

Opportunity-Based Programs

Opportunity-based programs are broader in scale and are typically used to generate new concepts through understanding consumers and their needs and aspirations in a specific area. They help a company define and understand consumer psychographics, make strategic decisions on where to focus development effort, visualize the opportunity space, and create platforms to own that space. Opportunity-based programs tend to be more strategic and move companies into deeper or more diverse relationships with their customers.

Deliverables for opportunity-based programs are focused around frameworks that communicate the opportunity space and long-term strategy, based on the synthesis of individual insights obtained from in-depth observations. Concepts may be generated to illustrate the types of products and experiences that fit into each space. Opportunity based programs fall into one of three categories:

Relationship Growth

Broadens an existing relationship with consumers through a deeper understanding of their experiences.

Example

Client: Novartis

Topic: Smoking Cessation

In-depth interviews conducted in five domestic and international locations with smokers and ex-smokers in different phases of their quitting process. Insights lead to user journey framework detailing emotional state, stage-specific challenges, reasons for relapse, and opportunities for Novartis in each stage. Research framework is the basis for Novartis's current strategy in providing smoking cessation products and services.

Product Growth

Seeks product growth through looking at modes of engagement.

Example

Client: Pepsi

Topic: Future of Beverage Containment

Explored different aspects of product enhancement through shifting functions of beverage containment (communication, transportation, long-term storage, short-term storage, use, disposal) and the practical and emotional needs of all stakeholders

Targeted Need

Explores a specific consumer need to more deeply understand its different facets and create concepts that address the need.

Example

Client: Nestlé

Topic: Healthy Indulgences

A brief round of interviews with chocolate consumers led to insights about indulgence, control, health, and wellness. Insights were used in framing brainstorm topics that generated over 100 concepts, of which 10 were prototyped and tested by Nestlé Confectionary.

Concept-Based Programs

When there is already a specific concept or set of concepts, design research uses prototypes, storyboards, and analogous products and/or experiences to explore new-to-the-world ideas with people. The one-on-one format allows the researcher to ask open-ended questions that probe how consumers may mentally categorize a product, how they might use it, and their unexpressed expectations regarding performance. These research programs may help define a market, position a product within a market, answer questions about a new concept, or help identify the strengths and weaknesses of related concepts.

Concept-based programs are more narrow in scale, answer specific questions, and are prototype or concept focused. Interviews ask specific questions to explore perception. A working prototype is not necessary before the start of a concept-based program. Beginning these programs before the development of working prototypes helps steer the direction and establish focus, saving both time and money in the development effort. Concept-based programs fall into one of three categories:

Targeting

Explores how different psychographics engage with a specific concept to find the ideal consumer fit.

Example

Client: ConAgra

Topic: Fresh Mixers

Beginning with the hypothesis that a single-serve pasta with separate sauce pack would be appealing to consumers of shelf-stable food, we probed the different advantages people perceived. ConAgra's question was: Who would like this concept, adults or children? Insights in freshness, control, and convenience led to firm set of design directives to communicate main advantages. Work led directly to creation of \$200M/year platform.

Refinement

Given a specific concept and target group, explores specific aspect of the design to improve usability or acceptance.

Example

Client: Intuity (formerly Rosedale)

Topic: Resample Geometry

Device usability research looked for design solutions for difficult blood resampling collection problem. Rosedale's question: What geometric tactile, and visual features best help people target the sample? Creation of prototypes prior to in-depth research allowed users to feel and interact with potential solutions, highlighting to the engineer team potential usability issues with proposed designs and identifying the most easiest to use solution.

Positioning

Explores a range of concepts or concept features with a given target group to identify differences between options and choose.

Example

Client: Samsung

Topic: Integrated Home Media

Short qualitative study helped Samsung prioritize potential home media server features and identify advantages and concerns. Additional storyboard exploration helped find key emotional resonance points of certain features around data permanence, privacy, and social networking.