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For marketing research and insights professionals

## Possibilities and risks

A guide to  
generative AI  
for insights

### PLUS

Why a recession is no time to stop brand-building

Tips from 40 years of B2B research

A holistic view of data quality

#### ADVERTISING SECTIONS

21 Top Taste Test and Sensory Research Companies

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Quirk's Marketing Research Review

JULY/AUGUST 2023

VOLUME XXXVII NUMBER 4

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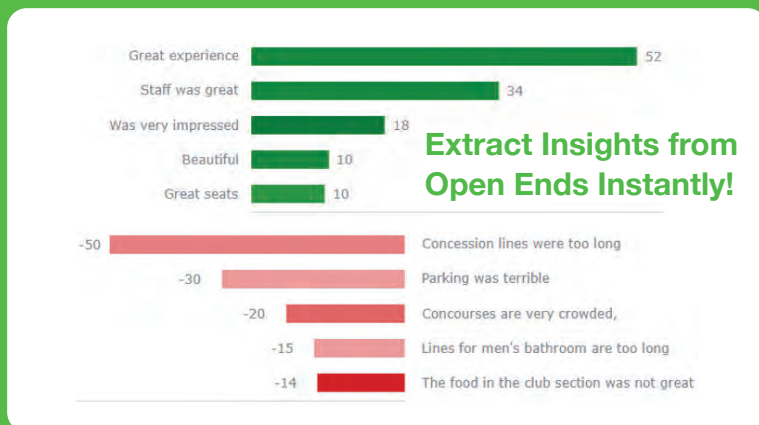
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## Get ready for the 2024 Quirk's Events!



// Noted Posts

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- **Dallas:** February 28-29
- **Chicago:** March 26-27
- **London:** May 8-9
- **New York City:** July 17-18



## // E-newsworthy

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**7 tips for conducting an executive interview**

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**Unpacking marketing insights: Key learnings from the Quirk's Event - London**

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**Seeing the forest for the trees: Guiding AI's role in the research process and business strategy**

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**Managing a multigenerational workforce: How to unify and support different generations at work**

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# In Case You Missed It

news and notes on marketing and research

## ••• consumer psychology

### Too anxious to clean house?

Add housecleaning to the list of things for Americans to get stressed about. A poll of 2,000 U.S. adults commissioned by cleaning-product company Casabella and conducted by OnePoll found that 90% of those surveyed say they get anxious cleaning their home.

The top five most agita-inducing cleaning tasks involve floors (54%), carpets and rugs (52%), refrigerators (52%), windows (50%) and dishwashers (48%). It's so bad that 49% admit to "always" or "often" pretending to not see a mess so someone else can clean it instead.

When they do finally get around to it, roughly three-quarters of respondents (72%) admit they're not as thorough as they should be when it's time to clean, and areas of their home will often go neglected because they're either too hard to reach (44%), are difficult to clean (39%) or they don't have the time to clean (38%).



The average person's home only lasts 12 days after being cleaned before it starts to get dirty again, making a plea for daily cleaning. A large majority (84%) felt confident in their abilities to tell whether something in their home is truly clean or not – claiming their home only feels clean once it lacks dirt particles (60%), smells sanitized (58%) and lacks stains (52%).



## ••• shopper insights

### 'Can I get a price check in the ointment aisle?'

It's an age-old law of marketing that friendly customer service is a sure way to boost your business. But shoppers who are buying embarrassing products don't necessarily want a smiling face or pleasant small talk.

A University of British Columbia Sauder School of Business study shows that when people are making a potentially awkward purchase, they choose self-checkout – or failing that, hope for a no-nonsense, robotic human cashier.

For the study in the *Journal of Marketing Research* ("How consumers respond to embarrassing service encounters: A dehumanization perspective"), the authors studied data of actual purchase behavior in grocery stores and observed whether customers prefer self-checkout or a human cashier when purchasing products such as condoms or menstrual pads.

The findings were similar across genders and challenge the long-held belief that building rapport with customers should be the top priority for service employees. So what should pharmacy workers and other retail staff do when a customer sets that tube of hemorrhoid cream on the counter? Skip the small talk and get them out the door. "They should be mindful of the purchases people are making and if the person is avoiding eye contact and the product they are buying is one that might be embarrassing for them, don't try to create a connection," says study co-author JoAndrea Hoegg.

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# What can researchers glean from Pew's rethinking of generational definitions?

I've always been fascinated by the enduring strength of the labels and definitions we have placed on groups of people based on when they were born. From Baby Boomer to Gen Z, we've been happy to use and therefore codify the terms and the generally accepted ranges of birth dates that demarcate one cohort from another.

I mean, I totally get it. As human beings and as marketers or researchers, we appreciate the ease and efficiency of being able to share a shorthand that helps us communicate in broad strokes about huge numbers of people.

But while each group shares defining traits, viewpoints and habits, I've never felt totally comfortable tarring every member with the same brush and have hoped marketers and researchers aren't too rigid in their applications of generational designations.

That point is one that qualitative researcher and frequent Quirk's author and Quirk's Event speaker Susan Fader has made when arguing for the value of what she calls cognitive demographics, which, as she has written "is about recognizing how people self-define versus putting them into demographic categories predefined by marketers or researchers." ([bit.ly/43FCXPT](https://bit.ly/43FCXPT))

In other words, we can apply all the catchy names and labels we want but we can't forget that we are talking about people here, in all their inconsistent and idiosyncratic glory.

Thus I read with interest an early-May article from Pew Research ("How Pew Research Center will report on generations moving forward" <https://pewrsr.ch/3BLLK6b>) on changes the august organization is making in how it thinks about and uses generational labels and definitions.


While Pew's motivations are certainly unique to its situation, its reasoning is also germane to marketers and researchers. Just as Pew aims to use its data to tell the most accurate stories about the demographic movements and trends it sees, so too are those in the business realm employing age-based codifications to give shape, meaning and relevance to their advertising and marketing. But no matter who is using them, inaccurate base assumptions and characterizations are bad for everyone involved.

In typical fashion, Pew's yearslong process was thorough and comprehensive. It spoke to a range of experts and also to critics of its generational analyses; it tested to see if it could compare findings from earlier telephone surveys to current online research-based data; and it experimented with higher-level statistical analyses to allow it to isolate the effect of generation.

I urge you to read the full article but along with general advice to not be too rigid with or beholden to age-based groupings, Pew's Kim Parker suggests thinking of temporal labels as lenses rather than fences. "Existing generational definitions also may be too broad and arbitrary to capture differences that exist among narrower cohorts," she writes. "A typical generation spans 15 to 18 years. As many critics of generational research point out, there is great diversity of thought, experience and behavior within generations. The key is to pick a lens that's most

appropriate for the research question that's being studied. If we're looking at political views and how they've shifted over time, for example, we might group people together according to the first presidential election in which they were eligible to vote."

That lens idea is particularly apropos to marketers and researchers. For your product or service, what age-related lens or lenses feel most useful through which to view your consumer? It doesn't have to be the broad span of the Baby Boomers. Perhaps better, as the Pew article notes, is to group people by the decade in which they were born, as this would create narrower cohorts of members who share more in common, or by their age during key historical events like the Great Recession or COVID-19 or technological innovations like the introduction of the iPhone.

Granted, the parameters of your lenses could end up being just as arbitrary as those defining Gen Z or Millennials but the act of finding them could lead to the kind of creative thinking that uncovers fruitful new areas of investigation. 



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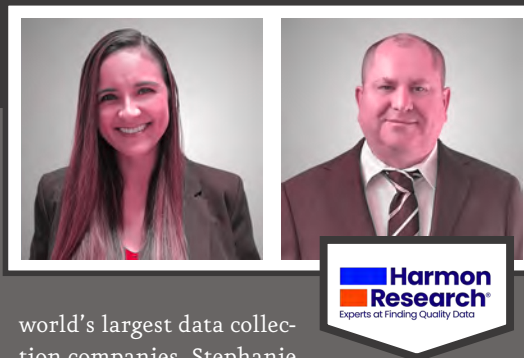


## Experts in data collection

### JOEY HARMON AND STEPHANIE VINCENT

HARMON RESEARCH

Joey's industry journey spans three decades, starting as a telephone interviewer and ascending through various roles at a full-service research agency. In 2000, he founded one of the



world's largest data collection companies. Stephanie began in 2003, rapidly advancing in positions of increasing responsibility, earning a master's degree in marketing along the way. After holding key roles at multinational companies, she reunited with Joey at Harmon Research as head of marketing. With Harmon's rapid growth and Stephanie's extensive experience, her responsibilities expanded to include panel management and operations. Both prioritize quality at Harmon Research, recognizing the impact of fraudulent responses and the ChatGPT revolution. They implemented DataDefense, a robust

quality-assurance program that reviews data throughout the survey process. Safeguards like cut-and-paste blocking, IP geo-checks and open-end review by live personnel ensure the highest-quality data for clients.

Supported by a talented development team, Harmon Research continuously evolves to combat fraudulent responders and enhance quality checks. Joey and Stephanie's leadership and commitment to excellence have positioned Harmon Research as a trusted industry partner. Their innovative approach and unwavering dedication deliver exceptional insights and drive client success in the ever-changing research landscape.

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## Expert in highest-quality panel builds

### ALEXANDRINE DE MONTERA

CPO, FULL CIRCLE RESEARCH

In September 2022, Alexandrine joined online sample provider Full Circle Research as its first chief product officer, charged with transforming the company's panel trajectory. Alex's 25+ years of experience, which include a focus on strategic growth and data



integrity, have already proven themselves invaluable, enhancing Full Circle's award-winning product performance, panel builds, hygiene and strategic relationships. This builds off her work at Ipsos, where she held three executive positions throughout her decade-long tenure; as senior VP,

global head of panels, she led a team of 50+ multinational acquisition and engagement professionals tasked with improving panelist recruitment and retention. At Full Circle, Alex serves as the company's leading quality brand ambassador as well as the linchpin to Full Circle's launch as the only U.S.-based sample provider with international panels certified to ISO 20252. Co-CEO Adam Weinstein says, "There's no question we'll achieve our projected panel growth now that Alex is at the helm. We're lucky to have her on board!"

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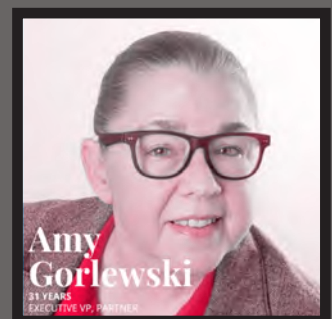
Our foundation is built on the collaboration of our diverse team, united by a common goal: To meet our clients' research objectives while upholding industry standards and best practices. The Fieldwork team truly embodies the essence of our organization and we take immense pride in their dedication and the impact they make.

### The concierge for the market research industry

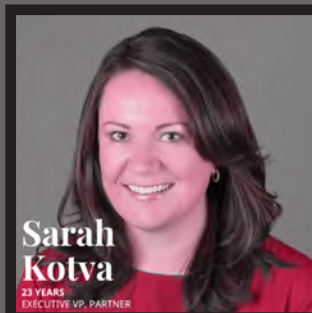
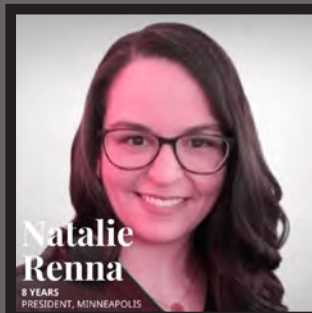
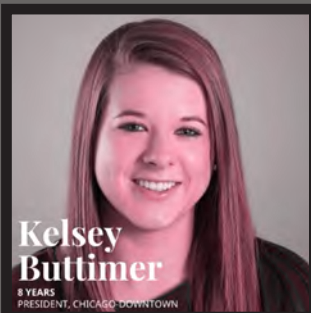
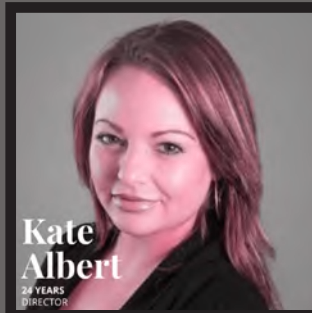
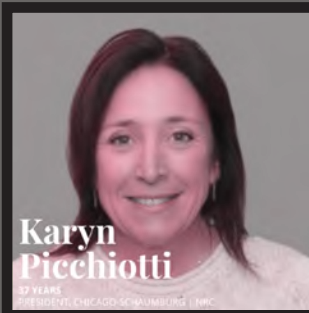
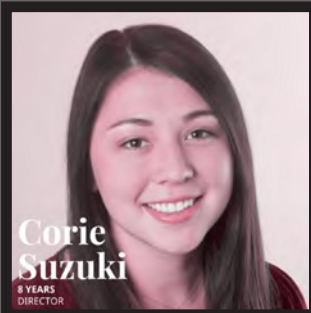
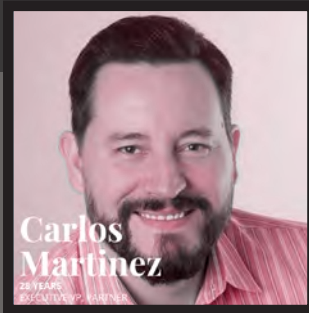
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heads up a consumer team and has worked with Susan for 9+ years. Judy has worked with Susan for 19 years and she handles in-facility liaison work as a company VP. Modesty is one of our newest project managers; she hosts a team of consumer recruiters. Bianca is 22 and has been with Murray Hill National since she was 16 and worked as a part-time recruiter in high school.

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## Spearheading a market research revolution with an intersectional lens

### BRIAN GEE

HEAD OF STRATEGY, SIMON/MYERS

Creating disruption in the market research field is no small feat, yet Brian Gee, head of strategy, is doing just that with the powerful insights unit of



Chicago-based agency, Simon/Myers. He skillfully blends a wealth of multifaceted experiences to shape his agency's unique, result-oriented approach for Fortune 1000 clientele.

Through nearly a decade of experience in product and brand management, Brian learned firsthand what marketers, product teams and C-suites needed from their research partners. He also experienced the challenges of corporate silos, lack of stakeholder buy-in and data paralysis.

In 2017, Brian decided to reshape the narrative. Joining Simon/Myers, he spearheaded an innovative market research division with a focus on creating differentiation. The linchpins of his successful strategy were early-stage cross-departmental collaboration, multi-source independent verification and direct, compelling results.

As a leading LGBTQ+ researcher, active artist and board president for an arts nonprofit, Brian helps his team perform research through an intersectional and empathetic lens, linking disparate points in unexpected, vibrant ways. This unique approach aids in delivering actionable, client-aligned findings and ultimately telling stories that drive impactful decisions.

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## // Survey Monitor



••• technology research

## Generative AI takes over

Marketers cite improved production rates, more creative output

Seventy-three percent of marketers say that their companies make use of generative AI tools. Botco.ai, a generative AI chat cloud company, found that they use the tools to help create text, images, videos or other marketing content.

The generative AI market got a boost in November 2022 with the launch of ChatGPT, a chatbot developed by AI research company OpenAI. Other notable generative AI tools include Google's Bard AI, Copy.ai, Jasper, Midjourney, DALL-E 2 and more. According to Allied Market Research, the global generative AI market is projected to reach \$126.5 billion by 2031, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 32% from 2022 to 2031.

Other key insights from the Botco.ai study include:

**Generative AI is on the rise.** Of those that say their company doesn't use generative AI, about one-third (31%) say they expect to within the next 12 months and about half (46%) say they

will do so within two years. Collectively, 77% of companies that aren't currently using generative AI expect to use it within two years.

**Copy that.** Website copy is the most common form of content that marketers are most likely to use generative AI to produce, with 48% of respondents saying that their company is likely to create website copy with generative AI now or in the future. Other common use cases are e-mail copy (44%), social media copy (42%), social media images (39%), chatbots that interact with customers (37%), website images (36%), SEO content (35%), blog posts (33%) and marketing/sales collateral (33%).

**ChatGPT is king.** ChatGPT is the most-used generative AI tool, cited by 55% of respondents who currently use generative AI. The next-most popular tools include Copy.ai (42%), Jasper.ai (36%), Peppertype (29%), Lensa (28%), DALL-E (25%) and Midjourney (24%).

**Lots to offer.** The most common benefit marketers gain is increased per-

formance (cited by 58% of respondents), followed by increased creative variety (50%), cost efficiencies (50%), faster creative cycles (47%), an ability to learn and improve (39%) and the augmentation of human creativity (34%).

**Training is the largest roadblock.** The most prominent barrier to using generative AI is training internal teams to use it, cost and privacy/security concerns, indicated by 50%, 45% and 45%, respectively. Lesser challenges include data scarcity (31%), poor-quality or inaccurate content (29%) and generative AI's unethical biases (24%).

**It drives ROI.** Of those companies that use generative AI, two-thirds (66%) have received a positive ROI, with 43% saying they experienced at least a 2x ROI and 22% saying they received a 3x ROI. Only 7% say they've seen a negative ROI thus far.

Botco.ai conducted research in March 2023 with 1,000 marketing professionals for *The State of GenAI Chatbot in Marketing report*.



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Bad checkout experiences lead to abandoned shopping carts

Despite a difficult 2023 marked by uncertainty, recession and shifting business conditions, respondents to a survey by payment and commerce solutions provider Verifone acknowledged

shopping online with greater frequency in the past year, with almost half (49%) reporting buying more online in the past 12 months vs. previously. Twenty-five percent did note a reduction to their online spending while 26% did not register any significant changes.

Of the online categories shopped most frequently, essentials like beauty and personal care (61%) and food and beverages (56%) took the first spots, closely followed by fashion (55%), electronic devices (50%), household items (49%) and entertainment (47%).

Convenience and selection were the main drivers of shopping online. Over half of respondents stated that they shopped on digital channels to save time (52%) and to find greater product diversity (49%). Forty-eight percent say user reviews, deal comparisons (47%) and promotional offers (42%) were also of great importance.

When asked which characteristics an online vendor would need to have to get their business, respondents placed

the availability of their preferred payment methods at the top, followed by the existence of physical locations for servicing or returns and the availability of product reviews. Other aspects included loyalty and reward programs and the option to pick up items at a store branch.

When it comes to the online shopping journey, the checkout experience is a central deciding factor, with respondents having clear expectations of what should happen in the “cart.” Social proof, in the form of product reviews and price comparisons (44%), favorite payment methods (41%) and localization (40%) were respondents’ top trust elements prior to purchase, followed by an easy return policy (37%) and easy access to the shop’s support (35%).

Checkout cost surprises were the main cause of cart abandonment. More than half of those surveyed (57%) admitted to abandoning a cart in the last year because of unexpected

**Panelbase.com**  
 Quality sample. Quality service.

# Empowering Quality Decisions

A personal, pragmatic, can-do approach to **global online data collection** where you can trust in a responsive, efficient, and high-quality service

 Paul Wealleans  
 Managing Director  
 paul.wealleans@panelbase.com



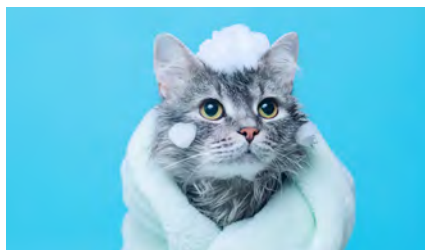
delivery costs. Other reasons included product availability issues discovered at checkout (27%) and a lack of ways to contact sellers with questions about the purchase (22%). The survey also highlighted the importance of payment options on conversions, with one in five respondents declaring that they would abandon the cart and purchase if their preferred method was not available.

As for favorite payment methods, cards still trump other options but digital wallets are challenging cards' supremacy. Almost 70% of users listed cards as their online buying go-to option, followed by digital wallets, a top choice for half of those surveyed (50%). Newer alternative payment options are also gaining more followers. Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) also used buy-now-pay-later options for online shopping.

No significant negative impact was seen on the online shopping experience from the introduction of the strong customer authentication measures in Europe aimed at reducing fraud and increasing online payment security. When questioned about how they perceived the new card payment authentication step, most of the Europeans surveyed responded positively, with 36% appreciating the extra security, 34% agreeing that the authentication process was smooth and not too disruptive and only 16% expressing frustration with the extra identity authentication step.

With online shopping on the rise, global shoppers are currently experiencing a blend of digital and physical touchpoints, as omnichannel scenarios become more prevalent in their day-to-day lives. The most popular cross-channel use case was found to be buy online, collect in-store (49%); followed by buy online, collect at pick-up point (39%); buy online, return in-store (39%); and browse in-store, wish-list and order online (22%).

Verifone conducted this survey with 995 global respondents aged 18-65 from August-October 2022.



## ... pet care research Pampering is on the rise

### Hoomans happy to dote on their fur babies

Today's pets are increasingly living the high life, more akin to humans themselves than the four-legged animals of yesteryear. From organic diets to premium grooming, pet parents – Gen Z in particular – are matching their furry companions' quality of life with that of their own, according to a survey by pet care company Wag.

The "humanization" of pets is clear but takes on a different meaning depending on who you ask. Wag found that while Baby Boomers largely view their pets as their children (49%), thirty-four percent of Gen Z think of them more as a best friend. Baby Boomers maintain a traditional view of a pet's place in the home, sticking to a philosophy that centers around affordability and discipline. Even so, 71% of Baby Boomers allow their pets to sleep in their bed.

Meanwhile Gen Z is less rigid, with 36% of respondents describing their training approach as flexible and reward-based. This generational shift also sees younger pet parents bringing their pets to more public places like restaurants, dressing them up and broadly spending more on items including food and fashion.

When it comes to food and nutrition though, Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers agree to put their wallets where their pets are, spending an average of \$50 to \$100 monthly. Fifty-three percent of pet parents say their pet has at least one dietary restriction, such as a gluten-free or vegetarian diet. Thirty-one percent of respondents say they feed their pets human food often or all the time.

Younger pet parents overall are less budget-conscious, willing to spend premiums in areas like grooming materials and services, fashion and accessories and pet insurance. While older generations see their pets as children, Gen X and Baby Boomers spend less on their pets than Gen Z monthly, despite Gen Z typically making less money. Fifteen percent more Gen Zers have pet insurance than Baby Boomers, with 23% more Baby Boomers reporting regularly scheduled vet visits compared to Gen Z. Fifty-five percent say they dress their pet in clothing or accessories and 73% of Gen Z spend extra on pet fashion for special occasions. Seventy-three percent of Gen Z are also willing to spend extra for premium pet grooming services and materials.

Many consider pets an essential part of life and believe disliking them is a relationship deal-breaker. Thirty-three percent of pet parents indicate that they would not date someone who dislikes pets and 35% would not marry someone who doesn't like them.

DKC Analytics conducted and analyzed Wag's *The State of Pet Parenting in 2023* survey with 1,000 U.S. adults aged 18-65 on January 6-7, 2023.



## ... financial services research Milestone or millstone?

### Consumers struggle to pay for major life events

Seventy-eight percent of Americans will experience a major life milestone in the next decade and half will encounter an important life event within the next 12 months and it's no surprise that marking those moments can come with some emotional stress. However, research from Citizens Fi-



financial Group and Wakefield Research reveals that paying for these life events is what really weighs on people and that access to more payment options could help ease the way.

Sixty percent of Americans and 73% of Gen Z Americans say the financial stress of paying for the event is greater than the associated emotional stress. Increased financial flexibility would enhance these milestones, which for the year ahead include celebrating a wedding anniversary (18%) and purchasing a new home (15%). For the more than three in four Gen Z consumers who anticipate a life event this year, 42% will move into a new apartment, 16% are starting college and 11% are getting married.

Americans are eager to celebrate life's biggest moments but many wish they could afford a better or more luxurious item related to the event.

**Weddings:** Of those who had a wedding or are planning to marry, 82% wish they could have the financial flexibility to afford a more luxurious honeymoon (54%) or more expensive wedding rings (28%).

**New homes:** Almost all (97%) of those planning to buy a new home would like the financial flexibility to afford more, including higher-quality furniture (51%), more smart home electronics (43%) and top-of-the-line appliances (42%).

**Family planning:** Nearly three in four parents (74%) and those expecting to welcome a child into their homes wish they had the financial flexibility to afford better amenities, including higher-quality furniture (41%) and smart electronics like a baby monitor (38%).

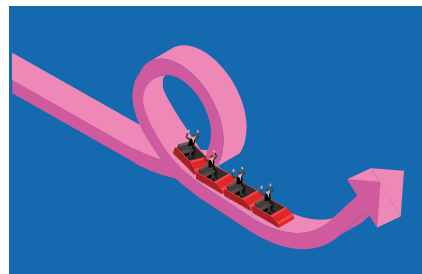
**College:** Among those who have started college or expect to, 92% wish they had options to afford a relevant item, such as personal electronics (62%), funds to travel home more often (57%) and appliances for dorm rooms (56%).

With nine in 10 consumers planning to make large purchases in the next 12 months – including a vacation (42%), a new cell phone (42%), a new laptop (36%) and new furniture (31%) –

consumers are looking for installment financing options to pay them off over time. While credit cards (64%) and cash (48%) are the leading ways consumers will consider paying for purchases of \$500 or more in the next 12 months, 17% will consider using buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) services.

Having the financial flexibility to make big-ticket purchases (53%) is the top benefit that consumers cite for using BNPL services, along with ease of application (39%) and being accepted at most retailers (29%). In the past 12 months, nearly one in five consumers (18%) have used BNPL services for purchases of \$500 or more, driven by Millennials (29%) and Gen X (19%). Nearly half (46%) of consumers who have not used BNPL will consider it for upcoming purchases of \$500 or more, particularly as prices rise due to inflation.

*Citizens Financial Group and Wakefield Research conducted this survey with 2,000 U.S. adults from January 20-29, 2023.*



## Leisure research Check it off the list

Americans seek one-of-a-kind experiences

Regardless of inflation and rising prices, nearly 90% of Americans are still dreaming big with their bucket lists – with many looking forward to everything from trips to Fiji to purchasing their dream home. However, Ally Financial found that more than one-third of people with a bucket list haven't crossed off a single goal in the last 12 months and nearly 75% say finances are what's holding them back.

Travel reigns supreme on consumers' agendas, with visits to specific

destinations on 85% of their lists with Italy, the U.K. and Australia coming in as the top three international destinations. One in five say a location in the U.S. is the top destination, with nearly a third (32%) of Gen Z saying so. The top international destination varies by age with Gen X choosing Australia while Millennials and Gen Z prefer European destinations including the U.K. and France.

Beyond travel, Americans also crave quality time with loved ones (58%), financial stability (50%) and want to learn new skills or hobbies (49%). Nearly one in four (23%) Americans dream of leaving their day jobs to pursue their passions. Gen Z have hefty goals, with over seven items on their bucket lists on average – significantly more than their older counterparts. Out-of-the-box bucket list goals were also accounted for including buying a luxury car and getting a tattoo (25%), skydiving (22%) and overcoming a fear of heights (20%).

Nearly 90% of U.S. adults have a bucket list but money and time are the top obstacles. Fifty percent cite finances as the ultimate hurdle to crossing off bucket-list goals with 75% ranking it among their top three barriers. Sixty-one percent of Gen X are especially likely to list finances as the No. 1 barrier.

Sticking to a budget is the top hurdle for both budgeters and non-budgeters with 31% of non-budgeters citing it as the reason they don't have one. While 81% of consumers are confident in their budgeting skills, half report feeling stressed when they go over budget. Pen and paper are still the primary budgeting tools for Americans yet almost a quarter of those surveyed say that even with a budget, they have trouble tracking and estimating their household's monthly spending. Thirty-eight percent of Gen Z and 52 percent of Millennials are especially likely to struggle sticking to their budget with one in 10 of Gen Z having no idea how much they spend monthly.

*This online survey was conducted by CITE Research on behalf of Ally Financial from March 21-31, 2023, with 1,000 U.S. adults.*



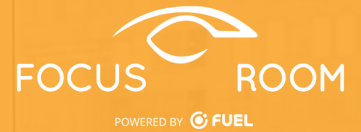
GreenBook  
DIRECTORY

Companies hire me to find out what their customers REALLY think about their brands. And the best way to do that is to talk to them directly, in-person, face-to-face. There's no better way to connect with a customer, experience empathy, make them feel comfortable, and encourage them to share their thoughts.

**Bruce Peoples, Consumer Insights Consultant at Peoples Marketing Insights**

As global travel continues to increase, we're excited to welcome our clients in-person both near and far. It's been exciting to dig back in the toolbox and pull out some of the more robust methodology options that involved a more personal, face-to-face experience. Our clients are loving not only the rich insight gains but also the unique experience of visiting participants in their city and immersing themselves in their culture.

**Abby Goodell, President of Fieldwork Network International**



There's a richness of interaction and that transmission of feeling, of communication, that comes with the sync of not only words but body language. And simply put, the humanity of being with others. The acoustics are not quite the same when a song is compressed into digital bits of data, and human interaction is no different. Some of the richness of that interaction and some of the opportunity for empathy is simply lost along the way.

**Cory Lebson, Principal at Lebsontech**

It is estimated that over 70% of communication happens below the neck. Product features like touch, weight, and contrast are simply not conveyed correctly in digital environments.

**Jamin Brazil, Happy Market Research Podcast Host**

# #facetofacemrx

In-person research always has and always will play an important role for market researchers. In-person research is important for behavioral research whether testing reactions to life-sized stimuli, conducting eye-tracking, observational research or ethnography. Many game changing insights for companies would not have happened without in-person research. We behave differently in-person versus online and while each tool plays a different role in the market researchers toolkit, in-person is irreplaceable for certain research initiatives. With in-person research you can observe behavioral nuances, understand cultural influences and capture the impromptu moments when true inspiration and insight can happen. We've all been there when the biggest insight comes when the moderator leaves the room and the respondents talk on their own! Here's to a return to in-person research, enhanced collaboration, stronger emotional connections and measuring behavior.

**Anne Stephenson, Partner at Explorer Research**



●●● special advertising section

# 21 TOP TASTE TEST/SENSORY RESEARCH COMPANIES

When conducting taste test and sensory marketing research it is important to choose the right partner to ensure your product stands out. Regardless of whether you are launching a new item or are improving an existing one, a marketing research company can help test your product or concept and can offer the best tools possible every step of the way.

Whether your project requires taste tests, fragrance or cosmetic assessments, consumer acceptance predictions or fully-equipped test kitchens, the following companies are prepared to meet your specifications from start to finish.



## AnswerQuest LLC

Founded 2005 | 21 employees  
Jason R. Miller, CEO



With almost 10,000 feet of space just outside Boston, AnswerQuest is the Northeast's premier sensory facility. AQ's test kitchen comes fully-equipped with both upright and walk-in coolers and freezers, stainless prep counters, tables and serving carts, residential ovens and dozens of microwaves. Abundant storage, plentiful outlets and an additional 400 free amps is available for specialized equipment. Our team is experienced in sensory and our sensory director (a trained chef) oversees every test personally. With a database of almost 100,000, we can tackle even the most challenging specifications and our trained recruiters fulfill quotas on time and within budget.

Phone 1-781-897-1822  
[www.answerquestresearch.com](http://www.answerquestresearch.com)





## AOC Marketing Research

Founded early 1980's | 25 employees  
Cathleen Christopher, Owner/Director of Operations

You need more than a test kitchen, you need a professional ServSafe-certified staff with experience executing tests. With 30+ years recruiting and implementing taste tests, AOC will take the worry out of

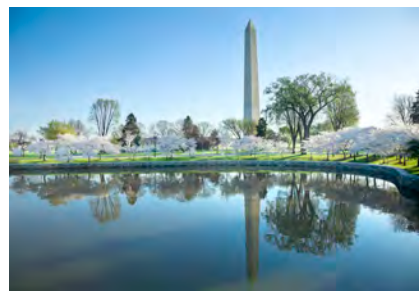


your project so you can focus on the results. Our fully-equipped test kitchen has ample dedicated circuits, steel product prep tables and large and small appliances, cookware and utensils. Our testing rooms feature hardwood floors and seating for up to 40 with laptops and dividers. Visit our website to find out what researchers are saying about AOC and why our clients consider us their preferred research partner.

Phone 1-704-341-0232  
[www.aocresearch.com](http://www.aocresearch.com)

## AREA WIDE MARKET RESEARCH Area Wide Market Research Inc.

Founded 1988  
Ann Weinstein, CEO



Area Wide's seasoned staff pours three decades of experience into every project. Our professional, in-house recruiting team – the most skilled in Maryland, D.C. and Virginia – can fill any group, from an intimate few to many hundreds. Recruiting low-incidence? That's when we do our most creative sourcing! For central location tests, we staff and manage the entire process seamlessly. On-site, enjoy classroom-style or individual booth configurations, ample free parking directly outside our door to ensure on-time starts and a stocked kitchen with two fridges, two freezers, four microwaves, four ovens and its own viewing room. Plus, our building is privately-owned. No product, from cigarettes to alcohol, is off limits!

Phone 1-301-590-1160  
[www.AreaWideMarketResearch.com](http://www.AreaWideMarketResearch.com)



## Blending Views

Founded 2018  
Bryan Styx, CEO



Here's the truth...we just do it better. Decades of research experience conducted with several Fortune 500 companies powered the formation of Blending Views. We are a small business with massive capabilities in the Chicago market. We create a seamless testing experience for our clients and respondents, yet always strive to be better. Our commercial kitchen is upgraded regularly, has an open layout and is so clean that it shines! The Blending Views facility is eco-friendly and full of smiles.

Phone 1-708-826-3200  
[www.blendingviews.com](http://www.blendingviews.com)



## Market **C&C** Research

### C&C Market Research

Founded 1993 | 300 employees  
Thomas Morrison, Senior Project Director

Discover the transformative power of sensory insights with C&C Market Research! With a rich legacy as pioneers in the sensory field, we boast an extensive network of 34 locations spanning the United States. From everyday consumer items to specialized products like cosmetics and tobacco, we possess unrivaled expertise in taste tests, personal care evaluations and fragrance assessments. Whether it's the meticulous CLT or the immersive HUT approach, rest assured, we have you covered! Let C&C Market Research unlock the hidden potential of your products, propelling you into a realm of unparalleled sensory success. Experience the difference today!



Phone 1-479-785-5637  
[www.ccmaketresearch.com](http://www.ccmaketresearch.com)

## CSS/datatelligence

### CSS/datatelligence

Founded 1987 | 100+ employees  
Carolyn Corbett, Vice President

CSS/datatelligence is a global consultancy for sensory and consumer research. We articulate the product and packaging experience through the touchpoints of the five senses. We offer sensory and consumer insights to optimize the consumer experience through innovation to empower our clients with recommendations to drive growth. Our research expertise focuses on food and beverage taste tests, per-



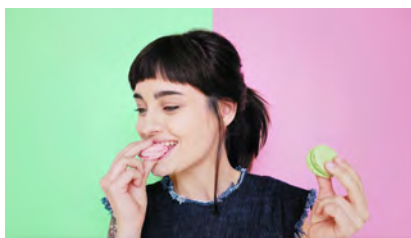
sonal care, fragrances, cosmetics and home care with CLTs, HUTs, consumption and satiety methods. Partner with our sensory scientists, our behavior psychologist or our predictive intelligence team to design and execute your next project! Test studios offer sensory booths, fragrance chambers, laundry, residential and a commercial kitchen, CLT/FG space and client viewing rooms.

E-mail [carolyncorbett@cssdatatelligence.com](mailto:carolyncorbett@cssdatatelligence.com)  
Phone 1-386-677-5644 x225  
[www.cssdatatelligence.com](http://www.cssdatatelligence.com)



### Curion

Founded 2017 | 300 employees  
Keren Novack, President



Curion specializes in delivering impactful insights to the world's top CPG companies, helping them develop winning, repeatedly purchased products. Curion's deep, data-driven product insights, sensory expertise and state-of-the-art consumer centers enable them to uncover responses to critical client objectives. With over five decades of experience in the product testing industry, Curion is dedicated to guiding clients with their proprietary Product Experience and Performance (PXP™) platform, connecting brands to consumers at every step. An innovator in the industry, Curion recently developed a groundbreaking benchmarking product testing method, the Curion Score™, which has become a trusted and sought-after tool within the industry. As one of the largest product and consumer insights companies in the U.S., Curion has built a reputation for excellence and trust among the world's leading consumer brands. Curion's

commitment to innovation and expertise, coupled with a passion for delivering actionable insights, makes Curion a valuable partner for companies looking to develop and launch successful products.

Phone 1-224-632-1919  
[www.curioninsights.com](http://www.curioninsights.com)

## Decision Analyst

### Decision Analyst

Founded 1978 | 150 employees  
Bonnie Janzen, EVP  
Felicia Rogers, EVP



Decision Analyst is a recognized leader in sensory research, taste testing, product testing, IHUTs and product optimization. Over the past four decades, our staff has evaluated more than 2,000 durable and nondurable products. We offer an array of research and analytical services to help our clients improve existing products and create new products. Our product testing services include sensory research, central-location taste tests, IHUTs, product clinics and product optimization techniques. At Decision Analyst, we design, develop and operate low-cost, fast-turnaround R&D sensory-testing systems and taste tests. Optima®, our product testing system, predicts consumer acceptance, determines the optimal set of ingredients or features and optimizes pricing. Our team members have extensive experience in conducting and analyzing IHUTs and optimization studies. We operate our own consumer panels and have labeling, packaging and shipping capabilities to support in-home usage testing.

Phone 1-817-640-6166  
[www.decisionanalyst.com/services/sensoryresearch](http://www.decisionanalyst.com/services/sensoryresearch)



## Fieldwork

Founded 1980 | 350+ employees  
Steve Raebel, President



Our specialties include taste tests and sensory research, medical, CX/UX, B2B, mock jury, consumer and global research. For over 40 years, Fieldwork has recruited the highest-quality business, medical and consumer respondents both through and far beyond databases, using proven methods to reach your audience. We believe in a customized approach to recruitment. Fieldwork provides unsurpassed project management and hosting. Fieldwork is your qualitative research partner. Focus on the research. We'll do the rest!

Phone 1-800-863-4353  
[www.fieldwork.com/market-research-services](http://www.fieldwork.com/market-research-services)



## FlavorWiki

Founded 2017 | 60 employees  
Daniel D. Protz, CEO

FlavorWiki is a leading product and consumer experience platform revolutionizing digital sensory research. Trusted by global brands such as Mondelez, Nestle, Bunge, IFF and



Givaudan, FlavorWiki combines cutting-edge technology, professional insights expertise and a large worldwide community of consumers to provide fast, efficient and actionable insights. FlavorWiki's patented AI technology for sensory testing facilitates the mapping of individual flavor perceptions in an objective and intuitive manner using data collected directly from consumers, without panel or sensory training. With a multinational and diverse team comprised of sensory scientists, insights specialists and data scientists, FlavorWiki offers extensive capabilities across a range of research projects and methodologies. Whether catering to multinational corporations, food tech companies or startups, FlavorWiki's expertise and adaptability ensures tailored solutions to meet unique business needs and unlock the true potential of sensory research in driving product innovation and consumer satisfaction.

E-mail [daniel@flavorwiki.com](mailto:daniel@flavorwiki.com)  
Phone +41 79 137 2228  
[business.flavorwiki.com](http://business.flavorwiki.com)



## Focus & Testing – an Insights Center Facility

Founded 1995 | 35 employees  
Spence Bilkiss, CEO



Focus & Testing, an Insights Center Facility, has skillfully executed food and beverage research through CLTs and focus groups for over 27 years. Since our inception, sensory testing has been our focus, allowing us to emerge as the prominent sensory center in Los Angeles. The 12,500-square-foot facility features the ultimate commercial-grade kitchen for everything from CPG to restaurant menu testing and anything in between. The facility also includes a residential kitchen, observable CLT suite with 44 respondent stations and three focus group suites. Our tenured and ServSafe-certified team sets us apart, enabling Focus & Testing to execute projects like a well-oiled machine.

Phone 1-818-577-4022  
[www.focusandtesting.com](http://www.focusandtesting.com)



## FoodView 360

Founded 2015 | 20 employees  
Don Tucker, Manager Business Operations



Take your research execution to the next level with FoodView 360° in the Chicago metro, conveniently located in Oak Brook, Ill. Our adaptable commercial kitchen is fully equipped to handle the preparation of everything from ready-to-serve products to freshly-made menu items. For focus groups and interactive engagements, we offer unparalleled video services and live streaming with robotically controlled HD cameras which capture the moment and connect remote teams to the project.

We can create the ultimate taste-test experience with our CLT room that offers 32 testing stations, staff with food handler certifications and research expertise to ensure the ideal environment is maintained. Whether you are looking for full-service research support or the facility to ensure your project is a success, FoodView 360° has the right tools to help your team gather accurate, actionable insights.

Phone 1-708-906-1875  
[www.FoodView.net](http://www.FoodView.net)

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## Herron Associates Inc.

Founded 1958 | 45 employees  
Sue McAdams, CEO



Herron is the first choice for leading sensory and taste-test clients. With years of experience and a modern and spacious facility in Indianapolis, we deliver seamless projects anywhere your research requires. Our commercial kitchen, designed by culinary experts, guarantees the best sensory experience. Our Indianapolis location includes a 960-square-foot commercial kitchen and spacious research suites for up to 50 respondents. Choose Herron for your next sensory study and see why our clients always come back. Get a fresh perspective on your research and benefit from our cutting-edge facility.

Phone 1-317-280-8007  
[www.herron-research.com](http://www.herron-research.com)  
[Info@herron-research.com](mailto:Info@herron-research.com)

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## INSIGHTS CENTER

### Insights Center

Founded 2016 | 25 employees  
Jeff Bryles, Managing Partner



Insights Center is a unique organization offering specialty facilities across the U.S. with commercial kitchens and spacious focus suites. We built the organization to answer a growing need in the marketplace for facilities that could host both qualitative and quantitative studies. Our test kitchens include walk-in refrigeration, ventilation, fryers and stainless prep space. Our CLT labs are capable of seating up to 50 at a time and our ServSafe-trained personnel handle even the most complex studies with ease. Whether it's a sequential monadic, paired comparison or discrimination test, our clients know they can rely on the data we collect.

Phone 1-720-787-7630  
[www.insightscenters.com](http://www.insightscenters.com)

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## MarketView Research

Founded 1999 | 25+ employees  
Jessica Cardella, Senior Vice President



MarketView Research is a leader in taste testing and product research. For over 20 years we have provided world-class quantitative and qualitative research that has fueled the growth and innovation of today's most beloved brands. Best known for delivering rich and impactful insights coupled with a commitment to exceptional client service, our team is passionate about helping brands understand what appeals to their target consumers. And we make the taste-testing process simple for clients – handling everything from start to finish. Our experienced in-house teams provide the planning, recruiting, location selection, fieldwork, survey development and analysis to ensure clients get the best possible feedback to drive products forward with confidence.

Phone 1-201-840-5286  
[www.mvrg.com](http://www.mvrg.com)



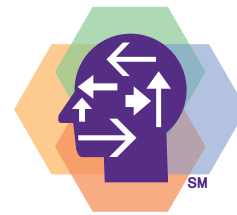
## Murray Hill National

Founded 2013 | 35 employees  
Susan Owens, COO



Clients trust Murray Hill National with thousands of studies per year as their research partner. In return, we deliver valuable solutions and high-quality recruitment for their consumer, health care, B2B and technology projects. Specializing in all methodologies, excelling in taste tests, we can host and deliver your results across the U.S. For the last 10 years Murray Hill National LLP, rebranded under new ownership, has advanced to be one of the leading data collection and recruitment companies in the U.S. Our teams are committed to meeting your research needs. We provide high-quality health care recruitment with access to 465,000 physicians, nurses and more, and we organize 100+ patient panels. Our qualitative services extend far beyond the traditional focus group. Our call center has 45 CATI stations where we conduct all our telephone interviewing including qualitative, quantitative, phone-to-web or old-fashioned CATI. Call us today for your next project, your “national” recruiting experts!

Phone 1-972-707-7645  
[www.murrayhillnational.com](http://www.murrayhillnational.com)



## P&K research

### P&K Research

Founded 1957 | 200 employees  
Patti Wojnicz, EVP

P&K's founders were instrumental in developing the research methods that helped lay the groundwork for sensory science and consumer taste testing. For over 65 years, food and beverage companies have relied on us to deliver the sensory and product insights needed to launch new products, evaluate existing markets and competitors and replace existing product formulations with more cost-effective ones. Our research solutions cover the range of sensory and consumer methodologies, conducted at our company-owned facilities in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and New York or with our field alliances across the U.S., Europe, Asia, Latin America and Australia. Our food and beverage expertise includes soft drinks, frozen and refrigerated foods, sweet and salty snacks, bakery products, candy, alcoholic beverages and many more.



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Phone 1-800-747-5522  
[www.pk-research.com](http://www.pk-research.com)

# SAGO

## Sago

Founded 1966 | 1500 employees  
Joe Mulvaney, SVP, North America, Qualitative

Sago, formerly Schlesinger Group, is the global research and data partner that connects human answers to business questions. Our team is highly adept at plan-



ning and executing complex testing programs so that you can optimize your products for market success. We support a variety of methods for product testing, from facility and CLT to in-home or on-site testing, using qual, quant or hybrid approaches. Connect with us: [connect@sago.com](mailto:connect@sago.com).

Phone 1-732-906-1122  
[www.sago.com](http://www.sago.com)



## Sensory Center of Atlanta

Founded 2019 | 18 employees  
Marisa Pope, President



Outstanding test kitchen or fancy facility? R&D needs the functionality of a true kitchen and the marketing team needs an attentive host team, plenty of space to spread out and a few niceties on the road. Sensory Center solves this

issue by offering R&D teams a true commercial test kitchen, complete with walk-in coolers, holding cabinets, ovens, fryers and more and marketing teams an exceptional facility replete with all the finest amenities. As part of the Jackson family of companies, Sensory Center of Atlanta is a trusted field partner with a focus on quality data collection and attention to detail.

Phone 1-770-394-8700  
[www.sensorycenteratlanta.com](http://www.sensorycenteratlanta.com)



## Symmetric, A Decision Analyst Company

Founded 2016 | 150+ employees  
Jason Thomas, President of Symmetric

Symmetric operates American Consumer Opinion® (a worldwide panel of more than 7 million consumers) and five B2B worldwide online panels:



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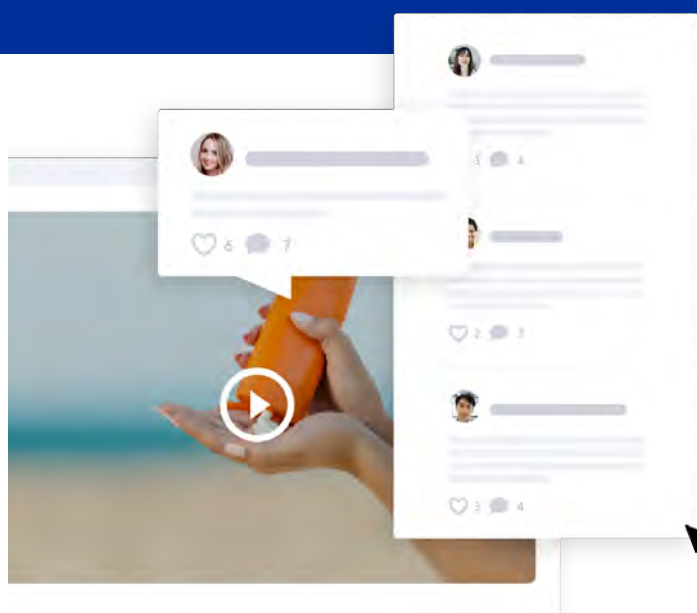
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# Superior quality in health care research begins with panel enrollment

| By Jason Freeman



## abstract

Ensuring the quality of panel data for health care research requires an active, vigilant approach from sampling providers, panel companies and end-user clients. Follow these six rules to foil the fraudsters, root out the repeaters and catch the cheaters.

# F

or the past 20 years, I have worked in the health care market research industry overseeing the global panel fielding of health care studies. One of the biggest challenges I've seen during that time is the need for improved detection and elimination of survey fraudsters attempting to enroll in paid survey panels.

Often, you will see and hear conversations about ways to safeguard the quality of primary research data collection. The proposed solutions include asking your online sampling provider the ESOMAR36 questions, optimizing survey design, adding traps, deploying joker checks, adding red-herring questions and purchasing the latest fraud detection technology. While these solutions are important safeguards in their respective areas, they only address the chronic symptoms of survey fraudsters, not the root cause.

One of the best pieces of advice I received in during my health care research career was, "Trust but verify." If you are passionate about survey data quality, here are some of my panel research rules that will be thought-provoking topics for your next call with your sampling provider.

### **Rule #1: Panel enrollment is by invitation only.**

*Do you allow wedding crashers?*

The idea of attending a wedding uninvited became popular after the movie "Wedding Crashers." These uninvited guests have no concern or respect. They simply arrive to take advantage of the free food and drinks. The best way to avoid such an alarming ruckus is to ensure only invited and desired guests know the time and location of the event. Similarly, the panel enrollment process should be by invitation only.

It is alarming how many open-enrollment links with "click here to join/register" are posted on websites, social media and paid advertising venues. These links are a beacon for fraudulent activity and an unending supervision nightmare for those attempting to ensure no gaps, holes or security enrollment breaches occur. It is a critical misstep to publicly broadcast the details of how to register. And don't engage in the flawed thinking that you



have the most rigorous and secure vetting process. Eventually, panel enrollment will be compromised by persistent fraudsters who can deploy their arsenal of false registration attempts/hacks when presented with these open-door opportunities. Panels that break this rule can easily have their enrollment database filled with attacks from unverified registrations. Avoid this ticking time bomb by never allowing open enrollment!

**Rule #2: Panel enrollment includes the detection and ongoing monitoring of the geolocation of invited and joined panel members.**

*Where are you located?*

Many popular browsers, antivirus software and web applications offer the built-in benefits of virtual private networks and proxy servers (i.e., anonymous IP traffic). While these technologies protect the user's identity and are great tools for accessing internet content securely, fraudsters also use them to obscure and falsify their identity and location. With a simple click, anyone can pretend to be in any country in the world.

Anonymous IP traffic must be detected within panel registration and survey deployment and it must be part of ongoing effort to detect account breaches and intrusions. By implementing a strict policy, invited panelists who ask to join can be monitored against their known clinical practice area, panelist-provided registration data and survey entry IP location.

**Rule #3: Panel enrollment requires the full collection of National Provider Identifier or license and deployment of deduplication software.**

*Have you been here before?*

A few months ago, I read recent survey findings on household Internet-connected devices. I was surprised that, on average, there are 7.8 connected internet devices per household in the U.S. Ubiquitous internet access poses a challenge to panels that solely rely on deduplication software to detect multiple registrations and fraudulent activity. One can easily switch devices (i.e., work and home computers) and bypass any security detection system (IP, cookie and browser fingerprinting

systems). Those who bypass such checks can easily register multiple accounts under different information.

Fortunately, the health care panel industry has professional license data that can be collected and verified. Collection of this datapoint type allows a secondary check to confirm registration identity and prevents duplication. Moreover, monitoring license data will alert system administrators to potential fraud activity (i.e., multiple registration requests under the same license). With license data collected, panelists can be checked for disbarment and license deactivation, which indicates death or retirement.

**Rule #4: Panel enrollment checks the panelist-provided e-mail for fraud flags. Referrals to join should not be allowed. Follow Rule #1.**

*I have a coupon for that!*

Back in the craze for coupon deals, I recall my spouse frantically calling me at work. There was a great coupon deal but the website limited users to only one coupon per e-mail address. She asked me to sign up to get the deal too. I then proceeded to ask my five coworkers in the room to sign up as well.

Panels are inherently targeted like coupon sites. Whether it's to fight fraud activity or a zealous valid survey member looking for another deal, additional security measures should be deployed during registration.

According to recent statistics, 40% of fraudsters use a newly created e-mail. Security checks such as tumbling (sequentially named e-mail addresses or multiple variations of the same e-mail) and first activity dates (the date any e-mail becomes active) are great ways to detect malicious enrollees.

In addition, beware of panels using referral systems, like asking registered panelists to refer another health care friend to join. They may be referring the same person to register multiple times without multi-factored measures in place to detect duplication.

**Rule #5: The panel payment process ensures all prior rules are followed.**

*What is the getaway plan?*

For most panel fraudsters, the end goal is to make a clean getaway. As with a bank robbery, it would be silly not to add a tracking device, dye pouch or

marked bills to the loot bag but that's effectively what happens when panel payment catalogs include anonymous payment options to @handles, e-cards like Amazon or unverified e-mail payments. Rather than make a payment to a Venmo handle, the payment should be made to a collected phone number associated with the panelist's Venmo account. The collected phone number can then be validated (i.e., reverse phone ownership lookup).

Panels that focus more attention on their robust payment catalog than on secure payment tracking methods will always miss a prime moment to ensure all prior rules are followed. This is the best place to catch a crafty fraudster. For example, sending a paper check allows you to catch those who enter a payment name different (Rule #1) than the one they used to register. In addition, the address location can be verified again (Rule #2) and the address location can be checked to ensure uniqueness across other panel records (Rule #3).

**Rule #6: Follow up with your panel provider!**

*Trust but verify!*

We end where we started. It would be incorrect to avoid asking verifying questions and assume safeguards are foolproof. For me, it has uncovered numerous opportunities to prove what I already knew to be true and uncover new understandings I did not know even existed.

**Good rules**

The elimination of survey fraudsters in paid research begins with panels following good enrollment rules. Let's improve the health care data collection industry by ensuring protections are in place. Together, we can eliminate survey fraudsters. 📌

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# Possibilities and risks

## A guide to generative AI for insights

BY THOR PHILOGENE

What does generative AI mean for marketing research? It truly can be a superpower for insights professionals but like any superpower, generative AI demands a thoughtful, responsible approach. To get the most out of tools like ChatGPT, researchers must be aware of their pros and cons.

“With great power comes great responsibility.” You don’t have to be a Marvel buff to recognize that quote, popularized by the Spider-Man franchise. And while the sentiment was originally in reference to superhuman speed, strength, agility and resilience, it’s a helpful one to keep in mind when discussing the rise of generative AI.

While the technology itself isn’t new, the launch of ChatGPT put it into the hands of millions, something that for many felt like gaining a superpower. But like all superpowers, what matters is what you use it for. Generative AI is no different. There is the potential for great, for good and for evil.

Organizations now stand at a critical juncture to decide how they will use this technology. Ultimately, it’s about taking a balanced perspective – seeing the possibilities but also seeing the risks and approaching both with an open mind.

In this article, we’ll explore both the possibilities and the risks of generative AI for insights teams and equip you with the knowledge you need to make the right decisions that will move your team forward.

### A quick refresher on generative AI

Generative AI refers to deep-learning algorithms that are able to produce new content based on data they’ve

been trained on and a prompt. While traditional AI systems are made to recognize patterns and make predictions, generative AI can create new content like text, code, audio and images.

The technology behind generative AI is called a large language model,<sup>1</sup> which is a type of machine learning model that can perform a variety of natural language processing tasks like generating/classifying text, answering questions and translating text.

### How can generative AI enhance insights?

The insights industry is no stranger to change. The tools and methodologies available to insights professionals have evolved rapidly over the past few decades. At this stage, the extent and speed of the changes brought by increasingly accessible generative AI are something we can only speculate on. But there are certain foundations to have in place that will help insights teams figure out how to respond quickly as more information becomes available.

Ultimately, it all comes back to asking the right questions and doing a thorough analysis – skills at which insights professionals are experts.

### Getting insights faster

One area we see a lot of potential is the summarization of information. For



example, companies have already been using generative AI to create auto-summaries of individual reports, removing the need to manually write an original description for each report.

We also see potential to develop this use case further with the ability to summarize large volumes of information to answer business questions quickly, in an easy-to-consume format. This could look like typing a question into a search bar. The generative AI platform would then leverage the company's internal knowledge to present a succinct answer that links to additional sources.

For insights managers, this would mean being able to answer simple questions more quickly and it could also help handle much of the groundwork when digging into more complex problems.

### Democratizing your insights

Generative AI technology could also help broaden the flow of insights throughout an organization. More specifically, key business stakeholders could easily access critical insights without needing to directly involve an insights manager. By removing barriers to access, generative AI could help support organizations that are on an insights democratization journey.

It could also help to alleviate common concerns associated with insights democratization, like business stakeholders asking the wrong questions. In this use case, business stakeholders without research backgrounds can be prompted to ask more relevant questions.

### Tailored communication for the right audiences

Another opportunity that comes with generative AI is the ability to tailor communication to both internal and external audiences.

In an insights context, there are several potential applications. It could help make knowledge-sharing more impactful by personalizing insights communications for various business stakeholders.

It could also be used to tailor briefs to research agencies as a way to streamline the research process and minimize the back-and-forth involved.

### What are the drawbacks to generative AI for insights pros?

As you're likely aware, there are also many risks associated with generative AI in its current state, particularly for insights professionals.

**The information may not be trustworthy.** One fundamental risk associated with generative AI is that you can't fully trust the information it gives you, primarily due to its reliance on prompts. Generative AI is statistical, not analytical, so it works by predicting the most likely information to say next. If you give it the wrong prompt, you're still likely to get a highly convincing answer.

What becomes even trickier is the way it can blend correct information with incorrect information. In situations where million-dollar business decisions are being made, the information needs to be trustworthy.

It's also worth noting that ChatGPT is only trained on information through the end of 2021, which means that it won't take current events and trends

into account.

Additionally, many questions surrounding consumer behavior are complex. While a question like "How did Millennials living in the U.S. respond to our most recent concept test?" might generate a clear-cut answer, deeper questions about human values or emotions often require a more nuanced perspective. Not all questions have a single right answer and when aiming to synthesize large sets of research reports, key details could fall between the cracks.

**The sources aren't always clear.** Another key risk to pay attention to is a lack of transparency regarding how algorithms are trained. For example,



ChatGPT cannot always tell you where it got its answers from and even when it can, those sources might be impossible to verify or nonexistent.

And because AI algorithms, generative or otherwise, are trained by humans and existing information, they can be biased. This can lead to answers that are racist, sexist or otherwise offensive.<sup>2</sup> For organizations looking to challenge biases in their decision-making and create a better world for consumers, this would be an instance of generative AI making work less productive.

#### **There can be security risks.**

Common use cases for ChatGPT involve generating e-mails, meeting agendas or reports.

But putting in the necessary details to generate those texts may leave sensitive company information at risk.

In fact, an analysis conducted by security firm Cyberhaven found that of 1.6 million knowledge workers across industries, 5.6% had tried ChatGPT at least once at work, and 2.3% had put confidential company data into ChatGPT.<sup>3</sup> Companies like JP Morgan, Verizon, Accenture and Amazon<sup>4</sup> have banned staff from using ChatGPT at work over security concerns. And just recently, Italy became the first Western country to ban ChatGPT while investigating privacy concerns,<sup>5</sup> drawing attention from privacy regulators in other European countries.


For insights teams or anyone working with proprietary research and insights, it's essential to be aware of the risks associated with inputting information into a tool like ChatGPT and to stay up to date on both your organization's internal data security policies and the policies of providers like OpenAI.

#### **What are the next steps?**

Generative AI offers both intriguing opportunities and clear risks for busi-

nesses and there is still a lot that is unknown.

Insights leaders have the opportunity to show both their teams and organizations what responsible experimentation looks like. We've entered a new era of critical thinking, something that insights professionals are well-practiced in.



**Organizations now stand at a critical juncture to decide how they will use this technology. Ultimately, it's about taking a balanced perspective - seeing the possibilities but also seeing the risks and approaching both with an open mind.**

The path forward is to ask the right questions and maintain a healthy dose of skepticism without ignoring the future as it unfolds in front of you.

#### **Make the tech your own**

A good place to start is by seeing the areas where you're naturally drawn to using these tools. Before you invest in any solution, you want to make sure that generative AI will actually fit into your workflows.

Likewise, it's a good idea to gauge how open you and your team are to incorporating these technologies. This will help you determine if there need to be more guardrails in place or, conversely, more encouragement to experiment responsibly.

Sketch out the inefficiencies in your workflows and explore whether it's something you could automate in whole or in part. These are likely areas where generative AI could offer your team a major productivity boost.

Chances are you don't have time for endless experimentation. A good way to focus your exploration is to look at the top priorities for your team and your organization and focus efforts where they will have the most impact.

#### **Communication is key**

Be sure to clearly outline the risks for your function and organization and don't hesitate to get advice from relevant experts in tech or security. Once the main risks are defined, you can align on the risk level you're willing to tolerate.

While minding the risks, also don't be afraid to ask the good kind of what-if questions. If you see opportunities, be brave enough to share them. Now is the time to voice them. Likewise, listen to other parts of the organization to see what opportunities they've identified and see what you can learn from them.

It's our firm belief that the future of insights will still need to combine

human expertise with powerful technology. The most powerful technology in the world will be useless if no one actually wants to use it.

Therefore the focus for brands should be on responsible experimentation, to find the right problems to solve with the right tools, and not to simply implement technology for the sake of it. With great power comes great responsibility. Now is the time for brands to decide how they will use it. 🗣️

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\* National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), March 2021

••• new product research

# Maintaining a buzz

Bringing Spruce Cowffee to market

| By Elliot Savitzky and Hannah Robbins



## abstract

The Spruce Cowffee case study concludes with an exploration of how research helped the brand understand the product benefits that most resonated with the target audience, which then informed the packaging design and the eventual retail channel decisions.

Last issue, in part one of this article (“Creating a buzz”), we described the challenges we faced in creating a go-to-market (GTM) strategy for Spruce Cowffee, a better-for-you cold brew coffee from New York-based Spruce Haven Farms.

Having identified target markets and selecting packaging and a preferred name, we needed to confirm the product’s appeal, create a leverageable positioning for the brand and gear it up for success. Specifically, with whom is Spruce most likely going to compete and how will the product differentiate itself in an already crowded market?

We tested the idea of cold brew coffee with over 1,200 geographically dispersed Gen Zs and Millennials and were astonished to find that 70%-80% of these two groups already drank cold brew coffee at least once a week. We then showed them a description of what Spruce was all about and an unprecedented 60%+ of them indicated they would either definitely or probably buy it in the future. We don’t regularly see numbers as high as these, particularly among a group of consumers who have such strong opinions about what they put in their bodies.

We then asked them to tell us in their own words why they liked Spruce so much and if they would recommend it to their friends. What we found was eye-opening: with no previous knowledge of the product or the brand, and with only a brief description of the basic premise of the idea, these consumers understood the benefits of the product, internalized them and played them back to us in way that led us to believe they were convinced that this was a product for them. Thus the brand/concept clearly resonates when the audience understands product attributes and benefits, which further supports the critical value of brand appeal to the right target market.





### Understanding attitudes and beliefs

Consumers don't just purchase brands; they buy with emotions, hopes and fears. Their wallet represents an inner narrative and each brand's ability to effectively inspire and ignite an emotional connection is how the path to profitability is won. We asked this target audience questions about their attitudes, lifestyles and psychographics and we were surprised at what we found. Instead of being consistent in their attitudes and behaviors, these consumers were a contradiction in terms, claiming, for example, a strong interest in healthy eating while also confessing to having a sweet tooth or being hopeful for the future at the same time as they expressed cynical views of our current world.

When consumers are pondering a decision it usually suggests that there is some type of internal conflict going on. This inner turmoil is known as cognitive dissonance. "Cognitive dissonance theory postulates that an underlying psychological tension is created when an individual's behavior is inconsistent with his or her thoughts and beliefs. This underlying tension then motivates an individual to make an attitude change that would produce consistency between thoughts and behaviors."

Much of our qualitative research touches on consumers dealing with internal conflicts and our approach helped inform us on how best to address these inner narrative conflicts for positioning the brand to the target market. These contradictions between a closely held value and a course of action may get in the way of making decisions, important or otherwise.

In this case, we concluded that Spruce talked directly to most of consumers' conflicts. It provides a much sought-after alternative with its physical and emotionally

"It has all of the good things for you and none of the bad things. It helps give me energy when I need to get up and go to work. It helps give me energy when I get home from work."

"I don't think I've heard of a coffee that gives you so much support for your body, your mind and your well-being as Spruce Cold Brew. It has the added benefit of having ready to go, 'grippable' container which is recyclable and with eco-friendly ingredients that can be traced back to the very udder of the cow."

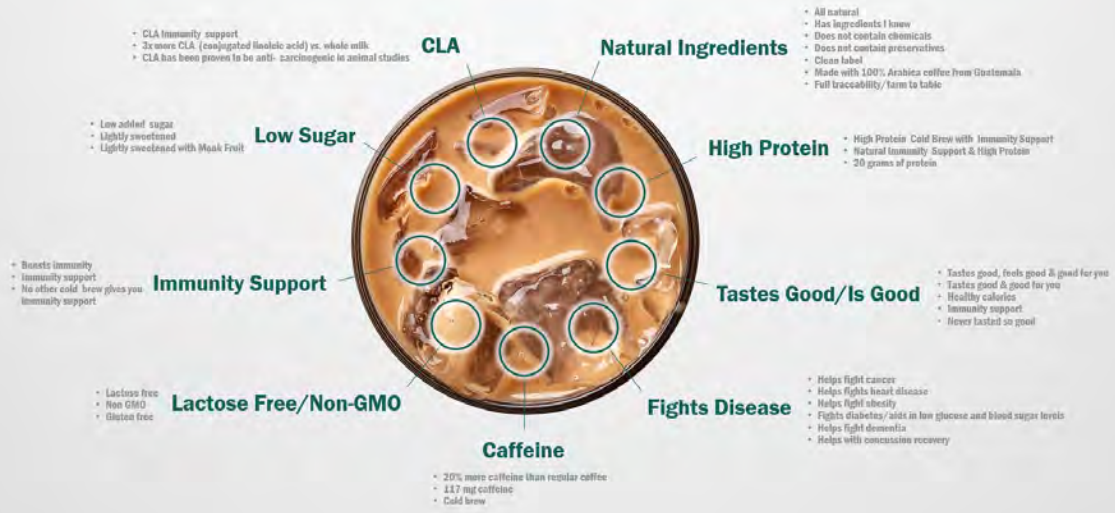
"This is something that can be consumed on a daily basis or as a treat that can also be beneficial to your health, which is always fun when you can pair good behaviors with good consequences."





Figure 2

# 35 benefit statements grouped into 9 clusters



healthy benefits. It boosts immunity. It has the caffeine to keep the consumer going. It is lightly sweetened and tastes great. It is a sustainable product that gives back to the community. It provides the convenience of on-the-go, ready-to-drink packaging. It also has a good shelf life. And, finally, it's not only real but it's really simple. The brand promise delivers key pillars this generation values: knowing the exact food source along with high nutritional benefits.

## Standing out in a competitive market

Every product faces some kind of competition but Spruce was up against a behemoth – Starbucks – and a host of many other smaller, regional brands. So how do you compete in a market like that? The last cog in the brand positioning machine is determining your key points of difference (KPDs) and which ones matter most to the identified target market. What is important to your target consumers?

We can already hypothesize some of the key benefits that will appeal but there were so many of them that we needed some way to understand where to focus. Do we talk about taste? Healthfulness? The high-quality ingredients?

The first step was to convince the client that they had too many benefits to start with. In part one of this article

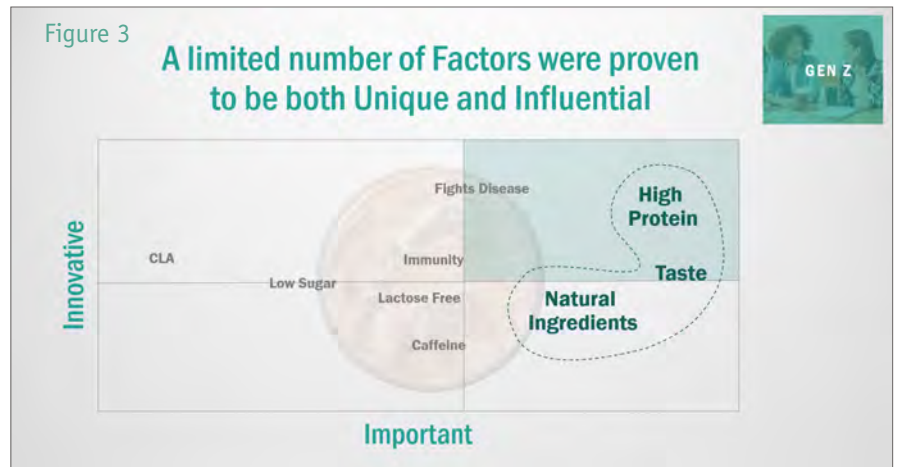
we explored how stakeholder bias impacted everything from potential product names to the primary target market and here again it was a barrier to streamlining the benefit selection process – something we find prevalent with so many brands.

We started with about 120 benefits that the client wanted to include in our research. We narrowed them down to 35 statements that could be logically grouped into nine clusters (Figure 2). The package is a brand's prominent and most important advertising tool so every word and graphic matters. In Spruce's case there were way too many to put on a package let alone promote in any marketing communications.

So how do we determine which KPDs to include? TRC has created a methodology called Two-Dimensional

Max-Diff (2DMD) that aims to add value to an already powerful tool. It allows us to assess choices on two dimensions at the same time. Whereas the standard MaxDiff technique may ask participants to identify which of a selection of four items are most and least important in their decision to purchase a product, 2DMD can assess those same items on two dimensions at the same time ("most important" and "most unique," as an example) and that is the technique we used to assess these 35 statements for both importance and innovation.

Rather than take a consumer through two separate evaluations on two separate dimensions, this technique avoids the added confusion and fatigue and kills two birds with one stone. Hence, we rated four of the 35



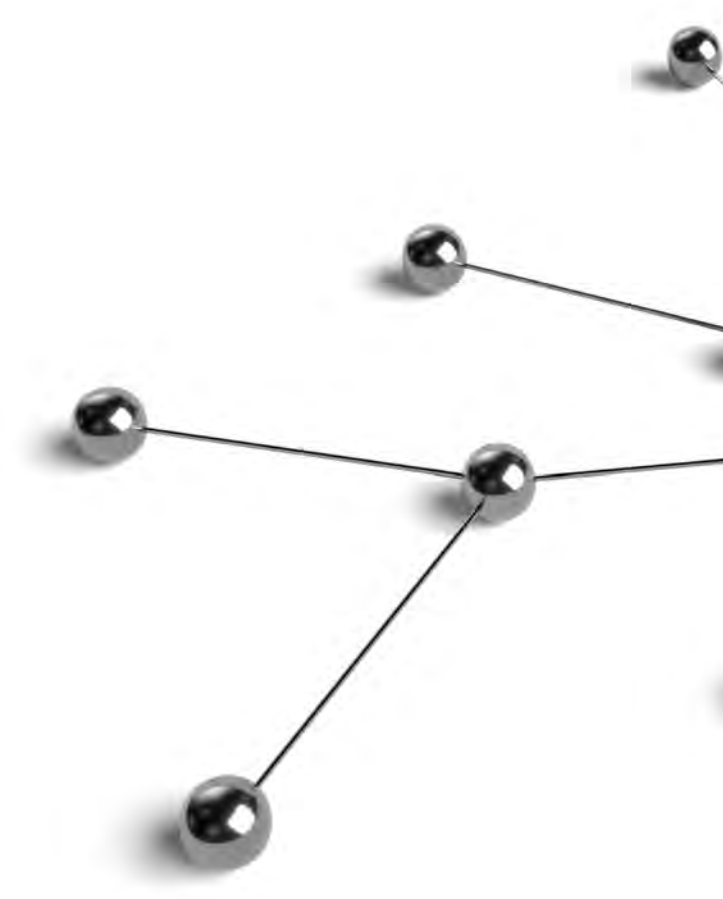


••• b2b research

# Make it matter

How to plan and conduct your business-to-business research for maximum impact

| By Alan Hale



## abstract

Effective business-to-business research focuses on understanding your customer's needs, opinions and pain points. As a researcher, your goals are to listen, identify problems and solutions and then tell the customer how the company plans to make their lives better. Longtime researcher Alan Hale offers tips and strategies for accomplishing those goals.

I have spent 40 years in marketing consulting and research for business-to-business (B2B) across a wide variety of products and industries. I have seen some excellent voice-of-the-customer (VOC) practices and some that were not so excellent. Based on my experience, I have outlined a process for identifying and acting on B2B VOC research insights.

This article will address several areas, including: how B2B research is different from business-to-consumer (B2C) research; the importance of having and creating raving fans; how to use VOC research to identify insights; Net Promoter Score; and what to do after the research process.

### B2B is not B2C

Every now and then, I will see people express the view that B2B marketing and marketing research are similar to their B2C counterparts. After all, this thinking goes, both are human-to-human, person-to-person.

Nonsense.

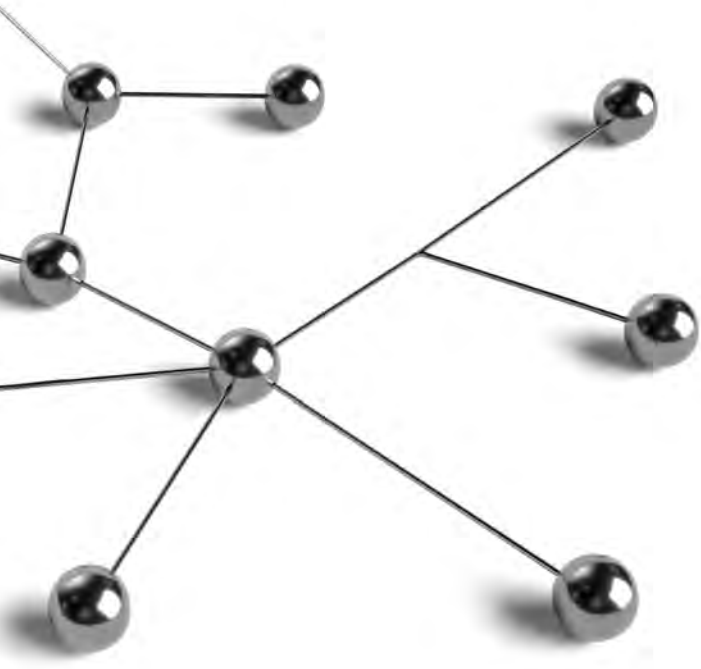
Let's define B2B. B2B is not selling to consumers. It is selling to businesses, contractors, OEMs or to distributors, wholesalers and other channels who sell to the end-user market.

There are multiple stakeholders in the B2B buying decision. An example could be engineering, purchasing and marketing for a bottle manufacturer. It is a long selection process heavily influenced by a range of financial criteria. The sales process can last months or even years. Pricing can be very high, even in the millions of dollars.

There are the concepts of risk, credibility and trust that must be managed. If you buy the wrong toothpaste, no big deal. If you buy the wrong car, your spouse could get mad. But if you buy the wrong solution in business, you could be fired.

An existing vendor has the implicit trust because they have proven themselves; they have a track record. It is very difficult to replace a cur-





rent vendor. Switching to a new one always carries the risk of failure due to unforeseen circumstances.

And then there's the 80/20 rule. In B2C a product like bleach, a consumer will usually buy one bottle at a time. But in B2B, 20% of your customers account for 80% of your sales. If you have 200 active accounts, you have 40 that are truly valuable and drive the profitability of your firm. Spend your resources here by trying to prevent churn and to make these golden accounts into raving fans.

### Raving fans

Let's talk about raving fans and why they are so important. The term "raving fans" was coined by Ken Blanchard in his book of the same name. They have the following characteristics:

- They love your company, brand and products.
- They are much less likely to defect/churn.
- They give you a higher share-of-wallet.
- They are generally, although not always, less price-sensitive.
- They are more likely to buy future products, services and solutions from you and may even serve as beta testers.
- They are potential candidates to serve on customer advisory boards.
- They become brand evangelists rather than brand assassins.
- They may refer you to other customers.

### Structuring the customer research

Spend the majority of your research dollars and effort understanding your major customers. Do not try to treat all customers equally; it will destroy your business. You can love everyone but these key accounts deserve special care and handling.

Identify key stakeholders at these accounts – at corporate, the branch and the division. For example, they could be in purchasing, engineering or marketing or be a user/operator.

Identify accounts who have churned or drastically reduced their purchases with you and determine if you are doing anything to systematically drive these accounts away.

### Executing the research

Remember: you need to talk to customers, not your salesforce. VOC is voice of the customer, not the voice of the rep. Why would you want filtered and biased input? Sales reps are not trained to conduct research. They are trained to sell.

In B2C, continuing with the example from above, you have millions of people who buy bleach. It is important to do quantitative research to first tease out opportunities and then follow up with qualitative methods like focus groups or ethnography, etc. In B2B, it is the opposite. You start with qualitative discovery and then use quantitative to make the data more robust as well as sampling into smaller customers.

In B2C, you are looking for statistical significance. In B2B, you are looking for major insights as you are interviewing 80% of your sales. You can add prospects, who might grow into a large account, as well as sampling accounts who churned to make sure you learn what not to do. This is a hard concept to understand for B2C research practitioners and they have difficulty shifting their paradigms. Concentrate your research dollars on your key accounts and identifying factors that could make them raving fans.

### Research methodologies

There are a variety of methodologies. Here are some frequently used methods that are not optimal for gaining insights in B2B.

**Web surveys** are cheap to administer. You get results quickly. It is estimated that about 60% or more of marketers use this method. The problem is that it does not drive insights. Respondents in many cases do not answer the qualitative questions. If they answer these

qualitative questions, they will write two or three words. We need to have more discussions and engagements and less survey-slapping. Not getting the whys, the context for the scores and ratings, is really marketing malpractice in my view. Unfortunately, it is now the default.

**Focus groups** are fine but they present issues of coordinating logistics and relatively high costs. You have 90 minutes to get the group talking, which means probably six to eight questions. And even with great moderators, some respondents will try to dominate, others will be quieter. And group dynamics can be hampered if the respondents are market competitors. Lastly, the cost can be high due to travel, honoraria, recruiting fees, food, videotaping, generating transcripts. (We do like focus groups for reactions to new products and new websites and feedback on new logos, taglines, communication messaging.)

Our favorite methods are face-to-face executive interviews and qualitative phone discussions.

For the **executive interviews**, with 15 to 20 key customers, both the CEO and the marketing person should go out initially. Over time, other functions

**Remember: Perfection is the enemy of excellence. While some of you may not have done customer interviews before and might not know where to begin, the main thing is to begin; you will get better over time.**

like engineering can join. The CEO gets to hear directly from clients without filtering from sales reps, for example, what the customers want and how the company should improve. Once this input is delivered it helps embed insight into the DNA of the organization, something I've seen firsthand.

For the **in-depth phone interviews**, we convince customers to spend about 30 minutes on the phone with a professional interviewer, typically an outside third party who brings no agenda or bias. There are cases where the internal research and insights group is strong enough to pull off the interviewing but this is the exception.

Remember: Perfection is the enemy of excellence. While some of you may not have done customer interviews

before and might not know where to begin, the main thing is to begin; you will get better over time. Try starting with a smaller account or two to practice. Role-play with others. Get trained by professionals. Again, just start.

Here are open-ended questions are great to start a conversation and dialogue. Some of my favorites are listed below:

- How were we to deal with in the last 12 to 18 months?
- What do you like about dealing with us?
- Where do we need to improve?
- How do we compare to our competitors?
- How can we help you solve points of pain?
- What else should we be doing?
- If you were sitting down with the CEO, what is the one thing you would tell him or her that we should do to make us better or make your life easier?
- What are some trends in the industry?

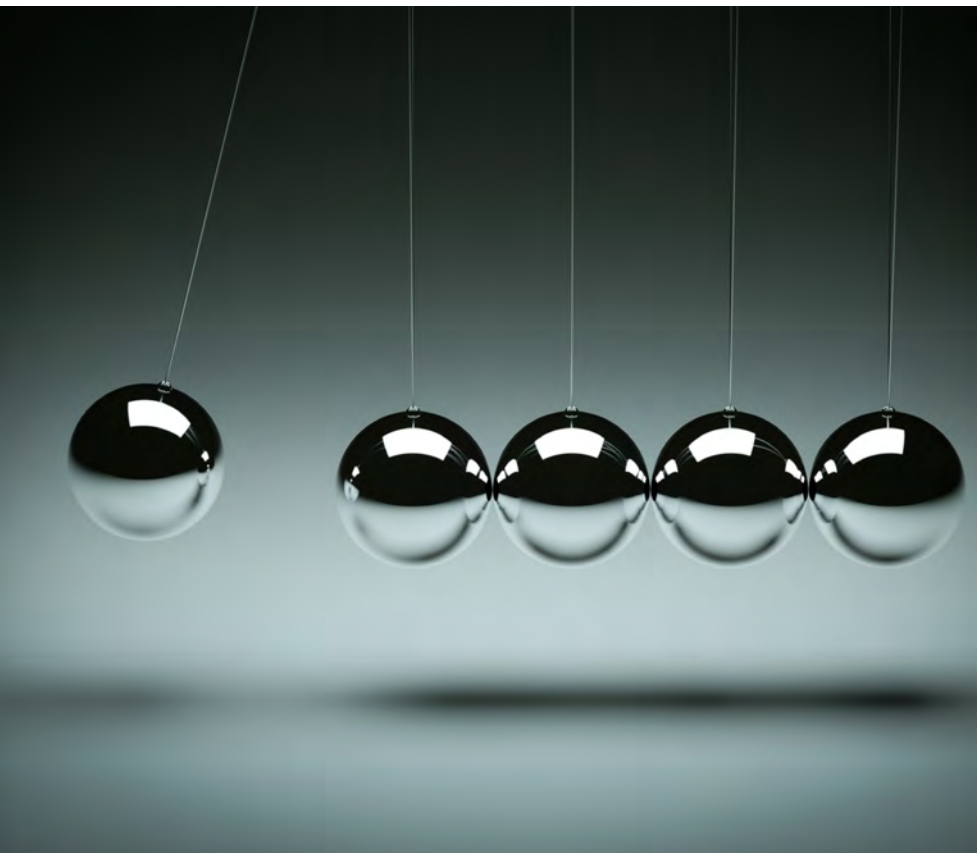
Talk to accounts who have churned so you can learn what drove them away. Your reps will likely say price but usually that's not it. Was it poor product fit? Was it the way the account was serviced?

Distribute transcripts for each customer discussion to socialize the learnings into your company. Give to the sales reps to review.

Once the qualitative research is done, you might decide to do quantitative research to make the data more robust and to survey other accounts who are not your key accounts. This can be used to tap into other non-key accounts as well as prospects.

### Thoughts on Net Promoter Score

The Net Promoter Score (NPS), now the Net Promoter System, has received a lot of bad press lately because it is not actionable. Web surveys are sent out but insights are not captured. I have a 26% NPS. Now what do I do? Who knows? The score was meant to be a benchmark, not the objective of the research. If you add qualitative diagnostic questions, you will get the answers on how to improve. Done incorrectly – and



most are done incorrectly – you have a vanity metric for the CEO. It won't help you transform the business. Even the creator of NPS, Fred Reichheld, has indicated that NPS is being used incorrectly.

Done right, it is a powerful predictor of who will buy more as well as who will churn over time. You can take actionable steps to raise the NPS score of each account. I am a strong believer in NPS and have seen remarkable results. But I am not here to convince the multitudes of service providers who think it is not a good methodology. It will remain an important part of my marketing toolbox.

### Post-research actions

OK, the research has been executed but you are not finished. Now what? You need to act on these insights. The goal is to make research expenditures an investment in the business, not just a line-item cost. It is about ROI, something the CEO will be in tune with, possibly making them more likely to fund future research.

Here is the post-research activity checklist:

- Identify the top three to five issues that cut across customers. It could be delivery, lack of responsiveness or that the company is difficult to do business with. Make sure they are root-cause issues and are important to these customers.
- Share the findings with employees. "Here is what we heard and here is what we are going to do." Every employee, as well as key vendors, should know the situation and your game plan. Obviously, for key vendors like ad agencies there should be a non-disclosure agreement in place.
- Craft initiatives that address these high-priority issues. How will these actions delight your customers?
- Select the three to five most important attributes identified by your customers. Don't just meet the competition on these criteria. Blow them away. Leave them in the dust.
- Assign each initiative to a senior-level manager for sponsorship. Someone needs to be accountable as well as allocate resources to get the work done.
- Address the silo issue. The goal is designing processes around the needs of the customer. This is where top leadership needs to enforce the policy that all departments must work together to service the customer.
- Each large account may require specific initiatives in addition to the top three to five identified earlier. Again, the goal is to make them raving fans. This step is often ignored by companies.
- Hand out customer transcripts to the salespeople of their assigned accounts. They should carefully review these documented conversations. Tell the reps what the company is doing about it. Train the salespeople to learn to take criticism. We have seen role-playing with professional actors be very helpful. The last thing you want is a defensive rep verbally attacking a customer (which we have seen happen).
- Close the feedback loop. This is not a one-and-done process. Go back to each customer. Here is what we heard. Are we missing anything? What else would you like us to do to make you a raving fan? Here is what we are going to do. We are going to implement the following programs.

sight      sound      smell      taste

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- Start a war room to track where each account is and the progress of your initiatives. The CEO or CMO can come in and review. When they can see what you are doing and the progress you are making, they will be more likely to fund research. Do not keep them in the dark or treat research like a black box.

### Research is a journey

As cited earlier, this is a journey, not a single transaction. Eighteen months after the initiatives have been launched, have discussions with customers to determine if your efforts have any impact on your relationship and determine what is to be fine-tuned.

Independent of this framework, you should be proactively reaching out to your customers to understand how you are doing.

We recommend a 10/30/90-day program. Every business day for two weeks, marketing should be spending time with a customer or customers. Every 30 days, engineering should also visit customers. What improvements

would you like to see in our product? What issues would you like our solution to address? And senior management should visit assigned platinum accounts every quarter. This sends an important signal that their account is getting high-level attention.

Remember: Discussions and engagements are much more valuable for developing insights than survey-slapping customers.

### Building a strong foundation

The above is an iterative process. It is a change in paradigm from thinking, "We don't need to do research; we know what our customers want." You don't.

This approach identifies and helps you focus initiatives on key insights. You are building a strong customer-obsession foundation. The research becomes an investment, not just a line-item cost, and your CEO will be more likely to support you since it is ROI-driven rather than merely nice-to-know.

Perhaps best of all, this kind of customer-listening work is difficult to impossible for competitors to duplicate. After all, they are likely too busy man-

aging their own activities and focusing on marketing to undertake a paradigm shift of their own.

Are you ready to shake things up and develop effective marketing strategies and tactics that are customer-based? Are you ready to make being customer driven your true north? To paraphrase Lao Tzu, the journey to customer obsession begins with a single step. ①

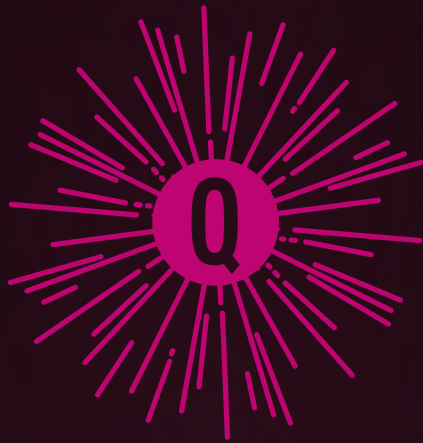
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# The good and the bad

Taking a more holistic view of data quality

| By Marco Vriens, Andy Elder and Scott Holland



## abstract

Data quality review often focuses on eliminating fraudulent data or data from respondents whose responses are questionable. But exclusionary quality reviews are only one part of the equation and do not always guarantee insightful findings. The approach explored here seeks to not only eliminate bad data but to identify the most valuable data.

Every marketing researcher knows that survey data quality has become a major issue, even more so when surveying hard-to-reach audiences. There are many factors that determine data quality: survey design, question format, survey length, sample sourcing and modality. In this article, we assume that the researcher has made every attempt to design a quality multimode survey, keep the length reasonable and select quality sample partners.

Despite all these efforts we can seldom (if ever) assume that the data we get back is completely valid or has all-around good quality. Any study can be susceptible to fake data, professional respondents or inattentive respondents who warrant being flagged as suspicious or of questionable quality. Though “inattentive” sounds benign in comparison to other, more actively problematic respondents, inattentiveness can be a serious issue for data quality. The extent to which we have respondents that were inattentive has been found to be in the 5%-50% range, as Maniaci and Rogge (2014) state: “Meaningful findings among attentive respondents were not present among inattentive respondents.”

It is this positive perspective towards the data quality issue – finding the respondents who did do their best to conscientiously read the questions and provide thoughtful answers – that often gets overlooked during the quality-review process. We argue that by identifying these respondents we not only gain meaningful insights from the data but also gain insight into quality.

### Three stages of data quality review

Illuminas has developed a data quality process ranging from eliminating fake data to identifying the most valuable respondents. We use three stages (Figure 1) of review: behavioral flagging, content review and insight creation. The first two lead to either full elimination of respondents or respondents being flagged as having some quality issues. The third identifies our most valuable respondents.



- Did they fail a knowledge verification question? For example, “Describe the topic of the survey.”
- Do qualifications look overstated? For example, someone may say they are the CEO of a \$1 billion company; not impossible but extremely unlikely.
- Were they straightlining or did their responses to battery questions lack meaning?
- Did they give inconsistent responses to questions probing the same topic?
- Did they answer obvious questions in an unobvious way? (e.g., Have you visited all the countries in the world?)

Based on our investigation we can give a point for each red flag and may decide that respondents with three red flags or more are removed from the survey. The exact elimination criteria are determined study by study and there will always be some art and science necessary to conform to different topics and question formats. We recommend making the decision process transparent and as consistent as possible across studies (especially tracking studies).

Behavioral scoring will typically have a group of respondents who fall in a gray area: They are not bad enough to immediately be deleted but their responses don't look high-quality either (some have referred to such respondents as slackers or tolerables). Ploskonka and Fairchild (2022) call out another type of gray-area respondent: the pros. According to these authors some respondents may do 50 or more surveys a day.

Of course, there are other reasons why we might get suspicious. For example, in cases where the survey is conducted by interviewers, the interviewers may take shortcuts or otherwise lead the interview against instructions. Further, aided and unaided awareness can sometimes reveal bias towards brands included in the aided question appearing in the unaided response. It is important that the researcher adapt their behavioral review to the realities of the survey mode.

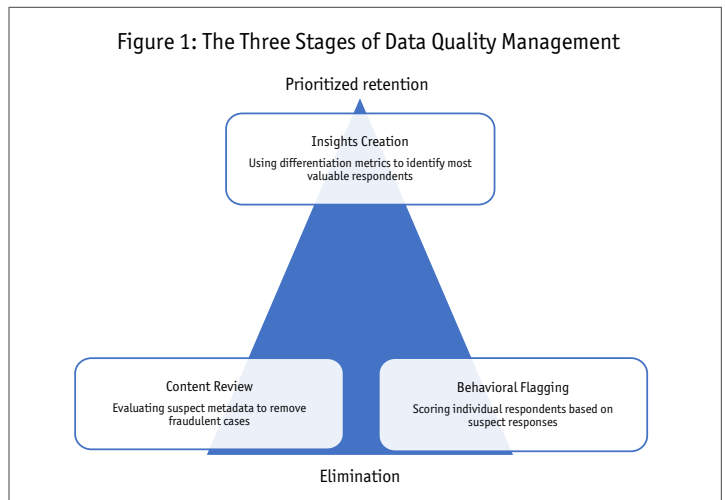
After this step, some respondents will be removed and others will be retained but they will

**Behavioral flagging.** The first step toward extracting high-quality insights requires establishing a better understanding of our low-quality respondents based on their survey responses. Sometimes these are referred to as inattentive or careless respondents. The decision of whether to exclude partially depends on judgment. Elimination can be based on having too many red flags or just one unacceptable red flag.

For some respondents, the implications of a single metric may just look too bad. When a respondent completes the survey in an unrealistically short amount of time, we can safely assume they did not read the questions sufficiently carefully and/or did not allot sufficient time to think about a response and instead just mechanically completed the survey. For example, if a survey realistically takes 15 minutes to complete and we get a survey back that was completed in under five minutes we may deem this respondent fraudulent (e.g., Pozzar et al., 2020). To detect inattentive or careless respondents, we look at a range of red-flag metrics such as:

- Were they speeding (if yes, how extreme)? Typically, a range is specified below which we believe there was some speeding going on.
- Did they have an excessive amount of don't-know or opt-out responses or, alternatively, too many or too few selections in multi-punch questions? (Excessive or minimal selections in check-all-that-apply questions is in and of itself not a reason to exclude someone but in the presence of other quality-concern flags it may be the tiebreaker.)
- Did they give odd responses to open-ended questions? For example, “I like it,” “very good and well” and other variations of affirmative phrases.

Figure 1: The Three Stages of Data Quality Management



have a quality flag that we may use at some later stage.

**Content review.** One concern we hear a lot from our clients is: Are the respondents truly qualified to be included in our study? Even though they passed the screener questions there can be several reasons to disqualify a respondent from the sample if we can determine that they are unlikely to be who they claim in the survey:

- responses came from a survey farm (see Pasternak, 2019);
- responses came from colluders (the same IP address is found among responders);
- responses were generated by bots or some automated tool; or
- responses were generated from some standard script.

If we can determine that a completed survey originated from a survey farm, this immediately disqualifies the respondent – for example, if respondents have very similar IP addresses and their responses to the screener questions are nearly identical, etc. Duplicates can be identified if the sample is obtained through multiple panel sources. By comparing the IP addresses, we could identify if a respondent entered the study twice. Respondents with duplicate IP addresses are eliminated. If a bot or automated tool was used to generate survey responses, we can catch that by using what is referred to as a honey pot, which is a hidden form that a human user is unable to see but a bot would be able to see. If a honey pot has data in it, that means that a bot or other automated tool was used to read the code of the website and fill in the data.

**Insights creation.** Using a scoring algorithm means some respondents may have one or two red flags but are not eliminated from the sample. The content review may reveal borderline cases of similarity or generalized data that are more uninteresting than they are blatantly poor. These respondents are not quite bad enough to be removed but the search for quality can leave the researcher with more doubt than confidence.

To help resolve this uncertainty, we turn to the other side of the quality spectrum: respondents whose answers indicate that thought and care were used to provide high-quality answers. Just as we identify straightlining and poor

discrimination as signs of quality issues, we can also identify those respondents who have more differentiated and informative responses than others.

How does this work in practice? For a branding study we can assume higher-quality responses will be more differentiated across brands and attributes; one brand will be a value leader, while another will own innovation.

The search for differentiation is supported by research: Neuert (2021) found that respondents differentiated less in later parts of a survey. This was indicated by lower differentiation metrics and by less fixation time as indicated by eye tracking. Different parts of a survey can lead to more- or less-differentiated responses. However, respondents can also differ in terms of how differentiating their responses are. One can use the differentiation metric used by Neuert (2021):  $P_d = 1 - \sum (P_i)^2$ , originally introduced by Krosnick and Alwin (1988). This metric can be calculated at the individual level.

Back to our branding example, say we have 10 attributes and these are evaluated on a three-point importance scale (not important, somewhat important, critically important). Consider two respondents. One selects critically important 80% of the time (eight of 10 attributes are considered critically important). The somewhat important gets 20%; none of the attributes are unimportant. The  $P_d$  value for this respondent for this survey section is  $1 - (0.80)^2 - (0.2)^2 = 0.32$ . A second respondent has 40% not important, 30% somewhat important and 30% critically important. This gives a  $P_d$  value of 0.66. A higher  $P_d$  value means more differentiation.

### A case study example

A commercial project among IT professionals was conducted in the fall of 2022. This was part of a tracking study and the survey contained several batteries of brand attributes and attitudinal statements. One battery had the following format: First, we asked “How important are each of the following scenarios when considering a provider?” The scale: not important, important, critically important. Respondents could select from

Table 1: Brand rating indices for 10 scenarios

TOTAL			
(n=1500)	BRANDS		
SCENARIOS	LARGE BRAND 1	LARGE BRAND 2	MID-TIER BRAND
1	9	7	2
2	8	5	-5
3	9	5	-4
4	3	8	-2
5	12	4	-18
6	5	9	-3
7	6	8	4
8	7	8	5
9	2	3	1
10	13	7	-6

a set of 10 scenarios (all that apply). Next, for those scenarios a respondent deemed critically important, they were asked which providers (out of a list of 10 brands) they preferred for each given scenario. Among the choices were big brands such as Microsoft, IBM, etc., and mid-tier brands such as Salesforce and several smaller brands. See Table 1 for the overall results.

As we can see, the two bigger brands are always better than the mid-tier brand on every attribute. Can a brand really be among the best across all scenarios even in areas where other smaller brands had clearly specialized? The brand halo effect could be partially responsible for this result – that is, some respondents, instead of evaluating a brand attribute-by-attribute, may have a strong overall opinion of it that colors their response to each attribute evaluation.

Respondents can differ in how many scenarios they select as vitally important. Respondents can also differ with respect to how many of these vital scenarios they associate with a given brand. To identify those respondents who can give us enhanced insight, we use the following steps:

1. Calculate individual-level differentiation metrics ( $P_d$ ), for both importance and association questions.
2. Use cluster analysis to separate low-differentiating respondents from differentiating respondents.

To illustrate this, we show a simplified example. After running a cluster analysis on the  $P$  metrics, we identified two segments: a low-differentiating segment (very similar to Table 1 result) and a high-differentiating segment.

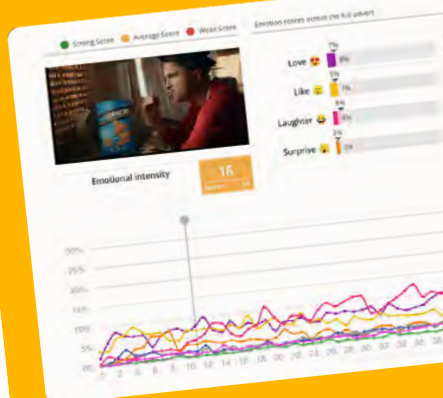
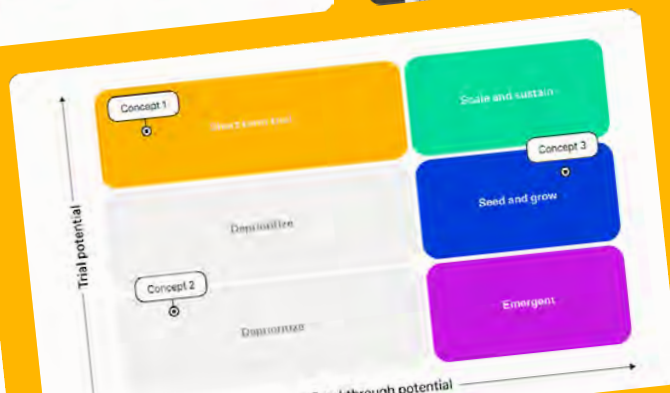
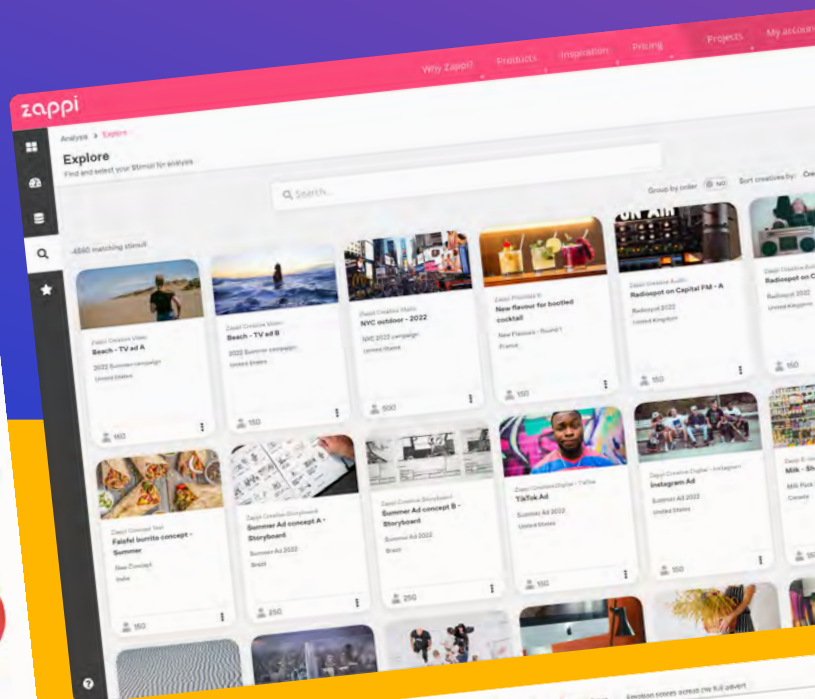


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In Table 2 we show the results of the high-differentiating segment.

For this subgroup, we can see the results are more interesting. Brand 1 stands out on Scenario 4 and 5, Brand 2 stands out on Scenario 3 and 7, and the mid-tier brand stands out on Scenario 1 and 9. Though we cannot show the real data here, Scenario 1 was the area where the mid-tier brand had specialized.

From a quality perspective, both segments presented viable and realistic brand scenarios. While the differentiating segment was clearly more insightful (and directly relevant to our research goals), the low-differentiation segment became more understandable in contrast. This process allowed us to identify greater depth to brand perceptions in the market and also validate that a lack of differentiation actually reflected a sizeable and important portion of the market.

### Response quality can vary

Marketing research professionals take a variety of precautionary measures to counter fraud, misrepresentation or inattentiveness. Quality review often focuses on eliminating fraudulent data or data

**Table 2: Brand rating indices for 10 scenarios for the differentiating segment**

SCENARIOS	BRANDS		
	LARGE BRAND 1	LARGE BRAND 2	MID-TIER BRAND
1	3	2	8
2	2	-8	3
3	4	8	-8
4	7	4	-2
5	2	-4	-4
6	8	-3	2
7	-1	6	2
8	-2	-6	1
9	-7	-1	9
10	1	-3	-7

from respondents whose responses are questionable based on quality metrics. But as we have shown, while data quality can vary across respondents, it can also vary within the data of one respondent. And just because a respondent falls in the low-quality category for one battery of questions, that doesn't mean all their data should be disregarded. Particularly with B2B audiences, where complex qualifications and finite audiences mean that every respondent counts, taking the extra steps outlined above can help mine every ounce of gold from our industry's most precious resource. <sup>1</sup>

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# Stay the course

The importance of maintaining brand equity through a recession

| By Greg Dolan



## abstract

Against a backdrop of layoffs and economic uncertainty, companies reflexively turn to slashing their marketing and advertising spend – despite evidence that doing so is damaging to their brands. This article presents five ways to build positive brand equity and emerge stronger and better-positioned in the marketplace.

Thirty-three percent. That's how much you can boost your company revenue<sup>1</sup> if you present your brand consistently.

A well-established presence in the marketplace means you can: charge a premium price for products or services; build customer loyalty; and make it more difficult for competitors to attract the same base because consumers perceive the products of well-known brand names as better than those of lesser-known ones.

However, as we head into a potential recession, many businesses reflexively cut back on discretionary expenditures such as marketing, which owns the company brand, and advertising. History tells us it's a mistake to do this.

Research<sup>2</sup> reveals pulling back on advertising hurts a brand in the long term, with sales crippled both during and after a recession.<sup>3</sup> This was accurate during the 2008 recession, where it took brands that shut down their advertising three to five years to recover their market share. However, brands that sustain advertising investment and maintain a brand presence during a downturn can increase sales during and after.

## The value of strong brand equity

A strong brand starts with brand equity. This is the added commercial and social value that a product or service carries over the same product or service without the name. This value can include the consumer's awareness of the brand, associations with it and perception of quality. The added value can be positive or negative.

Businesses with high brand equity have a distinguished reputation and brand recognition among consumers, making it easier to launch new products or expand into new markets. Brands can even sell or license their brand to generate additional revenue. A prominent brand typically equals success.



Building brand equity requires a long-term, strategic approach that focuses on creating positive customer associations and experiences. It's also an ongoing effort. Consider that 74% of the S&P 100 companies rebranded<sup>4</sup> their business in the first seven years. Maintaining outstanding brand equity requires companies to avoid resting on their laurels.

### Five ways companies can build positive brand equity

The companies that build the most positive brand equity and not only survive but thrive through recession do the following five things.

- 1. Provide high-quality products or services.** Consumers' purchase decisions get heavily swayed by their perception of your products. If they deem your product high-quality, you'll gain positive brand equity. Moreover, consumers will be more willing to pay a premium for your products.

In the age of social media channels like TikTok, which is currently experiencing a "deinfluencing" trend<sup>5</sup> with more than 200 million video views, it's critical to ensure you price products according to their actual value. Today's consumers, especially Gen Z, quickly call out brands for putting heavy price tags on products and instead recommend cheaper, just-as-valuable "dupes," as TikTok jargon calls them.

Use your marketing messaging to highlight the top three to five benefits or proof-points of your product's or service's quality. Create case studies, ask for customer reviews on relevant websites and solicit user-generated content on social media to encourage customers to share images or videos of them using your product. As 95% of consumers read online reviews<sup>6</sup> before making a purchase and 58% say they would pay more for a brand's products with good reviews, it pays to shout positive customer feedback from the rooftops.

- 2. Use consistent branding across all touchpoints.** The potential touchpoints through which a consumer interacts with your brand have exploded. You must now consider your website, social media channels, digital ads, e-mail, corporate signatures, PR, direct mail, billboards and brick-and-mortar stores (if you have them). You must ensure your logo, color palette, language and overall look and feel remain consistent across all these touchpoints. If you don't, consumers won't connect the dots that your brand is the same across these channels.

Consistent branding helps establish a clear and recognizable identity, which can increase brand recognition and recall, leading to more trust in the minds of consumers. It also helps differentiate a brand from its competitors and reinforces its unique value proposition, making it easier for customers to connect emotionally with the brand. Consumers interact with six to eight touchpoints<sup>7</sup> before purchasing and research<sup>8</sup> shows that purchase intent improves by 90% and brand perception by 68% when consumers view consistent messaging across multiple channels.

A great place to start is with brand style and usage guidelines, which ensure all messaging and brand assets remain consistent and aligned with your company mission, vision and values. If your company has rebranded recently, ensure all your updated logos, fonts, color schemes and messaging are consistent across all touchpoints and available to the necessary employees. This includes ensuring that visual assets like logos are sized appropriately for the various channels. You can also encourage employees to use company branding assets on their own social media profiles, such as LinkedIn, to help them become brand advocates.

- 3. Build loyalty through excellent customer service and gathering feedback to improve the brand continually.** More than half of global consumers name customer service



“very important”<sup>9</sup> in brand choice and loyalty. Almost two-thirds have stopped doing business with a company over poor customer service. You must deliver seamless, consistent, helpful customer service experiences to retain customers and boost brand equity.

How you execute customer service must be unique to your specific brand. Some succeed with in-house teams, others with outsourced call centers and chatbots. What’s important to prioritize is having a dialogue with your customers and then quickly and relevantly resolving their customer service requests. Consumers don’t want to speak or type into the ether, get handed off to support person after support person or have a machine point them to resources that aren’t specific or helpful to their problem. Customize your customer support, regardless of channel, and customers will stick by your side.

Also, don’t forget to gather feedback through customer service surveys or follow-up e-mails. This intel is critical to improving not just your customer support functions but also your overall brand. Maybe your website is hard to navigate, resulting in an uptick in customer service requests. Perhaps the same product is causing problems for a large number of customers. Whatever the issues, it’s best to hear them from the source and let them know you’re using their feedback to improve.

**4. Connect with customers on an emotional level by communicating your brand values and story in a way that resonates.** You can nail the previous three points and still have negative brand equity. The acceleration towards a digital-first economy means it’s more complicated than ever to earn and keep customer loyalty. It’s simply not enough to have innovative and differentiated products and services. You must also deliver an outstanding customer experience rooted in emotional connection. “An optimal brand experience demonstrates emotional sensitivity and sets the bar for all brand expectations moving forward, regardless of category

or sector,” says Deloitte.<sup>10</sup> That’s why emotions, not logic, influence 95% of purchasing decisions. Due to the recent times we’ve lived in and the social responsibility younger shoppers want brands to embody, companies should convey values that speak beyond just dollar signs and connect to the greater good. More than half of consumers have either cut down on or completely cut<sup>11</sup> shopping with businesses they think behaved inappropriately in the areas of environmental or social issues. Research by Edelman<sup>12</sup> shows that Gen Z believes brands must take a stand on issues that affect its employees (60%), its customers (59%) and how the products are made (55%) and that communications should reflect this via advertising and on their website (62%, on average across items). Thinking about your brand, do you support charities? Are you trying to reduce your carbon footprint? Have you made it part of your mission to hire more female, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals? Think beyond what you sell to how to try to impact the world positively. Be authentic in conveying this messaging<sup>13</sup> because today’s consumers can smell a rat from a mile away. And above all else, be human.<sup>14</sup>

**5. Develop and execute marketing strategies through effective advertising that build a positive reputation and convey the unique benefits of your brand.**

Businesses with robust omnichannel customer engagement retain, on average, 89% of their customers,<sup>15</sup> compared to 33% for companies lacking in this area. This means you should use a variety of marketing channels to get your message across. But omnichannel marketing doesn’t mean you haphazardly execute campaigns in various channels and call it a day. What someone sees in a display ad should tie into what they see in a social media app. Use your marketing channels to tell a story, using different channels as your chapters.

Regarding the best marketing strategies, think sight, sound and motion. Video is excellent for brand awareness and streaming services are on the rise. Consumers are constantly on their phones, so mobile and social media are other worthwhile channels to pursue. E-mail also made a comeback during the pandemic. Regardless of your advertising channels, be consistent, coherent and relevant.

Use actual humans in your marketing assets, incorporating diversity and inclusion. Your customers are individuals from different backgrounds and circumstances, so you must consider that when trying to connect with them.

### **A bright future for brand equity**


It’s impossible to predict how long a recessionary environment could last. That means companies must maintain their marketing efforts to maximize

## 5 ways to build positive brand equity

1. Provide high-quality products or services.
2. Use consistent branding across all touchpoints.
3. Build loyalty through excellent customer service and gathering feedback to improve the brand continually.
4. Connect with customers on an emotional level by communicating your brand values and story in a way that resonates.
5. Develop and execute marketing strategies through effective advertising that build a positive reputation and convey the unique benefits of your brand.



brand equity. They can consider alternative cost-saving measures, such as adjusting their marketing mix, optimizing their ad spend or focusing on more cost-effective marketing channels. If they maintain their spending, investment and R&D innovation through difficult periods, they will remain competitive when the economy recovers.

For brands to continue operating and growing in a challenging environment, they must continue investing in building their business, brand and equity. Whatever their position, it's imperative that companies think about the forward trajectory and not get mired in the difficulties of the present because not doing so may wind up ceding market dominance to another brand. By continuing to advertise, companies maintain customer engagement and set themselves up for future growth. 

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## customer experience (CX) and user experience (UX) research

### The Right Participants

Recruiting participants for CX and UX studies can be different from recruiting for other qualitative studies or focus groups. Understanding these nuances can be key to enlisting the right audience for participation

### Questions to Ask

- Can your research partner put medical condition patients at ease in discussing sensitive topics?
- Can your research partner gracefully verify the stage of illness and current protocols of an advanced condition patient?
- Who is responsible for addressing compliance requirements (security/privacy, legal, HIPAA, GDPR, CCP, trade secrets, etc.)?
- How can a study be set up so respondents can agree to be recontacted in the future?



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# In search of teachable moments

Hands-on marketing research learning is the way to go

| By Adam Warner

## abstract

The trial-and-error learning approach is well-suited to marketing research, whether it's college students working on projects for their intro to market research class or newly added employees in a client-side insights department or research agency. Getting that real-world experience is the key to becoming comfortable with and versed in the range of tools and techniques that researchers have at their disposal.

There's a book on my shelf called "You Can't Teach a Kid to Ride a Bike at a Seminar" (by David H. Sandler). I love the title because it is so true. To learn how to ride a bike, you need to get on a bike – try, fall, get up and try again. This same philosophy works for learning marketing research.

To learn the basics of research, there is no better teacher than experience. This applies in the classroom or in a professional setting.

There's another great saying: "See one, do one, teach one." Most of us have never been to medical school. However, for those who have, you've probably heard this one before. I'm oversimplifying, but to set a broken bone you need to observe one, perform the procedure yourself and then teach others. I'm not a physician but this approach works wonders for those learning market research skills as well.

At Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J., we conduct about 15-18 real-world market research projects each semester. These are semester-long projects, where students in market research courses are partnered with a business or organization to address a specific challenge. The projects are amazing hands-on learning opportunities for our students. The Market Research Center program is part of the Stillman School of Business and its mission of "transforming concepts into practice."

While college is a great time for students to expand their knowledge and learn new things, often classes aren't as interesting as they could be. One problem is that many teaching techniques have not evolved. Sitting in class, watching a professor review 25 PowerPoint slides for an hour and a half twice a week is just as boring as ever.

This is where the real world needs to come into the classroom. We think of our market research projects where student teams are paired with business partners as win/win. A win for our students with a tremendous hands-on learning opportunity. They have a client, a real business challenge and no easy answers. A win for the businesses because they gain insights and action-



able recommendations to their pressing challenges. They love working with students and their fresh perspectives at costs that are a fraction of commercial fees (and, for non-profits, pro bono).

How does it all come together? The first step in the learning process is conceptual: What is market research? When is it needed? And why?

The short answer to that “why” question: Research helps you make better decisions. There are certain situations in our personal or professional lives when you need to make a good decision. For example:

- Personal. You are purchasing a home. Probably the most expensive purchase you will ever make. You need to do your own market research to make a good decision. What are comparable houses selling for? Does the basement flood? How are the area schools? What are the taxes? Do the neighbors have a crazy, barksy dog?
- Professional. Your company is developing a new product or service. The stakes are high and you need to make smart decisions on how to proceed. Who are your competitors? Who are your target customers? How will you reach them? What messages resonate most? And on and on. Market research can help your company navigate these tricky, important challenges.

After an initial introduction to some research concepts and terminology (qual vs. quant, primary vs. secondary, open-ended vs. closed-ended) it makes sense to quickly get to the hands-on part. Whether it's a student team paired up with a business or a market research company with a client, learning by doing is the way to go.

There are typically three phases to our semester-long experiential learning projects.

**Phase I – Planning.** Getting business partners and students aligned regarding the key business issue. What question are you trying to answer?

**Phase II – Qualitative.** While a qualitative phase doesn't always need to precede a quantitative phase, it usually makes sense. Qualitative research can provide a foundation for understanding the why behind respondents' current behavior and potential future actions.

**Phase III – Quantitative.** The quantitative phase, often in the form of an online survey, can follow up on key topics of interest from the qualitative phase and help validate findings with a larger sample.

During the projects, the goal is regular communication between the student teams and business partners. The communication part is a big component of the learning too. Many students have never truly had a client. Meetings take place throughout the semester to ensure projects are on track. Deliverables are scheduled after both the qualitative and quantitative phases. Then there is a comprehensive final presentation with summarized insights and actionable recommendations at the conclusion.

### Tips to get newcomers up to speed

These same learning concepts apply in the professional market research industry as well. Of course, some basic conceptual knowledge about market research is certainly needed. However, the quicker the exposure to real projects and clients, the better. The projects and client interaction are where the bulk of the learning takes place. Here are three hands-on tips to get the newcomers at your company quickly up to speed:

1. Training: Some market research basics and onboarding are always in order.
2. Company: “How we do things” varies from company to company, so you want to let the newbies know.
3. Mentoring: Pairing-up new team members with more experienced personnel to share best practices.

Another important learning: take your time on the important communication at the beginning of each project. Easier said than done, of course. Clients often want results yesterday. There is a tendency to rush projects in the initial phases to get them underway ASAP. Marketing research professionals are guilty of this too. Teams want to jump right into the project details (recruiting, discussion guides, survey programming, etc.). However, it is wise to take your time on the important prep work. Ensure you are aligned with your client and



team on the following key items, BEFORE getting to the nitty gritty of the project:

**Business issue** – What is the key question you are trying to address? It’s critical to align on this before the project gets underway.

**Scope** – Exactly what will the project include (or exclude)? How many respondents? Timeline? Transcripts? Incentives? What type of deliverables?

These are questions that must be addressed before major resources (time or dollars) are utilized. Aligning on these key issues beforehand may slow you down initially but it pays off in the long run with targeted insights addressing your client’s specific business needs.

### On-campus focus group facility

Back to the value of the hands-on learning for market research. At Seton Hall, we are fortunate to have a focus group facility here on campus. It has the one-way viewing for clients and all the bells and whistles of a commercial facility. Students think the observation room is cool, like watching a suspect being interviewed on Law & Order or Chicago P.D.

When introducing the Market Research Center and the focus group setting, we first provide a brief overview of best practices. Then we quickly toss the students into the deep end by having them moderate a mock focus group with little to no preparation. We present a brief scenario to our rookie moderators like the following:

*Your client is considering opening a gelato store.*

*All the focus group respondents are residents of the proposed location.*

*The client wants to determine if the business will be a success.*

Then without any additional instruction, we send the new moderators (in pairs) into the mock focus group. Our student moderators usually walk into the focus group with a major deer-in-the-headlights look. They remain standing, while all respondents are seated. Then without any introductions or context they ask respondents to raise their hands if they like ice cream. It goes on like this. If we video the session (great learning as well), we review the fun and do a little play-by-play commentary as we watch.

Learning to create a survey takes place in a similar hands-on way. Our goal for students is to get them comfortable creating a survey in an online platform (we utilize Qualtrics). So, without any formal instruction we give students about 20 minutes to pair-up and create a five-question survey about any topic they’d like. They are encouraged to try different question/answer types available in the survey tool. Then the student pairs send in their surveys via e-mail to be shared with the class.

Survey topics range from favorite foods, movies, music, streaming services, social media or other top-of-mind thoughts for college students. This hands-

on approach forces students to quickly get comfortable with a new survey platform in a fun, experiential way. The quality of these inaugural surveys can be another story. Students typically just attach the survey link to an e-mail without any explanation or introduction. Sometimes even no subject line for the e-mail. We ask them: Would YOU click on this link? No way! It’s great for encouraging them to create an appealing e-mail to accompany their surveys.

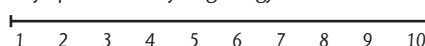
Questions in these first-pass surveys can be things like:

*How often do you go to the movies?*

- Never
- Sometimes
- A lot

(So, exactly how many is “sometimes” or “a lot”?)

*Use the slider below to indicate... How many days per week do you go to gym?*



(What if I don’t go to the gym at all? Also, I’d like to meet the person who is going 10 days a week.)

*Do you like pizza?*

- NO  YES

(Respondent indicates they don’t like pizza – crazy, right? Yet the next survey question is...)

*What is your favorite pizza topping?*

(...didn’t they just say they don’t like pizza? Why ask about toppings now? Hint/hint: time to learn about skip logic!)

These exercises are a fun, quick way for anyone to learn basic marketing research skills.

Long story short, regardless of where you are in your market research journey, there’s nothing like experiential learning. Hands down, hands-on learning is the way go! 🍕

Adam Warner is the director of the Market Research Center at Seton Hall University, a marketing professor and president of Warner and Associates Consulting. He can be reached at adam.warner@shu.edu.

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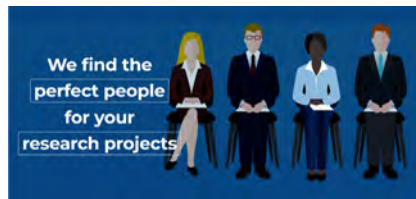
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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

●●● can't-miss activities

The 2023 Quirk's Event – New York will be held on **July 19-20** at the Javits Convention Center in **New York City**. Visit [www.thequirksevent.com](http://www.thequirksevent.com).

**Corinium Global Intelligence** will host CDAO Indonesia on **July 26**. Visit [cdao-id.coriniumintelligence.com](http://cdao-id.coriniumintelligence.com).

**Insights Association** will host The Leadership Event on **August 1-3** in **Chicago**. Visit [www.insightsassociation.org/Events/The-Leadership-Event-August-1-3-2023](http://www.insightsassociation.org/Events/The-Leadership-Event-August-1-3-2023).

**The Research Club** will host the Summer Party on **August 3** in **London**. Visit [www.theresearchclub.com/events/london-summer-party](http://www.theresearchclub.com/events/london-summer-party).

**Marcus Evans** will host the CMO Summit on **August 3-4**. Visit [www.august23.cmoanzsummit.com](http://www.august23.cmoanzsummit.com).

**AMA** will host its Summer Academic Conference on **August 4-6**. Visit [www.ama.org/events/academic/2023-ama-summer-academic-conference](http://www.ama.org/events/academic/2023-ama-summer-academic-conference).

**Corinium Global Intelligence** will host CDAO Chicago on **August 8-9** in **Chicago**. Visit [da-metro-chicago.coriniumintelligence.com](http://da-metro-chicago.coriniumintelligence.com).

**Worldwide Business Research** will host eTail Boston on **August 14-16**. Visit [www.etaileast.wbresearch.com](http://www.etaileast.wbresearch.com).

**Corinium Global Intelligence** will host DataCon Africa Johannesburg Edition on **August 15-16**. Visit [www.datacon-af-jhb.coriniumintelligence.com](http://www.datacon-af-jhb.coriniumintelligence.com).

**The Research Society** will host the Human Insights Conference on **August 30-31** in **Melbourne**. Visit [humaninsights.com.au](http://humaninsights.com.au).

**Corinium Global Intelligence** will host CDAO Melbourne on **September 4-6**. Visit [cdao-mel.coriniumintelligence.com](http://cdao-mel.coriniumintelligence.com).

**Merlien Institute** will host the UXDG Virtual Summit on **September 6-7**. Visit [www.uxdgsummit.com](http://www.uxdgsummit.com).

**GreenBook** will host IIEX.AI on **September 7**. Visit [iiex.ai/page/2837517/register](http://iiex.ai/page/2837517/register).

**Insights Association** will host the North Central Fall Conference on **September 6-8** in **Minneapolis**. Visit [www.insightsassociation.org/Events/Upcoming-Events](http://www.insightsassociation.org/Events/Upcoming-Events).

**Society of Insurance Research** will host the Annual Conference and Exhibit Fair on **September 10-12** in **Cincinnati**. Visit [bit.ly/3oNGsUX](http://bit.ly/3oNGsUX).

**ESOMAR** will host ESOMAR Congress 2023 on **September 10-13** in **Amsterdam**. Visit [community.esomar.org/congress-2023-registration](http://community.esomar.org/congress-2023-registration).

**Corinium Global Intelligence** will host its CDAO Government event on **September 12-13**. Visit [cdao-gov.coriniumintelligence.com](http://cdao-gov.coriniumintelligence.com).

**Strategy Institute** will host the Annual Data Analytics Summit on **September 13-14** in **Toronto**. Visit [dataanalyticspublicsectorsummit.com/about](http://dataanalyticspublicsectorsummit.com/about).

**Worldwide Business Research** will host eTail Connect Autumn U.K. on **September 13-14** in **St. Albans**. Visit [etailconnectautumn.wbresearch.com](http://etailconnectautumn.wbresearch.com).

**Forrester Research** will host Data Strategy & Insights on **September 13-14** in **Austin**. Visit [www.forrester.com/event/data-strategy-and-insights](http://www.forrester.com/event/data-strategy-and-insights).

**We.CONECT Global Leaders GmbH** will host the Big Data Minds event on **September 17-19** in **Berlin**. Visit [www.big-data-minds.com](http://www.big-data-minds.com).

**Quirk's Media** will host Wisdom Wednesday on **September 20**. Visit [www.quirks.com/events/wisdom-wednesday-webinars-september-20-20232023](http://www.quirks.com/events/wisdom-wednesday-webinars-september-20-20232023).

**Strategy Institute** will host the Annual Customer Experience for Financial Services Summit on **September 19-20** in **Toronto**. Visit [www.cxfinancialservices.com](http://www.cxfinancialservices.com).

**Quirk's Media** will host the 2023 Quirk's Event Virtual – AI event on **October 18-19**. Visit [www.thequirksevent.com](http://www.thequirksevent.com).

**Quirk's Media** will host the Marketing Research and Insights Excellence Awards on **November 14**. Visit [www.quirksawards.com](http://www.quirksawards.com).

*Event details as of June 1, 2023. Please see websites for more details.*

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# QUIRK'S TIME CAPSULE

Facts and findings from nearly 40 years of Quirk's



## Bacon and blockbusters: Movie rentals did boffo biz for grocery stores

Thirty years ago, the hottest department in your local grocery store had nothing to do with food. As a February 1993 Survey Monitor entry (“Supermarket video grew in '92”) explained, “the new star category in the supermarket industry” was the video department. According to a study by Food Marketing Institute (FMI), in 1991, U.S. supermarkets recorded \$1.35 billion in video rental and sales of movie videotapes. Even more mind-boggling, supermarket operators carried an average of 1,417 titles and 1,846 tapes per store and projected 1,573 titles and 2,088 tapes for 1992, the FMI said.

Back then, the Friday night trip to the grocery store almost always included picking up a movie or two for weekend viewing. (We don't miss those marathon haggling sessions over who could/would watch what!) Some people (cough, cough), whose parents were cheapskates, even had to endure the process of renting a VCR from the grocery store in order to be able to play the videotapes they had picked out. And most of the time, all the good new releases were already gone.

More than half of the companies in the FMI survey indicated that by 1993, all of their stores would offer both video rentals and sell-through videos. Four in 10 said they would increase the number of sell-through titles, which grew by 27 percent in 1991 alone. Almost three in 10 (28 percent) expected to increase the space for video rentals.

Speaking of which, the selling area for video departments averaged 666 square feet, with larger companies (10 or more stores) averaging about 50 square feet more than the smaller ones.

The supermarket video operators' greatest concerns? The cost of purchasing videos and the increased competition from other video outlets. They were also worried about the growth of other entertainment alternatives, theft/shrink and space constraints.

# 1993

## Love those mall facility modems!

The cover story of our February 1993 issue (illustrated above), “Keep the kids interested,” was a case study on the youthwear division of Levi Strauss & Co.'s use of a CATI system to conduct mall research on jeans and clothing trends with boys aged 9 to 14. Entertainment breaks were used to keep the interest of the boys during the interviews, which lasted 30-45 minutes, and also included a portion delivered via VCR. The data was sent to research company ACS for tabbing, *either on disk or via modem*. The modem option meant that turnaround could be quite short, though not every mall facility was equipped to handle data transmission that way. “Everyone is taking baby steps but we have three or four groups of mall facilities that we work with who can transmit by phone. That's been a real boon,” said ACS's Amy Yoffie.

## State-of-the-art, circa early 1990s

In that same issue, Quirk's Editor Joe Rydholm reviewed Al Blankenship and George Breen's book “State of the Art Marketing Research,” noting that one of the topics was *“how to choose between mail, phone, personal interviews, omnibus, etc.; how to develop a questionnaire; and a lengthy section on that most popular of research methods, the focus group.”*

Scan to access all  
Quirk's back issues.







# WALK. BIKE. RUN. GIVE.

The Marketing Research Education Foundation (MREF)'s Race Around the World for Education is the Marketing Research Industry's Largest-Ever Fundraiser.



Thanks to our generous sponsors and **850+** participants, we raised more than **\$90,000** and logged **64,081 MILES.**

## TOP FINISHERS

### Walking

1. Logan Huff, *Research Results, Inc*, **489.6 miles**
2. Haroon Mir, *Ipsos*, **290.3 miles**
3. Ryan Nesci, *Ipsos*, **278.9 miles**

### Running

1. Anshuman Saha, *PureSpectrum*, **350.3 miles**
2. Cyrus Kurd, *CMB*, **259.7 miles**
3. Erika FitzGerald, *Focus Forward*, **259.4 miles**

### Biking

1. Haroon Mir, *Ipsos*, **1,002.2 miles**
2. David Breihan, *PureSpectrum*, **844.8 miles**
3. Cheryl Muldoon, *Sago*, **767.7 miles**

### Other (Swim, Skate, Etc.)

1. Paula Michaels, *Fuel + Focus Room*, **167.2 miles**
2. Haley White, *Rare Patient Voice*, **161 miles**
3. James Demling, *Prodege*, **144.4 miles**

## OUR MISSION

To unify, inspire and activate the marketing research community to focus its collective resources to educate children and youth worldwide.



**START LIGHTHOUSE** is a New York-based organization that is dedicated to narrowing the literacy gap through a social justice lens. It services 5,200 students across eight Title 1 schools within the Bronx. Seventy to 85% of students living in the Bronx read below grade level due to a lack of book access. Start Lighthouse has distributed more than 21,015 new multicultural books with a value of over \$400,385. With this grant funding it will expand its opportunities and programming to hundreds of new students.



**MARTY'S ORCHID HOUSE** is a Kentucky-based nonprofit organization offering a specialized day program for preschoolers with autism spectrum disorder and overlapping health conditions. It allows low-income parents to continue employment and offers enrolled children access to a range of services. Grant funding will help Marty's Orchid House purchase equipment to improve its occupational therapy program as well as the necessary screening tools to establish a speech therapy program.

**THE ORPHANS' AID SOCIETY** offers monetary aid to children in foster arrangements in Ukraine. Children in their network have been displaced regionally in Ukraine and across Europe. Grant funding will enable OAS to continue working under difficult circumstances to help orphans and their caretakers.



**THE HOGAR MONTIEL GIRLS ASSOCIATION** works with young at-risk girls between the ages of 5-to-12 in Costa Rica. It supports them academically according to learning styles and individual needs and supports their emotional well-being and development. With the MREF grant funding, the Hogar Montiel Program will be able to continue offering support to the young girls by providing school supplies and tutoring classes in mathematics, technology, or English.

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## 10 minutes with...

### Ed Kahn

Senior Principal, Customer Experience Insights, Mutual of America



*“Make sure you understand the business value your stakeholders deliver to the organization and how they do it. Build trust by reinforcing that you succeed when they succeed.”*

Scan to read the full article at [www.Quirks.com](http://www.Quirks.com).



#### What led you to a career in marketing research and insights?

When I was very young, I was fascinated by kids around me who had come from other countries. Their languages and views were so different from my other friends and I wanted to learn more about them. In college, I didn't know what major to pursue so I read through course listings noting what interested me. Anthropology kept coming up so that was my major. I also completed a minor in psychology just by signing up for courses that interested me.

After completing my MBA in finance and international business, I was job hunting and happened to visit a foundation that worked with Japanese companies. One company needed an American employee to do econometric forecasting and market research. Fortunately, my interests and studies qualified me for the role and my career was launched.

#### Could you share advice for researchers who are struggling to prove business value to key stakeholders?

To prove business value, you and your stakeholders must define that value together. Do your homework before that discussion, we are researchers after all! Make sure you understand the business value your stakeholders deliver to the organization and how they do it. Build trust by reinforcing that you succeed when they succeed. Not every research effort will add the value you expect but your commitment to partnership will help you earn opportunities and success will come.

#### Do you have any tips for research and insight teams that struggle to say no to research projects they believe will not provide business value?

If you can deliver reliable answers to stakeholder questions, you're in business! Sometimes you figure out that you can't deliver reliable answers, that it's too costly or that you can't get it done quickly enough. Be transparent about how you reach your conclusion and validate it with the requestor. They will learn things from you, or they may find an error in your evaluation and then you've learned something from them!

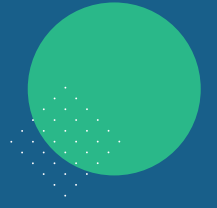
#### What excites you about coming to work each day?

I've always been a puzzle/problem-solving person. I enjoy unveiling the hidden answer or solution. It excites me to come to work and develop solutions that help my clients succeed – and that translates to the continued success of Mutual of America in achieving its mission.





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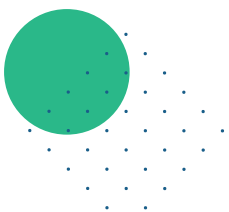
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