

User Interface Design

COMP1650

Personas

Dr Ralph Barthel, Dr Fotios Spyridonis

Learning Outcomes

The activities and content in this lecture are linked to the learning outcome

- C. Apply the principles, concepts and models of user-centred design methods to the development and evaluation of interactive system interfaces;

What are personas?

“Personas are archetypes **that describe** the various **goals** and **observed behaviour patterns** among your potential users and customers.” (Goodwin, 2009)

What are personas?

- Primer: [How to create personas?](#)

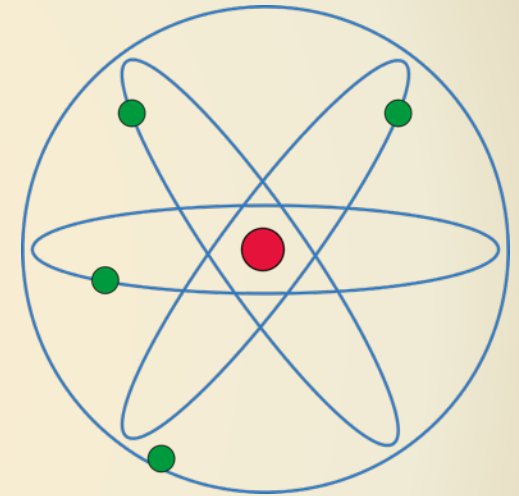


Source: <https://pixabay.com/p-2089532>

Why do we create models?

Models are powerful tools for better...

- Understanding
- Discussion
- Visualisation
- Representation



...of complex structures and relationships

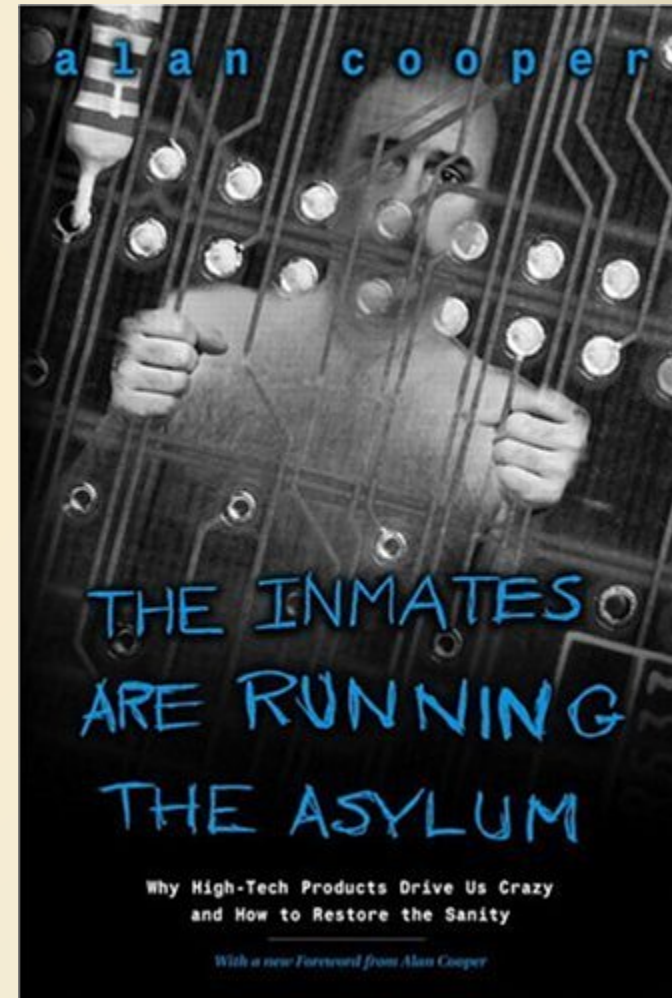
Personas - Modelling users

- We create personas to help us understand, discuss, visualise and represent the typical users and customers that we design for;
- Can include a representation of relationships to other users, the physical world, environment and our user interfaces.

History of Personas

Alan Cooper (1999)

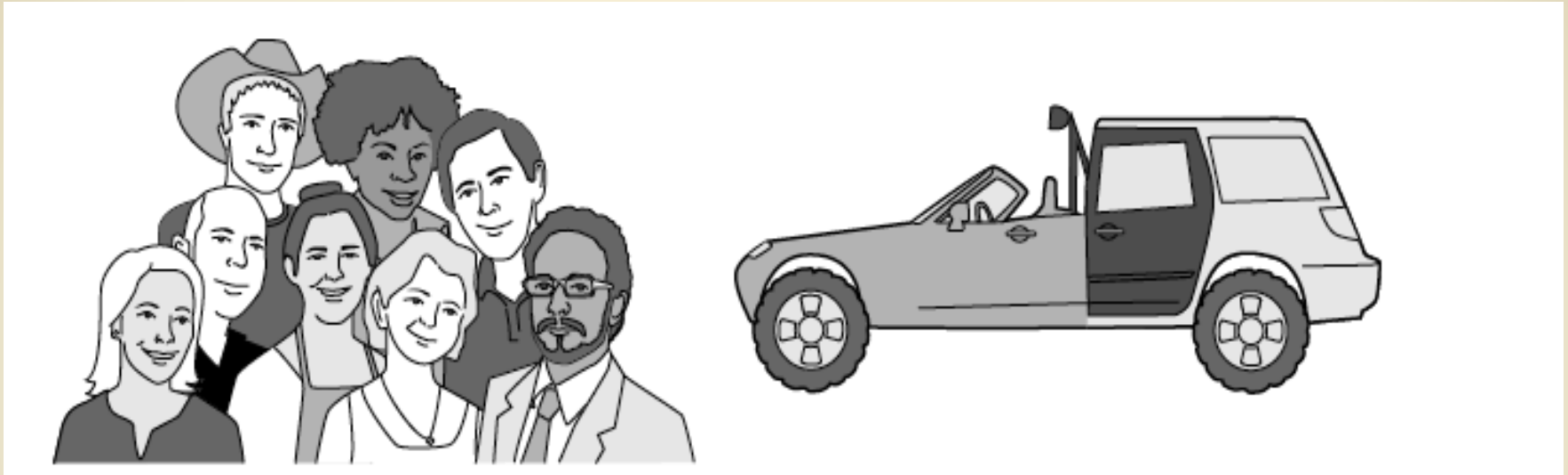
First introduced the use of personas as a practical interaction design tool



Personas

- “Hypothetical archetypes of actual users” (Cooper, 1999)
Archetype: a typical example of something, or the original model of something from which others are copied (Cambridge dictionary)
- **Not** real people, but based on our observation of behaviours and motivations of real people
- A precise way of thinking/communicating about how users think and behave; their needs and motivation (why)

Personas are not based upon “stereotypes”...



If you try please the ‘average user’, you please nobody!

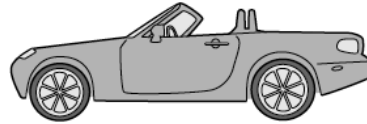
...but on models of individuals you then design for

Designs that satisfy people with similar needs to our personas!



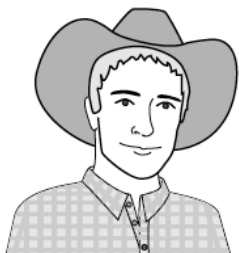
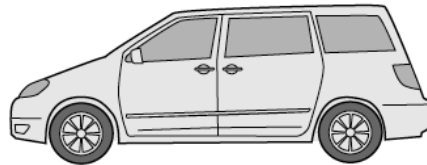
Alessandro's goals

- Go fast
- Have fun



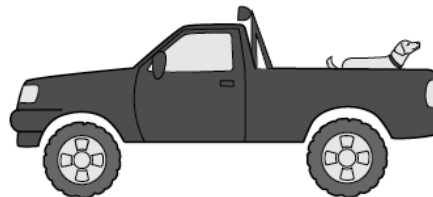
Marge's goals

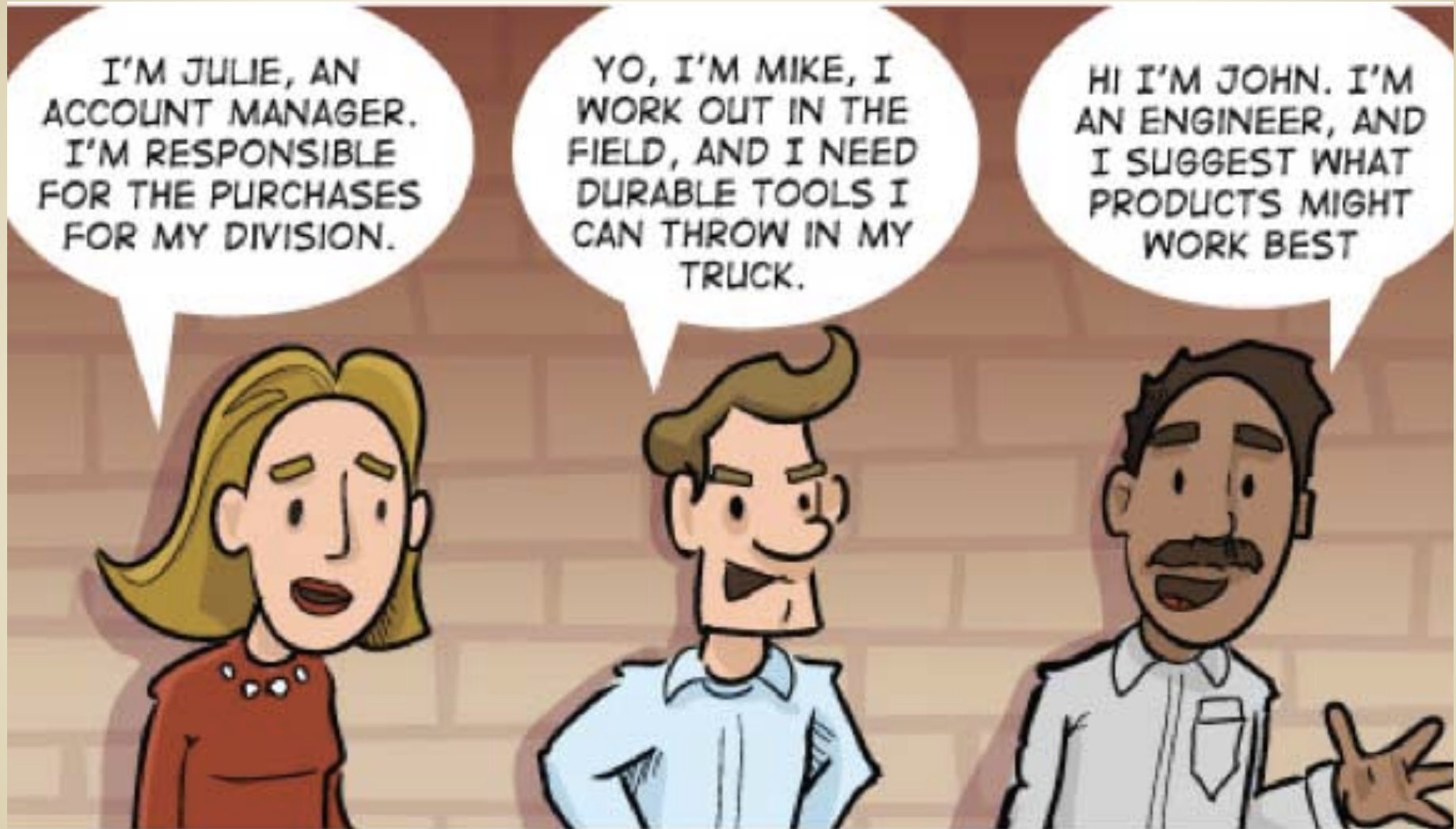
- Be safe
- Be comfortable



Dale's goals

- Haul big loads
- Be reliable





Source: <http://carsonified.com/blog/design/how-to-understand-yourusers-with-personas>

A persona...

- is a short description of a fictional character that represents a known group of a product's users
- is derived from research with real users
- helps designers to empathise with real people
- helps to answer design questions such as:
 - “Would Julie use this interface?”
 - “Would Mike understand this form?”
- can be used to inform requirements, ideation, visual design, development, and ongoing product maintenance

What a persona is not!

- Real user, real people
- Stereotypes and generalisation
- User profile
- A market segment (but often used like that in marketing)

What Personas Are Not

Market Segments



Persona example

Fran *fashionista*



"It's really important to be fashionable. I spend lots of time shopping to keep on top of all the latest trends"

Age: 31

Lives: Clapham, London

Unmarried, no kids

Income: \$\$\$\$

▼
Frequent shoe shopper Infrequent shoe shopper

▼
Fashion led Practicality led

▼
Service driven Price driven

Key goals & behaviors

- Must feel she has fashionable footwear
- Wants to be seen to be ahead of the fashion curve
- Wants to be unique - was very upset the day she wore the same shoes as a colleague
- Happy to dedicate a lot of time to shopping

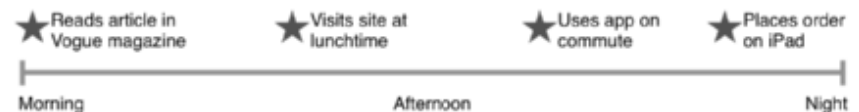
shoeUX.com must

- Be seen to be fashion leaders
- Feel exclusive
- Provide a wide range of styles

shoeUX.com must never

- Seem behind the times

Interactions with shoeUX.com



How personas are being created

Ideally, based on empirical research:

- Contextual research: interviews and direct observations of current users and/or potential users

How personas are being created

If not possible (e.g. can't make contact with users, no budget)
then either:

- Don't create personas! use alternative design methods
- or use alternative research and data by:
 - User surrogates (domain experts, etc.)
 - Stakeholders (managers, marketing, sales, etc.)
 - Market research
 - Literature
 - Secondary research

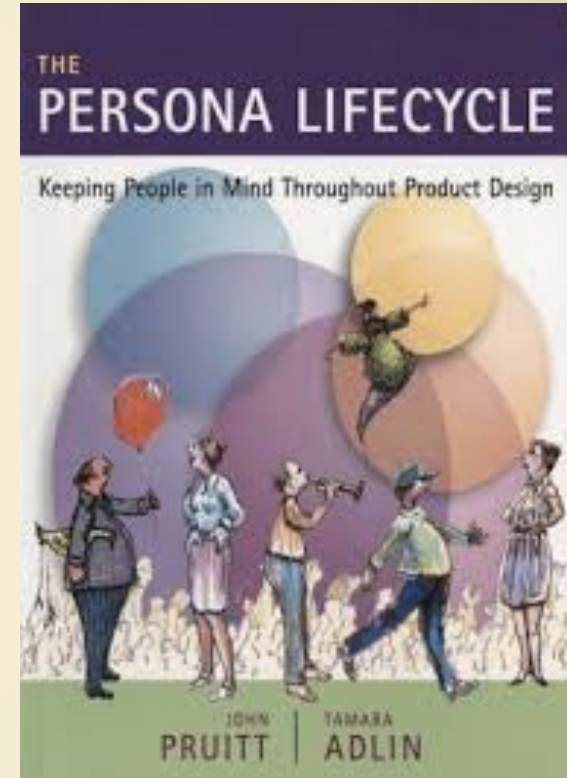
...or use provisional personas

- or “ad hoc” personas (Norman, 2004) instead to:
 - clearly communicate assumptions about who and what the important users need
 - enforce rigorous thinking about serving specific user needs (even if these are not validated)
- They are similar to real personas, but rely on available data and designer best guesses about behaviours, motivations, and goals
- Using provisional personas better than no user models at all!

Process for creating personas

A number of effective methods exist –
See for example:

- Adlin and Pruitt's (2010) Persona Lifecycle;
- Goodwin's (2009) Designing for the Digital Age or
- Cooper, Reimann and Cronin (2007) which describe seven principle steps



1. Identify behaviour variables

- **List all user participants and/or their job roles (i.e. interviewee job roles)**
- **Focus on the following variable types (often 15-30):**
 - Activities – What user does; frequency and volume
 - Attitudes – How user thinks about product domain and technology
 - Aptitudes-Education and training of user; capability to learn
 - Motivations-Why user is engaged in product domain
 - Skills-User capabilities related to product domain and technology
- **You may also list out identified demographic variables at this stage**

1. Identify behaviour variables

Example: Shoe retailer (Allen and Chudley, 2012)

Variables might include:

- frequency of shopping
- attitude to fashion
- willingness to return unwanted items
- need for good value

3. Map interviewees to behaviours

- Map the variables observed to each user participant/interviewee
- Identify and Explain potential patterns
- Capture patterns and define goals

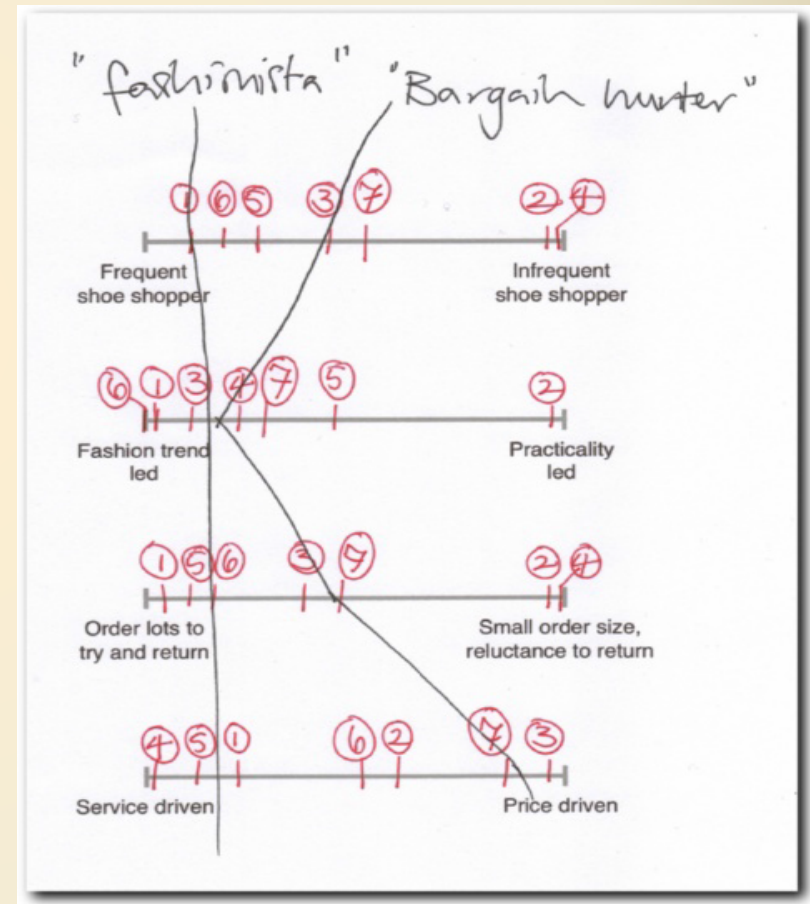
2. Map interviewees to behaviours

Shoe retailer Example

Emerging personas might include:

- “the fashionista”
- “the bargain hunter”

What are potential user goals?



3. Clarify distinctions and add detail

- Consider adding any of the following minimum details:
 - First and last name
 - Picture
 - Demographics (age, location, gender, job title, etc.)
 - Goals and needs
 - Relationships (business, social)
 - ...
- Always use those that are most appropriate to your project
- Third-person narratives are more powerful

4. Group and Prioritise Personas

Prioritise personas as follows:

1. **Primary** – primary target for the design;
2. **Secondary** - additional needs to accommodate; not always present;
3. **Supplemental** - if not not primary or secondary;
4. **Customer** – address needs of customers, not end users;
5. **Served** - not users, but directly affected by the use of a product;
6. **Negative** – not users, used to show that a product is not being built for these.

Why personas work

help to solve design problem such as

- the *elastic user*
- *self-referential design*
- edge cases

When personas don't work

- they're just made up and don't represent genuine user groups, based on real data
- they were developed externally and have no meaning for teams who must work with them
- they are seen to replace the need for ongoing research with real users
- they contain too much superfluous information

Personas - FAQ

Q. How many personas do I need?

A. You may create multiple personas - Cooper (1999) recommends 3-4. Chaffey (2009) points out that:

- Ford.com has 3 buyer personas
- Staples has 7 personas for shopping
- Windows has 7 personas for Windows XP

Q. Which personas do I need?

A. You have to create at least one persona for each type of user/user role

Q. What should a persona contain?

A. There is not specific template as to what a persona should or shouldn't contain; it depends upon your type of project and the context

Q. Do personas have to be accurate or be based on a great body of research?

A. Not always! (Norman, 2004)

Personas - Summary

- User personas are used to create reliable and realistic representations of key target user groups
- Representations based on user research only as good as research behind them
- A number of effective best practices exist – remember to map observed behaviours to user group participants
- There are different templates - number, type and information in a persona largely depends upon your project and its context

References

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