

**Improving the customer journey
for differing cultures
through storybranding
and storytelling marketing**

By Pamela Pietersz

1527766

Jilster B.V.

University of Applied Sciences Utrecht

Utrecht, Netherlands

Executive summary

This research paper contains improvements for Jilster B.V.'s marketing communication. Jilster is losing out on revenue opportunities because visitors to their websites' don't understand what Jilster is for, and this may be due to the current marketing communication methods.

Jilster has had some success with word of mouth marketing in the past, and is looking for ways to increase their customer communication by improving the customer journey for target groups of differing cultures. Due to the nature of the past successes, the methods explored in this research paper are storybranding, and storytelling marketing, since these methods are effective at increasing word of mouth marketing.

The storybranding model lends itself very well to being turned into a customer journey map, which can be used to find the problems in the customer journey preventing the comprehension of Jilster. There was little to no information available on storybranding and storytelling marketing geared towards different cultures, until now.

Secondary research (desk research) provided the data needed to identify the culture segments that have the most opportunity to grow, which are the Dutch, US and German cultures, along with the specific problems they face during their customer journey. Problems arise primarily in the awareness and comprehension level. Prospects have trouble understanding what Jilster is, what they can use it for, how to use it and where to find information on the website.

Primary research (qualitative interviews) provided the data needed to develop methods that can solve these problems. The differences between the cultures are that US citizens prefer imagery of people younger than themselves in order for them to relate to the image, and they prefer true stories and stories that engage the mind. Germans find birthdays very important compared to the other cultures. The data collected also provided insights into improvements that can be made to solve the problems faced during the customer journey for all three cultures, the most important being that prospects must be able to relate to the image being shown or message being communicated to them. Other improvements that can be made are using visual storytelling and community content, using storytelling methods that are memorable, making the message clear, improving website navigation, improving instructions and improving customer reviews.

Jilster should implement storybranding strategy and storytelling methods which can solve the problems faced during the customer's journey.

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1. Introduction

This research paper explores storybranding and storytelling marketing as methods to improve the customer journey for target groups with differing cultures. The findings of this research paper will be used by Jilster B.V. to improve their marketing communication.

The same marketing communication methods yield different results when used for target groups with differing cultures. It is unclear what the reason for this is, it may be that a different marketing approach per culture is needed, or perhaps a different method altogether would be a better fit.

Jilster is a company that fully operates online. They are active in the Dutch market, German market and English speaking market through three websites: www.jilster.nl, www.jilster.de, and www.jilster.com. However, Jilster faces a challenge by communicating almost solely online, which leads to important messages sometimes being lost in translation. Their websites' visitors at times don't understand what Jilster is for, and many of the Dutch marketing communication methods are used on all three domains, with mixed results. This may be due to cultural differences. The consequence is that Jilster loses out on potential revenue opportunities. Jilster would like to change that by looking into improving their customer journey. Their founder expressed an interest in storytelling marketing and has said that this method has yielded positive results in the past. Through stories that satisfied customers have told other people (word-of-mouth), Jilster has seen its business grow, and so they would like research to be done on this topic.

Jilster is part of the online magazine and print branch. This branch is growing as consumers are becoming more interested in tangible ways to create their own publications. A good example of this is an app called 'recently', which allows users to upload their images and have a high quality magazine printed (Dove, 2015). Jilster has a few competitors, like Blurb.com and Madmagz.com. Jilster differentiates itself by being easier to use (Blurb's software can be considered difficult to use) and giving the user complete freedom to create their magazine any way they want (Madmagz limits users to pre-made templates). Another one of Jilster's USP's (Unique Selling Point) is that users can work together on a magazine. An important technological development for Jilster to take into account is the declining use of adobe Flash, the platform that Jilster's online software runs on (The Guardian, 2015).

The goal of this research paper is to help Jilster find a way to improve their customer's journey, by researching methods that lend themselves well to Jilster, based on what seems to have worked well in the past. The differences between the culture groups with the most potential (to grow) will be researched.

A positive result for this research paper would be that conclusions can be made about cultural differences and that the findings can be used to pinpoint more effective marketing communication methods that can improve their customer's journey. The methods must also be immediately implementable.

1.1. Main research question

How can storybranding and storytelling marketing be used to improve the customer journey for target groups with differing cultures?

1.2. Sub questions

1. What are the relevant cultural segments to be distinguished within the company's target group?
2. What problems do each of the relevant cultural segments face during their customer journey?
3. How can the problems faced during the customer journey be improved by using storybranding and storytelling marketing?

1.3. Research paper description

The literature review explores existing literature on storybranding, storytelling marketing, the customer journey, and the relationship between the three.

Research methods includes data collection (secondary research; desk research, and primary research; qualitative interviews) and analysis methods (source reliability, categorization and interpretation of data), population and sample, limitations, delimitation and ethics.

The findings chapter includes an overview of the culture groups with the most potential, the problems they face during the customer journey and the differences uncovered by means of qualitative research. The discussions and conclusions chapter contains conclusions that could then be made about the target group's cultural differences, the problems they face during the customer journey and how the customer journey can be improved.

Lastly, recommendations for the improvement of marketing communication are made by providing the company with storybranding strategy and storytelling methods that allow them to improve their customer's journey.

2. Literature review

In order to understand storybranding and storytelling, one needs to understand why story is important for marketing, and why and how it can be used in marketing.

2.1. Story

Storytelling has become a popular marketing communication method. The reason is because stories are a good way to engage the reader and drive them to action. A good story has a plot and a theme. The plot being the events, and the theme providing the meaning.

The plot is always logical and provides the reader with an understanding of what happens in the story (Signorelli, 2014). The meaning provides answers to the question 'why?'. It's human nature to want to know why something is happening. It's a force that drives all humans, because meaning stems from curiosity, and curiosity stems from nature. That's why, when your curiosity is piqued, you suddenly have an emotional and visceral response that creates a vested interest in finding out what happens next. Meaning is important for a good story (Cron, 2012).

The only way that a story can have this effect on someone though, is if the story's theme aligns with the **worldview** of the person consuming it:

"Great stories agree with our worldview. The best stories don't teach people anything new. Instead, the best stories agree with what the audience already believes and makes the members of the audience feel smart and secure when reminded how right they were in the first place" (Godin, 2012).

2.2. The science of story

There is scientific research that proves that stories help brands connect with their target audience. When people are told neutral words, only the language processing parts of the brain are activated. Whereas when people are told a story, not only the language, but also the sensory areas of the brain are activated (Murphy Paul, 2012). This and other studies, have been able to conclude that people's brains make no distinction between hearing a story and actually experiencing it (Carlton Rush, 2014). This means that when people are told a story, provided it is something that resonates with them, in their minds they are experiencing it as if it's real life. That's where emotion comes in. Through story, it's possible to make people feel something. People use

"The human brain does not distinguish between reading or hearing a story and experiencing it in real life."

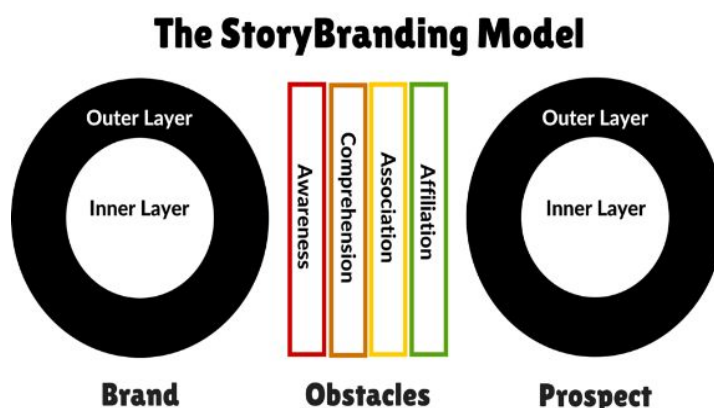
- Brianne Carlton Rush

emotions to evaluate brands, according to fMRI neuro-imagery, and emotions push people towards **action**. Think of our 'fight-or-flight' reaction to fear, or what happens when we feel insecure and want to feel better about the image we have of ourselves (self-identity). We will buy what we think will do that, for example an iPhone (Murray Ph.D., 2013).

So, emotions have a big impact on consumer decision-making, and story, with its ability to make consumers feel like they are experiencing something, has a big impact on how they feel about a brand.

2.3. Storybranding

The storybranding model is the best way to describe how the storybranding strategy works. Like a good story, this model represents two characters and the obstacles one character must overcome in order to connect with the other character. In this model, the first character is the brand, the second character is the target audience and the obstacles are challenges the brand must overcome in order to build a lasting relationship with the target audience (Signorelli, 2012).



Story is a good way to connect to customers, since it makes them **feel something** and leads **to action**. We've also seen that a good story needs to have meaning and that meaning must align with the **worldview** of the customer. But how can a brand do that?

The storybranding model takes into account the fact that customers can **generate repeat sales through word-of-mouth**. First the customer becomes **aware** of the brand, then they **comprehend** the brand's unique features, they then **associate** the brand with certain qualities they find important, and lastly they **affiliate** themselves with the brand's story. This last step in the relationship, affiliation, is where the brand's story resonates with the customer so strongly, that the customer becomes a brand advocate, wanting to share the brand's values, which coincidentally are the same as his or her values, with other people. This model can accurately describe the customer journey, because it describes the different levels a customer goes through from the moment he is introduced to the brand, to the moment he becomes bonded (or affiliated) with the brand and willingly participates in word-of-mouth marketing due to the strong relationship

he has formed with the brand.

It is possible to measure how well your brand is doing on all four levels, and thus pinpoint which areas you need to focus on to reach level 4, or affiliation. These levels are used in a later chapter to outline the customer journey map and to find out on which levels, Jilster's potential customers, or prospects, are experiencing the most problems. One major pitfall companies face is their message becoming inconsistent or contradictory. "When a brand's meaning becomes fragmented it ends up not conveying meaning at all" (Signorelli, 2014).

To start the storybranding process a brand must have consistency. In order to find this consistency, Signorelli has created the 6 C's of the storybranding process (1. Collect the backstory, 2. Characterize the brand, 3. Characterize the prospect, 4. Connect the characters, 5. Confront the obstacles, 6. Complete the storybrief). Going through this process could help Jilster create a storybranding strategy and marketing communication plan that will help improve their customer's journey. Whether or not it is the right strategy for Jilster to improve its customer journey for target groups with differing cultures remains to be seen.

2.4. Storytelling marketing

Storytelling marketing can take many shapes and forms. It is not limited to the written word, and it doesn't even have to be in a language you understand.

Here's Guido Everaert (Author, Keynote speaker, Columnist, (Web)Copywriter & Storyteller) : "Storytelling is not about language, it's about telling and creating stories in a compelling way. It's about finding the right metaphors, and above all the structure in which to tell a story. In doing so, the storyteller (re)creates a part of life and generates a story that is easily remembered and unique to that particular brand" (De Clerck, 2014).

Storytelling marketing can be described by what technique is used, or through which medium the story is told. Below is a table showcasing different types of storytelling techniques (Lindsay, 2014):

Storytelling technique	How it works
Monomyth	The hero leaves home to go on a difficult journey
Mountain	A way of mounting tension and drama in a story
Nesting loops	Layering three or more narratives
Sparklines	A comparison of what is with what could be
In medias res	The story starts in the middle of the action and the beginning is

	explained afterwards
Converging ideas	Shows how different thoughts led to one idea
False start	Beginning a predictable story but then surprising the audience and starting over
Petal structure	Organizing multiple stories around one central message

It is possible to use any kind of medium to present a message, or a story. It is important, however, to think about how the audience will perceive the story depending on through which medium it is told. In some cases, the message is the most important part of the equation, allowing those who are familiar with messages of it's kind to see the message in a new light. In some cases however, the medium can bring people from different walks of life together. The take-away is that a good medium presents stories in a manner that is engaging (Fanelli, 2015).

This makes storytelling a very versatile tool to use with a storybranding strategy. The key to finding the right way to use storytelling marketing to connect with your target group, based on what information has been found so far, is first finding out the **worldview** of your target group. A good way to do that, is knowing your customer's journey.

2.5. Customer journey

The customer journey is the complete sum of experiences that customers go through when interacting with your company and brand (Sorman, 2014). An effective way to analyze the customer journey is the customer journey map. "This map tells the story of the customer's experience: from initial contact, through the process of engagement and into a long-term relationship" (Boag, 2015).

When it comes to storybranding and storytelling, a customer journey map is a useful tool that helps understand what questions the customer may have and what obstacles stand in the way of a good customer relationship. In order to create a customer journey map, data analysis and anecdotal research can be used (Boag, 2015). Data analysis can be collected from company databases and analytics tools that show where users come from, what they do, in Jilster's case, on their websites, and how they react.

3. Research Method Strategy

As stated before, the main research question to be answered is as follows:

How can storybranding and storytelling marketing be used to improve the customer journey for target groups with differing cultures?

3.1. Orientation

This research question requires different types of research methods. There is already a lot of literature available on topics like storybranding, storytelling marketing and customer journey, but there is little to no information available on how these topics relate to one another, and how different cultures relate to these topics. That is why the collection of new data is required. This leads to a mixed research method strategy.

3.2. Data collection

There was already a lot of information available on storytelling marketing and customer journey. This information was collected from books, e-books, online articles and print articles. There was limited information available on storybranding, but there is enough available for the purposes of this research paper. This information will be collected from existing books and published works (online and in print) by industry experts.

In order to collect data for the company's target group and their differing cultures, a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used. To find the company's target group, databases of previous and current customers were analyzed. These were provided by the company. This data is compiled in an online database owned by the company, as well as an online website analysis tool, called Google Analytics, which tracks the company's website and its users.

To find out how the problems faced during the customer journey can be improved through storybranding and storytelling marketing, more information was needed than was available. This information was collected by conducting interviews with subjects that match the target group's cultural backgrounds. Five respondents from each culture (Dutch, German and US) were interviewed, making a total of 15 respondents. The interviews were of a qualitative nature and made use of a projective technique (image association), the laddering technique, as well as general open questions. These interviews were conducted via Skype. For the interview guideline, please see Appendix 1. Two of the interviews were conducted in Dutch, which was the only

common language between those specific respondents and the researcher.

3.3. Data analysis

In order to analyze the data collected from the research into storybranding, storytelling and customer journey, texts, books and all other data found was first scanned for relevance. If found relevant, the item was checked for reliability (publication date, authors, contributors) and validity (proof, bias). If the item was deemed reliable and valid, it was read thoroughly and notes with keywords were added to the designated chapter in the research. The notes and keywords together have made up all the information needed to understand storybranding, storytelling marketing and customer journey and their relationship.

For the analysis of the company's target group and their cultural differences, the data collected from the company's online database and Google Analytics database was entered into excel. Here, tables, charts and graphs were created to provide the insight needed to determine the target group and the accompanying cultural backgrounds.

To analyze the customer journey, previously collected data was used. This information has led to the creation of a customer journey map table. The data collected was then used to create written customer journey maps. These maps were then analyzed by looking for the specific moments during the journey where customers face a problem. A problem may be something they do not understand, errors on the website or questions left unanswered. These problems were compiled in an overview in Word.

In order to analyze the data collected from the interviews, it has been grouped into relevant categories. The data was then interpreted, attaching meaning and significance to the categories. Patterns and connections within and between categories were identified and discussed, and these led to improved marketing communication methods.

The categories are the following:

Visual appeal

Based on comments and opinions respondents gave for each image, conclusions were made about what kind of image would immediately make it clear that it is a magazine, make them want to learn more and imagine the story behind the image.

Online behavior

Based on the answers respondents gave to questions about their behavior online, conclusions

were made about what method(s) best facilitate their understanding of a topic and how they go about finding this information.

Story significance

Based on the answers respondents gave to questions about their story preferences, conclusions were made about what stories convey the most meaning to them and are the easiest for them to retain.

Birthday behavior

Based on the answers respondents gave to questions about birthdays, conclusions were made about their behavior, preferences and actions they may take when it comes to birthdays, their own or others'.

3.4. Population & sampling

The population sampled to create and compile customer journey maps and find out who the target group is and what relevant cultural differences they may have consists of all the people who have visited the company's websites from June 21st, 2011 to July 21st, 2015, and all the orders placed on the company's website dating back to May 18th, 2011 up to July 16th, 2015. From the database of all orders placed a sample of the 100 most recent orders with shipping destination to the Netherlands, Germany and the United States of America each was used. The 100 most recent orders were used to get a representation of the latest magazines types made. The population sampled for interviews consists of 5 Germans, 5 United States Citizens and 5 Dutch citizens.

3.5. Limitations

Constraints and limitations include, but are not limited by, a short amount of time for a great deal of research to be done, unreliable data (from google analytics or other internal company sources/databases, these databases are managed by people, so human error must be taken into account), compliance of employees and interview respondents (employees may not always be forthcoming during interviews) and other factors such as personal opinions (can make it difficult to draw conclusions from interviews), and management needs and wishes (can make it difficult to focus on main research). The research was performed and analyzed by one individual, which can also affect the results. The researcher's bias may have affected the results as well as her perception, which may have influenced how the answers were interpreted and categorized.

There was also some difficulty during the interviews when respondents didn't understand the questions or didn't understand what was asked of them, which resulted in some of the respondents having to be led to a certain extent. This means that the interviewer's bias may have influenced their answers. Another limitation is the difficulty an inexperienced researcher has conducting interviews with the laddering technique.

3.6. Delimitations

A choice was made to limit the research to culturally specific differences and how storybranding and storytelling marketing can improve the customer journey specifically through certain marketing communication methods, as opposed to how it can improve the entire marketing strategy as a whole. Also, the research was limited to finding suitable methods, not creating an entire marketing strategy which would require extensive testing.

The population was also limited to those cultures that showed the most potential for the company to invest time and resources in, instead of all the cultures that make up their target group.

3.7. Ethics

The data will be respected by protecting the wishes of those people who are interviewed. It will also be respected by not being misused for purposes other than to enhance the experience of people who have an interest in using Jilster.

The respondent will be respected by adhering to their wishes and not overstepping their limitations and making the end result unfeasible for them.

The researcher will be respected by being given the tools to complete the research and expecting reasonable results within the constraints, time or otherwise, that are present.

4. Findings

The limitations Jilster faces with their current marketing strategy, is that important messages are often lost in translation. Their websites' visitors at times don't understand what Jilster is for, and Dutch marketing and communication methods are used on all three domains, which results in Jilster losing out on potential revenue opportunities due to cultural differences.

In an interview with Jilster's founder, it becomes clear that the customer journey can be improved through story. The company's founder talks about the 'a-ha' moment that users of the editor only experience after hearing someone else's 'Jilster story'. Even during the customer journey, when users have already resolved to make a magazine, they need inspiration to finish their magazine. This inspiration usually comes in the form of someone else showing them how they made their magazine.

Another problem that becomes clear during the interview with Jilster's founder is that they have not taken into account the possible cultural differences. All three websites are set up the same way, including many texts and design. This may be the reason that their revenue from the German and English websites is much lower than that of the Dutch website.

4.1. Cultural segments

Sub-question 1: What are the relevant cultural segments to be distinguished within the company's target group?

Target group culture

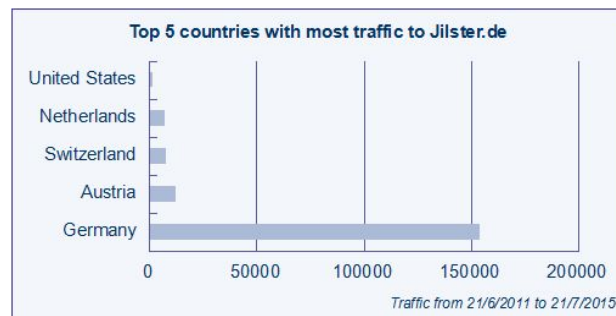
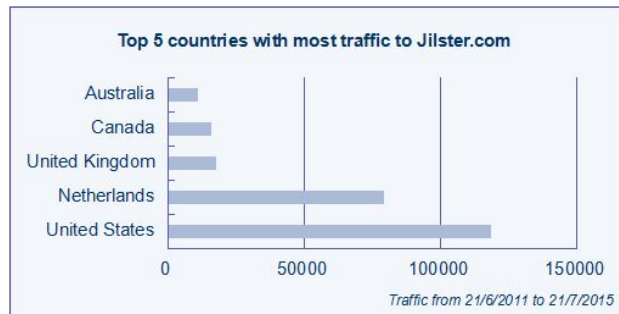
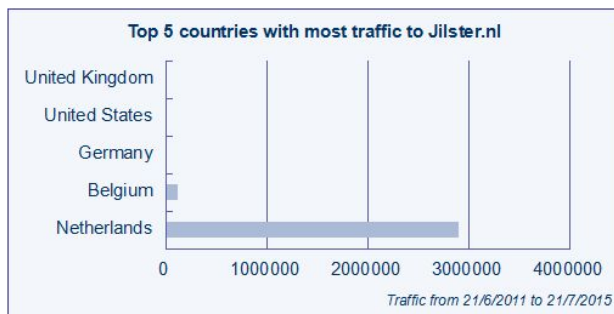
The most important culture segments were found by looking at past sales and current website traffic. These two results will be compared and correlations will be found in order to find the target groups with the most potential. The target groups with the most potential are those that have ordered in the past, which means that Jilster satisfies a need for them, and also those with the highest traffic to the website, which means there is an initial connection, but the communication that follows may not be working. So we're looking for the countries with the highest order numbers and the highest traffic numbers to the websites.

On the right is a table with Jilster's sales starting from December 11th 2011 up to June 25th, 2015. The table has been sorted according to amount of orders from high to low, and the corresponding countries.

Below are three tables with the amount of traffic ordered from low to high, by country, for each of the three websites Jilster has: jilster.nl (Dutch), jilster.com (English), and jilster.de (German).

Jilster's total sales up to June 25th, 2015

Shipping Country	Orders
Netherlands	25382
Germany	927
Belgium	745
United states of America	140
UK	73






Most orders come from the Netherlands, and most traffic to Jilster.nl is from the Netherlands, so that is an important culture. The second most orders come from Germany, and the most traffic to Jilster.de is from Germany, so that is also an important culture. The third most orders come from Belgium, but the amount of traffic from Belgium is low, so this culture is not as relevant to research separately at this moment as others. The fourth most orders come from the United States of America, and the most traffic to Jilster.com is from the United States of America, so that is also an important culture. The three most important cultures for Jilster to take into account are the Dutch, German and U.S. culture. The largest amount of traffic by far is coming to the Dutch website. This is probably due to the fact that the Dutch website was the first online. As such, it has had the more time to grow than the English and German websites.

4.2. Problems faced during customer journey

Sub-question 2: What problems do each of the relevant cultural segments face during their customer journey?

The next step is to create customer journey maps for each culture. The storybranding model (awareness, comprehension, association and affiliation) will be used to create the maps. The table below, the ACAA, or storybranding customer journey model, was developed specifically for this research paper.

Level	Awareness 	Comprehension 	Association 	Affiliation
What prospect is thinking	"What's this? Is this what I'm looking for? Do I need this?"	"A-ha! <i>That's</i> what it's for! Oh, <i>that's</i> how it works!"	"I associate this brand with things I find important, but other brands may have these things too."	"I love this brand so much I'm proud of using it and will recommend it to everyone I know!"
Level description	This is the level in which the prospect becomes aware of Jilster's existence.	In this level the prospect begins to understand the brand and discovers its usefulness.	The prospect begins to associate specific characteristics with the brand, these can be positive or negative.	The prospect now has a relationship with the brand, its message has resonated with his worldview and he becomes a brand advocate.
Measurement	This will be measured by looking at the referral traffic (sources that referred the traffic, in other words, the website the send traffic to Jilster's websites) and comparing it to how Jilster communicates to new visitors.	By comparing the amount of visitors that have registered, the amount of new magazines made, and the amount of magazines actually ordered, insights can be gained into the behavior visitors exhibit after becoming aware of Jilster.	Anecdotal research; information gathered from customer service representatives, customer reviews and feedback.	Anecdotal research; information gathered from customer service representatives, customer reviews and feedback.

For this research paper the ‘maps’ were conveyed by writing rather than a conventional map, chart or graph, in order to better showcase the data that was collected and have room to discuss and expand on certain topics.

4.2.1. Awareness

Most Dutch visitors are entering the website via **community content** (jil.st, hobby.blog), **social networks** and **start pages**, and they are looking for **free magazine design software** and **birthday gift ideas**. When these visitors are first introduced to Jilster, they often arrive through online magazines made by other users (community content). These pages do not explain what Jilster is, and they are shown magazine covers and articles on what sort of content to add to their magazine (an example is: How to conduct an interview for your magazine). This can be confusing to visitors getting to know Jilster for the first time, because they won’t understand that Jilster is an online magazine editing software.

The same problem arises for US visitors and German visitors. Most US visitors are entering the website via **community content** and **visual media**. Most German visitors are entering the website via **visual media (magazine covers and photographs)** and **community content**.

4.2.2. Comprehension

Jilster has compiled an overview for internal use consisting of **new members, magazines started, and magazines ordered**. They have grouped this information by domain. This is the data that will be used to measure comprehension (see table below).

Data from Jilster’s internal overview <i>July 2014 to June 2015 (12 months)</i>			
	jilster.nl	jilster.com	jilster.de
Percentage of new visitors that register for an account	15.94%	15.49%	6.76%
Percentage of newly registered members that start a magazine	51.16%	73.21%	86.11%
Percentage of magazines that are ordered out of new magazines started	34.18%	5.98%	24.92%

About 15% Dutch visitors register for a free account. This may be due to lack of information or understanding. They are aware of Jilster, but perhaps they ultimately found no need for it or do

not understand what it is. Over half of the visitors that register for an account make a magazine with the online software. This means that half of the visitors that register for an account do have an interest but do not make a magazine, this is most likely due to not knowing how to start. About one third of the visitors that made an account and made a magazine order the magazine. That means that about two thirds of people that made a magazine did not order. They have an interest, they have tried out the online software but they either do not like working with it or do not understand how it works.

Based on anecdotal research Dutch visitors have a hard time finding instructions on how to use the online software. They often e-mail or call with questions that have either been answered on the website or for which there is no information available on the website at all.

About 15% of all US visitors register for an account. This is similar to the Dutch citizens. This means that US citizens face the same problems as the Dutch; either they have no interest or there is too little information. However, most people that register do try the online software, but the amount of these people that order a magazine is very low. This means that they either do not like the online software or they do not understand how it works.

As with the Dutch visitors, US citizens often e-mail or call with questions that are either on the website, or for which there is no information available on the website.

About 7% of all German visitors register for an account. Since making a magazine is a very common thing to do for weddings, birthdays and at schools in Germany, it is probably due to the website not meeting their expectations. There are competitors on the German market that are less expensive, albeit not as fully featured and without the option to work together.

Again, as mentioned for Dutch and US citizens, Germans also have trouble finding the information they need on the website. They often e-mail or call with questions that are either on the website, or for which there is no information available on the website.

4.2.3. Association

Dutch customers often find the customer service very satisfactory. They say they are always helped quickly and find it enjoyable that the customer service is always helpful. Some customers comment that the making of a magazine is difficult (those used to online click-and-drag photo album programs), and others find it easy (those used to photoshop). They all say that it does take a long time to make a magazine. All of them say they are extremely satisfied with the results and say they will return to make more magazines. **US customers and German customers** have similar experiences.

4.2.4. Affiliation

Most if not all Dutch customers say they will not use any other program than Jilster, since they are happy with the results and also, because they now know how to use the online software. They also say that they are happy to recommend Jilster to people they know.

Some US customers do come back and make different kinds of magazines, but it is unclear whether or not they will refuse to switch brands if a better magazine software comes along.

German customers often say they are proud of their work due to the perceived quality of the magazines and would gladly recommend Jilster to anyone they know who might be interested in making a magazine or a gift.

4.3. Customer journey improvement

Sub-question 3: How can the problems faced during the customer journey be improved by using storybranding and storytelling marketing?

Potential customers only seem to have problems during the awareness and comprehension levels. In order to find out how these levels can be improved to overcome these problems, interviews were conducted among 15 respondents; 5 Dutch, 5 US citizens and 5 Germans. For the full interviews, please see Appendix 2. The questions asked were based on image association (since this is the primary way Jilster is currently communicating its product online), laddering technique and general questions about stories and online behavior. Questions were not limited to the above however, and additional questions were asked if the opportunity to find out more presented itself.

4.3.1. Interview Data Analysis

The three cultures researched had very similar preferences, and only a few differences. The common results will be discussed first, followed by the differences.

Common results

Visual Appeal

There have been several indications that respondents were not able to tell that the magazine covers were magazine covers. They thought they were illustrations made to advertise something that related to the target group that appeared on the cover. For this reason, the magazine covers did not appeal to them, since they assumed these images were not targeted at them.

“This looks like a contact or profile page for a dating site”
- Dutch respondent.

Several respondents expressed disliking the disorganized feel of candid photos and the unauthentic feel of the stock images. They also disliked when there was no one thing to focus on in the image. A frequent comment was that they liked images that clearly conveyed some emotion, action or liveliness. A common preference stated was for images with fewer people and lighter backgrounds, and images where it was clear what was going on in the image. When it comes to first impressions, it seems that **it’s important that the**

“It is a bit chaotic.”
“I’d like it better if they were doing something, more active, like if they were dying laughing or something. ”
- German respondents.

target group relates to what they are seeing, or they will not have enough interest to find out

more about the image.

Online Behavior

A frequent preference is a combination of text and video when looking for instructions online. Step by step text instructions with images, and short videos for each step of the process. Some respondents preferred one long video for longer processes instead of many short videos.

When researching something, a repeated answer was to go to websites that they know and trust. If they are unfamiliar with the websites, they will gather and compare information, look at customer reviews or judge the website's reliability based on how professional it looks. A recurring answer was that respondents trust official websites over other websites.

When it comes to making a decision about buying something online, price, reviews and transparency are considered important to all respondents. They look for good prices for good quality, they look for reviews (but only trust these if the amount of reviews is high and authentic, meaning they can see it has been written by an actual customer), they use their own previous experience and it's important that they can find any information on the website. If any part of the ordering and shipping process is unclear, they will look somewhere else.

"I like when there are reviews and they look real, written by actual people. "

- German respondent.

Story Significance

There have been many indications that respondents found negative stories memorable, either because they had a big impact on them emotionally (the story could also be about someone else, but in that case it had to be someone close to them to have an impact), because they learned from the experience, or because they overcame the negativity. In every case the end result of the story was positive.

A recurring answer from respondents was that they like stories that either challenge them or entertain them. Stories with twists and heroes (one or multiple) are liked. Some respondents also enjoy predictable positive stories with happy endings.

Birthday behavior

A very common answer from respondents was that they celebrate their birthdays with family (and sometimes very close friends or family friends) at their home. The Dutch mention sitting in a circle and eating cake and drinking coffee. US citizens mention putting more effort into birthday events for children. They do not attach a lot of value to these events. Most also celebrate separately by

having dinner or drinking with friends. They do find birthdays important because of the 'excuse' it gives them to spend time together with the people close to them.

There were many indications that the respondents don't know why they celebrate birthdays or give gifts for birthdays. They all said they wouldn't care if they didn't receive gifts themselves, but they do make an effort to get either useful gifts or gifts that will be enjoyed by the receiver. They only go through this trouble for people very close to them. It's also acceptable to ask what someone wants for their birthday, to make sure something can be purchased that will be liked or useful.

Differences

US citizens

The images of (young) men or older women were not received well. US citizens prefer images of older men or younger women, because they relate to these people more, even though the person on the image is not close to their age group.

When it comes to stories, the US respondents all enjoy stories that engage the mind and make you think (along with the stories mentioned above). They like true stories, facts, and stories told from multiple perspectives to get to the truth.

Germans

Germans were the only respondents to correctly identify the magazine covers.

All but one German respondent finds birthdays extremely important, both their own and birthdays of others. This day is supposed to be the best day of the year, every year. The whole day is filled with ceremonies and rituals from morning to night, and often this feeling extends to a week before and after the birthday (sometimes more). They go to great lengths to get the perfect gift that will be useful or enjoyed, often preparing for months in advance.

5. Discussions & Conclusions

This chapter contains the conclusions and discussions of all the findings. Conclusions are what has been found on the basis of the actual findings. Discussions are what can be supposed or assumed the research could mean in another setting. This chapter provides a better understanding about storybranding and storytelling marketing for differing cultures. The main research question and sub-questions will also be answered in this chapter.

5.1. Target group and relevant cultural differences

What are the relevant cultural segments to be distinguished within the company's target group?

The three most important cultures for Jilster to take into account are the Dutch, German and U.S. culture. The most relevant conclusions about the culture segment's preferences for stories and birthdays are discussed. They have been grouped by similarity.

One of the most important findings is that **there are not many differences between the cultures**. However, the research has shown that there are many ways the customer journey can be improved through storybranding and storytelling marketing.

Story similarities

A recurring theme among the answers given was: stories that start negative but end positive because an obstacle was overcome. Another recurring theme, though all three cultures used a different word (the Dutch said 'twists', US citizens said 'unexpected', Germans said 'unusual'), was stories that are unexpected. All three cultures enjoy being shocked or surprised by stories. The monomyth (hero must overcome obstacle), sparklines (comparison of what is and what could be) and false start (start in a predictable way and then surprise audience) storytelling methods may lend themselves well to these preferences.

Difference(s)

Happy endings are enjoyed by the Dutch and by Germans. US citizens made no mention of happy endings. US citizens mentioned enjoying stories that engage the mind and make them think or help them learn something.

Birthday similarities

The Dutch do not consider birthdays very important, but they do enjoy them because it gives them a good 'excuse' to spend time with those closest to them. US citizens do not find birthdays

important. However, they do feel it is a day to be recognized as it is a day to make someone close to them feel special. Both the Dutch and US citizens make an effort for close family and friends when giving a gift, and they find it important to get something that will be useful or enjoyed.

Difference(s)

Germans find birthdays extremely important. They go to great lengths to make the day very special, for themselves as well as others celebrating a birthday.

5.2. Problems during customer journey

What problems do each of the relevant cultural segments face during their customer journey?

All three cultural segments face problems during the awareness and comprehension phase. They have difficulty understanding what Jilster is for, how to use it, and where to find the information they need on the website.

Awareness

Most Dutch visitors are entering the website via community content (jil.st, hobby.blog), social networks and start pages, and they are looking for free magazine design software and birthday gift ideas. **Most US** visitors are entering the website via community content and visual media. **Most German** visitors are entering the website via visual media (magazine covers and photographs) and community content.

Currently, all three cultures are being communicated to in the same way. Based on the way these cultures are becoming aware of Jilster this can be improved. US and German visitors prefer visual and community content, whereas Dutch visitors prefer community content, start pages and social networks. A better approach may be to increase the relevant visual content and community content for all three cultures, as well as target visitors on the basis of what they are looking for when they find Jilster (for example magazine design software and birthday gift ideas).

Comprehension

About 15% of Dutch and US visitors register for an account. Since this percentage may be low because Jilster may not be what the visitor was expecting this percentage isn't a good indication of comprehension. However, a much lower amount of German visitors register for an account (6%), so here it may mean that the communication on the website does not encourage them to register in the right way.

A very high amount of new US members make a magazine (around 70%), but a very low amount

actually orders a magazine (6%). This means that many visitors who register for an account do try the online software, but they do not finish making their magazine or lose interest. Improvement in the communication about how to use the online software as well as the proper encouragement may increase the percentage of members that order a magazine.

A very high number of new German members make a magazine (86%) and about a quarter of those who made a magazine end up ordering the magazine. Again, this points towards members having an interest, but not understanding the online software. An improvement in communication about how the online software works and the proper encouragement to complete a magazine may work here as well.

About half of the new Dutch members (51%) make a magazine, and about a third of those (34%) order the magazine. Since only half of the newly registered Dutch members try making a magazine, some more communication on how to start may increase the number of new members making a magazine. Here too, an improvement in communication about how the online software works as well as the proper encouragement to complete a magazine may increase the number of orders.

Association

All three cultures associate Jilster with the same sentiments; great, timely and helpful customer service, high quality end product, but it takes some time to understand how the online software works and it takes a long time to finish a magazine.

Affiliation

Most, if not all previous customers are very pleased with the end results and convey their enthusiasm for sharing the online software with people they know. Once they receive the final product they become brand advocates. They feel proud for having made the magazine.

5.3. Customer journey improvement

How can the problems faced during the customer journey be improved by using storybranding and storytelling marketing?

Based on this research, the only problems faced during the customer journey for all three cultural segments happen during awareness and comprehension. Below are the conclusions drawn and discussions on the basis of the data compiled.

By adjusting the images and communication at the beginning of the customer relationship,

improvements can be made during the awareness stage. The data gathered has given insights into what methods of visual storytelling can best be used to communicate more clearly what Jilster is for.

By making changes to the website's navigation and instructions on how to use the online software, improvements can be made to the comprehension stage. The data gathered has also given insights into the best way to instruct each culture in order to encourage them to continue using the online software.

5.4.1. Awareness Improvement

Since most of the pages on the website are focused on gift ideas or how to make magazine content, this may put off the visitors looking for free magazine design software. It may be possible to increase awareness by publishing more diverse content. However, the available data is not sufficient to give recommendations on the type of content that would be effective.

The images currently being used as magazine covers are not recognized as such by Dutch and US visitors. In order to raise awareness, other visual content can be developed. Images with at least two people, in the middle of a lively act, clearly exhibiting emotion, with the focus on one very obvious thing or object are preferred for all three cultures. It is also important that they be able to relate to the image. Even though they may be looking for a gift for their mother, if the only person in the image is someone of their mother's age, it will not stand out to them and they will have no interest. So for the first moment of contact, it's important that the image be extremely relatable and explain very literally what the central message is.

There are a few differences: US citizens feel no appeal towards images with older people or younger men. Presumably because they are more age focused than the Dutch or the Germans. Germans find birthdays very important, so this would be a good topic to focus on when developing better awareness among Germans.

5.4.2. Comprehension Improvement

The Dutch judge websites on how professional they look based on the data compiled. If a website looks disorganized or they cannot easily find information they are looking for, they will look elsewhere. The Dutch prefer to learn things through step-by-step text instructions with supplementary videos. They look at the videos first, and then go back to the text instructions when they need to refer back to them.

Transparency, ease of finding information, and customer reviews are important factors when

gauging the website's trustworthiness. Visitors to the website must be able to easily find any information they are looking for. Company information, information about the online software and ordering process must be easily accessible at all times. Customer reviews must be many and authentic (actually written by a customer) to be effective.

US citizens have similar preferences to the Dutch when it comes to website quality and instructions. If they find the website too difficult to use or cannot easily find the information they are looking for they will look elsewhere. When learning something they prefer a mix of written step-by-step instructions with images as well as videos.

Germans have similar preferences to the Dutch and US citizens when it comes to gauging the trustworthiness of a website and instructions. The only difference being that customer reviews are more important than website quality.

5.5. Main Research Question

How can storybranding and storytelling marketing be used to improve the customer journey for target groups with differing cultures?

Storybranding strategy and storytelling marketing methods can improve the customer journey for target groups with differing cultures because they can find and clearly communicate the solutions to problems in the customer journey by identifying the underlying values and beliefs of the customer. These values and beliefs allow the company to create the right message and find the best methods to solve the problems the customer is having during their journey. An example of this is the images Jilster currently uses. Customers face a problem when presented with these images because they do not correctly convey to the customer what Jilster is for. Using the monomyth method (hero overcoming an obstacle) would solve this problem by showing the customer an image of a person finding an obstacle (not being able to find the right birthday gift) and overcoming that obstacle (giving a birthday magazine as a gift).

As stated in the literature review, storybranding is a strategy that turns a brand and its prospects into characters and attempts to find the best way to connect the two, by aligning their values and beliefs and by overcoming obstacles, like a story. All the respondents interviewed spent the most time talking when asked about their stories. They enjoyed telling their stories and thinking about their most memorable ones. This is a good indication that stories are memorable, engaging, and that they convey values and beliefs.

The research shows that there are not many differences between the cultures. The images they

prefer and the stories they find important are similar. The Dutch, US citizens and Germans all relate to stories that start negative but end in a positive way and they relate to the same kind of imagery as well. However, even though there are not many differences between the cultures, many methods have been found that can improve the customer journey for all three cultures.

It is important for all three cultures to be able to relate to the story. In other words, a story must reinforce their underlying values and beliefs in order to become important to prospect, no matter their culture.

In conclusion, using parts of storybranding strategy to identify and align the beliefs and values of the company with those of the customers, and using storytelling marketing is an effective way to solve the problems customers are having during their customer journey.

6. Recommendations

This chapter contains the recommendation given to Jilster, on the basis of the data gathered and analyzed in this research paper. The problem Jilster has, of website visitors not understanding what Jilster is for, can be solved by improving the customer journey at the awareness and comprehension levels. These improvements to the customer journey will lead to the visitors better understanding Jilster and how to use it, and thus solves the problem.

It is recommended that Jilster implement parts of the storybranding strategy and storytelling marketing communication methods for each culture based on the findings in this research paper.

The specific parts of the storybranding strategy to be implemented are outlined, as well as the storytelling methods. Some storytelling methods are the same for all three cultures. The cultural differences that should be taken into account for US citizens and Germans are added further below, following the methods for all three cultures.

6.1. Storybranding strategy

Characterize the brand. Schedule internal brainstorm sessions in which employees and management discuss the most important brand associations. Use these sessions to discuss the brand's strengths and weaknesses and internal expectations.

Characterize the prospect. Identify the target group's needs, and the underlying values and beliefs that fuel those needs, by conducting focus groups and individual interviews with existing customers.

Complete the storybrief. Summarize the findings into two story briefs (or IAM statements). The first story brief outlines the entire brand story. Write this letter from the perspective of the brand as if it were a person. The second story brief outlines the customer's story. Write this letter from the perspective of the customer. This will lead to the brand's **unique value proposition** (not the unique selling proposition), which, together with the story briefs, will serve as the core of marketing communication.

Test the unique value proposition and IAM statements for resonance with the target group by having them read and rate the UVP (unique value proposition) and IAM statements. In order to be useful, it's important to make sure that the messages in these documents **resonate** with the prospect. The tested IAM statements and UVP can be used to strengthen the storytelling marketing methods outlined below.

6.2. Storytelling methods

Methods for all three cultures

Use visual storytelling and community content. Share relevant magazines that previous customers have made (that they have made public) with existing customers, explain how they were made, and research the best way to do this. For initial awareness, use images with two or more people, clearly in the middle of an act and exhibiting emotions and actions with a clear message. This way, new visitors will immediately know what the website is for. The monomyth (hero leaving for difficult journey) storytelling method can be applied here, since data has shown that stories about someone overcoming an obstacle or learning from mistakes is considered memorable.

Use storytelling methods that are memorable. Use negative imagery or unusual imagery. For example an image with a bad birthday gift last year on one side, and a great birthday gift magazine this year on the other side. The false start (predictable beginning, unusual twist) and sparklines (comparison) storytelling methods are great methods to use for this purpose, since data has shown that stories that are unusual or go from negative to positive (negative to positive comparison) are memorable.

Make the message clear. Though some people may vaguely recognize an image of a magazine cover as such, it needs to be more straightforward. Do not let people guess what an image is for, because if they have to think too much they will lose interest. Immediately tell them they can make a magazine for a birthday.

Improve website navigation, so visitors can easily find information about the magazine making process, company information and the ordering process. It is **recommended** to do further research into the most effective way to present a website to visitors.

Improve the instructions by adding detailed step-by-step instructions with images as well as videos explaining the process. It is also **recommended** to do further research into the tone of voice both textually and for audio to find the best way to write and speak to each of the cultural segments. Videos are preferred over text and images.

Improve customer reviews by making them more authentic or using a customer review service. Customer reviews only count if they are large in number, believable, and authentic.

Exceptions for US citizens

Use images of people younger than the target group, but not too young, and avoid images of

young men. US citizens prefer images of people younger than themselves and find these more relatable, even though this may not be their own age group.

US citizens enjoy true stories and stories that engage the mind. It is recommended to create content based on true stories (customer reviews, company stories) and explore ways that Jilster can engage the mind.

Exceptions for Germans

Communicate as much as possible about birthday gift magazines. Birthdays are extremely important to Germans.

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Appendix 1

Interview Guideline

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Occupation:

Nationality:

Thank you for taking part in this research. If you wish I will keep your answers anonymous.

This interview consists of 2 parts. The first part is image association, in which I will show you two groups of images (10 images total) and you have to tell me what you think of them. The second part is just some general questions. Let's get started.

Photograph/Image association

I will show you two groups of images. You don't have to compare the images, just evaluate them separately. Tell me what you think the image is, what is happening in the image and what the purpose of the image is.

First set: Write down what you think the image is, what is happening in the image and what the purpose of the image is. What do you think of the person in the image and the design of the image. Does it appeal to you? What could be changed so that it appeals to you more?

Second set: Would this image stand out to you? Why or why not? What do you think of the person/people and design of this image? Will you remember this image? Why or why not? Does it remind you of anyone or anything? What is happening in this image? What would make this image stand out to you more? What would make it appeal to you more? Write down anything that comes to mind.

Group 1:

1. 40 years:
2. 75 years:

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera:

4. Wedding:
5. Two women looking at magazine:
6. Man looking at magazine:
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine:
8. Man looking at camera:
9. Woman looking at magazine:
10. Woman looking up from magazine:

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).
2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)
3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)
4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.
5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?
8. Are birthdays important (to you)?
9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)
10. How do you research a gift?
11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?



1



2



3



4



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10

Appendix 2

Full interviews

Interview 1 - Dutch

Name: Marco

Age: 27

Gender: Male

Occupation: Coffeehouse employee

Nationality: Dutch

Group 1:

1. 40 years: Man spreekt niet aan. Saai. Denk verjaardag, maar heel treurig. Design is slecht, teksten wel leuk.
2. 75 years: Denk travel tijdschrift en gedichten. Karate oma. Hele sportieve oma. Totaal geen associatie met eigen oma. Onrealistische oma.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: Ze is een tijdschrift aan het lezen. Leuk rustige foto. Leuke foto, maar spreekt niet aan. Is een stock foto, geen sfeer. Geen emotie.
4. Wedding: Gezellig. Wel geposeert. Vast voor een bruiloft.
5. Two women looking at magazine: Zelfde als eerste foto van meisje.
6. Man looking at magazine: Beter. Ietsjes rustiger. Onrealistisch. Spreekt niet aan.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: Het is een verjaardag.
8. Man looking at camera: Geen fijne foto. Dat hij naar de camera lacht is eng.
9. Woman looking at magazine: Zelfde als de eerste foto met het meisje, geen emotie. Heel neutraal. Wel leuk hoor, niks mis mee. Foto die niet stoort, maar ook niet opvalt. Je kijkt erover heen.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: Heel leuk. Moeder met kinderen, altijd leuk. Lieve moeder, is lief voor kinderen, heeft iets gekregen van man en kinderen. Levende foto.

Woman looking up from magazine: Heel leuk. Moeder met kinderen, altijd leuk. Lieve moeder, is lief voor kinderen, heeft iets gekregen van man en kinderen. Levende foto.

General questions

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Combinatie van text en video. Software alleen scherm met muis. Liefst korte filmpjes, of een lange film die opgedeeld is in kleinere stukjes (youtube playlists).

2. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Ik koop alleen dingen waarmee ik al veel bezig ben dus de enige factor is dan prijs. Voor snellere levertijd wil ik wel meer betalen, voor goede service.

3. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Heel veel research, product reviews and product comparisons. Comments op product reviews worden ook meegenomen. Articles from both small bloggers and big websites and compare.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are they factual, fiction, informative etc.?)

Different narratives. Lots of heroes. Teamwork zonder teveel drama. Realistisch, nuchter, grappig. Slice of life.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?)

I will never forget putting someone that is full of themselves in their place together with others. A sense of community when getting justice. It made me happy. Coworkers.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Cake and coffee and beer together and food.

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?

Family and people close to me, girlfriend.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

No. But I do it (celebrate it and give gifts) because the people are important to me.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Easy, impersonal gift. Not a lot of effort.

10. How do you research a gift?

I go into a store that would have things I think they'd like.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

Because it's expected.

Interview 2 - Dutch

Name: Chiara

Age: 23

Gender: Female

Occupation: Student International Marketing Management

Nationality: Dutch

Group 1:

1. 40 years: This looks like a contact or profile page for a dating site. Maybe he's introducing himself. It sort of looks like a magazine cover. Oh wait, okay, I see 40 years now. So he's 40, maybe it's something for a birthday then? I like the design, it looks like something I could do myself. I like the colors. It's a fun image of himself.

2. 75 years: (Respondent laughs) This one is cool. It's a magazine for a birthday right? It's more

vibrant than the last one, the colors are more fun, and it looks more personal.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: This is a staged image, a stock photo. My first reaction is to compare myself to her. I do relate, otherwise I wouldn't compare myself. The colors are good, and the fashion is good.
4. Wedding: This is fun, it looks like a wedding. This could be my own family. You can imagine the whole story behind it, you can see that they are happy.
5. Two women looking at magazine: This is also staged. I think it's a mother and her daughter. I like the light background, it makes them stand out more. I do prefer a more personal photo, that way I can make a connection, this makes me think these people are models and posing for a photo. Although in this photo it's easier to focus on the two people because of the light background.
6. Man looking at magazine: This one is also very staged, but I like that you can see what he's reading, so you know where to look.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: I like this one. It's happy, everyone seems to be focused on the lady with the magazine. You can imagine there's a story behind this. However I find it a bit too busy, there are too many people and too much going on in the photo.
8. Man looking at camera: This is comparable to the first image (of the girl looking at the camera). The magazine is more prominent here though. But I don't like the way it's set up, the guy is like 'look at me', and it's obviously staged. He is holding one page though, so it's more active.
9. Woman looking at magazine: This one is also comparable to the first one, only here she's actually reading. This one would stand out to me more than the others, but it's also too staged.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: (Respondent laughs) Yeah this one is more fun. This actually happened for sure. I can see the emotion on her face. The little girl's shirt is distracting though, too busy.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer?
(let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps,

detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Videos how to. Google videos. I'm dyslexic, so videos are better for me than text.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

It depends on what I'm looking for. Official website. Reviews people wrote. So first I get official info and then other people's experience.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Price. Delivery time. How reliable is a website, website where I've already bought something else. Popularity, if everyone buys at zalando it must be good. If the website is crappy. If it's easy to return. Guidelines aren't clear then I buy it at other website. I don't mind paying extra if I know it's reliable. Usually I do research online and buy in real life.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Stories with a twist at the end, something unpredictable. I like stories with heroes and they beat the bad guy. Shutter island.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?)

Positive stories. Little small personal details. How brother and wife met, love stories, positive. Stories that I can relate to.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Small close family. Don't like celebrating birthday. Don't have close family. Very personal, get together, eat together.

7. Who is involved in (birthdays) gift giving?

Personal gifts, no collaboration, only for expensive gifts.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

My own no. Other people's birthdays are important. A day for extra attention.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Depends on the person. Depends on the birthday. If it's a special birthday make a small bib, very personal. Always try to think of something personal. I ask people what they want.

10. How do you research a gift?

I have a couple of website that I use. Brothers, cool geeky gadgets website. I look at people's hobbies. If someone likes beers, go to beer store and ask to help find a cool beer.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

It's a custom. Can't go to birthday without gift. I try to put effort in it, so people know I appreciate them.

Interview 3 - Dutch

Name: Marijke

Age: 26

Gender: Female

Occupation: Fashion designer assistant

Nationality: Dutch

Group 1:

1. 40 years: This is a magazine for someone who turned 40 I think. It's very manly. I think his friends made it. This would not stand out to me at all, because I don't relate to this immediately so I wouldn't bother taking the time to look at it.

2. 75 years: (Respondent laughs). This is fun. This would stand out to me. This is a swinging grandma. More feminine than the last image. There's a lot of white in this image, which for

me, makes it easier to focus and figure out what it is. I can focus on one thing. The font is illegible.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: Stock image. I immediately think this is not allowed, since I sometimes use images for my work. I also think 'the perfect american dream', the perfect girl on a bed with her perfect life. It's so unrealistic. It would stand out to me though.
4. Wedding: This looks like a family photo. That's how it feels. It looks like it was taken in the 90's, the colors, brownish. It's a wedding, because the lady is wearing a nice jacket. It looks 'gezellig'. They got gifts and they're now reading a magazine. They got a magazine as a gift? There's emotion in this image. The image is very busy though so it wouldn't get my attention or stand out to me.
5. Two women looking at magazine: This would stand out more, it's more calm. They are looking at photos together. I don't know what they're looking at though, it's not clear, there's no focus, I don't know what's happening. But I do find it easier to look at this photo, more focus, clarity.
6. Man looking at magazine: This is more believable. This grandpa is enjoying reading this book or magazine. He seems interested in what he's reading. It's like you're going to visit grandpa and he's reading his favorite magazine. I like that you can see what he's looking at.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: This is fun, a family party. It's clear that she got a gift. She's happy and everyone is looking on. It's very busy, a lot of people. The photo is a good color light. There are a lot of people but it's not unpleasant to look at. The story behind it is clear immediately.
8. Man looking at camera: (Respondent pauses for a long time, doesn't say anything). Yeah, this is a young man looking at photos on a couch, don't know what else to say about this.
9. Woman looking at magazine: Same as first girl. This one is better though because she's not looking straight at you. The image has a dreamy feel to it.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: (Respondent laughs) Immediately clear. Like you're stepping into this family for a while and you're there and you see her getting this gift. It's not a pretty photo but it's clear what it's happening. You can see it's an actual photo someone took.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer?

(let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Graag videos, kort en krachtig. Liever kort dan lang. Images met alles erin, getekend, zo simpel mogelijk.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Google, kranten die ik ken, nederlandse kranten, blogs. Als ik een website vind die gaat over het onderwerp dan neem ik die. De eerste waar ik informatie vind die ik wil is goed.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Kleding, h en m omdat ik nooit in de winkel koop, veel te druk, te heftig, kan nooit wat vinden. Online koop je een paar keer verkeerd maar vanaf dan niet meer, dus je word een pro. Gemak, ik koop boeken op bol.com, omdat je geen tijd of zin hebt, of je weet niet waar je het moet vinden. Huishoud artikelen in de winkel, online op zoek naar reviews om te kijken welke het beste is. Als prijs weinig verschilt dan ga ik voor de betere reviews product.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Briljant als het einde een plottwist heeft. Verassingen, geschokt. Slechte bui is lechte tiener films, legally blonde. Goede thriller is ook leuk. Horror niet.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

Een ongeluk in de auto. Twee tellen afgeleid en voor je het weet iemand aangereden hebt. Ik was het zelf niet. Is met iemand gebuurt die dichtbij mij staat. Persoon die reed was van slag, met emoties verteld, politie was er nog, aangereden persoon was er nog. Wat nu? Er komt heel veel

op je af. Niet schuldig uiteindelijk en man leeft nog.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Ik vier me verjaardag vaak 3 keer of 4 keer. Moeder en vriend en mijn vriend broertje. Weekend in buurt van moeder ook feest met haar broers en zussen, neefjes en nichtjes. Vader gaat niet mee uit eten, wel verjaardag met zijn broers en zussen etc. Soms ook met vrienden, als ik zin heb. Anders nodig ik ze uit op een van die twee. Kringetjes, staan, tafels etc.

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?

Ouders is alles apart. Of het moet zijn dat ik zelf ergens voor vraag. Vragen zij wat je wilt of vertel jij wat je wilt. Allebei. Hint hint. Haha. Zelf allemaal enkele vriendinnetjes. Een groep met 4, en dan doen we wel gezamenlijk kadootje.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

Ja. Eigen verjaardag vind ik vooral fantastisch. Nog 4 weken dan ben ik jarig! Heel gelukkig worden van kleine momentjes. Leuk dat we allemaal samen zijn. Heb vaak heel veel zin in omdat het een excuus is om allemaal samen te zijn en gezellig te hebben. Familie = geen kadootjes als je maar komt.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Ik doe wel altijd moeite om iets te vinden waar de ander blij mee zou zijn en verrast zou zijn. Ik vind een challenge wel leuk (vriend van moeder) als het voor mensen is die dichtbij mij staan anders is het stront irritant. Want ze doen ook veel moeite voor jou.

10. How do you research a gift?

Vriend van moeder. Tijdje van tevoren observeren waar hij het over heeft. Hij zegt wel doe iets voor in de tuin, maar dat is te makkelijk. 1001 domme weetjes vind hij heel grappig. Ik ga echt op zoek naar iets voor hem persoonlijk waar hij blij van zou worden. Of ik ga op zoek naar oplossingen voor hem (sleutebos).

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

Omdat het zo hoort. Omdat de ander ook veel voor jou doet. Dat je elkaar wilt bedanken of belonen.

Interview 4 - Dutch

Name: Bart

Age: 28

Gender: Male

Occupation: It consultant

Nationality: Dutch

Group 1:

1. 40 years: This reminds me of the 40 year old virgin. The stop sign with 40 on it. I really don't like looking at this picture. Not a lot of color. The titles don't make sense to me. Guy looks really intense. Not genuine to me at all. CHUM is a bad word isn't it? Like you're a pansy? A pushover. Next please, I can't look at this.
2. 75 years: 75, yeahhhh. This is a power woman. I can't read the title. Design is too modern for older lady. I guess it's a magazine for retired people who still think they are in the prime of their life. They still have energy to do stuff. This magazine has tips and facilities for people of age that still want excitement in their lives.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: Pretty lady. She's looking at the camera so she's interested in me I guess, but then she has a magazine so I don't know. I want to relate to the scene, makes me want to be in the image with her, but then she's my girlfriend. Remind me of my girlfriend. Appeals to guys who want to settle down I guess.
4. Wedding: This is a bridal shower or some family holiday. I can see guest invitations on the table. They're dressed for a wedding though, maybe they're planning a wedding. This wouldn't stand out to me, it's too messy. I like to place myself in situations and I do not want to be in this situation.
5. Two women looking at magazine: I think someone is showing her friend something. Focus seems to be more on the dark haired girl (left). It looks overexposed, almost white. The two girls are a normal color though. Looks like a stock image, I prefer more warmth.
6. Man looking at magazine: This guy wants to buy a boat. He's worked hard at a corporate job his entire life so now he wants a boat. The focus is on the boat magazine, you immediately look at what he's reading. He seems to be doing very well for himself based on his house.

He's probably a baby boomer.

7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: Looks like a family gathering. It's mostly older women. They're looking over holiday photos. It's a reunion or a birthday or something and she got the book as a present. This would not stand out to me. Ladies in the back are funny though.
8. Man looking at camera: He's an artist, concrete wall, lots of images in the magazine probably. He's a young professional. I can relate to him.
9. Woman looking at magazine: Same feeling as the first image (of girl looking at camera) but this one is looking at the magazine. Could also be a model. She's smiling/smirking so she's enjoying herself.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: Really looks like a magazine of Marianne that her daughters made for her for her birthday or christmas (christmas tree in background). I like it because the emotion is genuine.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Written step by step instructions. Sometimes easier when you have a lot of options then a video is better, when the process is very hard. Process is long rather long video, but I would like the option to skip to where I need to be, or be able to click to where I want to be. Older people prefer video, infographic.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

For specific subjects I go to forums. Tweakrers or reddit. Front page only has interesting stuff for me.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

User reviews, multiple sources, meta critic, comparison to alternatives. Amount of reviews must be large.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are they factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Stories that take viewers intelligence into account, things that challenge you to think or broaden your perspective. Like a really good detective show. Things that are not obvious, like a surprise factor. Zombies also are awesome.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

Tragic and funny at the same time. When I was young, middle school. English exam, had book open, looking everything up didn't learn, teacher said you get a 1. Said no I'm gonna sit here give me test back. Flipped out, angry little kid, swear words. Afternoon got called to headmaster (corrector) consequences, teacher was crying. Words hurt, I was flabbergasted, shocked. Kicked off school. Parents shocked. Brother shovel dig potatoes. 2 Weeks later got called back to school. Only got expelled for one day. I was such an asshole, they let me try again.

Even though I didn't care, people still cared about me. That made me want to do it too. They didn't like me but they wanted me to do good.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

I don't want to celebrate it, someone else invites people over, so I end up organizing it myself. If it's celebrated very few people. Friends (one or two), my closest relatives.

7. Who is involved in gift giving?

Combined. Girlfriend is individual. Parents combine gift together. Useful.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

No.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal,

impersonal)

Really expensive gifts, it ends up costing a lot. I never find anything under 40 euros. I want to give them something that they can enjoy for quite a while. Bought closest friend raspberry pi, nice case and other stuff (pcu, wifi adapter strong one) eventually 80 euros. Installed add ons. Took a long time. Put the time in because I really made something he couldn't do himself and made by me.

10. How do you research a gift?

I remember stuff that is mentioned. I listen to them and try to come up with an original idea. Get information from the source. Sometimes gift ideas, for girlfriend. I actively remember things for birthdays. Sometimes I figure out something 6 months before and I cannot wait to give it to them.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

I don't know, it's part of a tradition. I give gifts on other days too. I don't want that person to feel obliged to give me something back. I only want useful gifts and I like giving useful gifts or something that they actually want.

Interview 5 - Dutch

Name: Roy

Age: 21

Gender: Male

Occupation: International Marketing Management student

Nationality: Dutch

Group 1:

1. 40 years: This looks like the cover of a cheap magazine. Oh it's a 40th birthday magazine. I guess a group of friends made a magazine with embarrassing stories for his 40th birthday. I don't like the design, it's boring, cheap, absolutely no appeal to me. It's gray and sad.
2. 75 years: This is definitely a birthday cover. I like it, I like the colors and the lady looks like a lot of fun.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: This is a stock photo. You could see this anywhere, without context it's difficult to say anything about this. It's accessible. There's nothing wrong with it

but it's not an eye catcher either.

4. Wedding: This looks like something I'd find on the internet as a meme or something (made fun of). They just got married I guess. It does look like a photo someone took in their living room or something. It's a good photo as a customer review, if you want information about how people experienced something, but then the goal needs to be clearer, I'm not sure what's happening in this photo since it's so busy on the table and in the photo in general.
5. Two women looking at magazine: A mother and daughter reading a magazine. This stands out more because it's a lighter photo. But it's still a bad quality stock image.
6. Man looking at magazine: Stock photo. It's to the point, clean, you can see clearly what he's doing. It looks professional.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: Busy, very busy, and a lot of pink. It's look upbeat and happy but what she's doing is completely lost in this photo.
8. Man looking at camera: This reminds of IKEA. I think the most important thing in this photo is either the couch or the guy, I'm not sure which.
9. Woman looking at magazine: Clear photo, nice a clean, crisp. This makes me think of being calm and collected. Be alone, meditate, enjoy life, enjoy your free time.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: Cozy. This is authentic happiness. I can see the emotions on her face, I really like that. I like that the kids are there too, but they don't look very pleased. I think having a few people in a photo is better than just someone by themselves.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

If it's a process that's difficult then I prefer a video. But I also look written steps with pictures. I'll usually try to find steps with pictures first. Then when I have an issue or I'm not understanding it I'll go to a video.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Official website. Google whatever looks trustworthy, what looks professional. I find customer

reviews to personal to gather information (what's good for them may not be good for me).

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

If I don't know the store I will look at customer reviews (I will trust those if I don't know the store/website). Price and delivery cost are important. I hate paying for shipping. I never pay it and will do anything to avoid paying for shipping. I do care about getting something sooner. Example there's a jacket I really want but it's sold out everywhere, however I will keep trying because I like it now and I'll do anything to get it, because I want it.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Fiction, science fiction, horror, imagination etc. I like to be entertained, I don't like serious stories. I like fun, lighthearted stories. I want to get my mind off stuff.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

The first story that comes to mind is one really negative story about a friend. Something horrible happened to her and I think I will never forget it because it happened to someone so close to me. Even though the thing happened before I knew her, it could have happened when we were close and that would have affected me even more.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Those closest to me are aunts, uncles, grandma, sisters and their husbands and friends of my mom. We gather together, sit in a circle and have coffee and cake. I also go drinking with friends.

7. Who is involved in (birthdays) gift giving?

For my mom I always buy her a gift myself. With friends we usually buy something together, since together we can combine more money and get a better gift. So if there's a possibility to get something together I'll get in on that.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

No, but I like the togetherness. It's fun to get together. It's a nice excuse to do something together. I think it's also important because of society, it's expected, especially with the bigger birthdays, like turning 80, those nice round numbers. People look for excuses to celebrate and plan things and be together I think.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

I ask what they want usually. Or if I know what they would like I'll get that. The effort I put into a gift does depend on how well I know the person. I give them things that I would like to get too. I'd rather get something useful then go around sneaking for a gift they may not like.

10. How do you research a gift?

I contact other friends to ask what would be a good gift and then get them something they will like. My mom I just ask what she wants.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

Socially expected.

Interview 6 - German

Name: Lisa

Age: 23

Gender: Female

Occupation: College student International Marketing Management

Nationality: German

Group 1:

1. 40 years: Magazine cover for a local magazine for older people. Local means kind of cheap, kitsch. Oh wait no it's a birthday magazine for a 40th magazine, friends made it. They wrote stuff about him. It looks unorganized, font is unprofessional, a lot of text. Background is okay. Name needs to be better presented.

2. 75 years: Magazine for a 75th birthday. Photo is nice. More organized than previous image. More appealing, more energetic. She's expressing emotion, I like that.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: Would not stand out. Looks like an eastern european online ad for dating or something.
4. Wedding: Looks okay. Doesn't look professional. Would fit a customer review or a personal blog. Professional to me is those ads you see on Facebook when you scroll by.
5. Two women looking at magazine: They could be looking at anything, I have no idea what context this is in, need more focus.
6. Man looking at magazine: Not interesting.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: I like the idea. This is more special. It's a birthday. I can relate to this moment. I find it easier to relate to moments.
8. Man looking at camera: Stock image. Could be looking at anything.
9. Woman looking at magazine: Again an eastern european ad for dating, no interest.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: She looks very happy. More people is better, gives it a better atmosphere (more atmosphere), more feeling and emotion.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer?
(let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Written out so you can go back to it. Combination with illustration or image. Organized in step. I've done that so you know exactly where you were.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Official website. Try to find what do people write about this topic. Second google page. Top ten best things. Too long I'm done. Shady is also nice, doesn't always have to be fancy. Comments by people. First page looks nice and it appeals to you.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important

part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Other offers, compare things. Compare price. Quality cannot be judged since it's not tangible. I like to have my own opinions, not rely on reviews. Have to want something, need already, look on the internet.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are they factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Happy endings. Something bad happens. Fairy tales. Princess and prince, Magic. Stories, the once upon a time, the language, the way it's told. The look of fairy tales, looks magical.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?)

Story of how parents met. Unusual, happy ending, people close to you. Like telling it to others.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Birthdays favorite thing, and Christmas. Always something planned, birthday breakfast. Always cake at some point of the day, coffee and cake afternoon. Best friends and their parents, friends of family. Birthday dinner on different day. And a day for bigger group. Go out with friends, before or after birthday.

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?

Own ideas for gifts. 2 months before already have present planned out. If you don't know for sure you can brainstorm together.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

Yes. Fun day of everyone coming together. Hard to find time to do something together. You celebrate something special, good food, fun with family and friends. Schedules are super busy.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

That depends. The more personal the more you want it to fit. For me if it's the right present I'll spend more for someone close. Spend more because person will be happy about it.

10. How do you research a gift?

Based on interests and hobbies. Also what would people need. Hand-made for really close people. Bracelet for friend, card for mom. Photo collab. Milestone is more special. Present plus something else.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

I like the gift giving process. I gave a good present. I like seeing people happy and I get happy when I get presents. It's nice to see other people happy. Presents can also be a fun moment together.

Interview 7 - German

Name: Janine

Age: 22

Gender: Female

Occupation: Student - International communication and media

Nationality: German

Group 1:

1. 40 years: Guy looks weird. Over friendly. I see birthday things and 40. Maybe it's an invitation? Maybe because the guy looks weird but I wouldn't bother reading it.
2. 75 years: (respondent laughs) Looks friendly and active. It's nice to look at. Don't know if she traveled or wants to. I think it's a birthday card. Appeals to me more than previous image but I wouldn't bother looking at it too long because I would assume it isn't for me. I don't see myself in this image.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: Looks friendly. Don't know what she's reading. I do identify with her.
4. Wedding: They're looking at old pictures together. Looking at a magazine. They're family, and

it seems like they're looking at memories.

5. Two women looking at magazine: Boring, I don't know what they're reading. Looks like it's from the 80's. I'd like it better if they were doing something, more active, like if they were drying laughing or something.
6. Man looking at magazine: Could be my dad or grandpa. Rich American guy. Focus is on boating. Friendly.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: Grandma's family and small daughter? She's looking at a magazine, or photos of the family. There are too many people, I cannot scan easily. I need one thing or person to focus on.
8. Man looking at camera: Guy looks feminine. He looks friendly, but not attractive. More like just a friend. I don't like that he's looking at the camera instead of whatever this image is trying to sell (product).
9. Woman looking at magazine: I can identify with her. The colors are plain, not too much going on (that's good) in picture so no need to think too much.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: (Respondent laughs) That's a cute family picture. She's looking at family photos/memories. Mom (or grandma) is clearly having fun. Nice picture.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Videos. Tutorials. Text doesn't really work. All together, so I can just skip to the part I need.

Finding videos for every step takes too long.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Prefer the official website.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Official website, the brand. Would not trust anything I don't know of. Google to see reviews of

websites I don't know personally. E-bay look into seller to see what other people said about him.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Movies that I don't have to think about, happy ending. Strong women, happy endings. Don't like twists and being shocked at the end.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

Violence, human being is shocked. I grew up in a great world, was able to do what I want to do. Was a year in US, host mom was president of 4 hospitals, stories about kids abused. Awakening of how good your life is. Gratefulness. Teaches you about life, makes you grateful.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Growing up, still now, home with birthday, mom wakes us, breakfast together, wish for what kind of food to eat. Afternoon coffee and cake with grandparents. Sunday birthday, following Sunday cousins and aunts come and have cake afternoon. On birthday get presents. Younger party with friends. Not more than 10. Decide what you want to do be at home and play games or go swimming.

7. Who is involved in gift giving?

Three sisters, since 12 we do 5 euros each, now 10 euros each and pool together for other sister. From parents something you need, something bigger. Mom said 4 children so no more than 50 euros if you don't need anything. Grandma and grandpa card with money. Friends, birthday party, moms collected money bought bigger present from it. After that every friend comes with gift for 5 euros. Aunts will come with flower or something small.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

Yes, very. Because it's something you know you will see your whole family, it's your day, it's all about you. You look forward to it, select food, nice gifts. Hear from people you don't talk to the whole year. Hear from family you don't usually get to see.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Not good at making things myself. I do think I give good gifts. I think about what they'd like or ask friends and family members if there's something they'd need. If it needs time to collect all the stuff I don't mind taking the time to do that. Something they really need and know I would like.

10. How do you research a gift?

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

It's a special day for myself. Even if a friend doesn't care about birthdays I will still give her something. I want to tell her it's a special day for her.

Interview 8 - German

Name: Adina

Age: 25

Gender: Female

Occupation: Full-time recruiter at susa, teamleader duits.

Nationality: German

Group 1:

1. 40 years: This looks like an ad for a camping store. Oh it's a birthday. I can't relate to this, because the man is 40. Design is boring.
2. 75 years: This lady is having a lot of fun. This is maybe a magazine about traveling for older people that are still hip. For feeling younger than you are. Maybe it would stand out to me if I was looking for a gift for my grandma.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: I can relate to her. She's my age and I love reading. Seems like something for young people starting out, like an ad for new apartments for young couples. She seems like someone that a conversation can be had with.
4. Wedding: This is a family party, maybe a wedding in winter since the shoulders are all

covered up. They're celebrating at home. Old fashioned. They didn't have a big budget for photography. It's a personal private photo. It's not advertising. It's very messy.

5. Two women looking at magazine: Empty first impression. Makes me think of real estate agent. Looks like 2 customers looking over the available houses/locations.
6. Man looking at magazine: I immediately think golf club. Boating. It's an ad for a golf club and it's saying to its target group 'we are the club of your choice'. This is our type of person, if you're like him then join us.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: Old people. This looks messy and wild. There's surprise, like something new is being done. Maybe it's a bachelorette party?
8. Man looking at camera: I think ABN AMRO. Green couch. A living space with status (so no focus). I don't know what the point of the image is. Again I think of maybe financing for young people starting out.
9. Woman looking at magazine: This makes me think of a hotel or a spa. She looks relaxed, she's chilling out. Clean image.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: It's her birthday. She got something or she has company. It's a mother around her 40's. Kids are there and they don't seem to care much. They're at home.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Videos, short videos.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Official website or trusted websites. Good design. Websites that I know. Niet te druk, goed gestructureerd. Vragen die je zou kunnen hebben meteen worden beantwoord voordat je ze stelt.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part?

Price. Retour mogelijkheden. Kwaliteit van de website, betrouwbaar, veel mensen maken er

gebruik van of niet. Als kwaliteit niet goed is dan koop ik het niet. Ook websites van een keten vind ik onbetrouwbaar.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are they factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Mystery, thriller, twist, no happy endings. Inception, new things, interesting things.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

Schuldgevoel. Negatief maar toch met goede uitwerkingen.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Zus broer vrienden. Niet ouders, wel met veel mensen, ook voorbereidingen vind ik leuk, ik zorg ervoor dat er iets is wat mensen leuk vinden, wel belangrijk om te vieren om samen tijd door te brengen. Niet alleen 3 maar wel met 15 mensen meestal.

7. Who is involved in gift giving?

Individueel, broer en zus verwacht geen kado. Niet beledigd als geen kado krijg van hun. Is gewoon zo gegaan niet afgesproken. Waarderen we als iemand wel een keer iets meebrengt. Vaak samen, vriendenkring belevenis kado geeft, haalbaarder als je het samen geeft.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

Jawel, eigen verjaardag is belangrijker dan anderen. Ik hecht wel waarde aan je verjaardag. Sommige mensen boeit hun eigen verjaardag hun niet dus dan boeit het mij ook niet meer.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Iets geven wat een verrassing is wat ik zelf heb verzonnen, kan zelf iets maken, verrassing is belangrijk, ook de manier hoe je het geeft, hoe veel moeite je erin stopt laat zien hoe belangrijk

iemand voor je is.

10. How do you research a gift?

Probeer te herinneren wat ik nog weet dat ze leuk vinden of vraag een gemeenschappelijke vriend wat ze leuk zouden vinden. Meestal geef ik alleen kados aan mensen waar ik vaak mee om ga dus dan geef ik iets wat ze echt leuk vinden.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

Word verwacht. Zou nooit iets geven waar ik niet achtersta. Als ik niks leuks kan verzinnen voel ik me minder geneigd om naar een verjaardag toe te willen. Wil die persoon speciaal laten voelen en wil dat het een kado is die echt bij je past.

Interview 9 - German

Name: Wiebke

Age: 23

Gender: Female

Occupation: Student International Marketing Management

Nationality: German

Group 1:

1. 40 years: The date makes me think it's a magazine cover. Though my first impression isn't that it is. It's nicely designed, the colors and proportions. I can't relate. This looks like a DIY man, handy man. He's 40 years old. Wouldn't read this.
2. 75 years: Looks fun. Would look longer due to cool lady. Probably wouldn't click on it since I assume it's not for me. It's for people that are 75 years old. There are tips in there, Hilde's tips.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: She's reading a magazine or a book. Clearly a stock image. Perfect lighting, background blurred, pretty girl, perfect, effortless. I could aspire to be like her, but I don't relate. Prefer people to inspire me, so I can aspire to be like them than being able to relate.
4. Wedding: (First reaction: awww, so cute!) This is a real picture, but it looks somehow professional. Fits with the event. It's a wedding, not fake. There's a gold theme. I can see

wrapping paper. Everyone is happily surprised, naturally pretty.

5. Two women looking at magazine: Two friends are looking at a catalog. Relaxing on a Saturday or Sunday. Stock photo for sure. Maybe looking at clothes or summer vacation options. They look relaxed and happy, or excited. Good atmosphere.
6. Man looking at magazine: Focus is on the magazine. He's retired, happy. Colors are bright. It looks like it's summer, so most people are happy in the summer. No stress, enjoying his time.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: ("Aw love that you can see excited women, so cute"). They're going crazy over a magazine. Bright happy colors. Real photo, perfect angle, family celebration. So many people are looking at her so it looks more like a gift. Prefer this over the other images, something is happening, there is excitement in it.
8. Man looking at camera: Fake. Natural, but he's not attractive. I feel bad insulting him but it's okay because it's a stock photo, that's strange. If it was a personal photo I would not make fun of him. Smile is not believable.
9. Woman looking at magazine: Professionally taken photograph. The girl is not trying so hard, looks less fake. Seems like it could happen in real life, so it's better to look at. It's more realistic.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: Natural, real. Messy but that's okay because it's a real photo. Details of real life, not perfect. Her laugh looks real, only noticed the magazine later. Looks very thankful to her grandchildren.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer?
(let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Videos, directly go to Youtube. Sometimes try forums. Shorter videos. If I wanted to do something that takes a few clicks then a short video. If I'm looking for something that will take longer I will look for longer videos. So it depends on the task.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Depends on what I'm searching. For school related research google scholar pdfs. Harvard business review, trustworthy websites. For products, look at YouTube videos, YouTubers I trust,

but also general YouTube searches. Website doesn't need to look professional but it does need to look real, like someone actually wrote it, not someone advertising. So if someone has also listed cons for example.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

I like when there are reviews and they look real, written by actual people. I also like the star system. I like it if I can see the product and when it will arrive/delivery costs. If you order ... It will in your house ... Additional product information that I can click to. Read up more about the product. Visuals, lots of pictures, videos. What sometimes helps for fast decision is 'only ... left in stock'. Payment methods. I don't like to pay by credit card. iDeal is easy, PayPal is easy. Needs to be easy.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are they factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Stories told from one perspective, narrative. One main figure. Different perspectives seems like a lot of work, but interesting. I like it to be easy to follow. More movies based on reality more than documentaries. Very critical of fantasy movies. I really like cheesy love stories. Happy endings, love it, need it. Don't like open endings. Relate to women more than men.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

Sad stories popped into my head. Unexpected sad stories, I was really in shock. Mind blowing moment, when something speaks to me, when I can definitely agree with something (dessert first). Story about two friends never saying they like each other. This is something I would never ever want to experience, shocking, but learned something so it stuck with me.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Birthdays are celebrated with friends and family. If I was living at home the morning of the birthday would already be sort of a ceremony. Family closeness. Evening always with friends. Celebrate with people that are close to me. If people that are important to me can't come I will consider rescheduling the celebration. Have drinks, hang out together and go party. I don't like having people over because I don't like baking etc. I do want everyone to have a nice time, and I also have a fun time preparing it and baking cake would not be fun. But I would bake a cake if I knew people would love that. I mainly celebrate birthdays of people are close to me. I only go to celebrations of people that are close to me. I will not go to celebrations of people I don't feel close to.

7. Who is involved in gift giving?

Sometimes I give something as a group, but rarely, because I want to be sure that whatever I give is something I actually want to give her since we are close. If we are not close than just giving 5 euros is fine.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

Yes. Reason to celebrate. Real reason to celebrate. It's their day so you try to give them the best day possible. If it's your own you point it out to everyone so they make your day special. Even just doing normal things is more festive on birthdays. It's magic.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

As personal as possible, try to give them something that they honestly enjoy. I also like making things. I like giving gifts that are thoughtful. Something that they will use.

10. How do you research a gift?

Mainly with the person themselves. I'm always listening for clues to things they want. If there is too little time, think about other gifts that I gave to similar people in the past, or ask people for help on what to give. Sometimes I look up what to give but not too often. Rather in the conversation with people I find information about what they want.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

To make people happy. Give them a smile on their face, let them feel special, to show them how much they mean to me and how much I care about them. I want to him to see how much I care about him.

Because somehow it will bring us closer. I expect something of equal value in return to prove the strength of our relationship.

Interview 10 - German

Name: Sebastian

Age: 25

Gender: Male

Occupation: Student International Marketing Management

Nationality: German

Group 1:

1. 40 years: I think the image is a birthday card or maybe a birthday invitation... the guy is obviously turning 40. The text underneath is about his life. he likes parties, drinking and BBQ. The person looks very normal. All in all the whole image is too gray in my opinion. More colors would be better.
2. 75 years: The woman is turning 75 years old. Could be a cover of a birthday card or magazine maybe. some of her attributes are listed. I like this one more than the one before; it is more colorful and the picture is funnier.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: This image would stand out, cause she is attractive. Design is nice, good color composition. Probably wont remember it, it is just a girl reading. Doesn't remind me of anyone. Maybe it would be better to show what she is reading.
4. Wedding: Looks like a couple that just married are looking at a magazine
I dont like the picture that much. The guy looks kind of weird, the older woman also maybe change these two persons and show what they are actually reading.
5. Two women looking at magazine: This image would stand out more than the one before. The colors look friendlier. The two girls look like actual friends to me. Reminds me of two friends reading some magazine, maybe about clothes or holidays.
6. Man looking at magazine: This image makes the most sense, because now I know what the guy is actually reading. The man looks like he could actually like boating. Maybe a little model

boat in the back could improve it. Also the blue shirt fits to the theme.

7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: It is a bit chaotic. Too many people dressed in pink. Probably a birthday with a magazine filled with photos of memories. I like the angle because it shows what they are actually looking at.
8. Man looking at camera: Would not stand out. Some normal guy reading some book and I don't know what it is about. The shirt is also not the best choice, maybe he should be laying down so I can see what he reads.
9. Woman looking at magazine: Another attractive girl, so that pic would stand out more. I like the clean colors and white sheets. Probably reading some girly mag. Maybe she should wear glasses. All in all I like this one the most.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: Would not stand out. The magazine is about the woman, so I guess it is a gift. The left kid looks a bit strange, maybe change it to a boy.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

You tube tutorials or step by step pictures.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Reddit, youtube, forums

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Price, reviews, forum reviews, articles

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are they factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different

people, examples, re-enactments.

A hero that has to overcome obstacles sounds alright, maybe some kind of outside that turns into a hero story, should start in the middle and work with flashbacks.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

I really can't remember anything at the moment. (He seemed to prefer not to share so I didn't press the matter further).

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Eating, drinking with friends and family. Presents and just having a good time together.

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?

Good friends and family.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

Not really.

it is often just about money and presents

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Something thoughtful that fits to the person. Doesn't have to be expensive for anyone. Family gets more expensive than a friend.

10. How do you research a gift?

Just go into a store they would like.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

Because it is normal.

Interview 11 - American (US citizen)

Name: Roxanne

Age: 51

Gender: Female

Occupation: Retired CEO

Nationality: American (US citizen)

Group 1:

1. 40 years: Boring. I think it's a card for a birthday. But it does say other things, so maybe a book? I wouldn't notice this and it doesn't really grab my attention. I do think it's something for a birthday. Maybe the man is the reason I don't like it, since I don't know anyone that's a man and his age that I would need a birthday gift for. It doesn't make me want to do anything.
2. 75 years: This one is better. I like the lady, she looks enthusiastic. Again I'm not sure what it is, a big birthday card or something. I think if there was an image of someone around my daughter or son's age I would like it more, because I'm always looking for gift ideas for them. It's starting to get harder for me to think of gifts for my sisters too, so if it was a woman around that age it might resonate with me more.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: This is a nice picture. I like the colors and the girl. I would notice this image. I sort of would like to know what she's holding, but I don't know if I would click on this image.
4. Wedding: Oh this is a wedding. The bride and groom just got a gift and are looking at it. I like the lady in the back trying to sneak a peak, that's fun. Makes me want to sneak a peak too.
5. Two women looking at magazine: This one is nice. I can see they're friends and they're really busy looking at a magazine together. I don't think it's a modeled image, I think this is just a photo of two friends. Doesn't make me want to do anything.
6. Man looking at magazine: This looks like a nice man. Not much else.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine:
8. Man looking at camera: I like the colors of this one, reminds me of the one with the girl in the beginning. He's farther away. I don't know, doesn't really say anything to me.
9. Woman looking at magazine: This one is boring, but only in comparison to the last photo of the girl. Not a lot of color, and the lady is looking away from the camera. I think that's why.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: This is a nice photo. Mom with her kids. Mom is clearly happy. I imagine she's looking at her husband. She looks very happy with whatever she's

holding. I'd like to know what made her feel that way.

General questions

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Written instructions combined with video, visuals, being able to see how it's done. Written instructions to print or save. Not always, but sometimes. Depends on what you're searching for. As a reminder of how it was done in the video. You know how it's done thanks to the video, but with the text you can go back and just read it and remember.

2. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important role? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

If it's something I can buy in a store I'd rather go and see it. I have searched for things online, and I could buy them online but I went and bought them in a store. Convenience, depending on what it is. You don't have to leave the house. Customer reviews are important for hotel. Website is important, if the website is annoying I try to find something else. Seeds also, because I can buy exactly what I want. Food mills, videos, compared reviews, bought it in the store. If they didn't have it in the store I would have bought it online (so online research influenced purchase decision).

3. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)
4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?)

Facts.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

If you have a goal you will reach it if you fight. You will get tired and you will feel weak, but you will fight on and reach the goals you want. Learning. Not giving up. Endurance.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

With people and a party.

Family and friends. One gift per person. Not expensive. Mixed. Puts thoughts into gifts. I like to give something they will like and enjoy. Chocolate. Handmade. Order chocolate online.

Why do you want to get something they like and enjoy? Because I wouldn't want to get something stupid for my birthday either. I like useful things.

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

Yes, because it's a celebration of another year of your life. It's not the party that's important, it's about the life.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Personal, hand-made. I put thought into it, by giving something that will be useful/appreciated.

10. How do you research a gift?

I think of them and things they like. Niece what is she into now? Useful. Certain age difficult, I try to think of something else, something different.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

Younger child is fun. More because it's a custom I think. You've done it all your life and you keep giving each other gifts.

Interview 12 - American (US citizen)

Name: Sharon

Age: 43

Gender: Female

Occupation: Teacher

Nationality: American (US citizen)

Group 1:

1. 40 years: I think this is a magazine for 40 year olds. It contains ideas for that age group. This looks like a memory magazine for this 40 year old with memories he has experienced. White text should be a different color. It could actually also be a photo album, I didn't realize that at first though.
2. 75 years: It's someone's 75th birthday. I think she's sharing things that she's done. I really like the picture, it's active. It would look more like a magazine if it was similar to for example popular magazines here, like Oprah, or Martha Stewart. Simple and soft is good.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: This doesn't do anything for me. It's posed (fake).
4. Wedding: This appeals more. It's a party, they're celebrating something, depends on who the people are and what their relation is. I like it, I think it's an age thing, you start appreciating life events with family and friends more.
5. Two women looking at magazine: Looking at a magazine, it's clear what they're doing. I don't like that I can't see the location, now I don't have context. Two people interacting appeals more.
6. Man looking at magazine: This image is clear, you can see what he's doing. Man seems nice, but since I'm not that old yet it doesn't appeal to me.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: This image doesn't appeal to me either, I'm not that old yet. It's also a very busy image with a lot of people. There's no focus and you can't see faces.
8. Man looking at camera: Don't like the shirt. Would never get this for my husband. The image is stylish, the background is simple.
9. Woman looking at magazine: I like this one better than the first one. It's softer, more relaxed, her face is.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: This is cute. I guess it's a grandma and her grandchildren. Kids made a magazine for her. Good image because you can clearly see the emotion. The kid's shirt is distracting though.

General questions:

12. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer?
(let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Step by step instructions. Ingredients in order of use. I like to know what it looks like. Images to see how it works. Images or video for programs.

13. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Consumer reports. Repair records. Performance, what have previous customers said. Reputation. Honda. Price think long term. Reputable websites, past records.

14. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Shopping amazon, then general search. Customer reviews. Price comparison. Reputable information, even Wikipedia is just people adding info.

15. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

Love stories, happy endings. People overcoming obstacles. Drama. Stories where more things are happening at once and you have to figure it out. Stories that make you think. You have to try and figure it out before the end. Sweet home Alabama. More from herself, but of past and bit of future, makes you who you are. Beginning, run it's course, to the end.

16. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

Personal. Own stories. Context talking to person. I was the one that went to brought my first niece home in my arms. Proud, because we waited so long for her to show up and I was allowed to hold

her in the car. Pride. Chance to be part of first niece's life. Big event.

Small things, it doesn't have to be anything big.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

17. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Last several years, birthdays close together, tables out, big party, lot of work, lots of friends too and family. Adults and kids party for daughter. Family and friends.

18. Who is involved in gift giving?

I give gifts to family. Closest family members. Close friend.

19. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

I try to buy something that the person would enjoy. Something that is meaningful to them. Ashley big Madonna fan, four of these little Madonna LP's. Frames with hooks put 3 discs in frame. Wasn't expensive, was thoughtful. Send something they will enjoy as opposed to just something to give.

20. How do you research a gift?

My husband is creative. What they like and what they need. New house, so something to put in house. Combination of what they like and their situation and what is available to you. LP's store with music on different formats. I like to touch and feel when I'm buying.

21. Are birthdays important (to you)?

Yes. Two things: uncle John passed away of cancer, instead of going to cemetery on day of death we go on day of birth. It's a milestone, another year, good to stop and show that person that you're thinking about them. Day to slow down and get together, let them know you're thinking of them.

22. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

I don't know. Let somebody know that you're thinking about them. For kids its exciting, when you get older you don't want more stuff. But if you don't get one you still feel bummed. Gift-giving goes overboard sometimes I think. I'd rather give something meaningful and thoughtful.

Interview 13 - American (US citizen)

Name: Patricia

Age: 47

Gender: Female

Occupation: Currently between jobs, used to be in HR now going to start my own business.

Nationality: American (US citizen)

Group 1:

1. 40 years: Cover of a magazine for men. It looks manly. He's 40 years old. It's a magazine about being 40 years of age. Cleaner than most magazine covers. Focus is on the man.
2. 75 years: Focus is on the woman. Clearly to be used in advertising. Addressed to people of an older age group.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: This isn't trying to sell anything. It's a happy person. Attractive, evokes positive things.
4. Wedding: This is a party. They're sharing information around the table. It's an event of some kind, I can see wrapping paper on the table. They're looking at a gift they received. Colors are off, not as bright, looks like an older photo. Looks like it was taken 20 or 30 years ago. Clothes look less old.
5. Two women looking at magazine: Two friends talking about a magazine and looking at it. Looks modern, more current time than previous image. Soft design. Background disappears so you can focus.
6. Man looking at magazine: Simple. This is a retired person who enjoys boating. This image was taken in the present time. Focus is on the man. Background is blurred, he's at home though, you can see that. Would not stand out to me because it's for an older target group.
7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: This is a party. Most people are older age. I can see a magazine with a person in it. Lots of stuff is happening. I can see confetti, so a celebration.
8. Man looking at camera: Doesn't fit for me. Young person on a couch with a magazine. It's unrealistic. And it's in a warehouse. Shirt throws me off too, it looks like it came out of the 80's.

9. Woman looking at magazine: Realistic. Young lady on a bed. Focus is on her. Green in background gives it some dimension. She's focused on the magazine.
10. Woman looking up from magazine:

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Type into google how to. Read more than use youtube. But can also depend. Wikipedia, accurate.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Go directly to website. Yahoo answers. Questions asked by someone.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Amazon prime, free shipping two days. Tells me what day it gets shipped and tracking. Price and rating. Rating makes decision. Only if there are enough ratings. Top 10 hiking boots by Neutral party. Articles on best hiking boots.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

I like to learn. Positive. Don't like entertainment without purpose. I do like getting different perspectives, newsroom. Play devil's advocate, dig deeper into answers. Different points of view. Makes story more credible.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

9/11 Stories that still come up. People will remember where they were. Big events in everyone's life. Community trying to make sense of it. Evoked strong feelings even though far away. I remember the feelings I had.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

People don't celebrate their birthdays as much. They don't make as big a deal about birthdays. Maybe plan a dinner, family and friends, or either. Exchange some gifts.

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?

Close family and close friends. Each will get own gift. Top 2 or 3 friends, kids, husband, sisters, nieces and nephews.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

(Yes. I love that it's during a festive time, makes it better) Dual income households, people don't have time to plan a party. They just don't celebrate it so it's normal to them to not do it.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

I do buy it. Definitely things that are useful. Listen for clues on things that they might need or don't have. Make notes in my phone on gift ideas. Something clues.

10. How do you research a gift?

See answer above.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

When you know what to get someone it's fun. Just had a friend birthday, went to Europe, became friends with people on ship, friends has fit bit, steps on phone. I was excited to give her that gift. So it makes you happy to be able to make someone else happy. Unless you have no idea, then it's difficult.

Interview 14 - American (US citizen)

Name: Chris

Age: 57

Gender: Male

Occupation: Retired Merchant Marine

Nationality: American

Group 1:

1. 40 years: I think that it is an invitation to a gay dating site. I would not spend any time looking at this at all. The only way that you could get this to have any appeal to me. Is if it had some head lines that interest me. And a girl's picture would definitely be better than this cake boy.
2. 75 years: This one is not getting my interest either. It comes off to me as an advertisement for an assisted living facility. Travel, Been there and done that. Poetry, Depends on the poet. William Shakespeare or Edgar Allen Poe and yes that will get my interest. Maya Angelou or Emily Dickinson, not so much. Hilde knows best, do not even want to go there.

Group 2:

3. Woman looking at camera: OK sure the girl is cute. But the whole image is not going to really get a lot of thought from me. Perhaps If I could see what publication the young lady was reading, then maybe some interest. Well everybody knows that sex sells. This has long been proven. If the girl was showing a little more cleavage. The image will get a lot more attention.
4. Wedding: The table is way too cluttered. Simple is elegant. All of that plastic covering the guys right arm is a mistake. It makes the image look very messy. Another Cake boy model does not help. Additionally I do not think that Aunt Bessie on the right adds anything and would be better off left out. As in the previous picture. It would be better served if you could see what thy were reading.
5. Two women looking at magazine: The background is all wrong for this photograph. It should either be more clear or something else entirely. It looks like a badly overexposed photograph. From the way that the girls are dressed. I would say that it is a good chance that they are looking at a lingerie catalog.
The only thing that might help this one is maybe if one of the girls was gazing thoughtfully into the distance, like she is thinking of something romantic, who knows.
6. Man looking at magazine: Again the hazy background does not do much for this image. For this photograph, a background of a yacht marina or some other nautical scene would really make a difference. I like the fact that you can see what he is reading. This is better. I think that maybe the couch should be a different color from his slacks for a little more contrast.

A baby blue shirt? come on.

7. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: There are a couple of things wrong with this photo. The table is way too cluttered. The people in the back ground look like they are trying to catch flies when they should be smiling. The little girl whose face is blocked by Grandma's left hand should be one step back so you can see her face. The other young girl on the far right is in a bad pose also. Not sure what I would do with her.
8. Man looking at camera: OK this is kind of interesting. This is the kind of background that you want to have if you do not want to draw any attention to it. The guy engaging with the viewer is a good thing depending on what you are trying to sell. I think that the color scheme is right here also. The only thing is that I would ditch the speaker or whatever is on top of the table on the left. I would either make it recognizable for what it is, change it to something else, or leave it out entirely.
9. Woman looking at magazine: OK this is pretty good also. Kind of a sexy pose, bare feet and all. The thoughtful look is very good. Notice the background is completely neutral. You do not even know that it is there. It works well for this scene. I will reiterate that the publication should be easily identifiable.
10. Woman looking up from magazine: This one is pretty good. The background is clear with some props, but not cluttered. The little girls shirt is cool, but may be distracting for some viewers if you are trying to send a message. Also the pose of the little girl on the right is wrong. I can not tell you how to fix it but it just does not fit. Also you can see the magazine which I think is almost a must.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer?
(let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

Written steps with images usually works well for me. Otherwise I will just usually figure it out for myself.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Blogs and forums work well for me. As does net research of my own. I think that some reviews

are good but that most are not. I think that most star rating systems are pretty bogus.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Before I buy anything on line that costs any real money, I do my homework. I want to know what I am getting. And more often than not I will confer with people that I know that have similar interests on forums etc. I price shop as well. However this is not always the deciding factor of who I purchase from. Some internet retailers give you good service and some do not. This is very important to me.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are the factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

I like stories that define what a hero really is. That being that a hero is an ordinary person that does extraordinary things. Single person narrative works well. Interesting that you mention stories that start from the middle. I think that if done well these are very engaging. Because you as the viewer have to fill in the blanks to a certain degree which really unleashes your imagination.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

Stories of human perseverance are always the most powerful. Of people overcoming the odds and winning out in the end against tremendous obstacles. True stories to be sure. The Gulag Archipelago by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Mila 18 by Leon Uris, or just about anything by Leon Uris. Tears in the darkness (can not remember the author right now).

A fictional example of a contemporary story such as this would something like Forrest Gump. As was made into a well known movie. Not exactly an ordinary guy. But still a person that triumphs against all odds to succeed at life.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

The older you get the less significance they have. However certain milestones will get more attention like say 30,40,50,60 etc. But mostly the real celebrations are for kids. This is just my way of thinking.

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?

All of the above depending on the occasion.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

See question 10.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Naturally the closer I am to a person the more likely I am to buy them a nicer gift, that is just the way that it is. Additionally, once I have made the decision to buy a gift for someone. I will often times consider their financial circumstances when selecting something. If someone is comparatively well off financially. I will not likely spend a lot of money on a gift for them, as in why should I. Now If on the other hand have a friend/relative that is hurting financially. If I care about them enough to give them a gift at all. I will likely go out of my way to give them something nice.

Another important criteria in selecting a gift for someone is that it has to be something that I would like to receive myself. This is how I attach myself to it. they will always remember who gave it to them. Now this often times makes it difficult to find the right gift for a person. It is generally easier for me to find a gift for a man than it is for a woman. But I have always been able to overcome this. And I think that it has worked well for the most part.

10. How do you research a gift?

I will usually think about it for a while in consideration of the person. And by the time I have made my decision. I usually know where to look. When I lived in the city. I used to like to go and shop in real stores. But as I now live in the country, more and more I shop on line.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

See question 10.

Interview 15 - American (US citizen)

Name: Bob

Age: 50

Gender: Male

Occupation: Banking

Nationality: American (US citizen)

Group 1:

11. 40 years: Image portrays a person who is happy where he's at in life and how he got there. Not crazy about the image design as I have to think hard what is theme/issue is being conveyed. The main themes don't see to go together - scattered thoughts. The image and verbiage attached does not appeal to me. I guess knowing what "Chum" represents and what the mission of the magazine or publication is so I can try to determine where this cover is trying to lead me.
12. 75 years: This image is more straightforward as to its intent. Celebrating life at 75. This person is looking to share her experiences and knowledge with the reader. I like the image. She's very enthusiastic and makes me want to see what she has to say. I like the image as it is.

Group 2:

13. Woman looking at camera: The model has an appealing smile and disposition. Not only is she looking at me but almost through me as if we know each other. I would remember this image since it comes across as positive. It does not remind me of any person specifically. It appears the model is trying to share what she is reading or looking at with her direct gaze at the reader. I would be interested to know what the magazine or book is or what is on her mind.
14. Wedding: The image does nothing for me. It is too busy with a cluttered table. The couple is looking at a magazine but we don't know what they are looking at. It appears that this couple may have gotten married and now going through their wedding gifts. No direct eye contact with the reader.
15. Two women looking at magazine: Similar comments as given in Group 2 Image 2 however no clutter in this image. Don't know what the two models are looking at and why it's important for me to care. I would not remember this image.
16. Man looking at magazine: The image appeals because you can at least see what the model is reading. He is dressed nicely and appears comfortable. Based on the magazine choice, he

appears to enjoy boating. He reminds me of a friend who passed away that enjoyed boats. I guess the image would appeal more if he were sitting outside along a shoreline and there were boats in the background.

17. Woman surrounded by people looking at magazine: I image would not stand out other than for the fact it is a poorly taken picture. Heads/faces cut off. No clear image of anyone. It almost looks like a bad selfie and the person forgot to include themselves.
18. Man looking at camera: Similar comments to Group 2 Image 1. Direct eye contact. Curious as to why model is smiling and what he is reading. Background wall does not appeal to me.
19. Woman looking at magazine: The model is attractive so it stands out for that reason. No eye contact and don't know what they are reading or thinking.
20. Woman looking up from magazine: The image does not stand out. The main person is smiling but the other two are not so you don't know if its about what they are looking at or if someone told a joke.

General questions:

1. When looking for instructions on how to do something online, what method do you prefer? (let respondent answer this by themselves, if they need help, use suggestions: written steps, detailed written instructions, steps with images, videos, printable instructions).

A video is preferable if the task is more difficult. Otherwise, steps with images would suffice and definitely in a printable format.

2. When researching something online, where do you prefer to find information? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

Almost everything starts with Google so then it's a matter of drilling down among the choices to see which appear to be the most direct or authoritative. I like to use trusted websites and avoid lots of advertising.

3. When deciding whether or not to purchase something online, what factors play an important part? (if respondent needs help: written customer reviews, articles from trusted websites/blogs, forums, video reviews, star rating systems etc.)

A combination of price, value, customer reviews, website design and ease of use.

4. What (kind of story) stories do you like best? (hero, adventure, different narratives, different

ideas with central message, stories that start in the middle, etc. These options are based on the different storytelling techniques found). (Help: think of your favorite types of movies or books, what theme, or style do they have in common? Are they factual, fiction, informative etc.?) How is the story told? Visuals, special effects, person in frame telling story, different people, examples, re-enactments.

I enjoy comedies and TV/cable series that I can binge watch and avoid commercials. Underdog stories are always good. Good mystery dramas that keep you guessing. Movies that don't always follow the same formula or plot line.

5. Think of a story that you will never forget. Without getting personal, explain what kind of story it is and why you will not forget it. Who is involved, what was your part, what were the effects of the event?

The movie *Usual Suspects* had me in knots trying to figure it out and the ending blew me away. Amazing acting and leading the audience without giving anything away.

Laddering - topic, birthday (specifically the ritual of gift giving and those involved).

Starting question for laddering:

6. How are birthdays typically celebrated by yourself and those closest to you?

Birthday parties for the kids until they get old enough not to want to. Typically going out to dinner or making a nice dinner at home. For those not in the immediate family, a phone call with a family singalong to wish the loved one a happy birthday.

7. Who is involved in birthdays/gift giving?

Close family and friends especially around the holidays.

8. Are birthdays important (to you)?

They are important so you can let the people you love know that you are thinking of them and that the world is a better place with that person in it. It forces us to at least for one day, let someone know that you are thinking of them.

9. What type of gifts do you prefer/tend to give on birthdays? (hand-made, personal, impersonal)

Try to get gifts that will make the person happy or give them what they need. Thoughtful gifts for those that inspire you to come up with unique ways to let them know you appreciate them.

10. How do you research a gift?

A little bit of everything. If the person has made a comment(s) in the past about something they wanted or liked, I try to remember so I can get them what they want. I will go online if the gift is not something that is easily obtainable in a local store.

11. Why do you give gifts for birthdays?

Same reason as question 8.