Observation to Insight:

Interpreting Qualitative User Research for IA

November 7, 2022

SARA INGHAM

Information Architect &
User Researcher
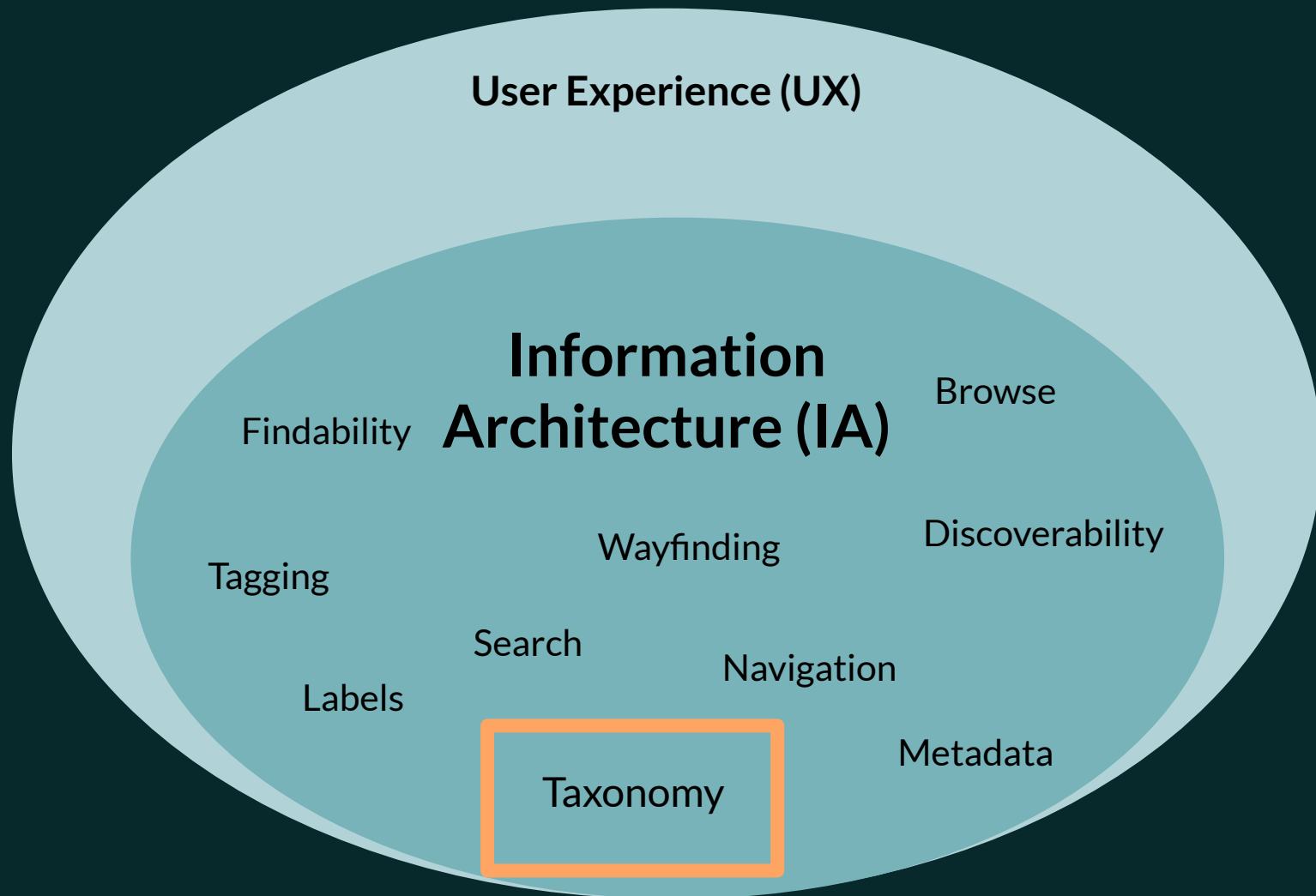
JENNIFER LONG

Project Coordinator & User
Researcher

@factorfirm on Twitter

factor

What is Information Architecture, and why should we do user research for it?

Information Architecture (IA)
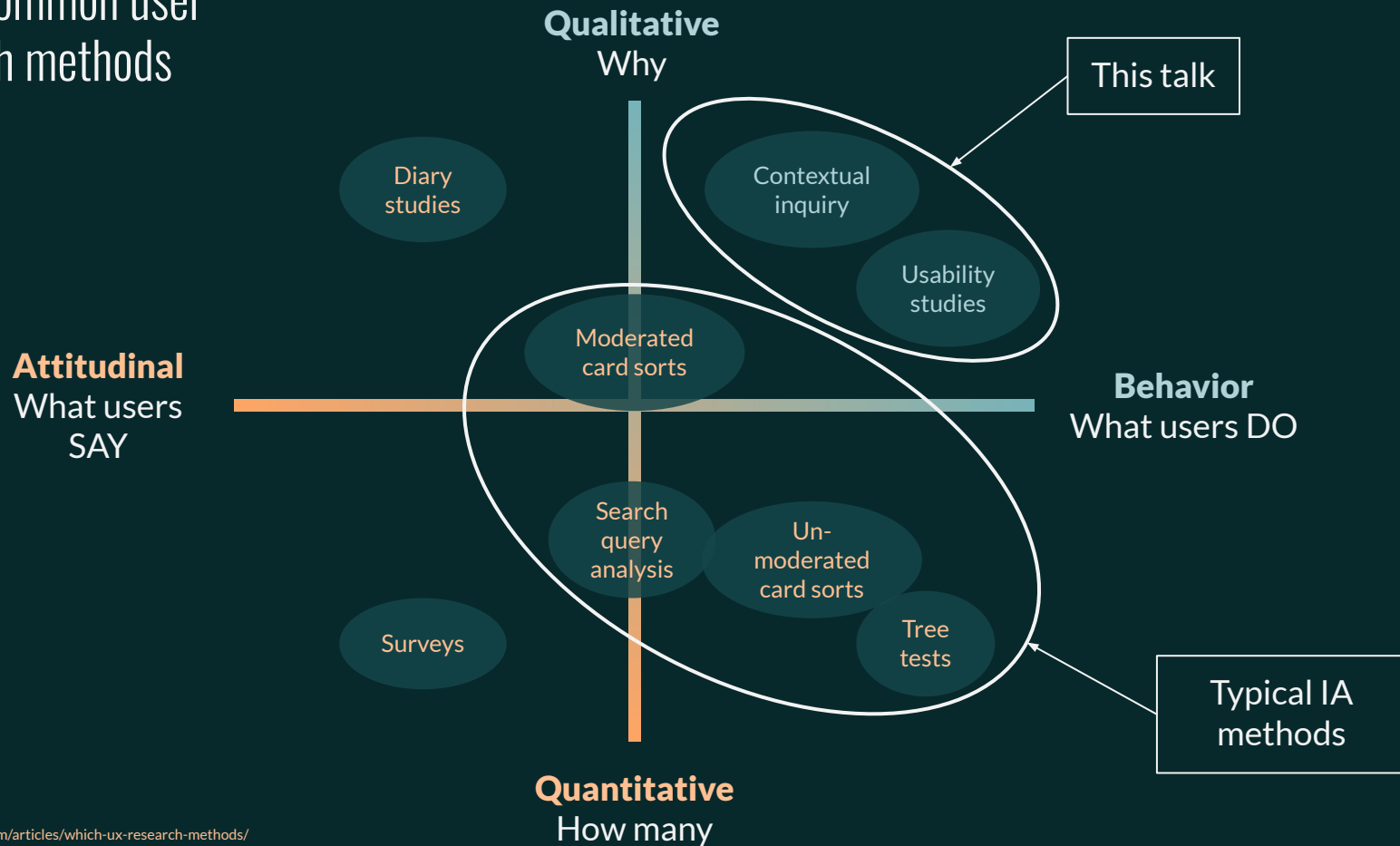is the discipline of making information findable and understandable.

Source:
https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/information-architecture

User Experience (UX)

Information Architecture (IA)

Findability

Browse

Discoverability

Wayfinding

Tagging

Search

Navigation

Labels

Metadata

Taxonomy

The goal of <u>User Research</u> is to understand your users' mental models

A few common user research methods

Qualitative
Why

This talk

Diary studies

Contextual inquiry

Usability studies

Attitudinal
What users SAY

Moderated card sorts

Behavior
What users DO

Search query analysis

Un-moderated card sorts

Tree tests

Typical IA methods

Surveys

Quantitative
How many

Adapted from:
https://www.nngroup.com/articles/which-ux-research-methods/
https://uxdesign.cc/the-right-way-of-doing-user-research-569bf7f35b36
https://uxdesign.cc/a-guide-to-top-ux-research-methods-1adef6d46efe

Generative vs. Evaluative

Diary studies

Usability studies

A/B tests

Generative
What should we build?

Open card sorts

Closed card sorts

Evaluative
How should we build it?

A hybrid method

Qualitative
Why

Contextual inquiry
+
Usability study

Generative
What should we build?

Evaluative
How should we build it?

Quantitative
How many

factor
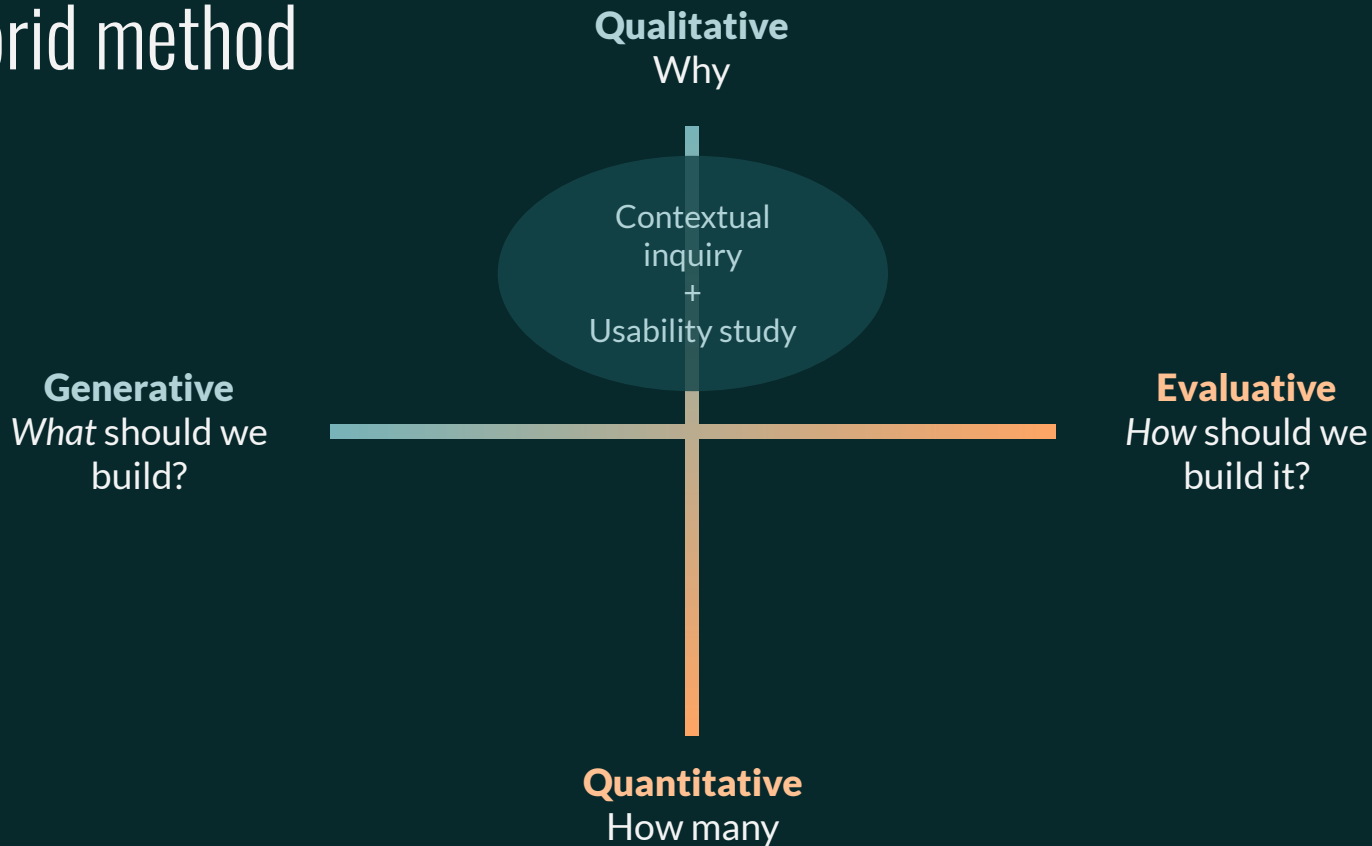
The goal of <u>Generative</u> Research for IA is to understand your users' information needs

The goal of <u>Evaluative</u> Research for IA is to identify findability issues in the user experience
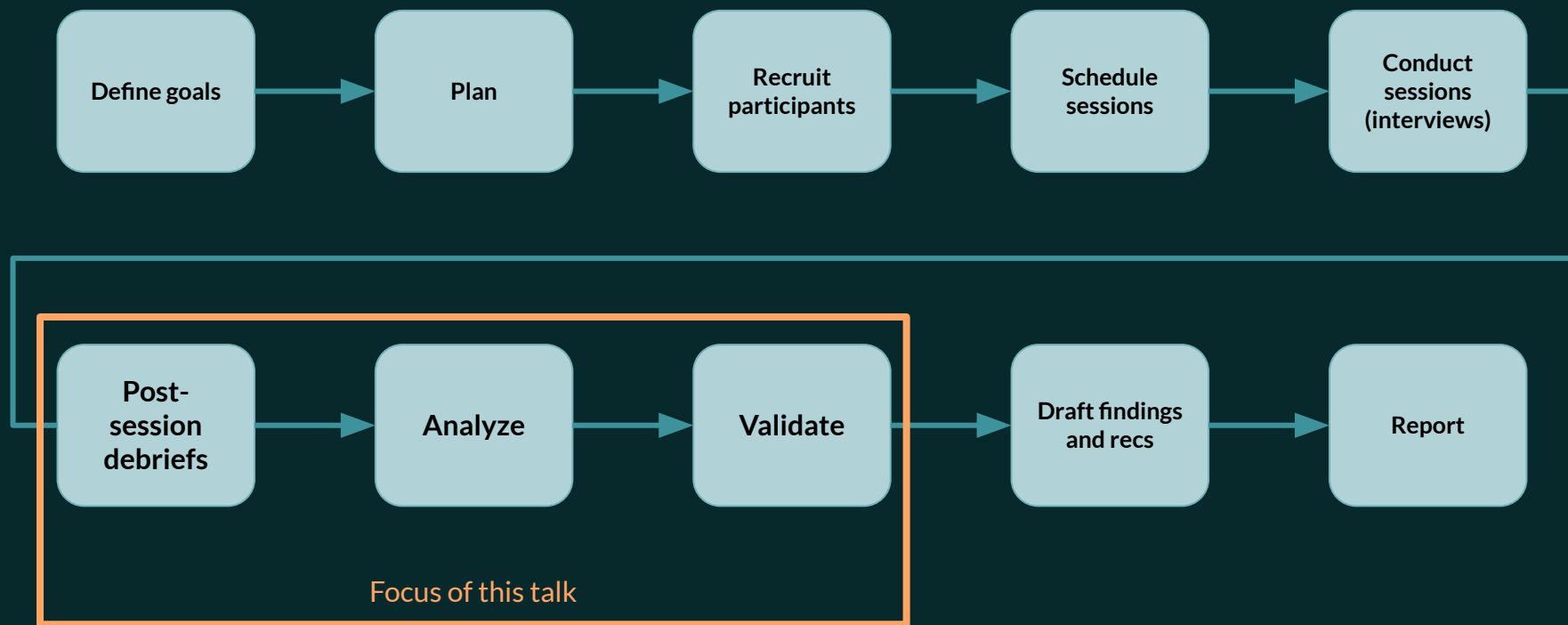
Insights from user research for IA can inform taxonomy and metadata design
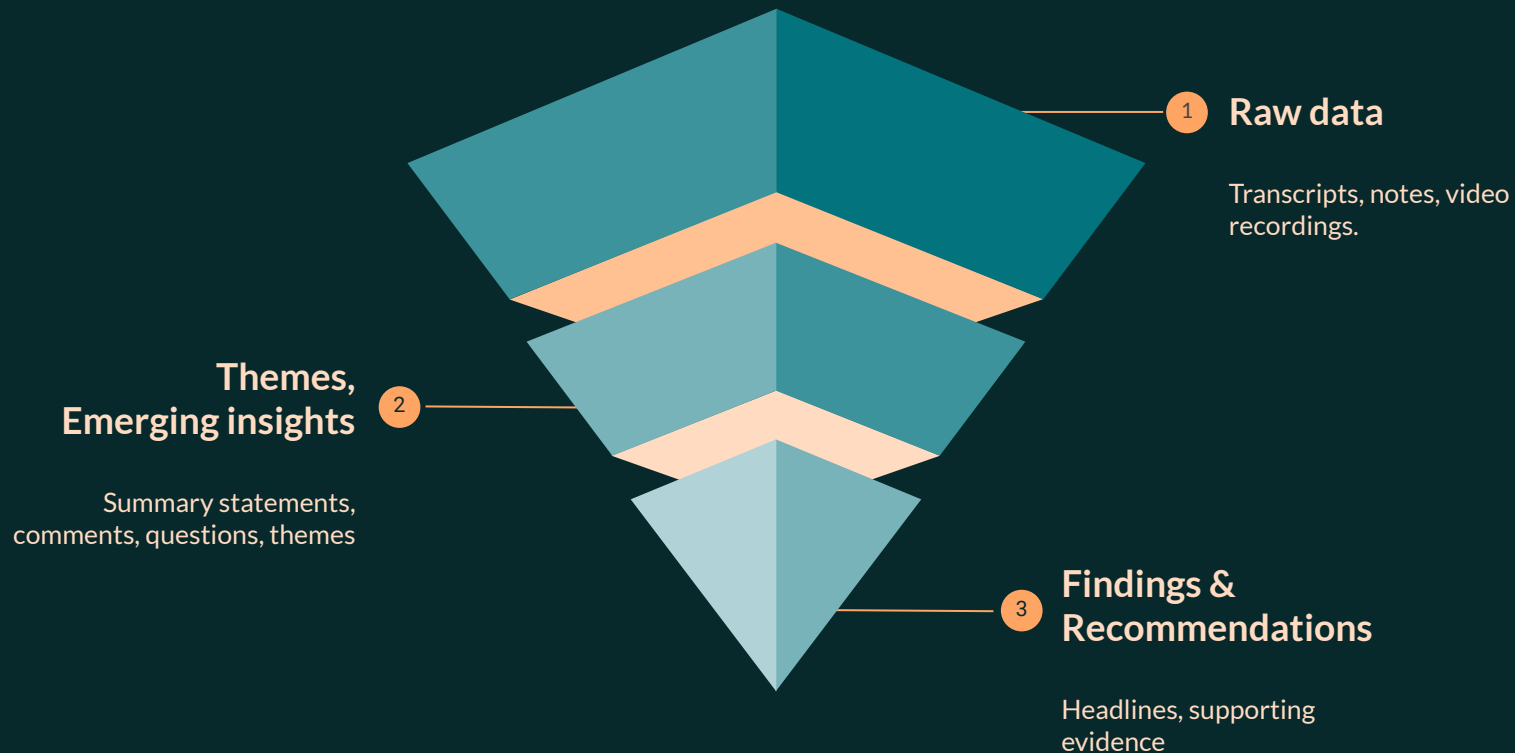
Quick review:

- Good IA makes information findable

- IA is the foundation of UX

- Users have information needs

- Qualitative Research helps us understand those needs

- Research findings are an input for taxonomy and metadata design

How do we analyze qualitative data, and generate insights relevant for IA?

Steps in a typical research study (interviews/usability)

| Define goals | → | Plan | → | Recruit participants | → | Schedule sessions | → | Conduct sessions (interviews) |

| **Post-session debriefs** | → | **Analyze** | → | **Validate** | → | **Draft findings and recs** | → | **Report** |

Focus of this talk

factor

Qualitative data analysis

1 **Raw data**

Transcripts, notes, video recordings.

2 **Themes, Emerging insights**

Summary statements, comments, questions, themes

3 **Findings & Recommendations**

Headlines, supporting evidence

Raw data (qualitative)

- Detailed notes, transcript
- Interview recordings

Note ID	Time stamp	Question/ Topic	Response
6.091			I like the dropdown menu on rockauto. More old fashioned, doesn't look slick, but harder to make a mistake. I don't know. I guess I'm just old fashioned, but I just like it better
6.092	0:33:28	a mistake?	yeah, like when you're working with web code and stuff..a field that isn't working right, or you click a box and sometimes it's greyed out when it shouldn't be, and you're not sure what you're seeing. The dropdown menus [as on rock auto] just work around that because you can see all the options at once.
6.094	0:33:30		I've gotta trust the people that do their web catalogue, but you never know.
6.096			Ebay has a lot more imported and chinese stuff, that retail places won't have. gives me ideas, shows me options, something that would look really cool
6.106			I was scrolling to find a picture with shocks in it...
6.108	0:41:38		I have no idea what kind of shocks are in any of these
6.115		base that assumption on photo?	Haven't even read the description. I'm pretty visual. If there are more details, they'd be in the item specifics.
6.116	0:44:05		I'd do more research. I might even spread it out over 3 or four days. I might have 5 tabs open so I can compare/contrast
6.117			This is a big project, and I'm cheap/frugal. So I want the best quality for the least dollars.
6.121	0:46:02	Did you sell a lot of kits as a mechanic?	Saves time searching for every bolt set and washer...
6.128			I like to plan the whole job out before I go shopping
6.136			It's a little weird... like, why do you want to know my vin number.
6.137		License plate	Nope. If a website asked me for something to link it back to me, I'd be like "no, you don't need that"
6.138		quality:	Country of origin, chinese and korean parts will not have the same metal quality.

ROCKAUTO.COM

Show Prices In US Dollars ($)

English | Español | Deutsch | Français

Help ❓

Order Status & Returns 📦

Log In or Create Account (Optional) 👤

Part Catalog **Part Number Search** **Tools & Universal Parts** **Cart** 🛒

Bigger

year make model part type or part number or question 🔍

- BMW
  - 2022
    - 228I
    - 230I
      - 2.0L L4 Turbocharged RSS 🔊   part name or part type 🔍 ❓
        - Body & Lamp Assembly
          - Lift Support

❌ 🖨 ✉ ❓

Related Parts ▾

BMW > 2022 > 230I > 2.0L L4 Turbocharged > Body & Lamp Assembly > Lift Support | Price

TUFF SUPPORT 614279 Info | $8.39
Hood; Body Code G42 | − 1 + Add to Cart ›

          - Brake & Wheel Hub
          - Cooling System
            - Coolant / Antifreeze
          - Engine
          - Heat & Air Conditioning
            - Cabin Air Filter
          - Ignition
          - Transmission-Automatic
          - Wheel

factor

Interview summary statements

Condense raw data during post-interview debriefs

P6 Summary
trusts rock auto tree menu more than faceted search, might be because context is clearer
looks on german ebay for inspiration
scans pictures in product list while scrolling, looking for a picture that shows a particular item in the kit
unable to see the brand/type of shocks in the product image
doesn't read descriptions - looks at the pictures
spends days researching, keeps multiple tabs open for comparison
thinks of himself as cheap/frugal, wants the most bang for the buck
says kits save time
plans the whole job out before shopping
wary of giving VIN number
wouldn't give license plate number
country of origin = quality

In the before times

Now: digital whiteboard

Clustering & Coding

Cluster similar observations, then summarize what each cluster is about
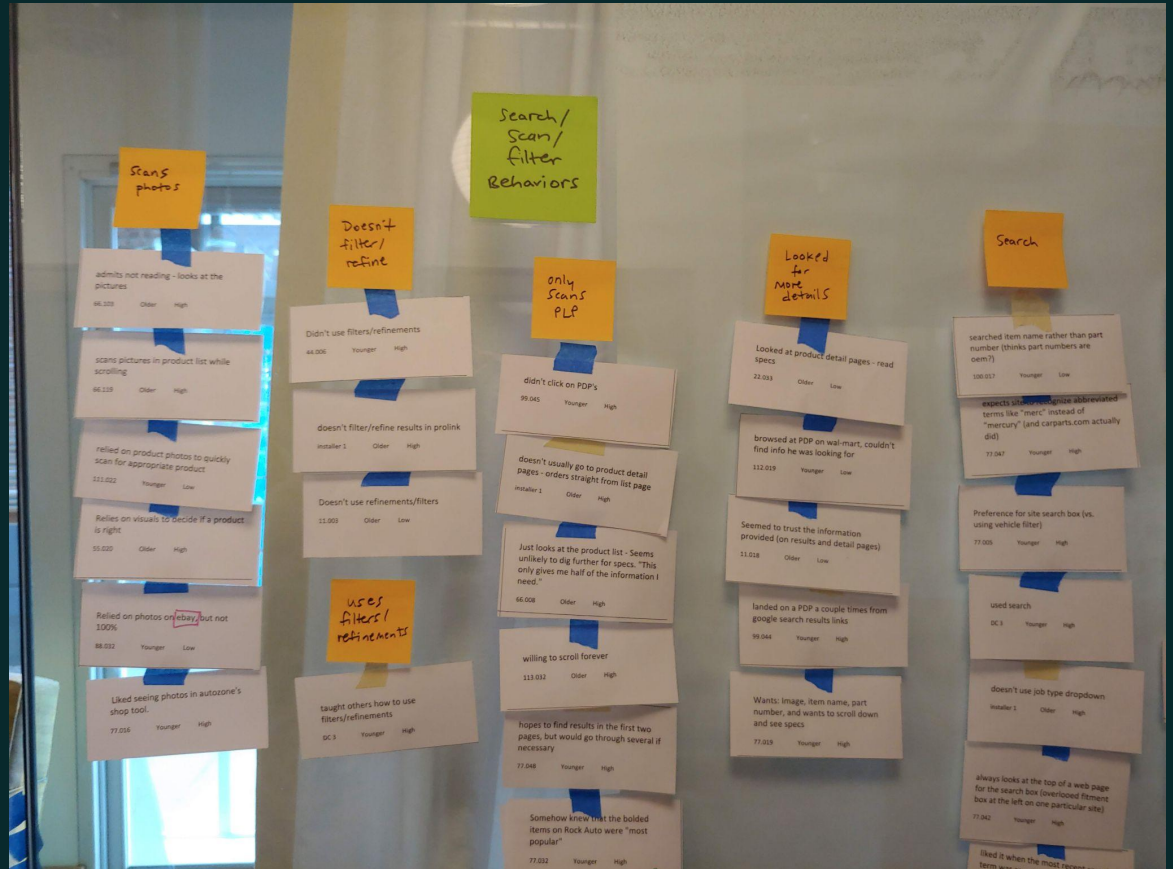
Verifying

Check assumptions and gather examples (evidence)

"NAPA is a name I know."

Implications for IA

Tie your new insights about users' information needs and usability of IA features together, and consider recommendations

- **Search capability requirement**

    - Search query format: <u>make/model + item type</u> ("vw atlas oil kit").

- **Attributes required for list pages**

    - Scanned product lists for <u>brand</u> and <u>price</u>.

    - Checks <u>stock status</u> before going to brick and mortar store.

    - Copies <u>part number</u> from one site, and pasted it into Google to search for best price.

- **Must include product photos**

    - Used product photos to <u>identify the correct item</u> in the product list.

Quick review:

- Listen to and observe your users!

- You'll generate insights while analyzing and condensing raw data

- Insights can lead to design recommendations

- …including IA and taxonomy implications

Anatomy of a finding

Observation   *What happened?*

Example   *Evidence*

Explanation   *Why did it happen?*

Implication   *Why does it matter?*

Write findings like headlines

A single, declarative sentence that describes the key takeaway

Resist the temptation to count or measure

Quick review:

- Findings are headlines, followed by evidence, further explanations, and ultimately, recommendations

- Quantitative analysis should not be used for qualitative data

Further reading

- Just Enough Research, Erika Hall
- Don't Make Me Think, Steve Krug
- Mixed Methods, Sam Ladner
- Interviewing Users, Steve Portigal
- Using thematic analysis in psychology, Braun & Clarke
- Qualitative Data Analysis, Miles, Huberman, Saldaña
- Basics of Qualitative Research, Corbin, Strauss
- usability.gov

Factor eBook

the Factor field guide to

User Research for Taxonomy Design

A quick guide to building the taxonomies people need

From the user research team at Factor

Thank you!