



## BEST PRACTICE #1

# Audience Focus

Overall, audience focus was the strongest best practice; we scored almost all projects as “excellent” across all three sub-elements of this best practice area. Many projects benefited from a foundational research and design period that integrated multidisciplinary teams and approaches, allowing for in-depth audience understanding, which led to strong audience insights, which eventually led to strong brand strategies and marketing campaigns.

### IDENTIFY THE AUDIENCE / UNDERSTAND THE AUDIENCE:

While identifying and understanding an audience are two discrete activities, we grouped them together because the process is iterative, where greater understanding of a target audience allows for additional layers of segmentation, dividing that population into smaller audience groups that share unique characteristics. The Adolescents 360<sup>2</sup> case study makes this process clear. The A360 Tanzania project team started with a broad definition of the audience – adolescent girls. Through the process of understanding the audience via qualitative and quantitative methods, they identified two specific sub-audiences: “Faridas” (less experienced, sexually active girls, approximately 16 years old) and “Bahatis” (more experienced, sexually active girls, approximately 18 years old).

The techniques used by the strongest case studies in the “identify the audience and understand the audience” best practice sub-elements include psycho-behavioral approaches, focusing on priority segments, and employing empathy.

### Psycho-behavioral approaches:

In a recent article in the Stanford Social Initiative Review, authors from the Surgo Foundation<sup>3</sup> advocate for scaling up psycho-behavioral segmentation in the development sector. They reason that this practice, adopted in the private sector in the 1960s, can help development sector initiatives be more effective. Psycho-behavioral segmentation divides people based on their behaviors, motivations, and beliefs; it is more effective than demographic segmentation because the differences between the resulting groups are relevant to the behavior in question, and “understanding why people make decisions is the most effective way to change their behavior and improve their lives.”

We recommend the Shujaaz and Airbnb case studies as examples of effective psycho-behavioral approaches. Like the A360 description above, Shujaaz<sup>4</sup> is focused on Kenyan youth ages 15-24. For each communication campaign, the team develops a unique segmentation, using a “rejection-adoption” scale to define audience segments; understand their attitudes, beliefs, and persuasion opportunities; and refine behavior change objectives. We also like the example provided by Airbnb,<sup>5</sup> which identified its overall target audience as “Headfirst Explorers” (people who love to discover new places but hate being tourists). We like that the Airbnb audience is identified based on its behavior and that the name brings the psychographic and behavioral characteristics to life, making it easy for anyone working on the brand to quickly understand and remember what defines this audience.

### Focusing on priority audience groups or segments:

Project teams often face tension between wanting to reach everyone and picking one or two of the most important

2) A360 is an adolescent sexual and reproductive health initiative

3) Sgaier, Sema, et al., “Time to Scale Psycho-behavioral Segmentation in Global Development,” Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2018.

4) Shujaaz is a multi-media platform developed to create social and economic value for Kenyan youth.

5) Airbnb is an online marketplace for arranging or offering lodging, primarily homestays, and tourism experiences

audience segments. We cite the above referenced article from the Surgo Foundation<sup>6</sup> which describes criteria for prioritizing segments: (1) ease of conversion; (2) segment prevalence; and (3) segment impact. Below we describe examples from our case studies that meet these criteria:

**(1) Ease of conversion (Future Fab<sup>7</sup>):** The team at MSK originally focused on girls ages 15-19. However, during HCD prototyping, the team decided to focus on girls who were not married, had not yet had children, and were living in urban areas — a group that faces high levels of stigma deterring them from accessing contraceptive services, but also a group with whom the project was most likely to be successful.

**(2) Segment Prevalence (A360):** A360 originally focused on adolescent girls. Through the early stages of the project, the team identified four segments: (i) younger, less experienced girls who were not yet sexually active; (ii) younger, less experienced girls who were sexually active; (iii) older, more experienced girls who were not yet sexually active; and (iv) older, more experienced girls who were sexually active. The team made the decision to focus on the two sexually active segments, as these groups were sizeable and also had the most urgent need for contraceptives.

**(3) Segment impact (Trust<sup>8</sup>):** The target for PSKenya's Trust condom brand is men, ages 18-30. However, the team specifically targets an influential segment known as "Johnny." Johnny is an unmarried, middle-income, urban man in his mid-20s. By targeting this influential, emerging segment, the team believed that Trust condoms would also appeal to lower income men.

**Key take-away:** Segmentation, particularly using psycho-behavioral approaches, is helpful to strengthen audience understanding and enable the organization to focus its resources on priority segments.

### Empathy:

Our standard of excellence for the "Understand the Audience" best practice involves going beyond demographics to include not only attitudes, practices, and beliefs, but also what we call "the unspoken." Based on the projects and brands we reviewed, empathetic approaches – often but not necessarily part of a Human Centered Design (HCD) process – can be helpful in revealing "the unspoken" – things about the audience that they themselves may not articulate or even be aware of. As explained by scholars Dorothy Leonard and Jeffrey Rayport, who introduced the concept of empathic design, "customers are so accustomed to current conditions that they don't think to ask for a new solution – even if they have real needs that could be addressed."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the audience may not be aware of the motivations for their behaviors or may not be able to imagine a world different from the status quo. Empathetic approaches help implementing teams reveal the latent motivations, desires, and needs that ultimately unlock new ways of approaching problems.

We recommend A360, Future Fab, Airbnb, Shujaaz, and Truth as best-in-class examples that used empathy to enable rich audience understanding. All five projects used one or more of the following approaches: (1) working with the audience as peers; (2) conducting immersive experiences; and (3) deploying diverse teams.

**(1) Working with the audience as peers:** As described by the A60 team, "*the consortium pursued deep partnership with young people throughout design and implementation, engaging youth not only as sources of insights but also as critical partners in gathering and making meaning of information, as intervention co-designers, and as partners in implementation.*"<sup>10</sup> For example, the name for the A360 intervention in Tanzania, Kuwa Mjanja, translates as "be smart" and has traditionally meant "be clean" as associated with menstruation and staying away from boys. As partners in the project, girls made the phrase their own and gave it new meaning: to have a sense of pride and purpose in pursuing one's dreams. Similarly, the Shujaaz team partners with the audience to help identify audience

6) Sgaier, Sema, et al., "Time to Scale Psycho-behavioral Segmentation in Global Development," Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2018.

7) Future Fab is an adolescent sexual and reproductive health project led by Marie Stopes Kenya.

8) Trust is the leading condom brand in Kenya.

9) Leonard, D., and Rayport, J., "Spark Innovation through Empathic Design," Harvard Business Review, Nov-Dec 1997.

10) "Pursuing Youth-Powered, Transdisciplinary Programming for Contraceptive Service Delivery Across Three Countries: The Case of Kuwa Mjanja in Tanzania."

segments, as explained on the organization’s blog, “*Young people are brilliant at describing the different groups of their peers and the different views that make up their world. We then cross-check and triangulate these in different locations and communities to test their universality.*”<sup>11</sup>

**(2) Conducting Immersive Experiences:** To design Airbnb Experiences, an initiative in which locals host tours and other experiences (e.g., glass-blowing or kayaking) for Airbnb travelers, Airbnb anonymously recruited a traveler to document the details of his trip to San Francisco, which included budget hotels, chain restaurants, and time spent at crowded tourist destinations. It later invited the same traveler back, this time to experience the “ideal” visit to San Francisco. After this second visit, the traveler left the city in tears of joy, describing the trip as “magical,” and “the best trip I’ve ever had.” The knowledge and empathy the team gained from these trips – and accompanying storyboards they created – became the blueprint for creating Airbnb Experiences.

To create the Future Fab Initiative, the team spent time with girls going about their everyday lives – going shopping, visiting with friends, etc. – which helped establish trust and enabled the implementing team to better understand what is important to Kenyan girls, ultimately leading the team to reframe the role of contraceptives as a means for girls to achieve their future hopes and dreams.

**(3) Employing multi-disciplinary teams:** Several projects deployed multi-disciplinary teams, a process that increases the breadth of what is noticed in the research phase, thereby increasing the likelihood of uncovering unarticulated motivations, needs, and desires. The A360 team was made up of adolescent-development scientists, anthropologists, experts in HCD, public health practitioners, social marketers, and youth engagement workers – in addition to the youth as research participants. Similarly, the Truth<sup>12</sup> Initiative team was made up of social scientists; marketing, communication, and media professionals; and tobacco control experts.

**Key take-away:** Empathetic approaches strengthen audience understanding, help to reveal the “unspoken” and ultimately create opportunities for marketing programs that resonate.

## ARTICULATE AN INSIGHT

Insights are the foundation of strong marketing programs because they inspire the audience to think or feel differently – and the audience cannot behave differently if they do not first think or feel differently. In this section we discuss two lessons we learned about insights based on our case study analysis.

### Campaigns that requires the audience to change their perspective require an audience insight:

Most problems require an insight that inspires the audience to think or feel – and ultimately behave – differently; however, there are some problems that are more straight-forward than others. For example, Aflac (American Family Life Assurance Company), an insurance company with 10% brand awareness in the late 1990s, needed potential customers to know and remember the company’s name so they would contact Aflac when they needed insurance. The Aflac duck campaign, featuring a duck that quacks “Aflac,”<sup>13</sup> was so distinctive and memorable that it enabled the brand to achieve 67% awareness and double sales in less than three years.<sup>14</sup> This campaign did require a behavior change (the audience needed to contact Aflac as opposed to some other company), but the behavior change did not require a significant change in the audience’s perspective.

Among our case studies, ORS / Zinc India<sup>15</sup> was somewhat similar. The behavior change – get caregivers to use ORS + Zinc to treat diarrhea – did not require a significant change in the audience’s perspective; rather, it required that caregivers become aware of the benefit of ORS + Zinc to help their children recover quickly from diarrhea.

11) <http://www.welltoldstory.com/segment-segment-segment/>

12) Truth is a US-based anti-tobacco initiative

13) [AFLAC’s Duck First Commercial Park](#)

14) Amos, Daniel P. “How I Did It: Aflac’s CEO Explains How He Fell for the Duck,” *Harvard Business Review*, Jan 2019.

15) ORS / Zinc Program, initiated by the Clinton Health Access Initiative, focused on increasing coverage for both zinc and ORS for children suffering from diarrhea.

**Key take-away:** An audience insight is needed if the behavior change requires the audience to have a significant change in perspective.

**The best insights reflect unspoken audience understanding, and are concise and easy to remember:**

Almost all of the insights in our case study series reflected unspoken audience understanding, but three stood out – Airbnb, Mankind,<sup>16</sup> and NURHI<sup>17</sup> – because they were also concise and memorable, which makes them easy to understand and use.

“The unspoken” refers to information the audience may not articulate, as they may not be aware of the motivations for their behaviors or may not be able to imagine a world different from the status quo.

| Case Study | Learning from Target Audience   | Audience Insight: reflects the unspoken, concise, memorable   |
|------------|---|---|
| Airbnb     | The “headfirst explorers” consider new ways to travel and local experiences as a core part of their identity. An attitude once seen mainly in younger millennials, the tendency to value experiences over things had become a global mindset that crossed geographies and demographics. <sup>18</sup>                         | The “headfirst explorer” loves discovering new places, but hates being a tourist.   |
| Mankind    | Primary care doctors in rural areas and Tier II and III cities wanted low cost drugs that would enable their poor patients to access pharmaceuticals and complete their treatment regimens. However, pharmaceutical representatives did not call on these physicians; they had been neglected by the pharmaceutical industry. | Illness doesn’t discriminate between rich and poor, or where you live, but healthcare does.                                   |
| NURHI      | Men and women felt judged and patronized by family planning programs that suggested that families should have only 2 to 3 children.   | Family planning isn’t about the right family size; it’s about having the freedom to make the right decisions for your family. |

**Key take-away:** When crafting insights, focus on the “unspoken” findings from the audience understanding; write insights that are concise and easy to remember so that everyone on the team can understand and use them.

Lastly, excellence in the audience focus best practice area takes time. In the words of Airbnb co-founder Brian Chesky, “It’s really hard to get even 10 people to love anything. But it’s not hard if you spend a ton of time with them.”<sup>19</sup> Several projects we developed as case studies had a relatively long foundational learning period. For example, Future Fab spent approximately 6 months understanding the audience and developing prototypes, NURHI spent 12 months in a foundational learning phase, and A360 spent 18 months. Well Told Story (WTS), the organization behind the Shujaaz media platform, has been immersed in studying Kenyan youth for the past 10 years and still spends approximately 3 months in foundational learning for each new campaign.

**Key take-away:** Doing the up front work to identify a specific audience, understand “the unspoken” and craft an audience insight takes time, but will pay off by providing clarity and guidance for project and campaign execution.

16) Mankind is an Indian Pharmaceutical company

17) Nigerian Urban Reproductive Health Initiative

18) Mildenhall, Jonathan, “How Airbnb built its brand by telling the world not to travel,” PR Week, Sept 18, 2017

19) “Airbnb’s Brian Chesky in Handcrafted” Masters of Scale Podcast with Reid Hoffman.