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.
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
  Internet, URL
• Approach: Empathic focus on the design process
• Basis/source: Intuition and personal experience
The Role-Based Perspective:

• Promoters: John Pruitt und Tamara Adlin


• Focus: Software development, Persona Lifecycle

• Basis/source: data
Perspectives on personas

The Web-Oriented Perspective:

• Promoters: Steve Mulder und Ziv Yaar
• Focus: Web applications and Web marketing
• Basis/source: data
Perspectives on personas

The Engaging Perspective:

- Promoter: Lene Nielsen
- Focus: Product development with a focus on empathic and social aspects
- Basis/source: data and fictional elements
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
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.