

Popular Media Scan

Popular media scans act as a kind of cultural barometer registering what is happening or emerging on the cultural landscape.

BENEFITS	INPUT	OUTPUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shows cultural context• Reveals patterns• Provides direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project's topic• Sources In popular media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Areas for further research• Opportunity areas for Innovation

What it does

Popular media scans act as a kind of cultural barometer registering what is happening or emerging on the cultural landscape. The method scans popular media like broadcast news, magazines, and TV programming to find out anything that seems like a noteworthy cultural activity. Just as satellite images show changing weather patterns, a survey of popular media can be used to identify cultural currents that could indicate hot spots of noteworthy activity. Popular media scans provide a high-level understanding of the latest trends, what is on peoples' minds, and what cultural trackers find new and noteworthy. They help innovation teams articulate the cultural currents that can influence the formation of an initial intent for the project.

How it works

STEP 1: Identify broad topics related to the project.

Whether stated in a client's design brief or self-determined, conduct a mind-mapping session to layout broad topics related to the project. Use identified topics, and perhaps subtopics, as a guide to further explore.

STEP 2: Seek out information related to the topics.

Look for what is being written about on blogs and websites, and in magazines. Use screen captures, scans, photocopies, or pages to build a library of findings.

Scan television programming, advertisements, events, and movies for content that may relate directly or indirectly to the topic. Collect these references as notes or samples that can be placed into the library of findings.

STEP 3: Look for patterns.

Sift through the information accumulated in the collected documents to reveal patterns of activity. These patterns provide a general sense of the current and emerging cultural trends.

STEP 4: Look at adjacent topics as well.

Sometimes emerging trends in a different topic can influence what may happen in your area of primary interest. For example, the evolution of the mobile phone applications market have given rise to a number of health and wellness offerings that enable people to more easily monitor their food consumption, thereby influencing how people eat.

STEP 5: Summarize findings and discuss opportunities.

Add your point of view about what is happening in culture and what is possible. Discuss and articulate how the patterns of cultural currents can point to opportunity areas for innovation and influence the initial statement of intent. Use these discussions to guide your activities for deeper exploration.