Personas: New Data, New Trends

Personas

New Data, New Trends

Lene Nielsen
IT University Copenhagen, lene@itu.dk

Jim Jansen
Qatar Computing Research Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, bjansen@hbku.edu.qa

Joni Salminen
Qatar Computing Research Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, jsalminen@hbku.edu.qa

José Abdelnour Nocera
University of West London, ITI/Larsys Portugal, Jose.Abdelnour-Nocera@uwl.ac.uk

Soon-gyo Jung
Qatar Computing Research Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, sjung@hbku.edu.qa

Abstract

Personas has evolved since Alan Cooper coined the term in 1999, moving into new domains, new ways of collecting data, and with novel ways of presenting the persona profiles. From the beginning, personas was linked to software design, expressing the need for empathy with end-users. This is still the case today, but we want to show how this is executed in different domains, not only in software, and how different forms of presentation relate to empathy. Thus, the persona course investigates the relationship between data collection, the representation of data as persona profiles, and empathy.

Additional Keywords and Phrases: personas, quantitative data, qualitative data, empathy

1 Benefits

Do you consider developing personas and do you not know how to get data, what data is appropriate, and have you considered why persona descriptions look similar, then this course is for you – whether you are a researcher or a professional. The teachers are all experts on personas with both practical and theoretical experiences with the method.
The participants will get:

- an introduction to personas based on quantitative data, how personas can represent the quantitative data as well as the pros and cons of quantitative data
- an introduction to personas based on qualitative data, how personas can represent the qualitative data as well as the pros and cons of qualitative data

• inspiration to new ways of representing personas, by experimenting with different forms of persona descriptions and work with how they can create empathy

2 Intended Audience

The intended audience are researchers and professionals who are familiar with personas and who what to dive deeper into the method. We will not introduce personas, so a brief knowledge of the method is needed, but not necessarily experiences from use.

3 Content

The purpose of the course is to assess the latest trends within personas. To; 1) review the present state-of-the-art of methods for data and 2) discuss new forms of interfaces/methods to present the personas. In particular, to discuss how the different data and presentation forms can bring value to the use of the method.

• The course seeks to investigate rather than answer the following questions:

• The course seeks to investigate rather than answer the following questions:How do you use quantitative data for personas?

• The course seeks to investigate rather than answer the following questions:How do you use qualitative data for personas?

• The course seeks to investigate rather than answer the following questions:Does the type of data influence the interface and presentation of personas?

• The course seeks to investigate rather than answer the following questions:What is the best way to present quantitative and qualitative personas?

• The course seeks to investigate rather than answer the following questions:Is there a relation between designers' conception of end-users and persona creation?

• The course seeks to investigate rather than answer the following questions:What is the best way to create empathy?

The course invites participants to learn, discuss and explore persona experiences. Participants from industry are particularly welcome. The course layout will be a mix of presentations from organisers, experiments, and participants discussions.

3.1 Course Structure

Overall, the course is planned to have a one-day duration of presentations, experiments, and plenary discussions. The organizers will contribute with presentations, which will pose challenges and act as starters to sessions.
We aim for at least 8 and a maximum of 25 participants to ensure a course atmosphere and informal style, where all have a chance to share viewpoints and engage in discussions.
We will run the course on-side.

Table 1. Course layout. The total duration (without breaks) is estimated to 5 hours

Unit	Duration	Topic
1	75 min	Welcome, participant presentation organiser presentation: A focus on data
2	75 min	Organiser presentation: Different persona presentations and empathy
3	75 min	Experiments: new ways of presenting personas
4	75 min	Plenary session and closing remarks

4 Practical work

The participants can bring own personas to work on or they will be handed persona description they will work on.

5 Instructor background

Dr. Lene Nielsen, is Associate Professor at IT University Copenhagen, department of Business IT. Her main research and teaching are in user experience research, in particular personas. Lene Nielsen has worked as a usability and persona consultant. She is a member of the ISDI (Information Systems and Digital Innovation) research group. She has written Personas – User Focused design and numerous scientific articles on personas as well as been a consultant for many Danish companies and organisations.

Dr. Jim Jansen current research project concerns personas. Dr. Jansen has authored or co-authored 300 or so research publications, with articles appearing in a multi-disciplinary and extremely wide range of journals and conferences. He is author of the book, Understanding Sponsored Search: A Coverage of the Core Elements of Keyword Advertising (Cambridge University Press), author of the book Understanding User - Web Interactions Via Web Analytics, co-author of the book, Web Search: Public Searching of the Web, and co-editor of the book Handbook of Research on Weblog Analysis. Dr. Jansen is a member of the ACM's Distinguished Speaker Program (DSP). He has performed several consulting and expert witnessing cases.

Dr. Joni Salminen works as a Scientist at Qatar Computing Research Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, and is an Adjunct Professor at the Turku School of Economics at the University of Turku. Dr. Salminen has co-authored a book on data-driven personas, and his current research interests include data-driven personas, persona analytics, interactive persona systems, and customer segmentation.

Jose Abdelnour-Nocera is Professor of Sociotechnical Design at the University of West London. His interests lie in the role of cultural diversity in the design of people-centred systems and in software development teams. In pursuing these interests, he has been involved as researcher and consultant in several projects in the UK and overseas in the domains of international development, mhealth, enterprise resource planning systems, service design and higher education. Dr. Abdelnour-Nocera gained an MSc in Social Psychology from Simon Bolivar University, Venezuela and a PhD in Computing from The Open University, UK.

Soon-gyo Jung is currently a software engineer at Qatar Computing Research Institute, Doha, Qatar. He has been working on data analytics/data-driven/data-intensive systems by applying research-oriented software engineering (Computer Science, Data Science & Analytics) skills. He also does jobs of a software architect, full-stack web developer, data architect, and data engineer. He received the B.E. degree in computer software from the Kwangwoon University, Seoul, Korea, in 2014, and the M.S. degree in electrical and computer engineering from the Sungkyunkwan University, Suwon, Korea, in 2016.

6 Resources

A website will be established if the course is accepted

7 Background

Personas is a method that for several years has been applied in multiple domains. Though there is no standard definition of personas, there has been an agreement that it describes an individual end-user based on data with or without fictitious elements. Some authors emphasize that the persona description should contain a one-to-one correlation between data and the description. Other authors allow to include fictitious elements in the description to enhance the empathy for the users [12].

In recent years the use of big data has emerged [14] involving automatic data collection and data science methods, e.g., using APIs [1,18], with structured data in focusing on views, likes, shares, purchases.

Until recently, creating data-driven personas that are based on behavioral data in large quantities had a limited number of efforts in the literature [8].
Parallel to this development, the idea that personas should be based on data is being challenged by recent trends of Lean UX and co-design. Lean UX supports integrating UX activities into the widespread use of agile development by using personas based on the design team's assumptions. With the perspective of Lean UX, the emergence of the concept of assumption-based personas is spreading. The argument is that these personas are fast and easy to generate and a starting point for "proper" data-driven personas [3,4]. Similarly, within the participatory design framework, the notion of co-designed personas has emerged. Co-created personas encourage users to engage with co-design sessions [10]. Common for both the personas based on assumptions and the co-created personas is that there are no underlying data.

7.1 Templates for personas

There are commonalities among the ways that personas are described leading to a form of an unofficial template applied to persona descriptions [15].
The visualization of the persona is linked to the type of data where the template that is developed with relation to qualitative and mixed-method data acquisition is most often a one-pager with a photo and textual information and supported by visualizations of the quantitative data. Many uses color-coding to distinguish the different personas from each other [13]. The number of personas is low, typically below 10.
This is different in data-driven personas where there is no general template and a variety in outputs and information [15]. Furthermore, the number of personas is typically higher than for the qualitative and mixed method personas.

7.2 Empathy

To enhance empathy and to create the impression that the persona could be a real person, the common trend has been to provide the persona with a specific age, a specific name, and a specific gender. The choices made have turned out to be controversial [5], related to recent discourses on intersectionality and identity [7]. The topics include special user groups [9], gender [6], disability [2], race [16], and more. Furthermore, cultural personas [11,17] have been investigated in cross-national and cross-cultural comparisons. The results indicate that the persona created are culturally specific, and sometimes so without the creators knowing that.

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