumptions like a gray alien shedding its encounter suit" (Hall 6).

The essence of research

Jane Fulton Suri, creative director at the renowned international design consultancy IDEO, offers this elegantly phrased statement of purpose in her 2008 article "Informing Our Intuition: Design Research for Radical Innovation" (http://bkaprt.com/jer/1/):

> *Design research both inspires imagination and informs intuition through a variety of methods with related intents: to expose patterns underlying the rich reality of people's behaviors and experiences, to explore reactions to probes and prototypes, and to shed light on the unknown through iterative hypothesis and experiment.*

It is important for designers to conduct their own research if at all possible or at the very least to be included in the research activities of the research department if the context is much broader. To frame it simply, designers need to talk to the people that will use the system they are designing. Although not foolproof however rudimentary it may sound the practice of conducting design research is imperative and should be in every designer's toolkit.

It is up to designers to demystify the act of conducting design research by taking ownership of the process. "Asking your own questions and knowing how to find the answers is a critical part of being a designer. If you rely on other people to set the agenda for inquiry, you might end up caught between fuzzy focus groups and an algorithm that scientifically chooses a drop shadow from among forty-one shades of blue. Discovering how and why people behave as they do and what opportunities that presents for your business or organization will open the

way to more innovative and appropriate design solutions than asking how they feel or merely tweaking your current design based on analytics" (Hall 7).

Designers who are new to this process may find it uncomfortable at first. Like anything new, feeling awkward is the norm. Persistence is key. "You will find that when you ask the hard questions, your job gets much easier. You will have stronger arguments, clarity of purpose, and the freedom to innovate that only comes with truly knowing your constraints" (Hall 7).

User Interviews
Conducting design research for Parisian Flea was a natural thing to do. Learning how different people go about their business at a flea market informed the design process. Conducting research using an empathetic approach without making assumptions made it easier for users to open up and tell their story. To be successful at interviewing one must consider it to be an act of listening and reflecting. These are not normal conversations.

User Criteria
The primary users for this iteration are The Flea Market Enthusiast, The Designer, and The Traveler. Additional user criteria include the use of mobile apps, experience with mobile apps to book travel, flights, appointments and the use of apps with scheduling as the main feature.

User Sample
In person interviews with three different users with completely different backgrounds took place. There were experienced and inexperienced flea market shoppers, designer and non-designer types, experienced and inexperienced travelers, collectors and non-collector types. The skills for this user group ranged from hi-tech users to low-tech users. Technology ranged from laptop to tablet to cell phone to pen and paper. All three users had experience with mobile apps to either plan or book travel. All had used global positioning apps, scheduling and planning apps along with apps that tracked spending.

Environment
Monelisa, a UX practice lead, was interviewed in her living room. She is an avid flea market enthusiast and collector.

Tewillie, a software engineer, was interviewed in Google Hangouts. Tewillie is a newbie flea market enthusiast who attended her first flea market in the Bay area this past summer.

Billyjo, an apparel designer, was interviewed in her Dallas studio. Billyjo sources ideas and materials for her collection at flea markets.

All three users gave their permission to be recorded. Notes were taken using a computer while they answered a series of questions.

Context Setting
The Paris flea market is the largest antique market in the world. It comprises some 2,500 stores, spread across 15 markets. The Paris Flea Market is not easy to find, and once you are there, it often feels like a maze with many hidden treasures.

Problem Statement
We are conducting research because we don't know the steps that you would take or the tools that you would use to plan a shopping trip to the Paris flea markets. We want to know how you would go about planning the day-to-day activities from one market to the next and how you go about making purchases, keep track of those purchases and ultimately get your purchases home.

Interview Questions
Technology Backgrounder
1. What devices do you take with you when traveling abroad?
2. Do you use mobile apps to plan travel?
3. Do you use any scheduling apps to plan activities?
4. Do you use any mobile apps to help you track purchases and receipts?
5. What other tools do you use when traveling or shopping?

Planning
1. How often do you go to flea markets?
2. What are your goals when visiting a flea market?
3. If you were planning a trip to the Paris flea market what would be your biggest concerns?
4. What would you be looking to accomplish?
5. How would you go about deciding which markets to attend?
6. What important details do you need to know about the markets to choose which ones to visit?

Purchasing
1. If you were on a Paris flea market buying trip how would you keep track of your purchases?
2. What tools would you use to keep track of purchases and vendors?
3. How would you remember which vendors you may want to visit later for example; a vendor or supplier that has some merchandise you are interested in but do not want to purchase just yet?
4. How would you attempt to get your purchase home?
5. What kinds of limitations are there in getting your purchases back home?

Navigating
1. What tools would you use to navigate from one market to the next?
2. What kind of details would be important for you to know about a particular route chosen?

3. What would you like to incorporate on your daily route that may make your trip easier, more productive and more enjoyable?
4. How would you get help en route if you needed assistance?

Concierge
A Concierge service may assist guests by performing the following tasks: making reservations for spa services, recommending night life, booking transportation, acquiring tickets to special events, booking tours for local attractions. A concierge may also assist with sending and receiving parcels.

Scenario
You are staying in an Airbnb, and the host is quite helpful however they have no experience with the Paris Flea Markets other than knowing that they exist. In this scenario, you do not have access to a hotel concierge.

1. Do you perceive a concierge service being useful to you while visiting the Paris Flea Markets?
2. If so, why?
3. Would you pay for a service like that?
4. What services would you arrange?
5. How would you go about arranging them?
6. What tools would you use to do so?

What if?
What if the Parisian Flea guided visitors on which markets to attend based on preferences and provided details about vendor hours, types of items along with shipping services.

What if there was an on-demand messenger service available at the market where visitors could target a messenger on the map with GPS? If the messenger were close to the market that they were at they could order on-demand courier services or to schedule pick-up services for a specific time similar to the way Uber works.

What if there was a social network exclusive to the Paris Flea Market Guide that supported the idea of *"Trip sharing"* or *"experience sharing."*

"I want to go on the same route as this person."

What if there were on demand tour guides?

What if somebody was available using text or chat? Daily rates could apply to chat or text.

What if there was a way to record purchases and vendor details so that they may be accessed at a later date?

User Goals

The primary goals of this user group were to explore, to be able to evaluate each market and remember where they went so as not to get lost. They wanted to visit the markets that interested them and wanted to do something different each day. The idea of going on a treasure hunt in addition to a variety of cultural experiences were equally as important as was looking for ideas and inspiration.

Billyjoe, the owner of Billyjo Retro, is a self-employed fashion designer and manufacturer. She has been a collector for a long time and loves Bakelite and furs. She is inspired by vintage fashions, fabrics and trims and incorporates what she finds into her collections. Billyjoe finds the people and the back-stories of the items she collects particularly interesting. Billy Jo likes to look for ideas and get inspiration from color, texture and silhouette.

Monelisa is an avid collector and flea market enthusiasts who works for a technology corporation. She likes to go to flea markets as much as she can. She collects vintage clothing, hats, furniture and other small art objects for her home. The most exciting thing for Monelisa is the hunt!

Tewillie is an adventure traveler that is new to flea markets. She likes to have new experiences and bring home treasures to enjoy from her travels. She loved going to her first flea market and found some art objects for her home, some things for her kitchen and some vintage clothing to wear. The most exciting thing for Tewillie is to meet new people and experience new places.

Mental Models

Crafting mental models from interview data can be a fun way to solidify user empathy. Deeper analysis and synthesis of user needs, repeat patterns and design ideas are easily recognizable through the affinity diagram lens. "Mental models are simply affinity diagrams of behaviors made from ethnographic data gathered from audience representatives" (Young 3).

"A mental model for a particular topic is, in essence, an affinity diagram of user behaviors. The towers in the diagrams represent group names for the behaviors within. The sets of towers represent a higher-level group of the behaviors" (Young 4). The affinity diagram for the Parisan Fleas was created using raw notes and recordings of user interviews. The notes and recordings were combed to retrieve customer quotes, deep needs, design ideas and repeat patterns. "To create a mental model, you talk to people about what they're doing, look for patterns, and organize those patterns from the bottom up into a model. From the field research, you will glean maybe 60 or 120 behaviors per person. Over time, you see the same behaviors, and you group them together. You line them up in towers; then line up the towers into groups that represent different cognitive spaces. The diagram looks a lot like a city skyline" (Young 5). The purpose of this exercise was to observe in the fullest sense every possible need or desire that surfaced from the sessions to later be evaluated as to its relevance to the design plan for the first iteration of the application.

"Designing something requires that you completely understand what a person wants to get done. Empathy with a person is distinct from studying how a person uses something. Empathy extends to knowing what the person wants to accomplish regardless of whether she has or is aware of the thing you are designing. You need to know the person's goals and what procedure and philosophy she follows to accomplish them. Mental models give you a deep understanding of people's motivations and thought-processes, along with the emotional and philosophical landscape in which they are operating" (Young 2).

The use of the affinity diagram proved to be useful for the Parisian Flea project. The concepts that the diagram produced are extensive. The diagram is a place to return to for inspiration and new feature ideas. The affinity diagram is a "big picture" of user needs that is easily understood.

REFERENCES

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Portigal, Steve. *Interviewing users: how to uncover compelling insights*. Rosenfeld Media, 2013.

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