

# The Personas method: Theoretical aspects

Connected Audience 2017

# Overview

- Personas approaches in the literature:
  - The Goal-Directed Perspective
  - The Fiction-Based Perspective
  - The Role-Based Perspective
  - The Web-Oriented Perspective
  - The Engaging Perspective
- Variations and mixed approaches
- Conclusion

# Theory

- The field of research is relatively young, the theoretical foundation is under development.
- Up to now, there is no common understanding of the method and its application:  
“..., there is no unilateral understanding of the application of the method or a definition of what a persona description is.” (Nielsen 2013: 14)

# Theory

- The theoretical foundation is under development and is influenced by various disciplines, e. g.
  - computer science / informatics,
  - information design,
  - psychology.
- The practical application is dominant, conferences promote the exchange of best practice, not theory.
- There are hardly any academic curricula for personas.

# Perspectives on personas

In the literature we can find different perspectives on personas:

- The Goal-Directed Perspective
- The Fiction-Based Perspective
- The Role-Based Perspective
- The Web-Oriented Perspective
- The Engaging Perspective

# Perspectives on personas

## The Goal-Directed Perspective:

- Promoter: Alan Cooper
- Publication: The Inmates are Running the Asylum. Indianapolis, IN: Sams. 1999.
- Focus: Development of software and complex technical products
- Approach: Focus on goals of users and their use of the products
- Basis/source: data

# Perspectives on personas

## The Fiction-Based Perspective:

- Promoter: Donald A. Norman
- Publication: Ad-Hoc Personas and Empathetic Focus. Essay.

Internet, URL

[http://www.jnd.org/dn.mss/personas\\_empath.html](http://www.jnd.org/dn.mss/personas_empath.html).

Version: 11/16/2004.

- Approach: Empathic focus on the design process
- Basis/source: Intuition and personal experience

# Perspectives on personas

## The Role-Based Perspective:

- Promoters:  
John Pruitt und Tamara Adlin
- Publication: The Persona Lifecycle. Keeping People in Mind Throughout Product Design. Amsterdam: Elsevier. 2006.
- Focus: Software development, Persona Lifecycle
- Basis/source: data



# Perspectives on personas

## The Web-Oriented Perspective:

- Promoters: Steve Mulder und Ziv Yaar
- Publication: *The User is Always Right. A Practical Guide to Creating and Using Personas for the Web.* Berkeley, CA: New Riders. 2007.
- Focus: Web applications and Web marketing
- Basis/source: data

# Perspectives on personas

## The Engaging Perspective :

- Promoter: Lene Nielsen
- Publication: Personas – User Focused Design. (Human-Computer Interaction Series) London: Springer. 2013.
- Focus: Product development with a focus on empathic and social aspects
- Basis/source: data and fictional elements

# Perspectives on personas

Variations and mixed approaches:

- Development of various methods over a relatively long time: 1999 until today
- Often project related approaches, selecting partial components and foci of different methods, practical application in combination
- Practical approach: flexibility first, theory later

# Perspectives on personas

Variations and mixed approaches:

Nielsen (2013: 7): “... in my experience, there is no one right way to work with this method but many different ways and that the method can be used in both a long-term process and on a shorter and more pragmatic scale.”

# Conclusion

- The personas method lacks a unified theoretical foundation.
- The literature suggests five perspectives on personas.
- Currently, there is no dominant perspective.
- The field is under development.