



nagarro

The Importance of Persona Evolution

Putting a face to the avatar

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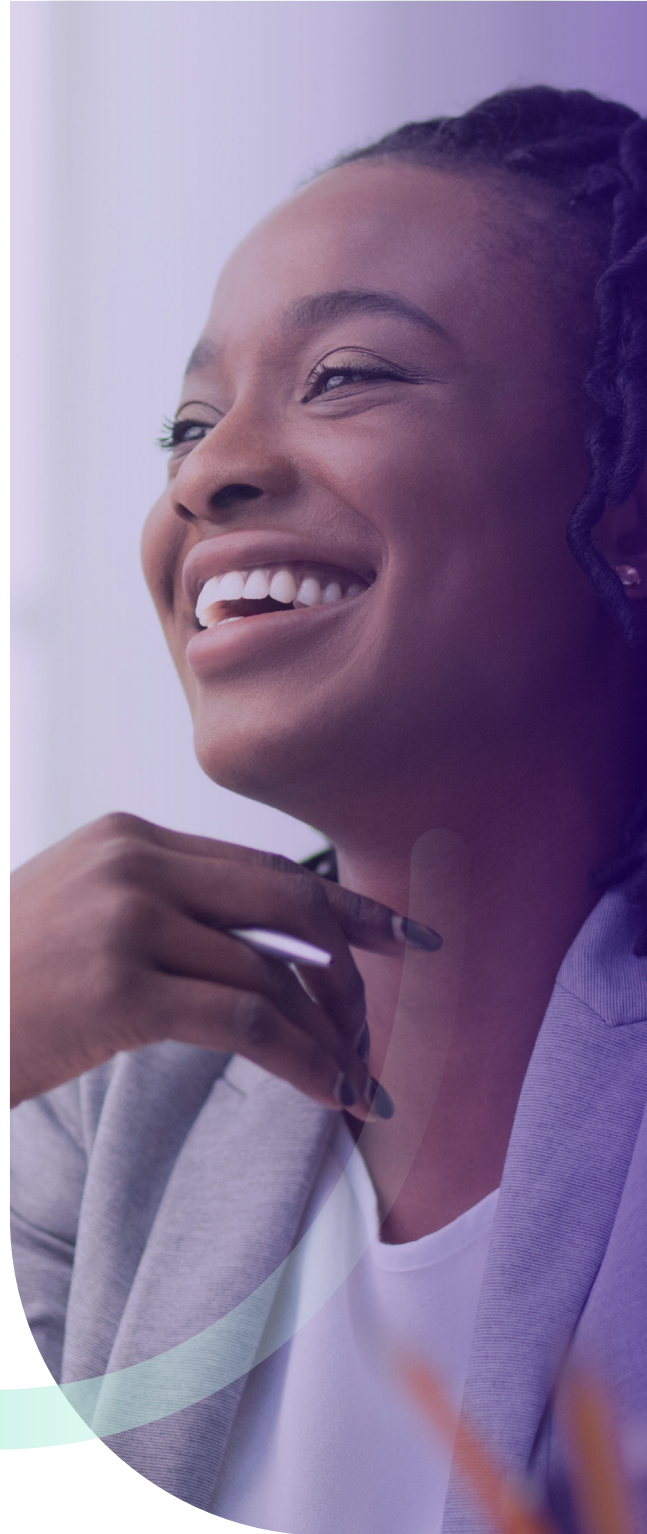
Introduction

Social structures and systems have a substantial impact on our consumption patterns. Consequently, it becomes essential for businesses to understand the social factors for developing effective marketing strategies and fostering deeper connections with their target audience.

By capturing family dynamics, social class, gender roles, and educational systems, (digital) personas as dynamic representations of target audience segments have long helped marketers better understand and connect with customers. However, with shifts in society and the advent of the digital economy, personas must also evolve. Organizations must study the changing factors and incorporate the findings into the persona-creation process.

At Nagarro, we factor in the changes driven by the digital revolution and the post-pandemic alterations when studying consumer behavior to reimagine personas. Our experts from anthropology, psychology, and marketing leverage their expertise and technology to build personas that are relevant to the audiences today to leverage digital data and insights.

Let's dive deep into the different aspects of persona creation and evolution.



Decoding (Digital) Persona's Origins and Impact

Personas in marketing or product development date back to the late 1990s and early 2000s. The concept emerged as a way to understand and target specific audience segments more effectively. Personas became widely recognized as a valuable tool in user-centered design, marketing, and product development. The introduction of personas in product development is attributed to Alan Cooper, a renowned software designer. Cooper underlined the importance of creating products deeply rooted in a comprehensive understanding of users' objectives, requirements, and behaviors, emphasizing the need for user-centered and highly effective solutions.

Personas are representative profiles of your target users that exhibit shared attitudes toward a product. They are snapshots capturing pertinent and significant similarities within your customer groups and are developed based on extensive user research.

Their utilization in the business context has become increasingly relevant over time. Among the various factors influencing the creation of personas, the pandemic has emerged as a significant catalyst, as it drove shifts in demographics, transformations in people's behaviors, and the accelerated adoption of digital technologies. This highlights the crucial importance of continually evaluating and evolving personas to ensure their relevance in business.



Although personas trace their origins back to traditional market research and marketing practices, their development and application in modern businesses have been significantly propelled by technology. As technology advanced, personas evolved to leverage the benefits of data, analytics, and digital research tools. The availability of extensive data sets, advanced analytics tools, and digital research methods has revolutionized the persona-building process, resulting in a more data-driven, scalable, and adaptable approach that aligns with the swiftly changing digital landscape.

The fusion of technology and persona development has opened new possibilities for businesses to gain deeper insights, make informed decisions, and navigate the complexities of the digital era.

What are Digital Personas?

Before we delve into the evolution of personas, it is important to distinguish digital personas and understand them better. Creating personas has become increasingly convenient for businesses, thanks to the information shared by customers and consumers on the internet. Through their continuous engagement on digital platforms, individuals openly express their thoughts, raise queries, and communicate their desires. Their digital behavior provides constant insights into their preferences and expectations.

While personas offer a comprehensive understanding of user characteristics and behaviors, digital personas specifically concentrate on individuals' online activities and preferences (Salminen et al., 2018). These personas are profiles or representations of an individual's behavior as they interact with digital platforms, websites, or online services. They capture and analyze information and patterns about a person's online behavior, preferences, browsing habits, interactions with digital content, and social media engagement.

Digital personas are extremely valuable for digital marketing initiatives, user experience design, and targeted personalization efforts, as they enable businesses to leverage digital insights and optimize their strategies for enhanced engagement and conversion rates.



Nagarro's experience in developing Digital Personas

In the IT environment, the creation and utilization of digital personas play a pivotal role in driving business success. In partnership with clients across diverse industries like CPG, automotive, and particularly pharma, Nagarro has been instrumental in shaping their strategies and helping them achieve their objectives more effectively. By developing comprehensive digital personas, we have provided invaluable insights into individuals' specific online behaviors, preferences, and interactions.

The process of crafting these digital personas involves leveraging real-time data to ensure their accuracy and relevance. By capturing and analyzing up-to-date information, Nagarro enables businesses to make well-informed decisions and swiftly adapt their strategies to evolving market dynamics. Moreover, these insights empower companies to optimize their digital channels and platforms, ensuring they align with the needs and expectations of their target audience.

Limitations of Digital Personas

While the digital insights team recognized the value of digital personas for obtaining up-to-date, tangible, and relevant data, they also emphasized the need to address their challenges and consider the evolution of personas to achieve more effective and valuable results.

One limitation is that they often fail to explain an individual's underlying motivations and behaviors. While digital personas often show the "what" in terms of demographic information, preferences, and behaviors, they fail to capture the "why" behind these actions (Jansen et al., 2021). This limitation can hinder marketers' ability to empathize with their audience and to develop deeper strategies.

Personas are created based on generalizations and assumptions, resulting in profiles like one another (Salminen et al., 2018). This homogeneity poses challenges for marketers, hindering their ability to tailor messaging and offerings to specific segments within their target audience.

Marketers may struggle to deliver personalized and relevant experiences that truly resonate with their customers without differentiation. Consequently, this limitation can lead to missed opportunities and limited effectiveness in their marketing efforts, potentially hindering their ability to drive engagement and achieve desired outcomes.

Focusing on only demographic factors can oversimplify the complexity of individuals and overlook other crucial behavioral aspects. Relying solely on these variables poses a risk for marketers, as it may result in overlooking valuable insights and failing to create targeted campaigns that effectively address their audience's diverse needs and preferences.

These crucial arguments prompted experts to contemplate the primary significant pitfalls encountered during the creation of personas. The following section elaborates on why breaking down these numbers and creating qualitative insights are essential for successful persona evolution.



Why does persona evolution matter, and how do our frameworks drive this evolution?

While a quantitative approach to personas is extremely popular, rapidly changing consumption patterns present the need for a more qualitative approach that isn't restricted to marketing but also brings in cultural, anthropological, and psychological perspectives. The Digital Insights team at Nagarro brings together experts from all these fields to create personas that help you deliver what your customers need.

Let's understand what differentiates our persona creation and evolution process by looking at the various dimensions of our digital insights strategy:



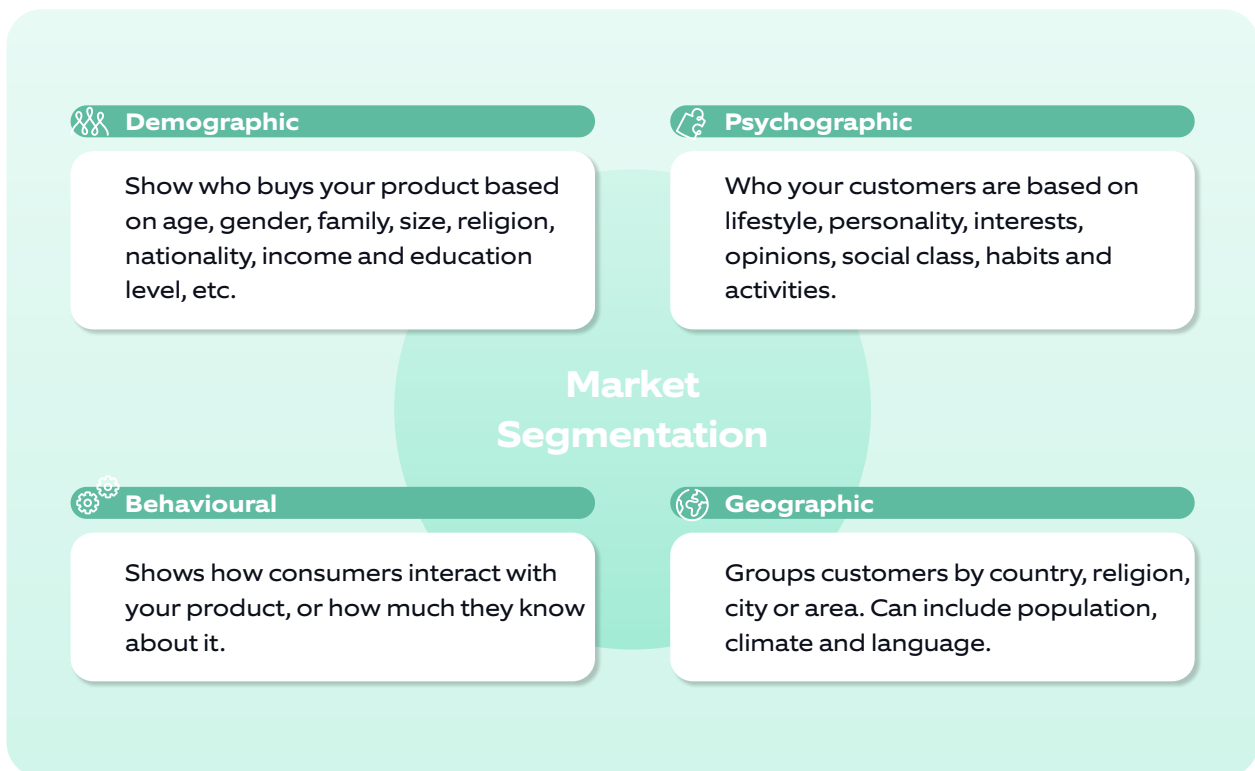
Leveraging effective tools

The power of advanced tools can be harnessed to create personas based on reliable data, enriched with profound insights, precisely tailored to specific segments, benchmarked against industry standards, and adaptable to the ever-changing dynamics of the market.

This strategic utilization of tools ensures that marketing efforts are precisely targeted, highly relevant, and seamlessly aligned with the evolving needs and preferences of the intended audience. By utilizing queries and dashboards within these tools, you can effectively validate hypotheses regarding different segments and make data-driven decisions to optimize the persona development process.

Defining persona parameters

Before creating personas, we program the tools and frameworks with attributes. The essential variables are the foundation for persona creation and include important demographic and geographic information such as age, gender, location, and occupation (see illustration below). These characteristics play a pivotal role in distinguishing and differentiating various segments.



You must carefully consider selecting both essential and enhancing variables, as they can impact the composition and behavior of the targeted segments significantly. The enhanced variables, such as psychographic and behavioral attributes, can make a persona more complete and profound.

Let's understand this with an example. In developing a marketing strategy for a migraine product, women are the primary target due to their higher prevalence of migraines. However, even within this group, diverse personas exist, such as mothers with infants and workaholic women. Despite shared demographics, these personas significantly differ in psychographics, preferences, behaviors, and lifestyles, affecting segmentation and recommendations for brand positioning, acquisition strategies, and purchase journeys.

Connecting persona variables

While persona variables provide a foundation of information, marketers can extract actionable insights by connecting the dots and interpreting these variables.

This involves examining the relationships and patterns among different persona variables. By identifying correlations, dependencies, or associations, marketers can uncover valuable insights about the target audience such as their preferences, pain points, and aspirations, and create tailored campaigns. It transcends surface-level information, delving into the deeper implications and their impact on marketing strategies. This process entails analyzing data within the broader market landscape, consumer trends, and business objectives.

Looking at the example of migraine sufferers, you can better differentiate them by linking the qualitative data to behavioural and psychographic characteristics, such as risk-taking, money-orientated, or a positive attitude towards health, which could impact each profile's digital behaviour and purchase journey.



Creating comparisons

Comparisons help us evaluate the uniqueness and competitiveness of the personas; this further enables you to refine your strategies and differentiate your offerings. Market segmentation is essential in creating these comparisons by avoiding delivering the same information to clients. You can consider several guiding questions to facilitate effective comparisons. For instance, you can inquire about the distinctions between different personas to avoid repetition or redundancy. Identifying what various personas have in common is equally important, enabling the development of cohesive messaging and strategies that address shared preferences or needs to create quick wins.

After identifying the lifestyle and behaviour of our migraine patients, it might be helpful to compare the identified segments by personality, digital behaviour, and buying behaviour to find out how they can differ and simultaneously have similarities. Comparing two profiles segmented by age, lifestyle, and behaviour can help optimise the strategy.

Cultivating empathy by understanding persona and client

Fostering empathy towards the fictional persona and the actual clients or customers is crucial. It involves putting yourself in the shoes of the persona and their perspective.

Once you have developed this understanding, you must extend that empathy to real-life clients or customers, creating a deeper bond with the customers.

Selecting true persona images requires extensive research to capture their characteristics accurately. This practice benefits clients by providing a tangible connection to actual product consumers and uncovering previously unknown segments.

Crafting compelling narratives

Crafting and evolving personas involves weaving intricate narratives that encompass diverse dimensions, including personality, values, and purchase behavior. These personas reflect the complexities and nuances by capturing multiple dimensions of the target audience.

This holistic approach empowers you to develop customized marketing strategies, optimize communication channels, and deliver personalized experiences that resonate deeply with the personas on multiple levels. By embracing the art of storytelling within persona creation, marketers unlock the potential to forge authentic connections, foster engagement, and drive meaningful interactions with their target audience.

Utilizing evolved personas, you can position yourself to navigate challenges, meet customer expectations, and achieve long-term success.



Nagarro's approach to digital personas

Besides marketing and technology experts, our digital insights team comprises experts from psychology, anthropology, and sociology who enrich the persona evolution with their expertise and diverse perspectives.

Let us look at how we leverage insights from psychology, anthropology, and sociology to create personas that resonate with the customers.

Psychology

Psychology offers a wealth of knowledge and methods that can contribute to creating personas. Psychological approaches, models, and methods can develop personas with a deeper understanding of users' personalities, cognitive processes, needs, and behaviors.

Psychology can also provide insight into how people perceive, process, and understand information (Salminen et al., 2018). Understanding cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and decision-making, can help create personas that match users' cognitive abilities and limitations.

Research methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations can help gather data about the target audience. To create more realistic personas, theories and personality models can identify and describe essential characteristics relevant to a product or service.

Anthropology

Anthropological approaches, models, and methods contribute to the evolution of personas by providing cultural and contextual insights into the target audience.

Models and methods, such as ethnographic research and cultural analysis, can help develop personas that reflect the diversity of the target audience (Charles D. Schewe et al., 2000). Using anthropological interpretation methods, you can create personas that reflect the cultural values, symbols, and meanings relevant to the target audience. It can also help brands avoid stereotypes or biases that may arise from a narrow perspective.

Let's take the example of pharma companies. It is crucial to understand the context behind how factors like economic disparities affect an individual's view of healthcare and why a certain cohort may reduce or stop using a certain drug despite being the most affected by the concerned disease.

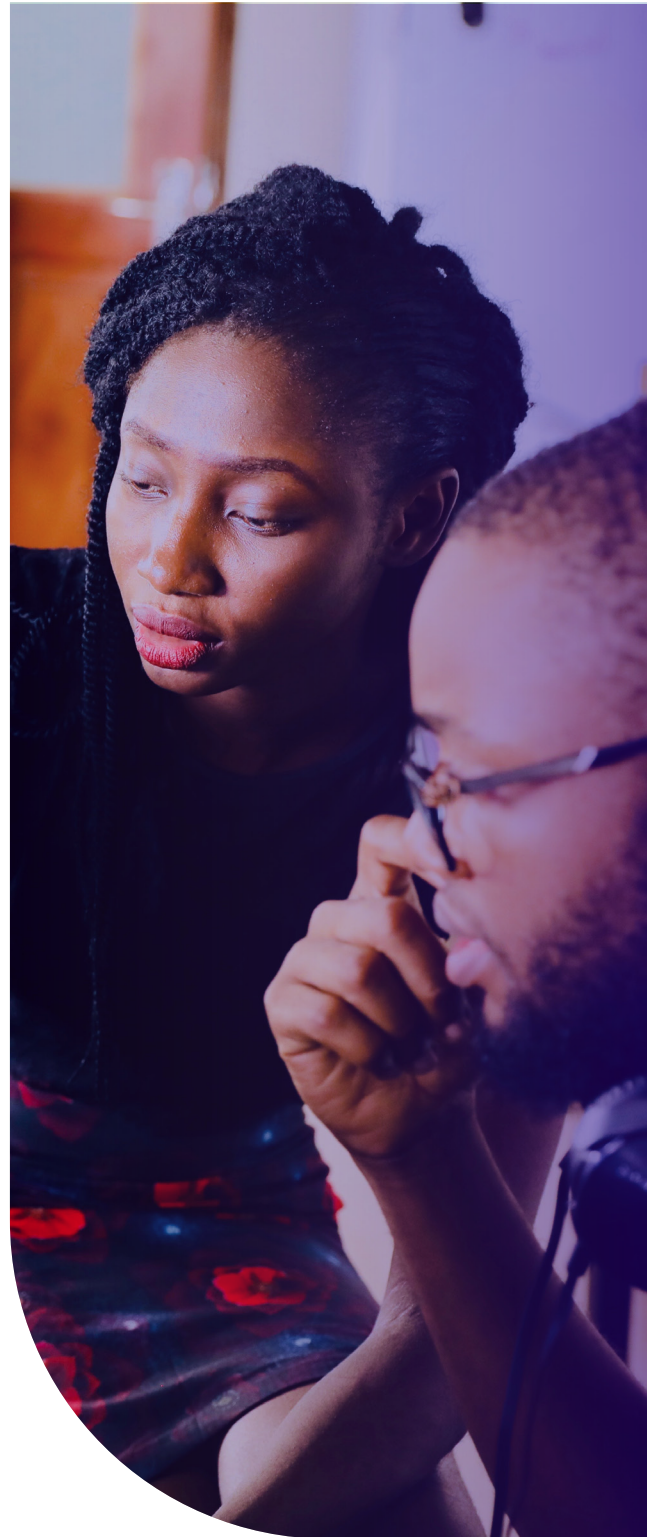
Socio-culture

Sociocultural factors include family dynamics, social class, gender roles, and educational systems, which influence individuals' experiences and contribute to forming distinct personas within a specific sociocultural context. Anthropology has various subfields that investigate human experiences through different lenses. However, for consumer understanding the sociocultural lens brings out a unique perspective on how different cultures, customs, and social lives impact human behavior.

To genuinely resonate with an audience, create personas that reflect their distinct identities and goals. Social learning and community networks contribute to forming shared personas within social contexts. Individuals acquire beliefs, values, and behaviors from their communities, shaping their personas. We grasp nuances of social learning processes to effectively engage with these personas and create strategies that resonate with their shared experiences and values.

Let's understand this by looking at the popular social media site Instagram. Before Instagram, most brands relied on traditional advertising mediums like TV and print. However, with the rise of Instagram, there was a noticeable shift towards visual storytelling and influencer marketing.

Brands quickly recognized the platform's potential and adapted their strategies to create more visually appealing content, collaborate with influencers, and engage directly with their audience. This shift not only allowed brands to reach younger demographics more effectively but also fostered a more authentic and interactive relationship with consumers.





Conclusion

Creating personas that truly represent your target customers requires integrating psychology, anthropology, marketing, and technology. A holistic understanding can help inform tailored strategies and personalized experiences. While this paper covers several important aspects of persona creation and evolution, there is much scope for further discussions, especially on evolving personas in the business context.

We are focused on covering these aspects in our digital insights research at Nagarro. We are constantly studying multiple potential ways and opportunities to improve the relevance and impact of personas in informing design, marketing, and user-centered decision-making processes.

If you wish to leverage our research findings, data capabilities, and diversified team of digital analysts, please contact us at digitalinsights@nagarro.com. We are already helping leading companies gain a deeper understanding and insights into their audiences and develop successful products and services.

Why not you?

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About Nagarro

In a changing and evolving world, challenges are ever more unique and complex.

Nagarro helps to transform, adapt, and build new ways into the future through a forward-thinking, agile and caring mindset. We excel at digital product engineering and deliver on our promise of thinking breakthroughs. Today, we are 19,500 experts across 35 countries, forming a Nation of Nagarrrians, ready to help our customers succeed.

For more information, visit www.nagarro.com.