

Unit 2.5: User Research Assignment

Homer White

Project reminders:

- Project is to redesign a website for Kokovoko Farm.
- Kokovoko Farm has two primary businesses: sale of Sewdish Gotland ponies, and a family-oriented “farm-destination” Bed & breakfast
- Current website is: <http://kokovoko1.wixsite.com/gotlands>

Assignment Part A: Creation of Personas

A brainstorming session with the stakeholder resulted in the development of the following hypothesized personas:

- **Pony Club Mom.** (Pony sales business.) Carries on a family tradition of devotion to horses and horse-culture, and is especially interested in developing her daughter’s interest in horses. Interested in ponies as stepping-stone for her daughter, to provide initial training in sports, dressage, 3-day evening, etc.
 - On website, her interests center on technical information concerning ponies for sale. She needs to see four pictures with every pony: conformation shot, undersaddle at trot, jumping and driving. Needs information on pony age and health. She would like to see videos of ponies, or at least links to videos.
- **Blond Braided Girl.** (Pony Sales Business.) Daughter of the Pony Club Mom. In love with horses/ponies, but may not yet be aware of the implications in terms of training, sporting and showing.
 - On website, needs pictures of ponies for sale. Would enjoy videos.
- **Whole Grain Mom.** (B&B business). Mother of several young children. Lives in the suburbs or a big city, but is a back-to-the-lander at heart. Has young children, wants to show them where food comes from, and besides every little girl loves ponies. Tends to find Kokovoko Farm through *Farm Stay US*, or by word of mouth.
 - On website: needs to see images of the farm, hillsides/landscape, and the various farm creatures (“dream material”). Needs to know specifically what educational activities are available on the Farm. Needs to know how to contact owner for reservations. Might very much like to see more images of families enjoying on-farm activities.
- **Ark Visitor.** (B&B business.) Parent in a conservative Christian family. Primary interest in staying at the B&B is to be near the Ark Encounter theme park, which is 19 miles away from the Farm.
 - On website, needs to know the particulars of lodging: will there be enough space for family, what are rates, how does one contact the owner for reservations.

- **Disney Dad.** (B&B business.) Divorced from Whole Grain Mom but shares her values to some extent. He also shares custody with the children, and is hoping to solidify his relationship with them by taking them on weekend adventures.
 - On website, needs to know about on-site activities for the children, needs to know how to contact owner for reservations.

The stakeholder believes that Pony Club Mom and are the main drivers for her business. Hence the decision was taken to create persons for these two types.

Personas follow on the next two pages. They are created using the Microsoft Word template suggested on page 22 of our text.

Notes:

- The textbook template is modified to include demographic information, but other elements of the persona specified in Step Three of the assignment instructions—User Needs, Goals, Pain Points and Motivations—are addressed only indirectly within the template framework.
- All images are licensed for free use and sharing.



Kathleen

Female, age 37; from Jessamine County, KY

“Convince me that this pony is worth the asking price.”

Key Goals

- A gentle but competitive pony for her child
- Considers herself the expert: wants to select the best pony for her child, on *her* terms
- A deal that will convince her spouse to support purchase

Behaviors

- Focuses on sales list
- Respects/expects technical acuity regarding ponies
- Willing to compare many options
- Can be swayed by “bargain” prices for older ponies

We Must

- Provide technical photos: comportsment, jumping, etc.
- Provide health information
- Emphasize the rarity of the breed
- Remind her: Gotlands are *safe* for inexperienced riders
- Keep her informed of viewing opportunities (shows, etc.)

We must never

- Clutter sales list with irrelevant information
- Talk down to her (keep all information professional!)



Judith

Female, age 35; from Chicago, IL

“What will my children see and do on this Farm?”

Key Goals

- A wholesome, instructive farm experience for her children
- Participate with her children in farm activities
- Children should “learn where their food comes from”
- Children riding ponies is a big plus!

Behaviors

- Will spend time on site to learn about activities
- Uninterested in fancy accommodations
- Sold on possibility of *engaging* children in activities
- Prefers to contact owner prior to making specific plans

We Must

- Present accommodations as basic (this helps!)
- Describe on-farm activities (back up with images)
- Provide information on nearby learning opportunities
- Provide general text/images to “dream on”
- Make phone and email address pervasively available

We must never

- Oversell convenience
- Sell the place as a “romantic getaway”

Assignment Part B: Empathy Maps

We turn now to the validation of personas by means of user interviews and empathy mapping.

Step 1: Picking a Task; Making an Interview & Observation Plan

Primary income for the Kokovoko Farm derives from the sale of Gotland ponies, so I chose to focus on the task of *acquiring information about ponies for sale*. Since Kokovoko Farm has an existing website, I knew that the primary task could be built around that site rather than a site belonging to a competitor or other horse operation.

With the assistance of the stakeholder I was able to identify several individuals matching or approximating the hypothetical personas Pony Club Mom and Blond Braided Girl. Sadly, in the given timeframe I was unable to locate a Whole Grain Mom.

Step 2: Selection of Individuals to Observe

I contacted two of these individuals and was able to schedule meetings at public places where they typically spend some time on the Internet.

Subject #1 is Paige Lautzenheiser. She is a 21-year old undergraduate majoring in Equine Nutrition at the University of Kentucky. She is not a perfect match for any of the hypothetical persona from Part A, but was once a Blond Braided Girl and could very well end up a Pony Club Mom (the Kathleen persona). One **drawback** with Paige as a subject is that she is quite familiar with Kokovoko Farm, having interned there in the summer of 2016. She continues to visit Kokovoko, and thinks about how the Farm can market itself better, so it was inevitable that she would approach the interview with too much of an “insider perspective.”

Subject #2 is Kathleen Magsam. She is a schoolteacher in Lexington, KY but resides in the rural northern portion of Scott County. She has a 12-year-old daughter who currently leases a pony, and the two of them are in the market to buy a pony. Kathleen matches the Pony Club Mom so well that the persona is named after her.

Step 3: Conducting the Interviews

The interview with Paige began at 9:15am on January 18, at a Starbucks in Lexington, KY that she frequents. The interview with Kathleen took place at a Panera's in Georgetown, KY. Kathleen was accompanied by her daughter Julia, who took a great interest in the proceedings. Both venues were a bit noisy, but the atmosphere was relaxed.

The scenario I set for both participants was as follows:

- You have a daughter, and it's time for her to get her first pony.
- You met the owner of Kokovoko Farm and heard from her about Gotlands.
- You don't have any contact information written down.
- You want to see if she has any ponies for sale that would especially interest you.

I set each of them two tasks:

- Find the website using only the information you remember ("Kokovoko" and "Gotlands").
- Find the ponies listed for sale and evaluate them.

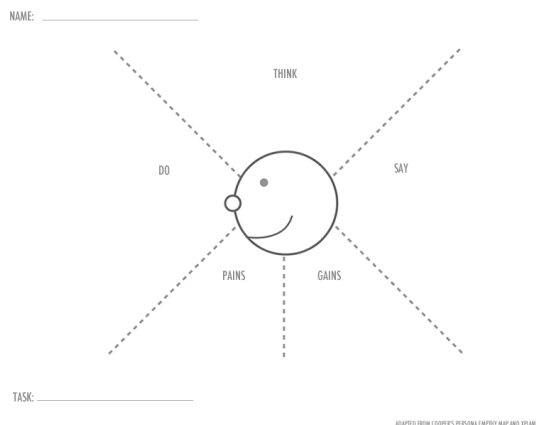
In both interviews the subject used a laptop that was equipped with video software to record the screen. The recordings have been uploaded to the DU Video Manager:

- The interview with Paige is **User_Research_Homer_White_01.mp4**;
- the interview with Kathleen is **User_Research_Homer_White_02.mp4**.

Since both venues were somewhat busy, I did my best to filter out the background noise.

Step 4: Empathy Maps

I will use the empathy-map template suggested in the assignment:



Maps are on the following pages:

Empathy Map for Subject #1 (Paige L.)

- **Persona Name:** Kathleen
- **Primary Task:** Find and evaluate the ponies for sale
- **Say**
 - "I'm seeing a lot of text." (Meet the Gotland page)
 - "She said that she has a lot of ponies, but I only see four pure-breeds listed."
 - "You [the farm owner] say he [the pony] can do this, but can I *see* it?"
- **Think**
 - Age, height and max-riding weight appear to be of great importance
 - Appears to think farm owner doesn't spend enough time on marketing.
- **Do**
 - It takes her a bit to recognize the image-carousels on the Sport pony page.
 - Clicks on FB links, but the link is to Wix.com FB page, not Kokovoko FB page.
- **Pain**
 - Insufficient documentation (image/video) to back up pony's stated capabilities
 - Not enough information on history/background of each pony
 - No indication of living conditions of the herd in general
- **Gain**
 - Fundamental pony characteristics presented clearly
 - Site is clear, can be navigated easily

Empathy Map for Subject #2 (Kathleen M.)

- **Persona Name:** Kathleen
- **Primary Task:** Find and evaluate the ponies for sale
- **Say**
 - (Meet the Gotland page) "I'd like to see something about the history of the Farm, how they got started, where they are headed."
 - "Have pictures of people riding them, and showing their talents as riding horses."
 - "We have been looking for horses for seven months, and I won't even go visit a horse if I can't see video."
 - "Almost everyone who is selling horses has video of them."
 - "Being honest is awesome. Don't tell people the horses can do more than they can."
- **Think**
 - Seems to have expected a clear demarcation between driving and riding ponies
 - "That's awesome that [this pony] was sold, but ..." (Why was he on this list? Why read all that information only to find out at the end of the paragraph that he's sold?)
 - Seems interested mostly in the crossbreeds (because her daughter is tall and would need a horse with more size).
- **Do**
 - Took her a while to discover that a particular horse was already sold.
 - She really dwelt on the cross-breds.
- **Pain**
 - Not finding pictures and video to document specific talents (e.g., how does pony perform with riders on its back?).
 - Some basic pony information (e.g., age) needs to stand out more.
 - Would prefer separate tabs for driving and riding horses.
- **Gain**
 - Easy to contact owner. Appreciates that both email and phone number are provided.
 - It was important that she saw a picture of the owner. (Easier to recognize her again at a show.)