Lesson 5: Market Research

Whether designing a cosy home environment or a dynamic commercial space, research is a fundamental step in ensuring that the final design meets the needs, expectations, and behaviours of its intended users. Effective research enhances creativity, optimises functionality, and ensures the sustainability and relevance of a design project.



Fig 1. Canva (nd) Students Using laptop while doing research

# Understanding User Needs

The success of any residential or commercial interior design project, hinges on a deep understanding of its users. User studies help designers comprehend the specific needs, habits, and preferences of the occupants.

For residential projects, this can involve understanding family dynamics, lifestyle preferences, and cultural influences. For commercial projects, considerations include brand identity, customer behaviour, and employee productivity. Conducting thorough user research ensures that the space is both functional and aesthetically pleasing, catering to both practical needs and emotional well- being.

# Audience Segmentation

Audience segmentation involves categorising users based on demographics, psychographics, and behavioural traits. This segmentation allows designers to create personalised spaces that align with the distinct characteristics of the target group.

Residential Design: Segmentation may be based on factors such as age, lifestyle, family structure, or cultural background. For instance, a family home may require child-friendly elements, while a single professional’s apartment might prioritise minimalism and efficiency.

Commercial Design: Businesses cater to specific customer bases, and the design must reflect this. A high-end boutique will have different spatial and material requirements than a fast-food restaurant or an office space. Understanding the target audience enhances user experience and brand perception.



Fig 2. Canva (nd) Focus Group

# Data Collection Methods

To gather relevant insights, designers employ various data collection methods. These methods help designers acquire qualitative and quantitative data that shape the design process.

1. **Focus Groups**

Focus groups involve engaging a small, diverse group of potential users to discuss their needs, preferences, and experiences. This method is particularly useful in commercial design, where businesses can test spatial layouts, branding elements, and customer experience strategies, prior to implementation.

1. **Observational Studies**

Observation allows designers to study user behaviour in real-life settings without interference. This method is especially effective in commercial spaces, such as retail stores, where understanding customer movement and interaction with the environment can inform layout and design choices.

1. **Interviews**

One-on-one interviews provide in-depth insights into the expectations and requirements of the end users. This approach is valuable in both residential and commercial projects, as it allows designers to understand individual perspectives and tailor solutions accordingly.

1. **Surveys and Questionnaires**

Surveys provide a cost-effective way to gather data from a large audience. They help in identifying trends, preferences, and pain points in both residential and commercial design.

# Cultural and Environmental Considerations

Cultural and environmental factors also play a role in interior design.

Cultural Influence: Design choices should reflect cultural values and traditions, particularly in residential spaces where occupants seek a sense of belonging and identity.

Sustainability: Researching sustainable materials and eco-friendly design practices contributes to creating spaces that are not only aesthetically appealing but also environmentally responsible.

Research is the pillar of successful interior design projects. Whether designing for residential or commercial spaces, thorough research ensures that the final design is functional, aesthetically pleasing, and aligned with the needs and expectations of the users. By utilising user studies, audience segmentation, and effective data collection methods, interior designers can create spaces that are not only visually compelling but also practical, user-centric, and sustainable.