Module 10: Using Ethnography to Understand Consumer Engagement and Buying Insights

Objective

The objective of this module is to investigate the final of four Storyscaping pillars - Consumer Journey. Here we look at several modern approaches to studying human thoughts, habits, and behaviors. The research gathered through these methods provides personal, real-life data that is ultra valuable for building effective Story Systems.

After studying this module, students will be able to:
1. Relate more closely with consumers to understand needs, desires, and buying behaviors.
2. Formulate a 'Hunt Statement' to help guide research efforts.
3. Utilize the 'Think, Do, Use' as a planning tool to anticipate how different elements of an experience may interact and to create routine, observable behaviors.

Outline

[Slide 1] MODULE INTRODUCTION
Gathering information is easier today than ever before, but there is also more information to synthesize. The best information comes from studying people. This module offers a variety of ways to gather research and lessons learned that are informative for decision-making and strategic planning.

[Slide 2] MODULE AGENDA
Pillar Four = Consumer Journey
Review Chapter Eight - ***In Their Shoes***
  – Consumer engagement and buying insights
  – The purpose for a Hunt statement
  – Review and discuss the 'common cold' case study
Activity - Explore real world examples of consumer journey.
Project Team Exercise – 'Think, Do and Use' and "Hunt statement.'

[Slide 3] EXPLORING THE CONSUMER JOURNEY
A process exists for exploring, making decisions about and consuming products. This process - traveling from point A to point *whatever* - is referred to as the consumer's journey.

Here again we hone in on the importance of gathering and utilizing consumer insights to help make that journey as clear as possible for a brand to understand and act upon.

The insights gathered while walking in the shoes of the consumer illuminate key stages of the consumer experience and help define opportunities. As such, mapping out the dimensions of the consumer experience become easier.

[Slide 4] CLASS ACTIVITY
- Review the information shared in the dining example on pages 145-147.
- Discuss how research helped dispel a common assumption about where the peak of anticipation would turn up along the consumer's journey.

[Slide 5] SHAPING THE EXPERIENCE
Ethnography and other associated research practices are fundamental in building environments, tools, products, and content—all things that enable the immersive experiences that consumers expect today.

Let's explore the principals and practice of several current research options.

The premise here is that people have experiences and that brands mobilize communications, products, services, environments, and more, to shape those experiences. In this sense, experiences are based from the consumers' ongoing patterns of perceptions and interactions.

[Slide 6] REAL PEOPLE
The key to securing beneficial research is to observe real people on their own terms.

Traditional research measures provide a way to sort people and their assumed buying habits as a series of homogenous demographics - pushed through a sales funnel that ends up projecting a single possible outcome - consumption.

Storyscaping is built on a significantly deeper understanding of consumers and their relationship with the brand through their experience. Recognize that as humans, we forget things and we change our minds; we aren't robots that do the same things all the time. Similarly, we respond to different stimuli that may change how we feel about things and do things differently.

[Slide 7] INTERCONNECTEDNESS
It's also about much more than simply knowing that a need exists - it's about knowing why that need exists and understanding the many other elements to which it is connected in people's lives. Things like motivations or stimulus/triggers, contexts or environments.

Recognize that needs may not even be conscious; they might be biological or subconscious.

Aim to identify the interconnection with the symbolic realms of self-identity, culture, brand values and Brand Purpose - these represent the needs and behaviors that become real and have manifested for the consumer. It is in our behavioral routines - our interactions in the world and with the products/services we plug in that tells our story about who we are and what we want to do.

Simply put, you should use research to help reveal how people are using the products that companies make/sell and how they tell stories to one another about who they are. As marketers, it's our job to find ways to make those stories fresh and more compelling - so again - in order to do that, we must understand the consumer, their point of reference, their language and their expressions. This is closely related to the previous module on insights - here we are looking at insight from a different perspective.

[Slide 8] ETHNOGRAPHY

All too often the concept of understanding consumers has been reduced to just identifying their needs, and market research has become a kind of dreaded hurdle that must be cleared before you go on to the next phase of development.

In Storyscaping we gain an understanding of consumers that results in stories of possibility rather than a reduction of risk, the elimination of uncertainty or the validation of paths already taken.

Ethnography is the study of societies and cultures. Here it is used to obtain a representation of the relationship between attitudes, perceptions, beliefs in the world and the material world. [***Instructor's note*** - 'material world' here means the interactions or behaviors with products and services, environments, and systems that are associated with people's functional needs.]

Our aim is simply to understand deeply and find meaning in behavior through analysis of small slivers of everyday life. It's about people, places, and things.

[Slide 9] HUNT STATEMENT

With regard to research…
- DO NOT just do the discovery and then map on the business context later.
- DO have a Hunt statement to ensure a frame around your work that makes it meaningful.

A Hunt statement defines how the research addresses your business problem. It's a global or broad statement of what we want to understand and why. It helps us create a clear, concise and compelling description of a project's most essential objectives.

EXAMPLE:

Understand the families' experience of learning differences—particularly from the main caregiver's perspective—in order to build an experience model that will inform both on and offline ABC Company's learning experiences.

Please note - the business context should NOT be the brand's Purpose or product positioning because those are constraints. Instead, define a context for discovery that will identify opportunities to fill with the brand and products rather than the other way around.

[Slide 10] DIGGING DEEPER

Go beyond asking what people are doing or thinking.

Plug in the expression 'Think - Do - Use' as a planning tool to anticipate how different elements of an experience may interact; doing so creates routine, observable behaviors. Use other insights to draw out hypothesis of how people might think and how you might like them to think about something.

This is a visual tool, an aid to thinking critically and each component has an equal effect on the others.

[Slides 11 - 14] CLASS ACTIVITY
Explore real world examples of consumer journey:
1. Airline
2. Football
3. Mobile Phone

As you explore, think about how this information is helpful for:
- Drawing out the most valuable insight around how people interact with the category, brand or product.
- Informing the opportunities for creating experiences.
- Understanding the possible Experience Space that we can optimize in Storyscaping.

[Slide 15] SUMMARY
Now you've learned about the fourth of all four pillars in Storyscaping. The strategies, insights, and findings of each pillar serve as valuable inputs for the Story System you'll be developing. These pillars represent the strategic foundation for Storyscaping, and all the information and insights gathered represent a rich bed of information and help you draw out an informed Organizing Idea. Which is what we will work on in the next module.

[Slide 16] PROJECT TEAM EXERCISE
1. Discuss the various forms of research tools outlined in this chapter.
    a. Which can you see being most valuable for your brand and why?
2. Review the questions listed under 'Think, Do and Use' on page 153
    a. Which (if any) apply to your brand?
3. Create a 'Hunt statement' for your brand project, so you can determine appropriate research.
4. Create a consumer journey for the way your desired consumer currently interacts.