USER RESEARCH FOR UX WRITING:

PART I: PREPARING UX WRITING DECISIONS WITH RESEARCH

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Cheat Sheet

Contents:

Introduction & General Information

Definition of User Research in UX Writing

The methodic study of target users—including their needs and pain points—so designers have the sharpest possible insights to work with to make the best designs.
Definition by Interaction Design Foundation

Categories of User Research

1	Qualitative Research: *"…collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand* concepts*, opinions, or experiences."*	Quantitative Research: *"…collecting and analyzing numerical data to describe characteristics, find correlations, or test hypotheses."*
2	Primary Research: *"…conducting first hand research, i.e. collecting the data yourself."*	Secondary Research: *"…summarizing and analyzing already existing data, i.e. working with data that has been collected by others."*
3	Exploratory Research: *"…examining into a subject in an attempt to gain further insight, usually before building a product's feature."*	Validating Research: *"…collecting and analyzing data to test and validate certain hypotheses and concepts."*

Definition of User Research in UX Writing

"… (usually) qualitative research ideally undertaken at the very start of the design process. It explores the needs, behaviours, pain points and context of (potential) users. Insights from exploratory research are used to inspire and guide product and service design strategies."
Slightly adapted definition by UX Insight

Why do we need Exploratory User Research in UX Writing?

- It gives us a basic idea of the user's needs, interests, fears, and values
- It helps us to understand which emotions to address
- It helps us to decide which information to include
- It lets us know which words to choose

How do we prepare User Research?

1. Be aware of what you want to find out
2. Involve stakeholders
3. Prepare the storing and organizing of your research results
4. Educate yourself about methods
5. Choose your data analysis tools
6. Be sure about data privacy rules
7. Plan your incentives
8. Plan the costs and time scope of your user study

Forms of Exploratory User Research?

- Competitor Analysis
- Conversation Mining
- Target Group Observation
- Focus Groups
- User Interviews

General tips & tricks

- Seek support if you're not experienced
- Combine different methods
- Be very clear about your goal
- Always be non-judging towards your research subjects
- Choose the right tools
- Keep your data well-organized
- Always present your results

Competitor Analysis

Definition

"A qualitative and quantitative research method to identify businesses in your market that offer similar products or services to yours and evaluating them based on a set of predetermined criteria."
Definition based on Skye Schooley für Business News Weekly

Goals

- See the features, products, and services others offered
- Learn how others phrase their offer
- Find out about different brand voices
- Learn about industry terminology, names, and keywords

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective
2. Derive the criteria to evaluate competitors
3. Define sources and write a research agenda
4. Collect data
5. Prepare and analyze your data
6. Present your results

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Gives an extensive market overview - Low in costs (financially) - No specific skills required - Data is (pretty) easy to analyze - Results are easy to communicate	- What others do is not necessarily good - Danger of copying others - Analysis might be highly subjective

What to keep in mind

- Be careful with your conclusions!
- Mind the popularity vs. differentiation paradox
- Don't forget about your own brand
- Also include customer feedback and third-party reviews

Examples

- Podcast app
- Online shopping app for gym clothing
- Productivity app

Conversation Mining

Definition

"A qualitative and quantitative method to gather insights from other customer touch points, like call center queries and internet forums."
Definition by BBC Global Experience Language

Goals

- Find out what users like / dislike about a product, brand, or service
- Identify misunderstandings
- Identify users information-related needs
- Learn more about the users' vocabulary

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective
2. Determine research questions
3. Define sources / channels to analyze
4. Collect conversational material
5. Prepare and analyze your data
6. Present your results

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Deep insights about natural language - Authentic insights into customer's world - Displays diversity of target audience - Gaining additional insights is likely - Researcher develops deep understanding - Access is easy	- Data material is often huge & complex - Is data really representative? - Experience in language-based data analysis needed - Data analysis might be subjective - Choice of platforms / channels is crucial

What to keep in mind

- Choose your sources wisely!
- Not all data items are equally valuable (e.g. trolls)
- Knowledge about data, analytics, and statistics is helpful
- Should be complemented by other data

Examples

- FAQ of insurance company's website
- Symptom tracking app for diabetes patients

Target Group Observation

Definition

"A qualitative research method in which the subject is observed and analyzed in their natural and real-world setting."
Definition based on Channelplay

Goals

- Detect behavioral patterns
- Detect orientation patterns
- Gain knowledge about people's preferences
- Find out which factors influence people's behaviour
- Learn about their choice of words
- See how people actually use a product

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective
2. Determine questions
3. Create an observation guide
4. Define your research setting
5. Observe as planned
6. Prepare and analyze your data
7. Present your results

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Insights are authentic - No subject cooperation needed - Flexibility is possible - Gaining additional insights is likely - Researcher develops deep understanding	- High costs in time and money - Sample is usually small - Data documentation is highly subjective - Data is hard to consolidate - It's difficult to make results comprehensible

What to keep in mind

- Involve researchers in an early stage of the project
- Be ready to adjust quickly
- Always get permission for your research
- Be respectful towards your subjects
- Involve a second or third observer if possible

Examples

- Voice assistant application for automotive manufacturing engineers
- Shopping assistant app

Focus Groups

Definition

"A qualitative research method that brings together a small group of actual or potential users to answer questions in a moderated setting."
Definition based on Scribbr

Goals

- Detect agreement and disagreement in target group
- Detect similarities and differences
- Collect ideas for new features
- Find out about where more or less information is needed
- Learn about common and uncommon vocabulary among users

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective
2. Determine questions and create an interview guide
3. Define your research setting
4. Recruit 5-8 participants
5. Conduct Focus Group interviews
6. Prepare and analyze your data
7. Present your data

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Highly effective for uncovering differences - Great for learning about common vocabulary - Great for display diversity of target audience - Gaining additional insights is likely - Researcher develops deep understanding	- In-depth insights are unlikely - Group discussions may get chaotic - Moderators might be biased - High organizational efforts needed - Choice of participants is crucial

What to keep in mind

- Always ask for consent (e.g. about recording)
- Observe group dynamics as well
- Consider involving a co-host or transcript writer
- Choose a representative sample
- Make sure to always control the session
- Ensure similar conditions for all participants

Examples

- Internal data platform in large corporation

User Interviews

Definition

"A qualitative research method in which researchers ask actual or potential users questions in a planned conversational setting."
Definition based on AureliusLabs

Goals

- Learn about the motives and values of your users
- Learn about preferences, needs, wishes, and fears
- Learn about the usefulness of features
- Collect ideas for new features
- Find out how users describe your features in their own words
- Understand information and communication needs

How does it work?

1. Set your research objective
2. Determine questions and create an interview guide
3. Define your research setting
4. Recruit your participants
5. Conduct interviews
6. Prepare and analyze your data
7. Present your data

Strengths & weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Insights are authentic and deep - We learn a lot about choice of words! - Flexibility is possible - Gaining additional insights is likely - Researcher develops deep understanding	- Relatively high costs in time and money - Subject cooperation is needed - Data analysis is time-consuming - Insights are not always representative - Effective interviewing is an art!

What to keep in mind

- Carefully craft your interview guide
- Be flexible, but keep comparability in mind!
- Be transparent! Trust building is crucial
- Always ask for consent (e.g. about recording)
- Make sure that sample is representative

Examples

- Travel app for solo travelers
- Football match experience app