

Research Report

Service Design | Spring 2022 | A3:D2
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One-Page Summary of Research Activities

Research Type	Research Method	Major Findings
Primary Research	Experimental Research	The current service has an opportunity for providing avenues for collaboration to their students (younger + adults).
	Guerilla in-store Interviews	NStuff Music is in a school district where elementary schools have many good music programs.
		Consumers seek social interaction and prefer in-person courses over online ones.
	Individual Interview with Music education startup CEO	NStuff Music has an advantage in local public praise and in-person lesson experiences compared to other similar music businesses.
Secondary Research	Digital Ethnography	NStuff Music provides one-on-one lessons with a variety of instrumental music lessons. It also provides online lessons (during and since the pandemic).

Experiential Research

Mar 15, 4:30-7:30 pm, N Stuff Music Store

Participants: Animesh, Celine, Xinzhu

Overview: We visited N Stuff Music's physical store, in which focuses on the instrument rental businesses, and the little lesson house, where the different music lessons operates. We toured around the two houses to observe the physical environment in these two locations. We also had the opportunity to interview the owner of N Stuff Music, Bob Sarra, as he showed us around and introduced their environment. We also interviewed the employees working at the instrument rental store about their experience and their perspectives on N Stuff Music.

Guerilla Interview

Mar 15, 7:00-7:30 pm, N Stuff Music Store

Interviewer: Animesh, Celine, Xinzhu

Interviewee: A father waiting for his son, age around 40s

Overview: We encountered our interviewee as he was waiting his teenage son taking his violin lessons. Our interviewee provided us with much information about his family's experience with N Stuff's music lesson as both his wife, his son, and himself have taken a variety of music lessons ranging from violins, flutes, to vocal lessons in N Stuff before, over, and after the pandemic. From our interviewee, we gain insights not only from a student, a parent, but also a local resident. We are able to take a look on N Stuff's consumer experience, its local influences, and what the consumers' are looking for in N stuff's services.

Interview with Music Education Startup CEO

Mar 16, 4:00-4:30 pm, CMU campus

Interviewer: Xinzhu

Interviewee: A current CMU master's student running a music education startup, male, in his 20s

Overview:

This music education startup has both similarities and differences with Little Lesson House. For the similarities, I understood the typical onboarding and communication process for students registering in the course, and also the possible billing and management challenges for the business. By comparing differences between the two companies I got a clearer view of N Stuff Music's advantages over other competitors, including the local public praise and in-person lesson experiences. In addition, learning about interviewee's opinions of building rapport with musical friends also enlightened us of possibilities of facilitate communities among N Stuff Music students.

Digital Ethnography

Mar 11-17, N Stuff music website, Youtube account, Google Map reviews

Overview:

For N Stuff Music website, we found out that N Stuff Music provides various services including instrument purchase, rental, and repair, music lessons, and next door cafe. We looked more into the music lessons they provided, and found that N Stuff Music provides a variety of one-on-one music lessons featuring different instruments such as electronic guitars, keyboard, violin, and so on. Over the pandemic, N Stuff also offered online and hybrid courses over Skype and Zoom. The registration method for the courses is through online registration. In the mainstream crowd review websites, N Stuff Music receives high ratings nearly close to full scores.

Insight 1

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. NStuff Music is in a school district which has a lot of schools with good music programs starting from elementary school.
2. Kids can learn various different kind of instruments (Violin, Trumpet etc.), and there are many competitions/ talent shows for young musicians.
3. Kids get hardly any break time/ time between classes in school. They hardly get time to get to know each other outside class.
4. Currently the service does not provide any avenue for collaboration among different students.

Insight

There are opportunities to create collaborative associations among N Stuff Music students, possibly bands, jam sessions, co-learning sessions etc.

Insight 2

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. N Stuff Music is well-known in the neighborhood.
2. N Stuff Music doesn't advertise their music lessons.
3. Current students find the Little Lesson House by themselves/ friends/ word-of-mouth.

Insight

N Stuff Music's music lessons have the advantage over other competitors for having good reputation in the local neighborhoods. They also have this advantage for garnering repeat customers.

Insight 3

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. The majority of music lessons are in-person one-to-one sessions.
2. Currently online lessons are offered as a remedy for missing lessons.
3. The owner and employees have strong preference for in-person lessons and think online lessons are not as effective.
4. Playing together in online lessons is difficult without special network connections.

Insight

Online mode of instruction is not likely to become a chance for growing music education business or replace in-person lessons.

Insight 4

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. Customers register for music lessons via the third-party LMS TeacherZone and pay bills by automatic deduction from credit cards.
2. Usually an instructor is assigned to an incoming student unless the student learn information about instructors before.
3. It's common situation that popular instructors have few time slots for incoming students.

Insight

There might be better ways to facilitate communication between instructors and students after classes begin, and also possibly before the classes begin (to facilitate the matching process.)

Insight 5

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. The father interviewee wants to hear his son playing but often doesn't get the chance.

Insight

Parents, who pay for children's music lessons, have the need to see the learning outcomes of their children (likely through music shows, events etc).

Insight 6

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. One big challenge for another music education startup is to find competent instructors at a moderate price.
2. N Stuff Music have rich network with local musicians.

Insight

N Stuff Music's network in local music community might make it easier to find suitable talented instructors, which saves a lot of financial and labor costs for people searching for good music lessons.

Insight 7

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. Currently instructors in Little Lesson House don't have a unified system to track students' progress or give feedback.
2. Feedback is crucial for students to progress effectively in deliberate practice[1], which is one important learning activity for learning instruments.

Insight

The billing and tracking work of music lessons could be further streamlined, possibly by a unified system.

Insight 8

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. The waiting room in Little Lesson House has a different visual decoration style from the store.
2. There is a TV screen and some magazines in the waiting room, but their contents are not relevant to music or N Stuff Music.

Insight

The waiting room in Little Lesson House could be modified to increase exposure of N Stuff Music's sale business or students' learning outcomes.

Insight 9

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. Usually an instructor is assigned to an incoming student unless the student learn information about instructors before.
2. In some other music education business, new students will first talk to a course advisor and then be assigned to an instructor who is suitable for the student's expertise levels, interests, and traits.

Insight

A more transparent communication of assigning instructors would be helpful for customers to choose a suitable instructor.

Insight 10

Research Finding/ Evidence

1. NStuff Music is in a great school district which have a lot of schools with good music programs starting from elementary school.
 2. Popular music is part of the school music textbooks and introducing them would be beneficial for school music education.
- [2]

Insight

There might be some opportunities to build partnerships with school music class or music programs so that N Stuff Music can increase exposure to potential students and customers.

References

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