USER PERSONA & EMPATHY MAPPING

You will know about...

1. What is User Persona?

2. Why do you need a User Persona?

3. How do you define a User Persona?

4. Build your User Persona

5. Benefits of creating User Persona

6. What is an Empathy Map?

7. What does an Empathy map look like?

8. Why use an Empathy Map?

9. What are the Benefits of Empathy Map?

What is User Persona?

A user persona is a fictional representation of your ideal customer. As a UX designer, you'll start the **design process** by conducting user research —**building empathy** with your target users and identifying exactly what they need from the product you're designing. A persona is generally based on this user research and incorporates the needs, goals, and observed behavior patterns of your target audience.

Why do you need a User persona?

Whether you're developing a smartphone app or a mobile-responsive website, it's very important to understand who will be using the product. In order to solve a real user problem, you need to have a **clear problem statement** in mind; in order to write this problem statement, you first need to understand your users and their needs.

- Who is my ideal customer?
- What are the current behavior patterns of my users?
- What are the needs and goals of my users?
- What issues and pain points do they currently face within the given context?

Personas help with strategizing and making smart design decisions. They make real users memorable for the product team, helping to focus efforts and build empathy.

In a nutshell, user personas are crucial if you want to design something that is useful, desirable, and valuable to your target audience. A solid user persona is your northern star, guiding your design decisions from start to finish.

How do you define a User Persona?

A well-defined user persona contains four key pieces of information:

- **Header**

- **Demographic profile**

- **End goal(s)**

- **Scenario**

Step 1: Add a Header

The header includes a fictional name, image, and quote that summarizes what matters most to the persona as it relates to your product. These features aid in improving memorability and keeping your design team focused on the users they are building the product for.

For example: Let's imagine you're designing a travel app. The foundations of your user persona could look like this:

Name: Savannah Rodriguez

Summary quote: "Take me to undiscovered holiday destinations away from the tourist traps."

Step 2: Add a Demographic Profile

Personal Background

While the name and image can be fictional, demographic details are factual and based on user research. The demographic profile includes four main sections: personal background, professional background, user environment, and psychographics.

The personal background includes details such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, persona group (e.g. working moms), and family status (e.g. single, married with children, widowed, etc.).

For example: Savannah's personal background might be described as follows: Savannah, 52 years old, a divorced mother of two, has a Master's degree in chemistry.

Professional Background

The professional background includes details such as job occupation, income level, and work experience. Here we might add that Savannah works full-time at a pharmaceutical company and earns around $65,000 per year.

Professional Background

The user environment represents the physical, social, and technological context of the user. This section is used to answer questions like: What technological devices do users have access to? Do they spend most of their time in a corporate office or a home office? And how often do they collaborate with others? So, Savannah's user environment could be in her office, mostly on a laptop, but also on her iPad when commuting to and from work.

Psychographics

Psychographics include details such as attitudes, interests, motivations, and pain points. Creating a psychographic profile enables you to better understand why your user behaves in a certain way—including why they use your product.

For example:

you're designing a holiday-booking app. Some useful psychographic information to include:

- Savannah enjoys luxury spa retreats, hates tourist traps
- Enjoys trying authentic local cuisine
- Prefers to travel alone or with one other person
- Tends to favor quality over economy

Step 3: Add end goals

The end goal is the motivating factor that inspires action, and answers the question: what do users want or need to accomplish by using your product? End goals are the main driving forces of your users and determine what the persona wants or needs to fulfill.

In Savannah's case, her end goal when using your holiday-booking app is to discover and book luxurious, off-the-beaten-track holiday destinations.

Step 4: Add a Scenario

A scenario is a "day-in-the-life" narrative that describes how a persona would interact with your product in a particular context to achieve his or her end goal(s). The scenario usually defines when, where, and how the narrative takes place. They are typically written from the perspective of the persona and describe use cases that may happen in the future.
For example, Savannah's scenario could start off like this:

"At least once a year, I like to go away on a luxury holiday. I try to discover places I've never been to before and to stick to destinations that aren't yet overrun with tourists. I work full time, so I don't have that much time to browse and book each individual element of my holiday. Ideally, I'll find some kind of package deal that comes with local restaurant recommendations…"

Build your User Persona

Step 1: Gather Data

Before you can start drafting your personas, you must do market research or user research by gathering data you may already have on your customers. Data can help you understand user motivations and pain points along with demographics. Accurate user personas use data from user interviews, surveys, and market research. Collect as much information as possible about your target users to help you create a solution to their problems, making for better product UX and product marketing.

Step 2: Analyze Data
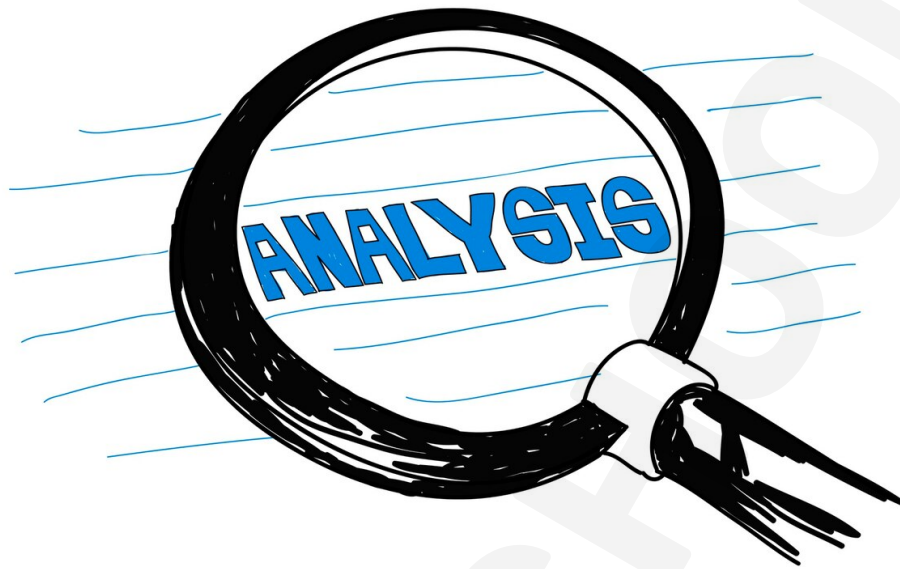
Now that you've collected all the data you have on your users, you must analyze it. Analyzing your data can take time, so don't try to rush the process. Instead, look for similarities you can identify between your users. You can start with a few small personas based on these similarities and create more as you get more comfortable defining them.

Step 3: Create your Personas

Once you've sorted your users by similarities in their data, you can begin building your personas. You can use a user persona template for each to ensure you include the correct information. Start by naming each persona and adding an icon or image to represent how they might look in real life.

Step 4: Add Categories

With a basic user persona created, start to think about a specific user's interests, motivations, and goals.

For example, if you discover many of your users are pet parents, you can categorize them based on the types of products they're likely to purchase.

For example, new pet parents might purchase training treats.
If you performed interviews, you could include answers you received during those sessions to your user persona to make them more personalized and accurate.

Benefits of Creating User Persona

Defining user personas improves your marketing efforts by allowing you to reach your target customers. It also enables you to create better products that customers will love based on their pain points and behaviors. You must always consider the customers' goals and barriers when developing and marketing a product.

Persona UX uses real data and information to inform marketing decisions, enabling better performance and increased ROI.

Empathy Mapping
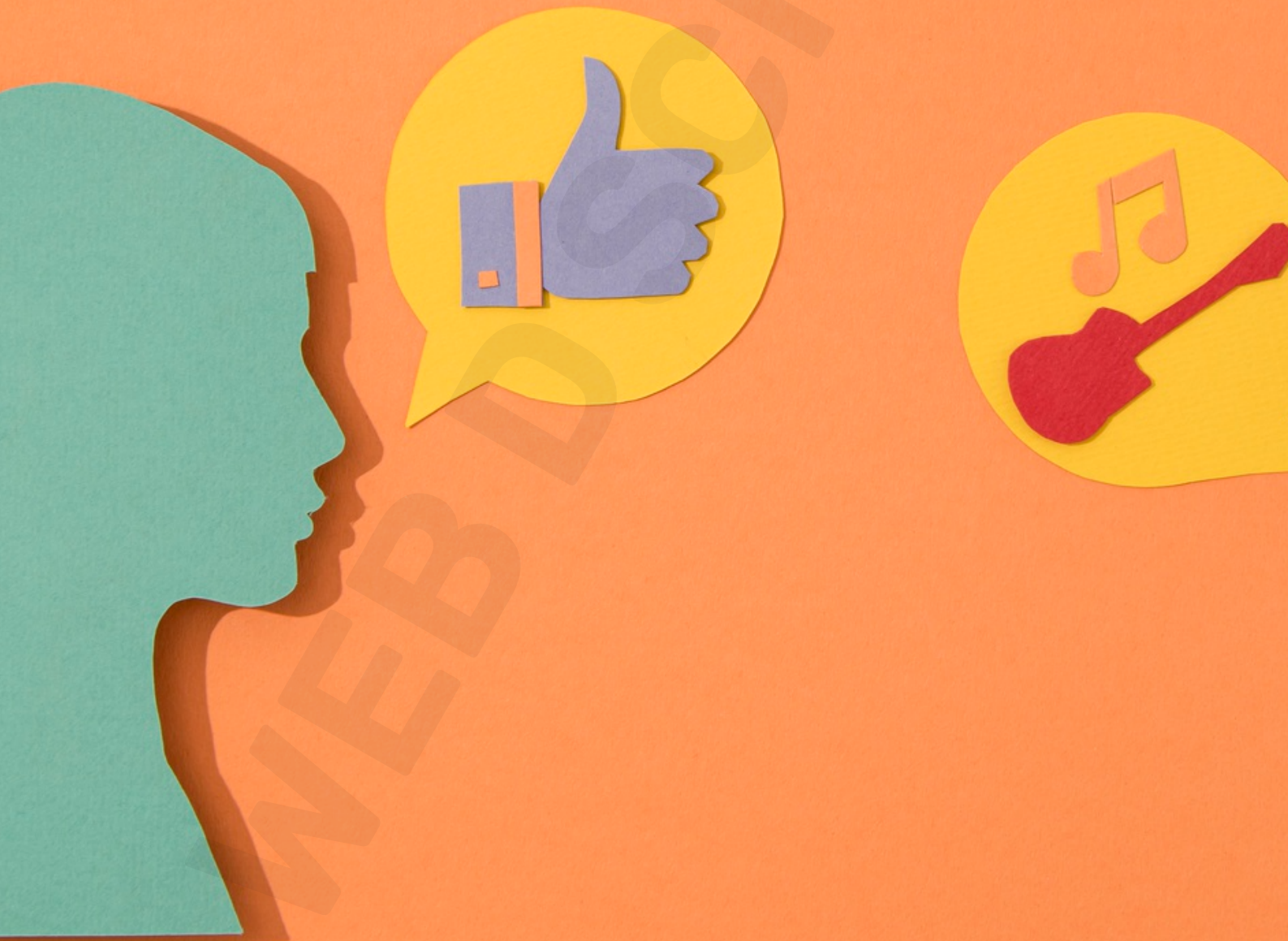
Empathy maps are an **efficient tool** used by designers to not only understand user behavior, but also visually communicate those findings to colleagues, uniting the team under one shared understanding of the user. **Originally invented by Dave Gray at Xplane**, the empathy map was made in an attempt to limit miscommunication and misunderstanding about target audiences, including customers and users.

An empathy map condenses user research findings, capturing verbal and non-verbal cues like body language and facial expressions, for easy understanding and analysis.

Ideally, designers should be capable of crafting a concise **empathy map within 20 minutes**, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of users. Furthermore, this process can identify research gaps, offering opportunities for deeper insights into user needs.

What does an Empathy Map look like?

Essentially, an empathy map is a square divided into four quadrants with the user or client in the middle. Each of the four quadrants comprises a category that helps us delve into the mind of the user. The four empathy map quadrants look at what the user says, thinks, feels, and does. With the user at the center and the categories in each of the four surrounding quadrants, an empathy map arranges all of your research about the user into an easy-to-read visual.

EMPATHY MAP

SAYS	THINKS
DOES	FEELS
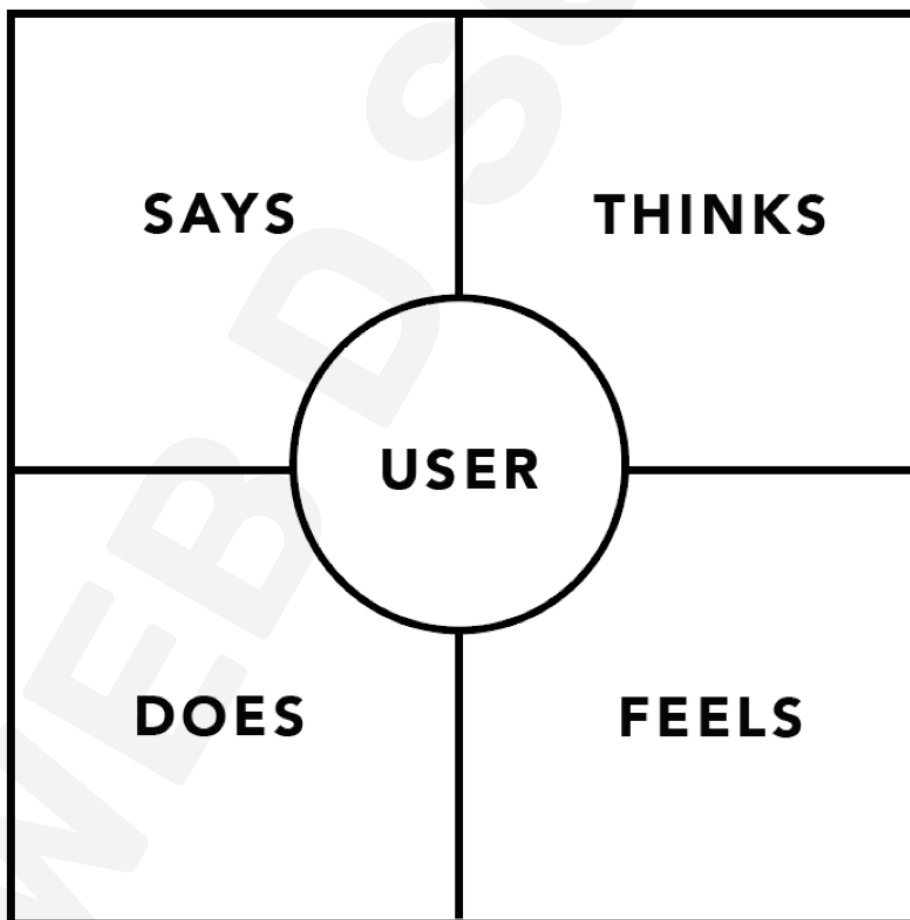
USER

SAYS

This section contains direct quotes from the user that have been gathered from the research phase or previous data. It might feature statements like "I need something fast," or "I'm not sure where to go from here."

THINKS

While this quadrant may have similar content to the "Says" section, it is more focused on what a user is thinking and doesn't choose to say out loud. Use your qualitative research to ask what matters to the user and what is on their mind.

Looking at why they might be hesitant to share their thoughts out loud can reveal even further insight into the user and how they relate to the product or experience at hand.

Example: "This is boring," or "Am I doing this right?"

FEELS

This category addresses the user's emotional state and answers questions like "What is the user feeling during this product experience?" and "What worries or excites the user?" An easy way to organize this information is to list the emotions being elicited followed by a short description of what is making the user feel this way.

For example; "Overwhelmed—too many decisions to make," or, "Anxious—doesn't want to waste their time."

DOES

This quadrant captures what the user physically does and how they do it. In other words, what actions does the user take and how do they take them?

Example: Does what they usually do.

Why use an Empathy Map?

We use empathy maps because they help us understand our user's needs and goals in a more nuanced, but organized way. By looking at their needs through the four lenses **(says, thinks, feels, does)**, we can also see the complexity of their needs at times (for example, when they say one thing and do another), and find solutions that meet them where they are.

Empathy maps are valuable tools for sharing user insights within design teams, fostering empathy and aligning efforts towards user-centric design. By cultivating a deeper understanding of user behaviors, teams can prioritize user needs in decision-making processes. Furthermore, directly involving users in empathy mapping uncovers nuanced insights that might have been overlooked. This approach enhances the accuracy and relevance of the design process.

Benefits of Empathy Map?

1. User Centered

The **design process** should address the user's needs and emotions. **Empathy maps** ensure a user-centric approach, which enhances the likelihood of creating products that truly connect with users.

2. Deeper Understanding

Empathy mapping goes beyond what users explicitly state and unearths hidden **motivations**, desires and pain points. This deeper understanding helps in designing solutions that address unspoken needs.

3. Enhanced Communication

These maps visually and concisely represent user insights so that everyone on the team sees the same information This makes it easier to communicate findings within **cross-functional teams**. By following this process, organizations can foster better **collaboration** among **stakeholders** and team members.

3. Enhanced Communication

Empathy maps highlight potential areas for improvement and **innovation** by focusing on **user needs**. The resulting insights become the foundation for refining existing products or developing new, user-focused solutions.

Navigate the design journey with user personas as your compass and empathy mapping as your North Star.