The Personas method: An instrument for visitor-centered products and services

Connected Audience 2017
Overview

• Visitor research
• Other disciplines / other museums
• Personas
• Scenarios
• How to …
• Conclusion
Visitor research

Sources for information about visitors:

• Administration
• Public relations & customer care
• Museum education
• Visitor research, e.g.
  – visitor surveys
  – observation of visitor behaviour
  – interviews
  – focus groups
• Market research
Visitor research

The crucial question:
What does the typical user look like?

Example:
What statistics tell you about the typical German museum visitor: statistically the median body size is 168 cm (eye level at 156 cm), IQ = 105, age 28 years, second level education (Realschule), 56% male and 44% female (Rietschel 1988: 52)

How helpful is this information?
Visitor research

What museum curators consider to be the so-called “interested” or “ideal” visitor:

„Der ideale Besucher ähnelt der eigenen Person insofern, als dieser mit vergleichbaren Interessen und vergleichbarem Vorwissen gesegnet, jedoch etwas weniger informiert ist.“
(Tyradellis 2014: 102)

Visitor studies indicate that less than 5 % of the visitors comply to this cliché.
(Serrell & Raphling 1995: 54)
Visitor research

Problems with data from visitor studies:
• Abstract quantitative and/or qualitative data
• The data lack comprehensibility
• Problems with communication of data
• Problems in application of data
• Therefore it is necessary to make the data “actionable”
Other disciplines …

… similar situations:
• Marketing (the origin of the method)
• Software development, information design
• Technical documentation
• Accessibility on the Internet
• Solution:
  Application of the personas method – using of typical user representations in order to create user-oriented products and services
Other disciplines …

… similar situations: BBC Local Radio (England) and its project „Bullseye“ in the early 2000s (radio strategy 2010)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC_Local_Radio#Dave_and_Sue>:

- „Dave and Sue“, two fictitious radio listeners: a couple in their mid-50s, he a plumber, she a secretary, both divorced with grown-up children, no interest in politics or high culture, listen to the radio to be entertained/diverted.

- In 2005 elected “Receptionist of the Year”, represented by two hired actors during the ceremony.
The Gallo-Roman Museum in Tongeren, Belgium, used three “learning-type oriented characters” based on 500 interviews:

- **Piet** (28 % of the potential visitors):
  10 years old, active, little museum experience, visits with class, high media affinity

- **Mieke** (10 % of the potential visitors):
  34 years old, housewife, visits only in company (family, friends), practical

- **Gust**: (27 % of the potential visitors):
  51 years old, visits both alone and in company, high museum experience, text-oriented
Other museums …

use personas to make user data “actionable”:

• The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, …
• The Tate, London, …
• EU projects such as Europeana …
  – M3.2.3 eConnect Personas Catalogue
  – M3.2.3 eConnect Personas Catalogue Update
Personas

What are personas?

• Personas are pretend users, i.e. fictitious characters who represent prospective user groups throughout the design process.

• Personas not real people because people are individuals and are not
  – based on data
  – typical / characteristic
  – general / universal
  – representing a target group
Personas

What can personas do?

• They humanize vast and disparate data sources.
• They rely on our ability to remember details about individual people.
• They create associations and empathy in the project team.
• They provide a common and aligned understanding for the whole project team.
What do personas look like?

- Meet the personas
  Christian Michels and Else Schultheiss!
Visitor research

Persona concept

Typical characteristics, needs and goals

Persona 1

Visitor-oriented designs for personas

Visitor-oriented product or service

Persona 2

Analysis of target group

Survey

Observation of users

Interviews with users

Focus groups

Customer care

Marketing

Identifying visitor needs
Personas

Steps in working with personas (1 of 3)

• Develop a cast of characters for the project
• Identify the primary/secondary personas or contrasting personas
• Identify the personas who are not users
• Define the personas’ needs, goals, interests
• Define the constraints the personas face
• Develop the social and personal aspects of the personas
Steps in working with personas (2 of 3)

• Define the knowledge, habits and possibilities of the personas
• Define the tasks the personas want to do with the product or service
• Define the devices the personas use
• Enrichment of personas, e.g.
  – motivation for the visit
  – mode of visit (alone, in company)
  – patterns of movement in exhibit rooms
  – holding time of objects, texts
Steps in working with personas (3 of 3):
• Create Skeleton personas and descriptions
• Write scenarios for each persona that explains how the persona will use the product or service
• Role-play the scenario taking the role of the personas
• Use the findings to design the product or service
## Skeleton personas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Else Schultheiss</th>
<th>Christian Michels</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>Else Schultheiss</td>
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<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian Michel</td>
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<td>Married, no children</td>
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</table>

**Scenario 1**
Else uses traditional media in the exhibit

**Scenario 2**
Christian plans the visit to the museum ...

**Scenario 3**
Christian reads texts in the exhibit ...

**Scenario 4**
Christian looks for information on ...
Personas are “facts & fiction”, so
• add narrative aspects but don’t overdo it!
• avoid stereotypes (prejudice)!
• avoid clichés (movie-like characters)!
Scenarios

• A scenario is a narrative, a short story
• It tests ideas for functionality, design or marketing of a product or service.
• It describes the situation of use:
  – a real situation,
  – usually a typical situation,
  – with details but not over-elaborate.
• It shows how the persona(s) behave and what they experience.
• It is told from the perspective of the protagonist(s), the central character(s).
Scenarios

• A scenario can have different designs:
  – problem oriented
  – test oriented
  – idea generating
  – ...

• It is a vehicle for team communication.
• It weaves a compelling and memorable narrative.
Thanks for listening!
Do you have comments or questions?
Join us for the how-to section of the workshop!