

User cards

Understanding
garments and wear

User cards

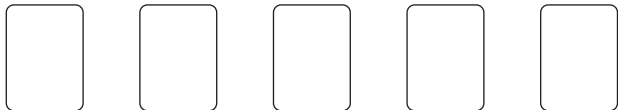
This collection of cards introduces a selection of approaches that designers can use to understand their user's garment practices and preferences so that they can make better circular design choices.

The cards have been developed for fashion designers situated in industry, but they could be used and adapted by anybody involved in design development.

The methods presented here are not an exhaustive list but serve as inspiration for designers to start their journey into understanding the user.

The toolkit contains:

5 EXPLAINER CARDS



10 METHOD CARDS



Motivation

Explainer #1

Motivation

One of the easiest ways to help improve the environmental impact of garments is to design for increased use over the longest timeframe. There are numerous ways that this can be done, but how do we know if our design will be used lots of times and will last as long as intended?

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND OUR USER!

Who are they? What are their preferences and needs?
How do they use clothes? If we do this, we will be one step closer to our long-lasting designs becoming a reality.

What do you want to understand?

- Use of a specific garment or element, e.g. knitted jumpers or pocket placement
- Use relating to a specific strategy, e.g. physical durability or repair
- Use and a specific challenge, e.g. wear and tear or fit
- Use and the difference between users, e.g. ages, gender, body type, location or use situations

How could you contact your user?

- In store
- Brand Membership/club
- Social Media
- Own Network

How do you want to meet your user?

- In person (studio or store)
- Telephone (call or message)
- Online (meeting or e-mail)

Study focus

Explainer #2

Study focus

There are 10 user method cards in total.
Each card is colour coded by one of four categories.

GARMENT

A garment study helps you to understand the use of a specific garment.



Favourite garment
Competitor garment
Purchased garment
Returned garment

WARDROBE

A wardrobe study helps you to understand how garments are used as a collection, as part of the user's wardrobe.



Wardrobe sorting
Wardrobe selection

SAMPLE

A sample study helps you to understand how garments are actively used in real life by using a prototype or production sample.



Sample testing
Sample and collection

DESIGN

A design study helps you to understand how you design new garments for increased use.



Material sourcing design
Element prototype design

Design process

Explainer #3

Design process

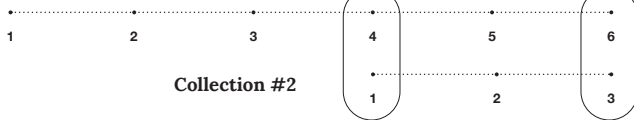
While it is possible to use the user cards at any point within the industrial fashion design process, we have indicated on each card the most useful point in the process that these methods could be applied.

We have split the design process into 6 sections.



Remember, there may be some crossover between collections. You could save time and meet your user to understand more than one thing.

Collection #1

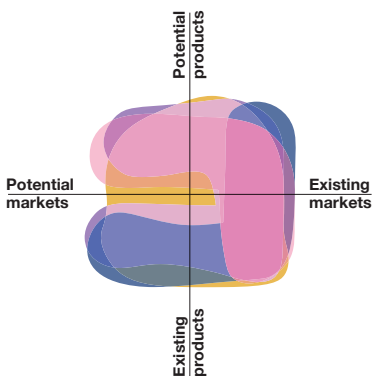


Compass

Explainer #4

Compass

Each of the user cards has a small compass on them. This is to help you navigate how each method might help you investigate:



Favourite garment



Competitor garment



Wardrobe sorting



Sample testing



Material sourcing design



Purchased garment



Returned garment



Wardrobe combination



Sample and collection



Element prototyping design

**Please remember that these cards are not an exhaustive list of methods. There are many other methods that could help fill gaps that these cards do not cover.*

Who is the user?

Explainer #5

Who is the user?

These cards have been designed to be used with several different types of users. Each card indicates the relevant users the method could be used with.

YOURSELF

This method can be done yourself.

Opportunities

- This is a useful first step by helping you think about your own use of garment.

Limitations

- Do you wear the brands design?
- Can you put yourself in the user's shoes?

A COLLEAGUE

This method can be used with a colleague, e.g. from within design or a different department

Opportunities

- This is an easy method to get a basic understanding from another source.

Limitations

- Do they wear the brands design?
- Do you know the person and if so, will they be biased?

GENERAL USER

This method can be used with a general user, e.g. a friend or family member.

Opportunities

- This is a good method to get an outside perspective.

Limitations

- Do they wear similar clothing to the brands design?
- Do you know the person and if so, will they be biased?

BRAND USER

This method can be used with a brand user, e.g. someone that shops at the brand.

Opportunities

- This is an effective method to understand the brands real user.

Limitations

- Have you engaged with the right type of user for the questions you have?

Favourite garment

Test version



Favourite garment

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user

This method explores positive attributes of the user's favourite garment.



INSPIRATION

ABOUT

This method is about understanding the user's needs and preferences and can help you design garments that will be used more often and kept for longer. This can be conducted as a discussion (interview, focus group, etc.), where the physical favourite garment is used to help guide the dialogue.

GETTING STARTED

First, consider what type of favourite garment you want to explore: any favourite garment from the user's wardrobe or a specific type. This could be adapted for a least favourite garment, a damaged garment, or another type.

Second, ask your selected user to bring a favourite garment and start the conversation. A piece of good advice is to keep your questions open and let the user tell their story.

An example: Ask everyone in your design team to bring their favourite garment from the brand. Have a conversation about: Why these are your favourites? What design elements/features you like and why? How do you wear them and in what situations? Cluster the insights, such as shape, fit, versatility, etc.

EXPLORE

General Questions

- Why is this garment the user's favourite?
- What design elements/features does the user like?
- How often does the user wear it?

Deeper Questions

- How long has the user owned it for?
- What situations does the user wear it in?
- How does the user normally style it?

Specific Questions

If it is not a brand product:

- What does it have in common with garments from the brand?
- What is the user's favourite brand product, and why?

Competitor garment

Test version



Competitor garment

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user

This method explores different attributes of a competitor product in use.

1

INSPIRATION

ABOUT

This method is about understanding how garments from other brands are used and can help you to improve an existing design or develop a new product type. This can be conducted as a discussion (interview, focus group, etc.) where the physical competitor garment(s) is used to help guide the dialogue.

GETTING STARTED

First, decide which garment or selection of garments from other brands will be used in the study and who will be part of the discussion (e.g. the design team or other users?)

Second, explore the competitor garment(s) beyond just the material, shape, fit and design elements. Consider use situations and functionalities and how the competitor garment addresses these.

An example: You want to develop better fitting jeans.

You purchase a range of jeans from your competitors.

With a colleague, you compare each design. You wear each of them for a day (cycling, working and relaxing) and keep notes. What have you learnt and how can it be applied to the brands jean design?

EXPLORE

General Questions

- What does the user like about the design?
- What does the user dislike about the design?
(Consider: material, shape, fit and design elements)

Deeper Questions

- What situations would the user wear the garment?
- What makes this garment useful/functional for the user?
- How would the user style this garment?

Specific Questions

- What makes this garment more useful than one from the brand?

Purchased garment

Test version



Purchased garment

This method explores the reasons for purchasing a garment.

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user

6

SHOP

ABOUT

This method is about understanding the user's motivation for purchasing a specific brand garment and can help you establish the desirable design elements and intended use. This can be conducted as a survey or discussion at the point of or after purchase.

GETTING STARTED

First, consider what you want to know about the purchased garment and how this information will help the design of future garments.

Second, it's important to establish if the purchaser is the intended user. If not, what other insights can you gain? You may need to tweak the suggested questions below.

An example: You arrange with a sale assistant to ask users that purchase "the dress with the statement sleeves" some questions. You might want to understand how often it will be used and for what occasions and if it was the sleeve shape that the user was specifically looking for?

EXPLORE

General Questions

- Who is the garment purchased for?
- How might the user, use the garment?
- What specific design features caused the purchaser/user to buy the garment?

Deeper Questions

- What situations would the user wear the garment?
- How often does the user expect to wear the garment?
- Why did the purchaser/user choose this garment and not another?

Specific Questions

- What made the purchaser/user go to the brand rather than somewhere else?

Returned garment

Test version



Returned garment

This method explores the reasons for returning a garment.

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user

6

SHOP

ABOUT

This method is about getting an in-depth understanding of the user's reason(s) for returning a garment and can help you act on this information when designing a similar garment for a new collection. This can be conducted as an analysis of online return forms or a discussion when a garment is returned to store.

GETTING STARTED

First, look at the garments with highest number of returns in the previous collection. Is it, for example, a specific style, a type of material or a certain trim that seems to cause issues?

Second, evaluate the reasons for the returns given by the users to find out what you need to explore.

An example: You find out from online returns that a jacket style has a high number of returns due to 'fit'. You invite a user to try out the jacket style and investigate together what the problem is with the existing fit and how it can be improved.

EXPLORE

General Questions

- What issue does the user have with the garment? (Consider: Is it related to material, fit, colour or use situation?)
- How does the user think the garment can be improved?

Deeper Questions

- Is the issue about a single design element or a combination?
- Was the garment exchanged for something else?
- What did the user prefer?

Specific Questions

- Is there a common reason why users return this garment?
- How could the garment better meet users' preferences?

Wardrobe sorting

Test version



Wardrobe sorting

This method explores the garments that a user's wardrobe contains.

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user



INSPIRATION

ABOUT

This method is about understanding the use of garments within a wardrobe. This can help you understand your user's preferences, needs and ways both broad and specific types of garments are used. This is best conducted as a discussion guided by the garments from the user's wardrobe (but could be adapted).

GETTING STARTED

First, determine the desired focus area: Do you want to know about a garment's use in general, e.g. with a focus on a product category, such as tailoring, or how garments are combined and styled?

Second, ask the user to sort their garments into piles according to your focus area. Let the user tell the story about these garments and keep your questions open. The narrative provides more insight than the number of garments they sort.

An example: Your focus area is t-shirts. You ask your user to sort their t-shirts into three piles: often worn, worn occasionally, seldom/never worn. What is the difference or similarities in design between them? Why is a material, colour or shape in a certain pile? Are any from the brand and how are they sorted?

EXPLORE

General Questions

- What types of garments are in the user's wardrobe?
- What are the similarities/differences between the garments in the user's piles? (Consider: material, shape, colour, etc.)

Deeper Questions

- What different situations does the user use the garments?
- How often does the user use the garments?

Specific Questions

- What proportion of the user's wardrobe is from your brand?
- What types of the user's garments are from your brand?
- What role does the brand's products play in the user's wardrobe?

Wardrobe combination

Test version



Wardrobe combination

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user

This method explores how user's select garments for combining outfits.



3

SAMPLE

ABOUT

This method is about understanding how brand garments fit into users' wardrobes and are used to create outfits. This can help inform and validate collection content. This can be conducted at the studio, in the user's home or a combination.

GETTING STARTED

First, consider what your focus is. Do you want to explore a specific garment, a range of garments or the entire collection?

Second, invite the user to look at the samples you have designed (they do not need to be finalised). Discuss how the user would style this with the garments they already own. For deeper insights, you could ask the user to take home and actively combine the sample(s) with garments in their wardrobe and report back.

An example: You have designed a new silhouette for a series of dresses but are uncertain how it will be received and used by users. You let diverse users take home their preferred sample and get them to send photos to show how they combine it with garments in their wardrobe and follow up with a discussion.

EXPLORE

General Questions

- What attracted the user to the garment?
- How would the user combine it with their own garments?

Deeper Questions

- What made it easy/difficult for the user to combine the garment into an outfit?
- Is there anything the user would like to change?

Specific Questions

- Does the user have similar garments in the wardrobe?
- Why would this garment be useful in the user's wardrobe?
- How does the garment contribute to the user's outfits?
(Consider: layers, temperature, colour, texture, volume etc.)

Sample testing

Test version



Sample study



Sample testing

This method explores how garments perform in everyday settings.

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user



3

SAMPLE

ABOUT

This method is about understanding how a garment performs when it is used and can help you understand if your design is fit for purpose and how durable it will be. This can be conducted with lab testing or simply by someone wearing the garment.

GETTING STARTED

First, consider how the garment will be used by the user. What situations will they use it? How often will they wear it? This will guide what type of sample test you should do.

Second, think about how the garment was designed. What makes it different from another version (material, shape, fit, a specific design feature). Use this to focus your investigation when testing.

An example: You design a new shape of trousers, and the sample arrives. You ask a range of colleagues, that are the sample size, to try them on to see how they fit on different bodies. You ask one person to wear and wash them throughout two weeks and ask questions about the experience.

EXPLORE

General Questions

- Does the user like the shape and fit?
- Does the user like the design elements? (pocket, zip, etc.)
- How does the user think it feels? Is it comfortable?

Deeper Questions

- Were there any signs of wear after it had been worn?
- How often does it need washing?
- What does it look like after one wash and ten washes?

Specific Questions

- Did the user enjoy wearing it and why/why not?
- Was it practical for the activities the user did?
- Is there anything the user would like to change?

Sample and collection

Test version



Sample study



Sample and collection

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user

This method explores user feedback about the final collection before it is sold wholesale.



4

WHOLESALE

ABOUT

This method is about understanding user preferences regarding designs within the collection before it is sold wholesale. This can help inform and build arguments for investment at wholesale and future collection content. This can be conducted in the studio or showroom before wholesale customers are invited to view it.

GETTING STARTED

First, consider which user – or users – you wish to invite to the studio/showroom and for how long.

Second, agree on the task you give the user. Do you, for example, wish that the user selects garments based on a specific criterion?

An example: You invite three brand users from different segments (e.g. age, geography, gender) and ask them to select a number of styles from the collection that they are immediately attracted to. You have a discussion with them about their choices. The user insights can be used by the wholesale team in their sales pitch, as well as for future design.

EXPLORE

General Questions

- What garments does the user desire and why?
- How would the user use these garments?
- What garments does the user not want and why?

Deeper Questions

- What elements of the design does the user like?
- What materials/prints/patterns/textures does the user like?
- What shape, fit and style does the user like?

Specific Questions

- How would the user combine garments in the collection?
- How important are the circular design attributes/story in the user's preference?

Material sourcing design

Test version



Design study



Material sourcing design

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user

This method explores which materials are desirable for users.



INSPIRATION

ABOUT

This method is about getting user feedback on material preferences, and can help you source relevant materials for your designs. This method is conducted as a discussion around a selection of physical material samples that can be touched and felt in order to guide the dialogue.

GETTING STARTED

First, select the materials you want to study. This could be a broad range of different materials or a more specific collection of one material type. These could include new innovative materials.

Second, consider, if this is a general study about users' material perception or if you want to explore how materials perform for a specific garment. Which user is best placed to provide feedback?

An example: You invite users into the studio to get their feedback on a selection of material samples (one sample is recycled). Before the users touch the samples, ask them to order them according to their visual (or other) preference. Repeat this after they have touched and felt them. Does hand-feel effect their preferences? How did the users respond to the recycled sample?

EXPLORE

General Questions

- What material does the user like to wear and why?
- Which materials does the user not like and why?
- How does surface or texture effect the user's answers?

Deeper Questions

- Has the user owned garments with similar materials before?
- What benefits does the user think the materials have?
- How does thickness or drape effect the user's answers?

Specific Questions

- What material properties, such as ease of care, are important to the user when purchasing new clothes?
- What information would the user like to have about the materials their garments are made of?

Element prototype design

Test version



Element prototype design

Yourself
A colleague
General user
Brand user

This method explores which design elements and attributes are desirable and useful for users.

2

COLLECTION

ABOUT

This method is about getting user feedback on various design elements while you develop your collection and can help you fine tune your design to be desirable and useful for the user. This method is conducted with users seeing, touching, trying and talking about design elements.

GETTING STARTED

First, consider what design element(s) you wish to get feedback on, for example, a detail, a shape, the cut lines, a trim etc. or combinations of specific elements.

Second, consider who is best placed to provide feedback. Does a colleague from another department wear the brand, or do you require a brand user to come to the studio?

An example: You are designing a jacket with multiple pockets. You wish to get user feedback about the position, size and function of the pockets before you finalise the design. You invite a user to the studio and have a discussion using examples of different pockets on old/new samples. Together with the user, you mock-up the pockets size and position for your jacket design.

EXPLORE

General Questions

- What types of element does the user find useful on their garments?
- What annoys the user about elements designed into their garments?

Deeper Questions

- What trim size and position does the user like and why? (Consider: zips, buttons, pockets, etc.)
- What element shapes does the user like and why?

Specific Questions

- What situation will the garment be used for and what design elements are required?
- What does the user think of the design element you have designed for a garment?

User cards

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2023 Design School Kolding - Test version

www.designforplanet.dk/toolbox/user-cards





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