WILLIAMS-SONOMA

experience design

process book

by

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Inspired by the vision of the perfect kitchen utility, we designed a digital platform for Williams-Sonoma’s Open Kitchen line, targeting novice and aspiring cooks to support their passion and develop their culinary skills.
We used experience design as a tool to bring value to the business, moving it from producing only products and commodities to creating a memorable experience for the customers. Experience design combines the best practices from business, design, and research. Its relevance comes from the combination of the various elements in a customer-centric way.

“Great products are only a part of the story…”
- Don Norman
In order to make the project useful, usable, and delightful, we considered the core business problem. We sought to reduce customer friction and add value to the business by looking into the core idea first, before considering the channel or the medium.
Luxury is the expression of a taste, of a creative identity, of the intrinsic passion of a creator; luxury makes the bald statement ‘this is what I am’

- Luxury Strategy

There are several practices that we found common within the luxury industry. First of all, luxury companies rarely compare themselves to another, preferring to represent and state a unique image. The luxury brand must work hard at maintaining this character, be it a specific style, or signature. This is so that the integrity of the brand remains strong and brand confusion remains at bay.

Channel handling is also a delicate task as the brand must refrain from selling overtly or up-selling their clients, both practices being common in regular companies. All in all, luxury companies must be especially careful in crafting and maintaining their image while ‘orchestrating’ the brand experience so that they become synonymous with desirable characteristics, traits, and goals that the audience may have.
There are few authentic connections and relationships despite being constantly digitally connected.

Consumers care about having a healthy lifestyle.

The general audience spends little time at home to eat with family and often has no time to cook.

Consumers often rely on foodie blogs, online videos and recipes to learn or find inspiration.

Showrooming is becoming a common practice, especially for luxury brands. Consumers may first research on the brand or products online and even buy the product online while using the physical store as a showroom.

Tradition becoming something that consumers look for and find value in, emulating a friendlier, more personal time and society.
Insights from agencies

EXPLORATION

We gathered several insights from AKQA’s project with Audi. One of the main ones being, give less of the platform and more of the brand or product. The details of the platform, such as layout, colors and interactions must reflect the brand as well. This would lead to the brand being communicated better and provide a more enjoyable experience for the audience.
We came to understand that trust and transparency is paramount between business and customers now as we studied Method’s project for Lush. Brand values should be communicated clearly in order to develop an authentic relationship between the company and the customer. Similarly, traditional ways of communicating brand and advertising are no longer effective. Instead, the best way is to let the customer feel like they are a part of the company and their culture.
Charles E. Williams founded Williams Sonoma in 1956 with a focus on customer-centric service and handpicking high quality culinary products, such as cookware, cookbooks, cutlery, informal dinnerware, glassware, table linens, specialty foods and cooking ingredients. Williams-Sonoma engages their audience and markets these products through retail stores, catalogs, and e-commerce.

Open Kitchen is a new line by Williams Sonoma. The line was introduced in January 2014 by Williams Sonoma for a casual, young, food-loving audience compared to Williams Sonoma’s traditional audience of serious connoisseurs. Open Kitchen provides the same high quality and design while the price range is much more affordable.
ENHANCING CUSTOMERS’ LIFESTYLE AT HOME, FOCUSING ON INSPIRATION RATHER THAN PRODUCTS

PEOPLE FIRST

GUIDES

LUXURY PRESENCE

B R A N D  M O D E L

SYMBOL

PRODUCTS

PERCEPTION

STAFF

PROMISE

EXPERIENCE

STAFF

by

PROMISE

by

LUXURY QUALITY

CRAFTSMANSHIP

HOSPITABLE

represents

builds

shapes

represents

can be

MEASURED

LUXURY PRESENCE

by

STAFF

by

STAFF

by

CULINARY PRODUCTS
E-COMMERCE
IN STORE COOKING CLASSES

deliver

by

STAFF

by

LUXURY PRESENCE

by
BUSINESS MODEL

Value Proposition

**Aspirational**
- Enhance customer’s lifestyle at home.

**Intangible**
- Help make home a reflection of who the customer are.

**Tangible**
- Food and cooking related products.

Channels

- Retail store
- Catalog
- Website
- Social media
- Word of mouth
- Advertisement

Key Resources

- Physical property
- Intellectual
- Knowledge
- Experience
- Relationships

Key Partners

- Various small factories
- Suppliers
- Retailers
- Local chefs
- Restaurant

Key Activities

- Production
- Design
- Education

Customer Segments

- Niche market
- Luxury market

Customer Relationships

- Personal treatment
- Automated services
- Co-creation
Williams Sonoma is currently heavily focused on the top half of this matrix, where they bring existing and new products to their existing market while few of their resources are directed at introducing new products to the new market, or traditional products to the new market. Our design introduces a new market, young foodovers, to a new affordable product line (Open Kitchen) at an early stage, so they will be introduced to the traditional, luxury products eventually. This will not only expand the audience of the brand but also create brand loyalty and keeps the company growing in long term.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>PRE-SERVICE</th>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>POST-SERVICE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>awareness</td>
<td>exploration</td>
<td>consideration</td>
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</table>

### Pre-Service

- What companies sell kitchenware and cookware?
- How can Williams-Sonoma compete with other companies with similar products and lower price tags?
- What are people saying about our brand?
- How do we bring a potential customer to Williams-Sonoma?

### Service

- How do I navigate?
- What events are going on?
- What is in all these categories?
- Is there any guides, support, or help?
- Where do I find the things I want or need?
- What are these products for?
- How do I use it and why would I use or need it?
- Is there somewhere I can go to get a feel of the product?
- What are the differences between these products?
- What are other users or buyers saying about this?
- Is this the best product for me to use?
- Should I physically go see the product?
- Should I buy it online?
- How much is the total?
- What types of payment are accepted?
- How long will it take to ship?
- What is the return, exchange, and warranty?
- Can I add insurance to the package?
- Is the checkout process easy?
- Are we giving understandable product and information to the customer?
- Are we instilling trust in this process?
- Are we providing holistic experience?
- Is the product easy to use?
- Is this the best product for me to use?
- How long will it take to ship?
- Can I add insurance to the package?
- Is the product quality good?

### Post-Service

- What are other people using?
- Where can I find out how to use product?
- Did the package arrive on time?
- Where can I find support or help with my purchase?
- Did I buy the right product?
- Is the product easy to use?
- Is the checkout process easy?
- Are we giving understandable product and information to the customer?
- Are we instilling trust in this process?
- Are we providing holistic experience?
- How can we provide support after our products are bought?
- How can we reengage with customer?
- How can we invite them to store?
**CURRENT INSTORE FRAMEWORK**

**PRE-SERVICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>awareness</th>
<th>exploration</th>
<th>consideration</th>
<th>purchase</th>
<th>post-purchase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- What companies sell kitchenware and cookware?
- Which brand should I choose?
- What do others say about Williams-Sonoma?
- What are other people using?
- Where can I go to learn more about Williams-Sonoma and their products?
- Do they have digital platform that I can go to find out about them?

**SERVICE**

- How do the storefront make me feel?
- What do they carry?
- Is there anyone to help me?
- What are these events they are having?
- What do you do and when is it?
- Are the staff knowledgeable and willing to help me?
- What is the product called?
- What are these products for?

- Is there more information available?
- What is the difference between all these brands?
- What is open kitchen?
- How do I use it? (What cooking method and technique?)
- Do I need this?
- How is the quality?
- Would I be comfortable and confident using these?

**POST-SERVICE**

- Is this really the right product for me?
- Where do I pay, is there anyone to help me?
- Is there a long wait and is there anything I can do while waiting?
- Is there warranty?
- How was the service?

- Was the website easy to use?
- Did the package arrive on time?
- Where can I find out how to use product?
- Did I buy the right product?
- Is the product easy to use?

**How can Williams-Sonoma compete with other companies with similar products and lower prices?**

**What are people saying about our brand?**

**How do we bring potential customers to Williams-Sonoma?**

**Are the staff properly trained and well educated?**

**Can customers navigate easily?**

**Do we have sufficient staff to meet customers’ need?**

**Is the checkout process friendly?**

**Are we providing relevant information without overwhelming the original brand aesthetics?**

**How can we inspire trust and confidence?**

**How can we provide support after a purchase?**

**How can we reengage with customer?**

**How can we invite customers to store?**
Williams-Sonoma's sales levels have been declining since 2010. There are multiple causes for declining sales including dilution of brand as they expand, poor communication of brand values and increasing levels of competition. Another issue is Williams-Sonoma's exclusive focus on traditional markets while new, younger audiences with buying power emerge. Williams Sonoma would eventually become obsolete if these problems are not remedied. The younger generation know about the brand from their family, but don't see enough value to buy products from the brand.
One of the issues stated was Williams Sonoma’s expansion as they grew and introduced more products. In doing so, not only did their brand get diluted, they also lost sight of being customer-centric and meeting customers' needs. In this case, friction grew for customers as they found it harder and harder to approach the brand, this is especially true of inexperienced and novice cooks.
There are several friction points that customers face. One major friction is that the audience may have limited knowledge themselves to explore the culinary world. Similarly, the lack of a cohesive environment makes it difficult for them to learn, develop and grow their passion.

“If you as a company, stay within that limited emotional range, then you are cutting yourself off from all the possibilities in the larger world where people actually live.”

- Bruce Mau
Williams Sonoma developed the Open Kitchen line in response to these issues. Open Kitchen has a clear identity and reaches back to Williams Sonoma’s tradition of hand picking the best products. The new line also introduces a new audience to the brand, building loyalty early on. However, Open Kitchen has received limited attention from its target audience so far.

Hence we find an opportunity to design an experience for Williams Sonoma’s Open Kitchen to introduce them to their audience.
**BRAND PROMISE**
People first, enhancing customer's lives at home focusing on inspiration rather than product.

**EXPERIENCE DESIGN**
- human-centered
- observation
- insight
- empathy

**SELECTED CLIENT**
**WILLIAMS-SONOMA**
- Brand DNA + Business Problem + Trends

**CONVERT NEED TO DEMAND**
- Observation
- Insight
- Empathy

**DIGITAL INTERFACE**
- Experience Design

**BRAINSTORM**
- LUXURY
- QUALITY
- CRAFTSMANSHIP
- HOSPITABLE

**IS IT WORKING FOR THE BRAND?**
- Feasible + Viable + Desirable

**DEVELOP**

**REFINE**
- repeat until refined

**WITHIN DOMAIN?**
- yes

**PRODUCTION TO VALUE**
- Engaged = Sustain
- Tangible + Intangible + Aspirational

**PROJECT → EXPERIENCE DESIGN → RESEARCH → TRENDS → CLIENT SELECTION**
Constrains

IDEATION

AVOID CLICHE

Stay away from recipe dependent platforms

LUXURY & BRAND

Stay within the luxury realm of Williams-Sonoma
Avoid using social media based interactions directly
Do not sell directly
Emphasize brand’s traditions

DOMAIN BASED

Do not create an advertisement or campaign
AUDIENCES

We are targeting the younger generation (Generation Y) and other novice or aspiring cooks and food lovers. We are targeting them because Open Kitchen offers a culture appealing to this group that other similar price-ranged competitors don’t offer.

Similarly, they are an emerging market with increasing buying power and would constitute a new customer pool for Williams Sonoma.

NEEDS

Young and novice cooks may or may not have much experience in cooking. Hence their needs are unique and different from Williams Sonoma’s traditional target. They need an experience that has low cognitive overhead, that allows easy control which inspires courage and confidence. Often times they may also need an audience or a mentor for companionship and guidance.

On the other hand, aspiring cooks and food lovers would be in search of inspiration and further knowledge to refine their culinary understanding.
Proposals

IDEATION

This concept was to build a story with food, experience and lifestyle as the priority while the products take supporting role in creating these moments. However, we looked back at consumer trends and recognized that the larger part of the audience views food and cooking as something enjoyable already. Hence, our proposal did not provide sufficient value to the consumer and Williams-Sonoma.

Proposal 1 ----------- rejected

COOKING AS AN ENJOYABLE PROCESS RATHER THAN A CHORE.

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Proposal 2 .......................... rejected

ENLIGHTENING THE COOKING PROCESS BY REINTRODUCING THE TRADITION OF PREPARING FOOD

We focused on Williams-Sonoma’s Open Kitchen, specifically their idea of ‘Gather, Cook, Eat, Repeat’ for this proposal. In iterating, we found our idea of cooking together with friends or family especially fit this concept. We explored this proposal further and found that it may be interesting but too much of the interactions depend on other participants. This would present a challenge in creating value for the consumer and Williams-Sonoma.
Realizing the limitations of the previous proposal, we shifted our focus to address frictions that our target would experience. We identified intimidation as a major factor in preventing our audience from enjoying the culinary experience and so, set out to develop a platform that would give them guidance and develop their confidence in the kitchen. As we proceeded though, we branched out in our iterations and found greater opportunities.

Proposal 3 ........................ rejected

REINTRODUCING THE TRADITION OF COOKING BY LOWERING THE INTIMIDATION OF COOKING

Realizing the limitations of the previous proposal, we shifted our focus to address frictions that our target would experience. We identified intimidation as a major factor in preventing our audience from enjoying the culinary experience and so, set out to develop a platform that would give them guidance and develop their confidence in the kitchen. As we proceeded though, we branched out in our iterations and found greater opportunities.
Following the idea of the proposal to lower the intimidation of cooking, we found that an even larger audience would gain value through inspirations rather than just strictly technical aspects. With this insight, we incorporated cultures and origins of different cooking methods, techniques and tools with proper terminology, encouraging the audience to explore the culinary world and expand their passion.
KITCHEN UTENSIL

Our design is a cooking utensil for the aspiring cook. It provides crucial support in the aspiring cook’s journey while providing and supporting an enjoyable cooking experience, similar to the chef’s knife. It is a must have in the cooking process.

HAND PICKING ELEMENTS

The information and knowledge within the application are ‘hand-picked’ to suit the audience’s needs, reflecting Williams-Sonoma’s tradition of hand-picking quality items for their customers.
We identified three stages of interaction, pre-cooking, cooking and post-cooking, throughout the entire process of cooking by observing actions and activities that the user may engage in. During the cooking stage, the user is faced with many time sensitive tasks and would have greater difficulty going through a large number of information. Recognizing this, our goal was to develop a simple, intuitive hierarchy and layout. Visually, the application needs to be clean, allowing users to quickly grasp essential techniques. We provided high interaction dependent actions during the post and pre-cooking process. We optimized the interaction so the application becomes an essential in the cooking process from inspiration to cooking and plating.

Observing people's behavior while cooking and using a mobile platform, we noticed the majority of touch interaction occur with wet or dirty hands. Users would often have difficulty with single touch interactions as it requires the user to touch a specific area of the screen in order to activate the interaction. If the user's hands were not dry and clean, the tablet would be unresponsive. On the other hand, a sliding interaction can occur in various points on the screen, making it easier to do with dirty hands.
USER INTERACTIONS

Swipe left and right to view different cooking methods.

Swipe left and right of the top navigation bar to quickly search for a cooking method.

Swipe up to enter the equipment page of the cooking method.

Drag the toggle to select cuisine.

Drag or tilt the device to view the equipment from different angles.

Tap a zoom icon to view a close up shot at corresponding text.
Pinch to exit or tap the close icon

Tap to initiate a video tutorial

Pinch to exit or tap the close icon

Tap the top navigation to skip segments

Drag to play video at comfortable speed, release to pause at any time

Drag the dials to reveal related information

Place tablet flat to switch to top down view of tutorial
UX/UI
UX/UI
The condition of “flow” is characterized by the users being immersed and completely engaged in what they are doing. People who are in a state of flow “experience intense concentration and enjoyment, coupled with peak performance,” says Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, psychologist. In our design we aimed to challenge the users at some level but leave a delicate balance so the audience feels confident to handle each cooking method with the technique learn, putting the audience in a state of “flow” where using the application becomes a memorable experience and therefore, the brand becomes memorable.
## Digital Platform

### Pre-Cooking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>before use</th>
<th>first use</th>
<th>continued use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where can I learn about techniques and their origin?</td>
<td>Can I learn more about these cooking methods?</td>
<td>What cooking method do I want to learn about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should I download this app?</td>
<td>How do I navigate?</td>
<td>What are the steps?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will it have content that I’m interested in?</td>
<td>How many cooking methods are there?</td>
<td>Exactly how do I do this technique?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is this app for?</td>
<td>What is this being shown?</td>
<td>Am I doing it right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Williams-Sonoma?</td>
<td>Can I see the tool?</td>
<td>Do I understand the directions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Open Kitchen?</td>
<td>Where can I buy them?</td>
<td>Which culture method do I want to try out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where can I get it?</td>
<td>What’s in the tools section?</td>
<td>How do I do it? What techniques do I use?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What’s in the techniques section?</td>
<td>Is it easy? Can I do it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does it have content that appeals to me?</td>
<td>What should I cook?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where am I?</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

- Encounter the app through Williams-Sonoma website, print catalog and social media
- Introduced or recommended through word of mouth from other aspiring cooks and foodies

### Cooking

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the differences in the method between the cultures?</td>
<td>What is this “Origins” option about?</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should I cook?</td>
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</table>

- Navigational menus and process bars
- Videos demonstrating proper techniques
- Correct terminology
- Feel you have control over the cooking process and you can master each technique

### Post-Cooking

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the differences in the method between the cultures?</td>
<td>What other cultures are there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the differences in the method between the cultures?</td>
<td>What other cultures are there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is this “Origins” option about?</td>
<td>Am I doing it right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is this “Origins” option about?</td>
<td>Do I understand the directions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I doing it right?</td>
<td>What other methods are there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I understand the directions?</td>
<td>What other methods are there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other methods are there?</td>
<td>Where can I learn about the method, techniques, origins and tools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other methods are there?</td>
<td>Where can I go to buy the tools?</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

- Explore the favored cooking culture

### Touch Points

- Introduced or recommended through word of mouth from other aspiring cooks and foodies
- Relevant information on tools, techniques and origins.
Why this works for the Brand?

Our project will introduce a new customer segment of casual food lovers to Williams Sonoma early on as they find their passion for cooking. Through continued usage the audience would be exposed to Williams Sonoma's culture and products, immersing them in the brand. By reaching to the audience early on and continued immersion in the brand, the user will feel connected to Williams Sonoma.
CONCLUSION

FEASIBLE

Our project combines and uses technology currently available. Williams Sonoma will have the relevant information/knowledge within the company as a well established kitchenware company.

VIABLE

Reduce material and labor costs Develops and supports sustainability measures Increases sales levels, brings in a new customer pool and encourages brand loyalty.

DESIRABLE

Makes the cooking process enjoyable for aspiring cooks, the UI interactions are optimized for convenient usage in and around the kitchen when cooking.
Our project provides the opportunity for the aspiring cook to learn and experience the right tools, techniques, and terminology. It inspires the user and supports their exploration of the culinary realm. Through continued use, our project will become a learning and cooking companion for the aspiring cook, developing an emotional connection with them. Our application encourages users to develop their own culinary tastes, satisfying their reflective and aspirational needs as they build the image of being a food connoisseur and belonging to the foodie community.


Client Image. [Photograph], by Ashley MaoMing, 13, Retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/maomingmom365/8403396149

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