

WELFARE

Open Educational Resource

Module 3 : Design thinking – Empathize & define

Research plan & Empathy map





1. Theory

Qualitative research is used to gain deeper understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, motivations, experiences, processes ... It provides insight into your challenge and helps you to develop concepts and ideas. The focus on understanding makes qualitative research primarily **exploratory** in nature and therefore particularly relevant in the research phase of the design thinking process.

Three dimensions of qualitative methods can be distinguished:

- ✓ Understanding **context** or how economic, political, social, cultural, environmental and organizational factors influence your challenge. People do not live in a vacuum and are shaped by the contexts in which they live.
- ✓ Understanding **people** or how people think, how they make sense of their experiences, why they behave the way they do ...
- ✓ Understanding **interaction** or how the people involved interact with each other and their environment.

Qualitative research is characterized by:

- ✓ **Research questions and the goal of your research**
 - ✓ Research questions focus on complex themes or social processes
 - ✓ Daily reality of the people involved (e.g., social context, objects, activities) is central to your research
- ✓ **The research design is ...**
 - ✓ Flexible
 - ✓ Focused on studying natural environments
 - ✓ A holistic approach on understanding the context
- ✓ **Data collection**
 - ✓ A lot of different research methods available
 - ✓ Most often multiple research methods are used
 - ✓ Data collection requires intense contact in the field
- ✓ **Data analysis**
 - ✓ Analysis primarily focuses on text rather than numbers
 - ✓ Focus in the analysis is on deep understanding rather than representative research



- ✓ Focus in the analysis is on processes

Types of qualitative data:

- ✓ Structured text (writings, stories, survey comments, news articles ...)
- ✓ Unstructured text (transcription, interviews, focus groups, conversation ...)
- ✓ Observation
- ✓ Audio recordings
- ✓ Video recordings (graphics, art, pictures, visuals)
- ✓ ...

You can find more information on qualitative research via May, T. (2002). *Qualitative research in action*. SAGE.

2. Instruction

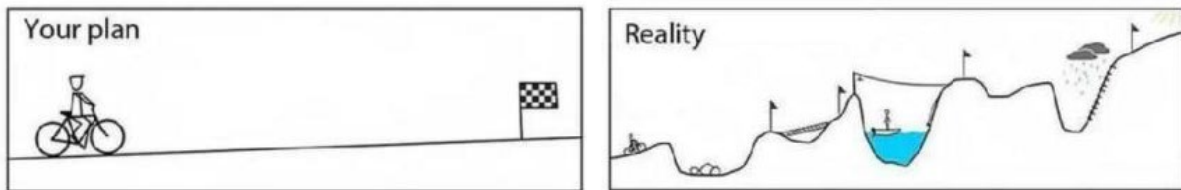
- ✓ **STEP 1: Make your research plan.**

Instructions and guiding questions are integrated in the template.

- ✓ Define the research challenge.
- ✓ Formulate the research questions.
- ✓ Identify the key stakeholders.
- ✓ Select the research methods according to your research questions and stakeholders.

- ✓ **STEP 2: Go out, talk to people, listen!**

- ✓ Use your research plan to conduct your research and to gain understanding in your users and their context.
- ✓ Discuss as a group how you will distribute the work (i.e., who will do what by when?).
- ✓ Research is rarely easy and never – never! – goes the way you planned it. Be flexible, discuss alternative approaches as a group, don't lose your eager to learn.



Copyright image: Murray, C. (2014). The plan versus reality. Retrieved from <https://the-goodcoach.com/tgcblog/2015/1/14/the-plan-versus-reality-by-charlotte-rydlund.html>

✓ **STEP 3: Gather the main results and insights of your research in the empathy map canvas.**

Walk in the shoes of your stakeholders. Prioritize user needs you learnt while conducting your research. What do you conclude? Guiding questions are integrated in the template.

- ✓ Who are you empathizing with?
- ✓ What do they need to do?
- ✓ What do they see?
- ✓ What do they say?
- ✓ What do they do?
- ✓ What do they hear?
- ✓ What do they think and feel?
 - ✓ What “pains” do they think and feel concerning your challenge?
 - ✓ What “gains” do they think and feel concerning your challenge?

✓ **STEP 4: What else do you want/need to know more about?**

Reflect on your research process and further elaborate on this based on the feedback you receive on your pitch.

✓ **STEP 5: Pitch your empathy map in 2 minutes.**

- ✓ Content of your pitch:
 - ✓ How did your research go?
 - ✓ How do you see/understand your user? What are your most important insights?
 - ✓ What insight surprises you? What insight triggers you? What insight makes you angry?
- ✓ Tips:
 - ✓ Keep it short and concise.
 - ✓ Don't aim to discuss every single piece of the empathy map.



- ✓ Select the core insights of your research and the focal points of your pitch as a group.



3. Tool

Research plan template & Empathy map canvas

<p>Research challenge Describe your challenge in a few sentences so an outsider understands what you will be working on.</p>		
<p><i>Formulate your research challenge in one clear sentence (e.g., "We want to work on ...", "We wish ...", "It is a challenge to ..."). Highlight the keywords.</i></p> <p><i>List the 3 main research questions and/or assumptions you wanted to verify.</i></p>		
<p>Research questions What is the focus of your research? List the questions you want to answer and the assumptions you want to test.</p>		
What do you know?	What do you think you know?	What do you not know?



Stakeholders		
Which stakeholders do you want to involve? Why?	Which stakeholders will you get in touch with? Why?	How will you reach out to your stakeholders?
Methodology		
Which research methods will you use to answer your research questions and/or test your assumptions? Distinguish between desk research and field research. Remember that different questions and assumptions may ask for different methods.	Make it specific: with whom, what, where, when ...	
<i>How will you try to understand your stakeholders' perspective?</i>		

Empathy Map Canvas

Designed for:

Designed by:

Date:

Version:

1 WHO are we empathizing with?

Who is the person we want to understand?
What is the situation they are in?
What is their role in the situation?

GOAL

2 What do they need to DO?

What do they need to do differently?
What job(s) do they want or need to get done?
What decision(s) do they need to make?
How will we know they were successful?

7 What do they THINK and FEEL?

PAINS

What are their fears,
frustrations, and anxieties?

GAINS

What are their wants,
needs, hopes and dreams?

3 What do they SEE?

What do they see in the marketplace?
What do they see in their immediate environment?
What do they see others saying and doing?
What are they watching and reading?

6 What do they HEAR?

What are they hearing others say?
What are they hearing from friends?
What are they hearing from colleagues?
What are they hearing second-hand?

4 What do they SAY?

What have we heard them say?
What can we imagine them saying?

What other thoughts and feelings might motivate their behavior?

5 What do they DO?

What do they do today?
What behavior have we observed?
What can we imagine them doing?

What else do you want/need to know more about?

What gaps in your empathy map/understanding need some more research?

What questions from the other groups are you taking with you and need some more research?



4. References

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- ✓ Steinke, I., Flick, U., & Von Kardorff, E. (2004). A companion to qualitative research. London: Sage.



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website

<https://www.welfareproject.eu/>

