2.5 EMPATHY MAPPING

Introduction:

- Understanding users is one of the primary goals of User Experience (UX) design. While surveys, interviews, and observations provide valuable information, designers also need to understand **how users think, feel, say, and behave** during their interaction with a product.
- This deeper understanding helps designers create products that truly address user needs and emotions.
- **Empathy Mapping** is a visual tool used in UX research to organize user insights collected from research activities.
- It helps designers understand users from their perspective by analyzing their thoughts, feelings, actions, and spoken words.
- Instead of focusing only on user tasks, empathy mapping focuses on the **human experience**, enabling designers to create more meaningful and user-centered solutions.
- Empathy Mapping is widely used in product design, mobile application development, healthcare systems, e-commerce platforms, educational software, banking applications, and service design.

Definition:

- **Empathy Mapping** is a collaborative visualization technique used to understand users by organizing information about what they **Say, Think, Do, and Feel**.
- It helps UX designers develop empathy for users and design products that better meet their needs.

Objectives of Empathy Mapping

The major objectives are:

- Understand users from their perspective.
- Identify user emotions.
- Discover user motivations.
- Recognize user frustrations.
- Improve product usability.
- Support user-centered design.
- Build accurate user personas.

- Identify opportunities for innovation.
- Improve customer satisfaction.

Importance of Empathy Mapping:

Empathy Mapping is important because it enables designers to understand users beyond simple demographics and task completion.

1. Develops Empathy:

- ✓ Designers learn to think from the user's perspective rather than their own assumptions.
- ✓ This leads to more meaningful design decisions.

2. Understands User Emotions:

- ✓ Users often experience emotions such as happiness, confusion, anxiety, or frustration while using a product.
- ✓ Empathy maps help identify these emotional responses.

3. Identifies Hidden Problems:

- ✓ Some usability problems are emotional rather than technical.
- ✓ Users may hesitate, lose confidence, or become frustrated even if they eventually complete a task.
- ✓ Empathy Mapping helps reveal these hidden issues.

4. Improves Communication:

- ✓ Empathy maps provide a common understanding among designers, developers, product managers, and stakeholders.
- ✓ Every team member gains the same understanding of the user's needs.

5. Supports Better Design Decisions:

- ✓ Designers can prioritize features based on real user needs instead of assumptions, resulting in more effective products.

Components of an Empathy Map:

A standard empathy map is divided into four major sections.

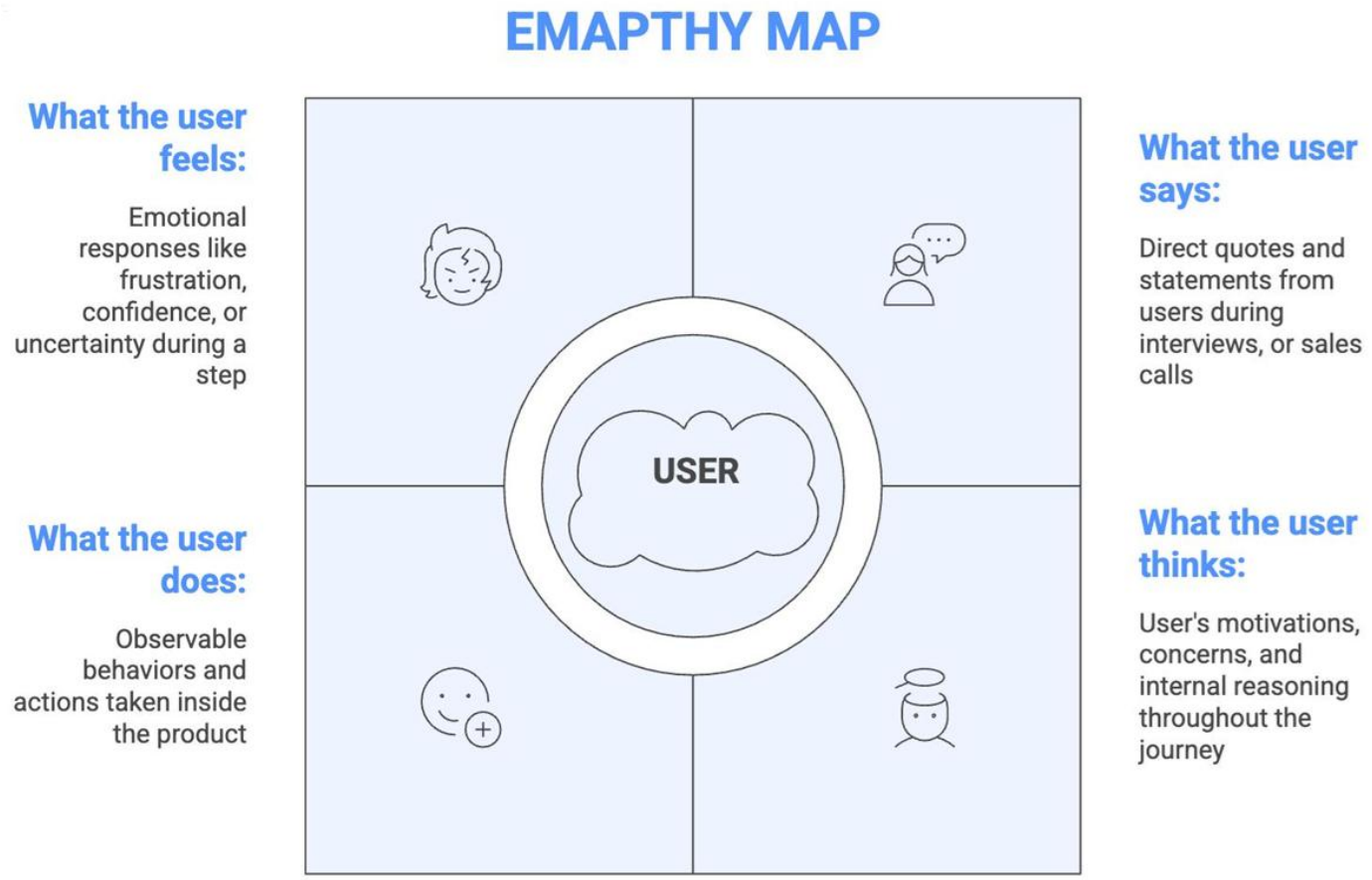
1. Says:

- ✓ This section records what the user actually says during interviews or usability testing.
- ✓ These are direct quotes collected from users.

Examples

- "The application is very slow."
- "I cannot find the payment option."
- "The menu is confusing."
- "I wish login were easier."

These statements help designers understand the user's explicit opinions.



2. Thinks:

- ✓ This section captures what zthe user is thinking, even if they do not express it directly.
- ✓ Researchers infer these thoughts from observations and interviews.

Examples:

- "I hope I don't lose my data."
- "This process looks complicated."
- "Am I doing this correctly?"
- "There must be a faster way."

Understanding user thoughts helps identify concerns and expectations.

3. Does:

- ✓ This section describes the user's actual behavior while interacting with the product.
- ✓ Researchers observe actions rather than relying only on verbal responses.

Examples:

- Repeatedly clicks the same button.
- Uses the search function frequently.
- Skips optional fields.
- Scrolls through multiple pages.
- Abandons the registration process.

Behavior often reveals usability issues that users may not mention.

4. Feels:

- ✓ This section records the user's emotions experienced during product usage.
- ✓ Understanding emotions helps designers create enjoyable user experiences.

Examples:

- Happy after completing payment.
- Frustrated when the application crashes.
- Confused by complicated navigation.
- Nervous while entering banking information.
- Confident after successful registration.

Additional Elements of Empathy Mapping:

Many organizations extend empathy maps with additional sections.

Pain Points:

Pain points represent problems or frustrations experienced by users.

Examples:

- Slow loading pages.
- Complicated registration.
- Difficult navigation.
- Poor customer support.
- Frequent login failures.

User Goals:

Goals describe what users want to achieve.

Examples:

- Book tickets quickly.
- Complete online payment safely.
- Find products easily.
- Learn new skills.
- Track orders efficiently.

User Needs:

Needs represent features or improvements required by users.

Examples:

- Faster performance.
- Simple navigation.
- Better accessibility.
- Secure authentication.
- Regional language support.

Steps in Creating an Empathy Map:

Creating an empathy map involves several stages.

Conduct User Research

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Collect User Data

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Identify User Quotes

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Analyze User Behavior

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Identify Thoughts

↓

Recognize Emotions

↓

Prepare Empathy Map

↓

Generate Design Insights

Empathy Map

Empathy Map helps to understand the user needs accurately and give a clear view about the solutions

Says

- I want an app which is easy to use
- The app should be fast in browsing
- Interface should be modern looking
- The app must be protect my data
- I want 24/7 customer support

Feels

- We can use our apps with many comforts
- This app is very frustrating to use
- This app is very comfortable to use so we are satisfied with it
- This app is designed to avoid confusion
- With this app we will not feel tired



Thinks

- The app would less time consuming
- Fast in for transaction would give inner peace
- Fund transfer system would save his busy time
- Data security would give him peace of mind
- Customer support would solve any problem quickly

Does

- App will use to checkout balance, monthly bank statement & transaction history checking, fund transfer and utility bills payment.
- All financial work will done by one app
- Customer support will always solve his problem whenever he or she wants.

Pain

- The UI of the app is messy
- Hard to find any specific service
- App gets very slow when transactions are running
- Data security is not good
- Frustrated with the customer support service

Gain

- The UI of the app is very nice
- Very fast to make transactions
- Data security is excellent.
- All the main features can find in the Homepage
- Customer support service is very good and easy to access

Example of an Empathy Map:

Product: Online Food Delivery Application

Section	Example
Says	"The restaurant search is slow."
Thinks	"I hope my payment is secure."
Does	Compares prices before ordering.
Feels	Happy after receiving food on time.

Pain Points:

- Slow loading
- Limited payment options
- Difficult coupon application

User Needs:

- Faster search
- Better recommendations
- Live delivery tracking

Applications of Empathy Mapping:

Empathy Mapping is used in various domains.

Healthcare: Understanding patient experiences during online consultation.

Banking: Improving digital banking applications.

Education: Designing student-friendly learning management systems.

E-Commerce: Understanding online shopping behavior.

Agriculture: Developing mobile applications for farmers.

Government Services: Simplifying citizen service portals.

Benefits of Empathy Mapping:

- Builds empathy for users.
- Organizes research findings.
- Improves communication among team members.
- Identifies user needs clearly.
- Supports persona development.
- Enhances user-centered design.
- Reveals emotional challenges.

- Encourages innovation.
- Improves product quality.
- Increases customer satisfaction.

Limitations of Empathy Mapping:

- Depends on the quality of user research.
- May contain researcher bias.
- Requires regular updates.
- Difficult for very large user groups.
- Cannot replace actual usability testing.

Empathy Map vs Persona:

Empathy Map	Persona
Focuses on emotions and behavior	Focuses on user profile
Based on research findings	Represents a fictional user
Helps understand experiences	Helps identify target users
Dynamic	Relatively stable
Used during analysis	Used throughout design

Real-World Example

A university plans to redesign its online learning platform.

User Research Findings

Students report that assignment submission is confusing.

Empathy Map

Says

- "I cannot find the upload button."

Thinks

- "I hope my assignment is submitted successfully."

Does

- Refreshes the page multiple times.
- Rechecks submission status repeatedly.

Feels

- Nervous before deadlines.
- Relieved after successful submission.

Design Improvements:

- Larger upload button.
- Clear submission confirmation.
- Progress indicator.
- Automatic email notification.
- Simplified navigation.

As a result, assignment submission errors are significantly reduced.

Best Practices for Creating Empathy Maps:

- Conduct proper user research.
- Use real user quotes.
- Avoid assumptions.
- Collaborate with the entire UX team.
- Focus on user emotions.
- Update maps regularly.
- Validate findings with users.
- Convert insights into design improvements.

Important University Exam Questions

2 Marks

1. Define Empathy Mapping.
2. List the four components of an Empathy Map.
3. What is a user pain point?
4. What is the purpose of Empathy Mapping?

5 Marks

1. Explain the components of an Empathy Map.
2. Discuss the advantages of Empathy Mapping.
3. Describe the process of creating an Empathy Map.

10/16 Marks

1. Explain Empathy Mapping in detail with suitable examples and diagrams.
2. Discuss the importance, components, benefits, and applications of Empathy Mapping in UX Design.
3. Compare Empathy Mapping and Personas with suitable examples.