



FINALIST



Patient Journey Mapping and Research for WS Audiology and HearUSA

The Challenge

WS Audiology, a global hearing health company specializing in providing hearing aid products and services, had been observing that patients often delay getting hearing aids despite such delays impacting the patient’s quality of life, their work, family, and even their mental health. Even a slight reduction in these delays would have an enormous impact on the physical and mental well-being of millions.

So in 2021, Yogesh Chavda, the company’s Head of US Market Insights, set on a mission to impact these patient delays by deeply understanding patient experiences in their different journey stages, from the first signs of hearing loss to getting hearing help. He recruited Gold Research, a national customer journey firm, to assist in this important effort for achieving 2 important deliverables:

1. Uncover the different journey stages that patients were taking to get help, and
2. Identify the pain-points that they were encountering in each stage that caused delays.

The Solution

Yogesh and the Gold team, led by its Chief Journey Mapper Greg Tucker, first dived deep into a journey insights extraction from HearUSA’s existing research and operational Voice of the Customer (VOC) metrics. This enabled Yogesh to build upon HearUSA’s existing knowledge base. Then, a two-phase robust qualitative approach was designed to:

- Conduct in-depth interviews with internal stake holders to assess their gaps in customer understanding

- Intercept and engage with patients throughout their different journey stages using in-depth interviews and focus groups.
 - Yogesh also allowed the inclusion of family members of patients due their role in the patient journeys. This was an innovative step that later yielded rich perspectives into patient decision making that were previously unknown!

The Results

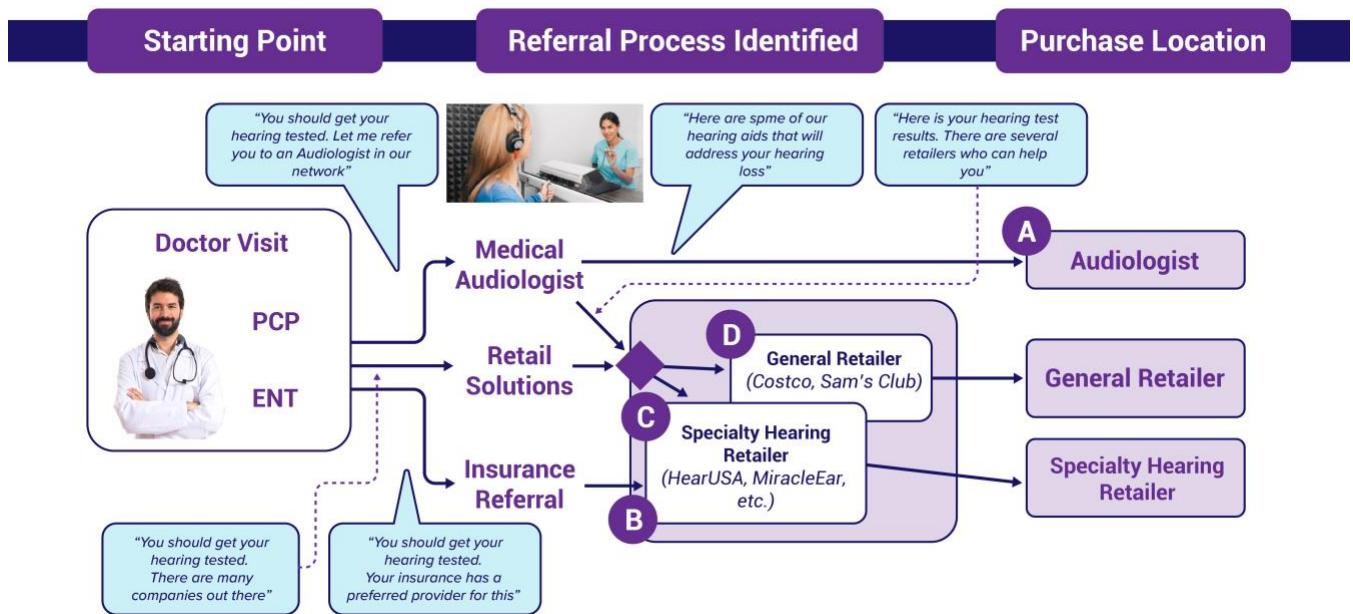
Under Yogesh's leadership, WS Audiology and consequently millions of patients in the US, received the following key benefits:

- Detailed journey maps, complemented with video interviews of patients, brought to life the patient journey from their initial fears, attitudes, behaviors, and moments-of-truth.
- The organization received a clear road map of the patient journey that highlighted pain points and remedial actions that could be taken at each step (see image below).
- WS Audiology successfully filled in the gaps in their patient understanding to improve their products and services. By understanding the “why” behind patient decisions, and how to overcome stigma, the key barrier for why consumers typically postpone their hearing aids purchase, WS Audiology was able to optimize their experiences significantly (see image below).
- Overall, this project enabled WS Audiology to guide and educate millions of patients to get help early on while reducing delays substantially.

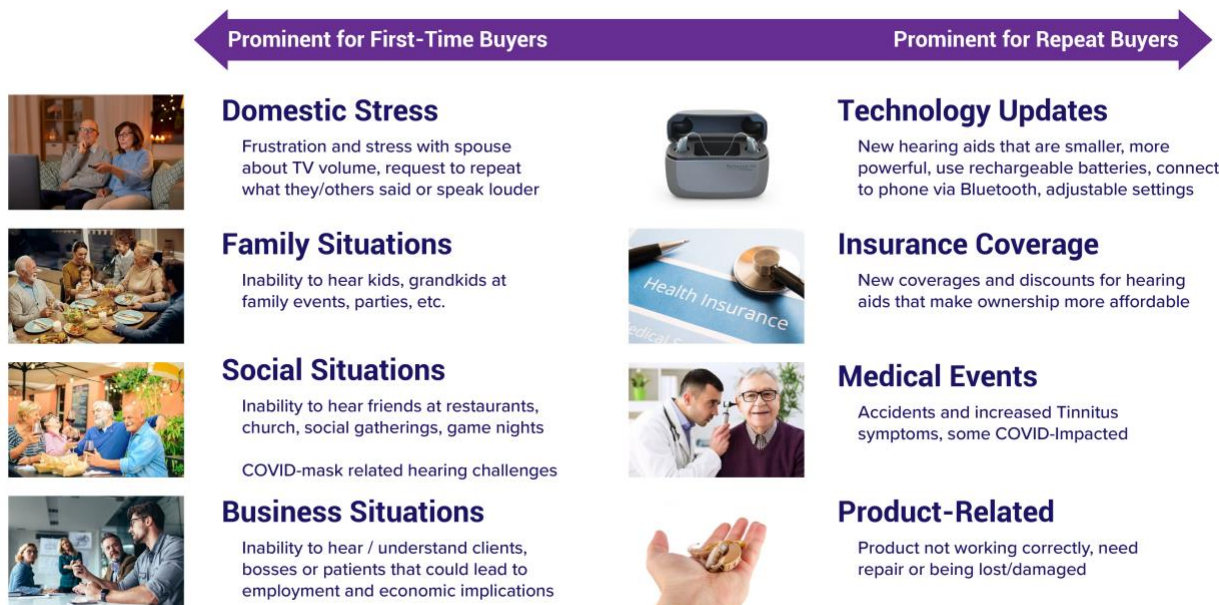
Client Testimonial:

As background, our consumer target audience is typically 55+ who have hearing loss. We've learnt over time, that consumers take on average 7 years from first identifying that they have some level of hearing loss to acting on it by visiting a hearing care professional (HCP). When we initiated this project, we were interested primarily in figuring out what steps the consumer would take once they were ready to deal with their hearing loss all the way to booking their first appointment in a hearing aid clinic. In the case of WS Audiology, our brick-and-mortar business (HearUSA) was the initiator of this research.

As we went through the findings, we realized that the findings were relevant, from a tactical marketing communication perspective, at different touchpoints and for first time and repeat buyers for hearing aids, and from a strategic perspective, i.e. how we could leverage our entire ecosystem of business units to help drive revenue. WSA has a managed care (3rd party insurance business called TruHearing), our product brands (Signia, Widex) that typically sell into the independent channel, and Rexton that sells into Costco. This strategic overview has been instrumental in how we are organizing our lead generation and how we help consumers flow from TruHearing to HearUSA to Signia/Widex brands. This pathway wouldn't have been as clear to us had we not done this research. See chart below:



But wait, there's more! We also learnt, a lot, about how to overcome stigma, the key barrier for why consumers typically postpone their hearing aids purchase. This research identified how family and friends can play a role (either passively supportive or actively pushing) the person to move into purchasing their hearing aids. Net, this research is not only foundational to what we do in marketing; it's also helped us organize dramatically in how we operate as a business.





- Yogesh Chavda, Head of US Market Insights, WS Audiology