Research for interaction Designers are often keen to shy away from digital media projects, perhaps because they have a tendency to falsely equate technology with a lack of creativity.Brief Your workshop challenge is to undertake design research for a newinteractive product or service that will make life simpler for two important target audiences – 'organized parents'andthe 'young tech elite'.These two audiences both have the disposable income to be able to afford to pay for a product or service that would effectively organize,make more efficient and thereby enhance their work/life balances.Start to collect and digitize inspirational images and to reference material that you come across in books, magazines, online and so on. Organize your images into themed folders on your computer, such as by colour, image, typography and layout, or by more specialist categories such as audiences, brand language, navigation elements, art direction and so on. Create a document the size of your desktop in Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator and place and arrange your digitized images on the canvas in order to create your moodboard.Fortunately, it is mucheasier thanever before to keep track of andshare sourcesof inspiration, thanks toan arrayof simple bookmarkingand portfolio sites.Choosing the right resources andtools for this is a matterof personal choice – butthe table here providesaselection of bookmarking andportfolio sites for you toget started with!Google's PageRank scores pages from 0–9 based on thenumber and importance of incominglinks from other web pages.Alexa Toolbar ranks and displays graphs of visits,and (perhaps more interestingly) also displays related links to websites with similar content, which is great for finding out more about thecompetition.Industry perspective: Eilidh Dickson & Helle Rohde Andersen, CIID Consulting Client Novo Nordisk Brief To investigate the lives of Type 2 diabetes patients in the USA, with a view to discovering unaddressed user needs and new opportunities for innovation.Brandand user experience workshop These photostakenduringabrand workshop with Plump Digital's client, Ardent Financial Planning, show arange of research techniques thathelp both designers andclients toevaluatecurrent brandpositionand user experiencesprior tostarting new design work. Agency CIID Consulting (Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design), Copenhagen, Denmark Solution Designersand researchers from CIID undertookin-depth field research through an approach they termed 'Immersive Living', which discovered a number ofkeyfindings that were presented through the design of an interactive iPad app.A limited number of participants, usually between sixand twelve, are selected froma target audience or consumer group, and their preferences, attitudes and opinions are then gathered through moderated discussions.Middle row: Competitors' visual identities, marketing materialand websitesare analysedto helpevaluate theirrelative strengths and weaknesses.For example, a website with a clean minimal interface employing a subtle use of typography may appeal to one technically savvy user, but to an IT novice with visual impairments it may appear obscure and difficult to read.Moodboards are still very useful, but their form is changing as it is now much easier to simply curate them online using sites such as Pintrest, or to create moodboards using desktop software packages, which can be easily changed and stored, shared and even polished for client presentations.Better every day atday care withNFC The Finnishagency Nordkapp worked closely withtheirclients tohelp shape the brief as part of theEU-funded Smart UrbanSpacesresearchinitiative.The Nappula project aims to test and research howto bestutilize contactless technologies (such as radio frequency identification (RFID) and near field identification (NFC))in day-care centres.Investigating

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website popularity Download Google Toolbar and Alexa Toolbar foryour web browser so that you can view the popularity of websites that you visit at a glance.Scenarios and competitor analysis are often used together to give insight into user experience as they generate lists of important content and functions that can then be collated to form the basis of a design.Culture hunt In contrast to cultural probes, designers gather research first-hand by visitingselected locations for aset period of timeon designated culture hunts.Information can be gathered by using the same techniques as for cultural probes – that is, diaries, notebooks, cameras and sound recording equipment, aswell as by undertaking impromptuinterviews.Moodboard desktops Traditional moodboards collaged with images cut from magazines, printed photos and colour swatches from the local hardware store have become somewhat anachronistic in the modern open-plan design studio.This timewe choseto use an extremely small sample of threepatients; however, we spenta week witheach of them andmet with anyonewho was involvedin theirnetwork ofcare.This is particularly the case for interactive projects, such as building a website or designing an app, where user experience (UX) is more likely to be active rather than passive.Building a new website therefore requires careful research and user testing as part of an iterative design process in order to ensure that users can access its content and use its functions in the most effective and rewarding way.A good briefwill articulate the project aims, requirements, intended audience, timescales, budgetand, increasingly, the criteria by which success will be measured.To avoid costly misunderstandings, some design agenciestherefore prefer to supply their clients with a tried-and-tested brief pro forma to make sure that they capture all the essential information in a consistent format that their design team can then quickly and easily interpret.Distinctiveness is the ideal marketing quality for a brand: those brands that are closely clustered in the same area of the matrix will be less distinct and will invariably face the most competition.Thislevelof information commonly relies on 'page tagging', whereby a small pieceof code(usuallyaJavaScript) isinserted into every websitepage.The cultural probe can be as simple as a paper diary and pen or as sophisticated as a smartphone, which enables participants to take photos, record videos and write diary entries as part of a blog.Sketchbooks and blogs There is still nothing to surpass a traditional sketchbook for ease and simplicity in recording notes, reference materials, thoughts and initial ideas.Most professional photo libraries will allow you to use comping images of their photographers' and image-makers' work for the purposes of producing mock-up designs so long as images are not published or used in any commercial form.Yet, technology and creativity should not be seen as diametrically opposed to one another; each new technical innovation actually brings with it a wealth of new creative opportunities to explore.The relentless pace of technological change does, however, mean that digital media projects are often complex, because how audiences or end users will respond to new developments cannot be easily anticipated without solid research and development.Unlike reading a magazine or watching a DVD, where a certain type of consumer use and responsive behaviour may be assumed, navigating a new website can be similar to handling an unfamiliar appliance for users.Top row: A 'warm-up' exercise identifying carbrand values helpsto sharpenclients' analytical skillsbefore they then learnto apply them to their ownbrand.Most web-hostingcompaniesprovide some form ofweb analytics toolwhen youacquire space,but the mostpopular free toolis Google Analytics.Web analytics should be used on a continual basis to assess whether

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website changes and digital promotions are achieving measurable results.User research Unlike market research methods, which give general overviews of consumer behaviour and market competition, user research methods give detailed insights into user needs and behaviours from both real and imagined end users.The key benefit of a focus group over individual interviews is this element of group discussion, which can lead both to a better understanding of the focus group's perceptions and attitudes, and usefully enables problems to be identified and investigated in more detail.Imagine, for example, shoppingfor anew online bank account,trawling through discussion forums and comparison sites for advice, before assessing the online application processes for a range of different banks.There is somuchto see andlearn at the merepress of a search button that the possibilityof missingan example ofcreative greatnesscansometimes feel overwhelming.First, we sent the patients sticky notes prior toour visit so that theycould tag objectsin their homesthat they associated with their diabetesorthat made their everyday lifeeasier.Bottomrow: Abrand matrixis a visualway tocomparebrands using selected criteria.The drawing ofcustomerjourney maps helps designersand clientsunderstand howusersinteractwith brand andservice touchpointsover time.The goalof the project isto find better practices for thedailyadministrative routines, such as monitoringpresence, and thus free time for the children.Competitor analysis When designing an identity for a TV channel, creating a new app game or redeveloping a website, knowing your competition is very important.Web analytics can tell us a range of information about site visitors, including: the number of unique and returning visitors; the average number of pages viewed; the average length of time spent on a site; the user's location; the flow of pages viewed (also known as 'clickstreams'); and the percentage of visitors who viewed the site from a mobile device.Focus groups In contrast to questionnaires, focus groupsallow a researcher to gather qualitative information abouta product, service or idea.Cultural probes last a set period of time, during which participants may receive further guidance via text or email.The methods described below represent a small selection of those available that might be used to encourage the investigation, recording and use of visual research for digital media design projects.ED: Yes,Novo Nordisk wanted to gain a more in-depth understanding of the lives of Type 2 Diabetespatients, particularly in the USA where the condition is an increasingly widespread problem.Now that we can watch television on our phones, download movies to our laptops and listen to podcasts on TVs, organizing our social media and personal communication is becoming an ever-more complex and time-consuming job.In this chapter, we will explore a range of research techniques and strategies that may prove vital when performing design research for an interactive project.Questionnaires and surveys Where time (and budget) allows, a questionnaire or survey may be used to gain new quantitative market intelligence.If you do want to ask speculative questions, setting up a focus group might be a more appropriate research method to use, as this will allow you to explore the respondents' answers and motivations more thoroughly.Score the products in a table, take screengrabs of their key features and write down their individual strengths and weaknesses.This statistical information or 'web metrics' is important in helping to judge the effectiveness of any changes to the website or increase in traffic resulting from promotional campaigns.Care needs to be taken so that leading questions are avoided and the views of strong characters within the focusgroup do not unduly influence other participants.They are widely used in web and product design to help clients

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and designers visualize their audience when making decisions about design features, user experience and content.Cultural probes Cultural probes are information-gathering kits that allow participants to self-document a design issue that is being explored.The aim of the probe is to collect a plentiful supply of qualitative information that will inform and inspire your design.The aim of a culture hunt is for designers to immersethemselves in places of study in order to gain insights into the designproblem and so gain inspiration for a likely solution.Designstudents are often encouraged to keep personal blogs using Tumblr or Word Press as a means of self-reflection, as well as a way of receiving helpful comments from others.Interview with Eilidh Dickson and Helle Rohde Andersen Eilidh is a Project Lead and Interaction Designer and Helle is an Interaction and Service Designer.This wasaway forthem to feel confident intheirown home and highlight the things that theywanted toshowus.Next, participants placed peopleor stakeholders who influenced their diabetes care on an axis, somenear to them, others further away.Because part of the project was visualization,wewent through the mammothtaskof transcribingthe audio andvideos.Technology hasbeen a major driver behind this rapid process ofchange – butcould it possibly simplify thingstoo?On the flipside, as we become more media savvy, advertisers are working harder than ever before to create meaningful dialogues with consumers in order to sell their products and services.Your design research will use the competition analysis, personas and scenarios outlined earlier in this chapter to provide a list of user-experience requirements for this potential new service.Search for the following terms on YouTube's homepage: Ericsson's 'The Social Web of Things'; and Microsoft's 'Future Vision' videos and 'Our LifeStyle'.These could include a range of services, from email clients and social media organizers, through to interactive television and online entertainment media, such as iTunes, Netflix or Spotify.Score the products in a table, take screengrabs of key functions and write down their individual strengths and weaknesses.Misinterpretation caused by not asking the right questions at the briefing stage, or from not researching the brief thoroughly enough, are common mistakes made by inexperienced designers.When reading a brief, orreceiving a briefing presentation, we often look for guidance on three key areas of research: projectcontext,focus and process.Context review A context or literature review is a comprehensive study of corporate literature, articles, papers, reports and books on your client, their industry and their competitors.The difference between a questionnaire and a survey simply comes down to who fills out the form: a participant fills out a questionnaire, whereas a researcher questioning a participant fills out a survey.Brand matrices essentially allow designers and their clients to visualize a brand's values relative to its competition.Two important criteria are chosen for the axes of a matrix and are labelled with appropriate scales.Shared inspiration Inspirationis everywhere l.inthis 24/7, always-online world

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