

# COMMUNICATING USER RESEARCH INTO NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

Stella Boess and Annelise de Jong

Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering, Delft University of Technology, Landbergstraat 15, 2628 CE Delft, The Netherlands. [s.u.boess@tudelft.nl](mailto:s.u.boess@tudelft.nl), [a.m.dejong@tudelft.nl](mailto:a.m.dejong@tudelft.nl)

## ABSTRACT:

In the context of new product development processes, our research seeks to identify ways that parties can communicate about expectations and benefits from usage research. A discussion round was held with usage researchers and designers. It showed that usage research can have an inspirational, communicative and decision-aiding role. A shared design vision can form a bridge between parties. A visualisation of these findings could become part of information materials for design researchers and process managers.

## 1. RESEARCH

We seek to identify how parties can communicate about expectations and benefits from usage research for new product development processes. Communication is important in clarifying and agreeing on courses of action. Our research questions are: 1. Which data and findings play a

crucial role in which parts of a design process? 2. How is this role being made clear for oneself and others during the process? The aim of this work is to lower barriers to the adoption of usage research in design. We present findings from an invited paper presentation session and semi-structured discussion round we held as part of the IEA congress 2006. The session provided a workspace to present and compare approaches. We invited an individual designer making use of usage research, a user experience expert seeking to bring knowledge into an industry design process, a co-designer organizing collaborations between users and designers, and a hci-specialist and a team of designer researchers developing knowledge to be applied in design. All brought work from industry contexts to the discussion. The discussion and our subsequent analysis were informed by our research questions. The session was videorecorded and transcribed verbatim.

## 2. RESULTS

We found that usage research has an inspirational role, as well as a communicative and a decision-aiding role in new product development processes. Usage research was done by external experts but also by designers themselves, and sometimes involved users directly. Management, engineering and design have different requirements for trustworthiness and understanding of usage research results. Bluntly said: management need numbers in glossy reports for board meetings. Engineering need data to be 'quick and clean' to use directly in development. Designers need in-depth information close to the users. There is a need for bridges between these different communication styles so that user information is not lost. A shared design vision was found to be an important bridge between usage research, design and management processes.

## 3. APPLICATION

With a shared design vision, information about product usage remains fruitful throughout the design process, and plays a role in the communication among stakeholders. We have created a summarising visualisation of the findings from the session (Fig. 1). This visualisation could become part of information materials for design researchers and process managers.

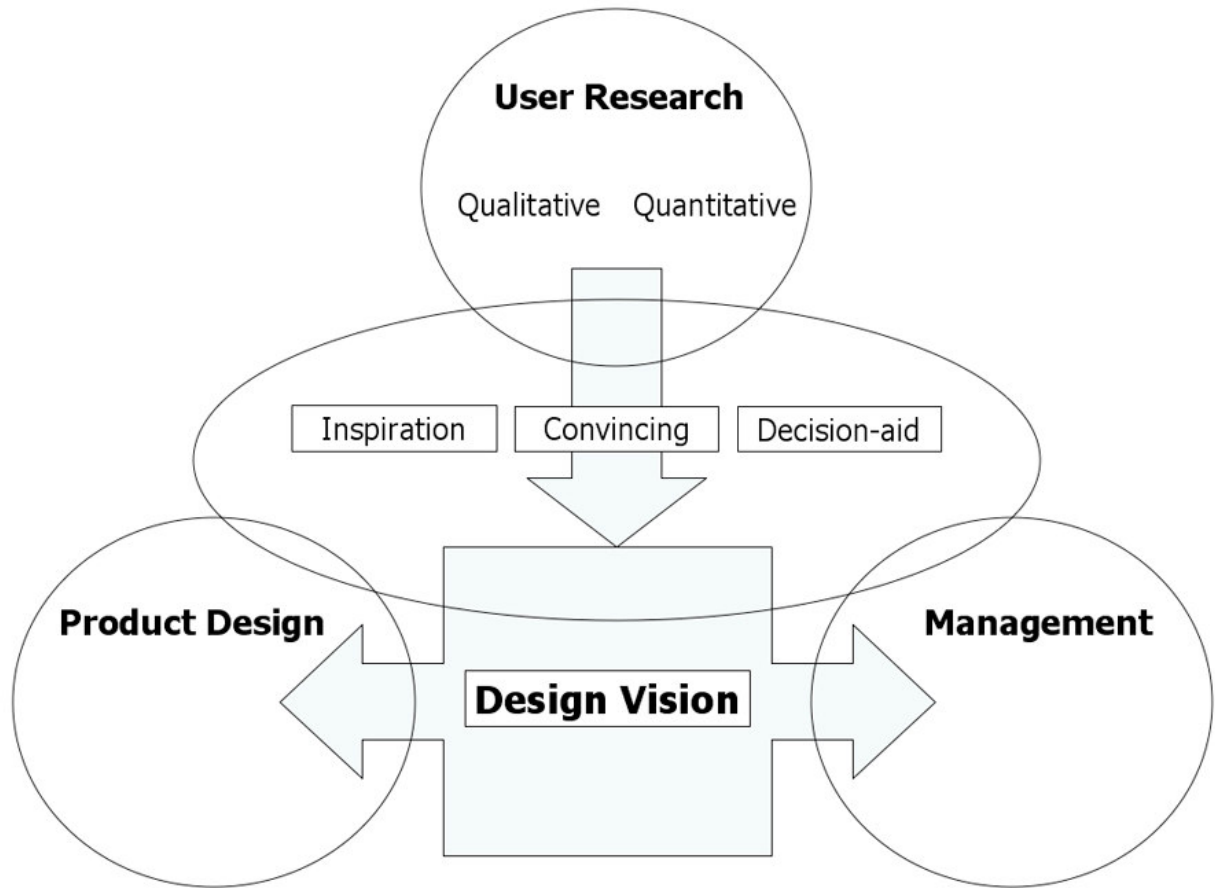


Figure 1: a visualisation of the benefits usage research can have in new product development processes.