

Varun Khanduja

(309) 684-3154 | varunkhanduja@gmail.com | Portfolio: varunkhanduja.netlify.app | www.linkedin.com/in/varunkhanduja

User Research & Service Design Leader | Developing & maturing research & service design practices from scratch, shaping product strategy & delivering business impact

User Research & Service Design Leader with **15+ years** progressing from hands-on research and design into team, portfolio, and practice leadership. Combines mixed-method research, behavioral analytics, service design, and **responsibly applied AI** to turn customer evidence into product direction and measurable business outcomes while keeping researchers accountable for interpretation and decisions. Led teams supporting **80+ local news stations** and **10 digital products**, with work contributing to **\$125K in incremental revenue** and approximately **\$195K in documented savings** across organizations.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

SINCLAIR BROADCAST GROUP

July 2023 - July 2026

Lead UX Researcher & Service Designer

- Directed a three-person research team serving web, mobile, and TV products across 80+ local news stations; prioritized the portfolio by business impact, methodological fit, and delivery timing.
- Used current- and future-state service blueprints to align marketing, technology, and executive leaders around two cross-channel pain points. Account-signup and mobile-web smart-banner changes generated \$125K in incremental ad revenue and 20K app downloads within six months, shifting priorities from short-term conversion fixes toward a long-term trust-building strategy. [Case study link](#)
- Built Sinclair's service design practice and secured executive support for a four-phase, multi-year maturity roadmap tied to waste reduction, engagement, cross-channel personalization, and team culture.
- Reframed a geography-first audience model into four behavioral archetypes and five validated personas through mixed-method research combining diary studies and one-on-one interviews, giving product and content teams a reusable customer lens for roadmap planning.
- Applied Google Analytics 4 product analytics and usability testing across multiple product features: a five-week beta reached 5.9% adoption with 49% higher engagement time per session; removing a low-value feature saved approximately \$35K annually; and a proposed redesign improved UMUX from 58 to 84. [Case study link](#)
- Led a weighted research-platform evaluation (RFP) and negotiated terms with the selected vendor, saving \$10K in the first year of the contract; research delivery increased 20% year over year after adoption. [Case study link](#)
- Built an OpenAI/Codex-powered Segmentation Hub to classify research against four behavioral archetypes and retrieve persona evidence, with researchers retaining responsibility for interpretation and product decisions. [Case study link](#)

CAPITAL ONE

May 2022 - April 2023

Senior User Research Manager

- Managed three UX researchers supporting 10 Auto Navigator digital products serving millions of car buyers and dealership partners.
- Simplified a nine-factor research prioritization model to four decision criteria, contributing to a 25% year-over-year increase in strategic research requests and using demand-and-capacity evidence to secure approval for an additional researcher. [Case study link](#)
- Independently led a mixed-method study combining a Kano survey of 65 dealership finance professionals with concept testing involving 10 participants, narrowing eight feature ideas to two MVP capabilities, reducing initial engineering staffing needs by nearly 50%, and securing roadmap placement during annual planning. [Case study link](#)
- Scaled research capability by training 50+ product and design partners and leading weekly research office hours.
- Saved \$150K annually by auditing the research vendor contract (UserTesting) and enabling dynamic reallocation of underused seats.

FEDEX

Nov. 2017 - May 2022

Digital Marketing Advisor, UX Research Lead

- Led three analysts supporting Adobe Analytics implementation across 40+ digital products on FedEx.com and its mobile app. Delivered quarterly shipping and tracking performance reports to SVP and executive audiences, and managed enterprise UX research and analytics tool contracts representing up to \$500K in annual spend.
- Led usability research on a sales lead-generation form, contributing to a 28% year-over-year improvement in leads from prospective shipping and logistics customers.
- Identified five FedEx.com shipping and tracking pain points by triangulating contextual inquiry, eye tracking, and web analytics, including a key drop-off between rate quotes and label creation.
- Supported global ethnographic research across China, the UK, the US, and Mexico; journey maps helped go-to-market teams align campaigns with recipient and small-business shipper journeys.
- Promoted to senior advisor within two years for advanced telemetry and research work; trained 100+ global colleagues in Adobe Analytics and UX research methods.

AUTOZONE

Aug. 2015 - Sep. 2017

Senior UX Research Specialist

- Built AutoZone's research capability from Level 0 (emergent) to Level 2 (integrated) on Nielsen Norman's maturity scale in two years by introducing new methods, tools, and scalable operating processes.
- Reduced annual vendor fees by \$10K by building CRM-based in-house participant recruitment, improving participant quality and executive confidence in qualitative research.
- Uncovered online-to-store inventory discrepancies through contextual inquiry and ghost-shopping research. The findings shaped an omnichannel inventory-visibility strategy associated with a 1.5x lift in same-store sales within six months.
- Shaped mobile-first strategy through usability tests, field interviews, rapid-prototype A/B tests, and competitive research.

STATE FARM INSURANCE

Apr. 2013 - Aug. 2015

User Experience Consultant

- Produced 10+ low-fidelity HTML prototypes and partnered with researchers on usability testing for State Farm's career-site redesign, supporting recruitment for specialized roles.

UX CONSULTING (BNY MELLON, LEXMARK, ORACLE)

Jun. 2010 - Mar. 2013

User Experience Consultant

- Developed Android UI patterns through secondary and contextual research before official Android guidelines existed in 2010; the work received recognition from Oracle leadership.
- Partnered with human-factors researchers to deliver end-to-end designs for printer and software products.

EDUCATION

MS, Human-Computer Interaction Design, INDIANA UNIVERSITY, BLOOMINGTON CAMPUS

BE, Biotechnology, VISVESVARAYA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICATIONS & TRAINING

Quality Driven Management Expert (QDM), American Society for Quality | Certified SAFe Agile Practitioner - Product Owner | Leadership & Communication, Dale Carnegie (12-week)

Databricks AI Agent & Data Extraction | Web & Mobile Analytics (Adobe Analytics, Google Analytics 4)

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Research Strategy & Practice Building | Team & Portfolio Leadership | Product & Roadmap Influence | Service Transformation | Executive Decision Support | Research Operations & Enablement

SKILLS & TOOLS

Leadership: Research strategy | Team leadership & coaching | Portfolio prioritization | Research operations | Budget & vendor management

Business & Product: Product strategy | Roadmap influence | Executive storytelling | Cross-functional alignment | B2B & B2C

Research & Service Design: Mixed methods | Usability testing | Contextual inquiry | Ethnography | Surveys | Service blueprints | Journey & systems mapping

Research Platforms: Dscout | UserTesting | Qualtrics | Optimal Workshop | Pendo | Notion | SurveyMonkey | TheyDo

Analytics & Responsible AI: Google Analytics 4 | Adobe Analytics | Databricks | SQL | Tableau | Alteryx | K-means | ANOVA | Human-in-the-loop synthesis | Source grounding | Privacy-aware data handling | Bias/hallucination checks | OpenAI | Claude | Codex-built research workflows & prototypes