Lab 2: Empathy Building and User Understanding

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Course: Design Thinking
Scenario: Booking at Kiosks

Context

Self-service booking kiosks are widely used in public environments such as railway stations, metro stations, shopping malls, cinema halls, and government service centers. These kiosks are intended to reduce manual workload, minimize queues, and provide faster access to services such as ticket booking, bill payments, and registrations.

However, despite their intended benefits, many users face difficulties while interacting with kiosks. Issues such as unclear instructions, complex navigation, payment-related anxiety, language limitations, and technical failures significantly affect user confidence and satisfaction. Studies on self-service technology adoption indicate that lack of usability and emotional reassurance discourages repeated usage, especially among elderly and first-time users.

This lab focuses on understanding real user experiences, emotions, and challenges associated with booking at kiosks and aims to build empathy for diverse user groups before proposing any design solutions.

STEP 1: Define the Target User

Task:

Identify the primary user group for booking kiosks.

Target User Profile:

Age: 18–65 years
Occupation: Students, office employees, shop workers, elderly citizens, daily wage workers
Location: Urban public spaces (railway stations, metro stations, malls, service centers)
Service Dependency: Medium to High (frequent kiosk usage for tickets and payments)
Digital Literacy: Low to Medium
Services Used: Ticket booking kiosks, payment kiosks, service registration kiosks

STEP 2: List Initial Assumptions

Before interacting with users, the following assumptions were made:

Users are comfortable using touch-screen kiosks.
Booking through kiosks saves time compared to manual counters.
Errors during kiosk booking cause only minor inconvenience.
Elderly users avoid kiosks and prefer human assistance.
Users trust digital payment systems used in kiosks.

Assumption Table

ID – Assumption
A1 – Users are confident using kiosk interfaces
A2 – Kiosk booking is faster and stress-free
A3 – Errors cause minimal frustration
A4 – Elderly users avoid kiosk usage
A5 – Users trust kiosk-based digital payments

STEP 3: Prepare Interview Questions

Simple, open-ended, and respectful questions were prepared to understand user behavior and emotional response.

Sample Interview Questions:

How often do you use booking kiosks?
What difficulties do you face while using kiosks?
Which step of the booking process feels most confusing?
Do you feel confident making payments through kiosks?
Have you ever abandoned a transaction midway? Why?
What would make kiosk booking easier and less stressful?

STEP 4: Conduct User Interview

Instructions:

User interviews were conducted at public locations where kiosks are commonly installed. Observations were made while users interacted with kiosks, focusing on behavioral and emotional responses.

Observed Behaviors:

Hesitation during payment confirmation
Repeated reading of on-screen instructions
Seeking help from nearby staff or other users
Stepping away from the kiosk due to confusion or fear

User Statements (from interviews and surveys):

“I am scared I might press the wrong option and lose money.”
“The instructions are too confusing for first-time users.”
“I prefer a person because machines don’t explain mistakes.”
“If something goes wrong, I don’t know whom to ask.”

Output:

Interview notes and direct user quotes

STEP 5: Create Empathy Map

SAYS
“The screen has too many options.”
“I am not sure if my payment went through.”
“There should be clearer instructions.”

THINKS
“What if I make a mistake?”
“Will my money be deducted twice?”
“I need confirmation to feel safe.”

DOES
Reads instructions repeatedly
Asks others for help
Cancels or abandons transactions
Avoids kiosks in the future

FEELS
Anxious
Frustrated
Confused
Lack of confidence
Fear of financial loss

STEP 6: Validate Assumptions

Users are confident – ■ No – Many users feel anxious and confused
Kiosks save time – ■ No – Errors and hesitation increase time
Errors cause minor stress – ■ No – Users report high anxiety
Elderly avoid kiosks – ■ No – They want to use kiosks but need clarity
Users trust payments – ■ No – Fear of money loss is common

STEP 7: Identify User Insights

Users value clarity and reassurance more than speed.
Payment uncertainty creates high emotional stress.
Simple language and visual guidance improve confidence.
Trust is built through transparency and confirmation.

From: “Users are slow at kiosks”
To: “Users feel stressed when systems do not guide them clearly”

STEP 8: Create User Persona

Name: Ramesh Sharma
Age: 41
Occupation: Office Clerk
Location: Urban City
Usage: Occasional kiosk user

Goals:
Complete booking without mistakes
Receive clear confirmation
Save time without stress

Pain Points:
Complex navigation
Fear of incorrect payment
No immediate support

Motivation:
Convenience
Financial safety
Independence

Quote:
“Clear instructions and confirmation would make kiosks easier for me.”

STEP 9: Translate Insights to System Needs

Payment anxiety – Clear confirmation screens
Navigation confusion – Simplified interface
Language barriers – Multilingual support
Low trust – Transparent error handling
Need for reassurance – Progress indicators

STEP 10: Reflection & Documentation

What surprised you during the interview?
→ The level of fear users have regarding payment mistakes.

Which assumption was wrong?
→ That users are comfortable with kiosk technology.

How did empathy change your thinking?
→ It showed that emotional safety is as important as functionality.

How will this affect your design approach?
→ I will prioritize clarity, reassurance, and inclusivity before adding advanced features.

Expected Lab Outputs

✔ Interview Questionnaire
✔ Empathy Map
✔ Validated Assumptions
✔ User Insights
✔ User Persona
✔ System Requirement Mapping

Design Thinking Phase Mapping

Empathize – Interviews, Empathy Map
Define – Insights, Persona
Ideate – Requirements
Prototype – Next Lab
Test – Next Lab