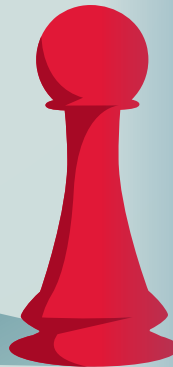# QUIRK'S

For marketing research and insights professionals

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QUIRK'S

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MAY/JUNE 2024
VOLUME XXXVIII NUMBER 3
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2024 nomination portal now open

The Marketing Research and Insight Excellence Awards are now accepting nominations! Nominate yourself, fellow researchers or a research organization for one of our 17 categories. Early-bird pricing ends May 22 and nominations close July 11 at 11:59 p.m. ET. You can't win if you don't enter! Nominate today at www.quirksawards.com!

The Q Report returns for 11th year

The Q Report, the only industry study that is dedicated to exploring the work life of the corporate/end-client researcher, returns in 2024! If you are an end-client researcher keep an eye out for our survey to hit your inbox over the next few weeks. The results of the 2024 Q Report will be published in the September/October issue of Quirk's magazine. Take a look at past reports at www.quirks.com/tools/corporate-researcher-report.

// E-newsworthy

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▍ **Agile design: A holistic approach to navigating unknowns**

▍ **The risks of generative AI and deepfakes in the marketing research industry**

▍ **Macy's future: Can iconic department stores rebound?**

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Q // Noted Posts

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From media and advertising to co-founding a marketing research firm
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Research Careers Blog

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••• questionnaire development

Survey approach gleans truer responses to dangerous questions

As reported by Ileana Wachtel of Newswise, Chinese citizens who rarely voice open criticism of their government revealed stronger negative views when they could answer questions anonymously, according to a study published in The China Quarterly.

The study, "Do Chinese citizens conceal opposition to the CCP in surveys? Evidence from two experiments," by researchers at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, shows an enormous drop in citizen support for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and government policies when citizens are surveyed using a method called a list experiment.

A list experiment confers a heightened sense of anonymity by asking respondents how many statements they agree with rather than which ones and in this case researchers found CCP support hovers between 50% and 70%, not 90% as reported in traditional surveys.

The direct-question survey also showed that only 8% of citizens cited fear of repression as a reason for not protesting, while the list-experiment survey revealed that about 40% acknowledged fear as a deterrent.

Traditional surveys conducted in China that directly question respondents overstate Chinese citizens' support for the CCP by up to 28.5 percentage points, according to the study. Thus, the researchers underscore the need for scholars to stop using direct-question surveys to measure public opinion in China and other repressive environments.
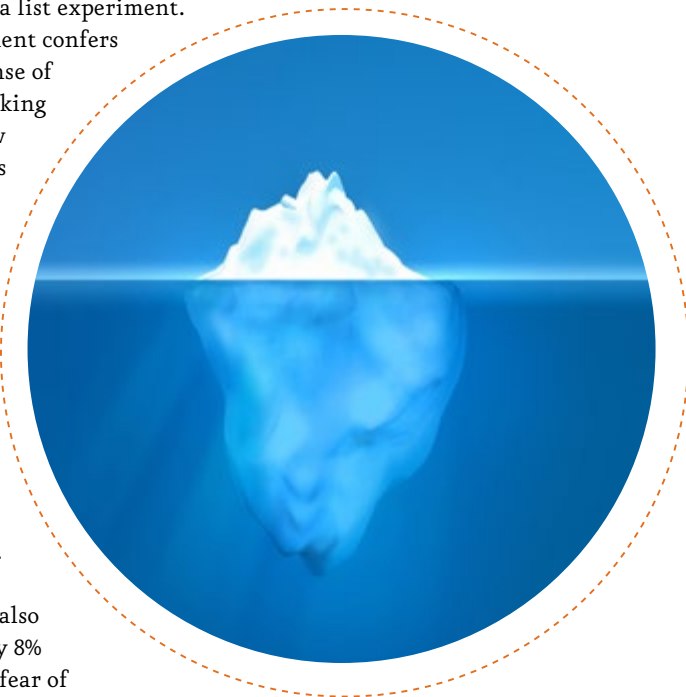
••• the business of research

Lie to them but not to me

Next time you're interviewing a prospective candidate for your insights team, you may want to keep the conversation one-on-one, as new research shows that people may be more inclined to act deceptively when dealing with a group than an individual.

According to research from the UBC Sauder School of Business, under what's called the plurality effect, people behave more unethically toward groups than individuals. A job candidate, for example, would be more likely to exaggerate their qualifications during a panel interview than a one-on-one because groups are often perceived as competitive, aggressive and negative and less like a "real" entity and, as a result, people tend to see groups as less personal and less deserving of moral treatment – which in turn excuses less-ethical behavior toward them.

A person's connection to the group can also make a difference. People tend to show greater moral concern toward individuals in their circles or "in-group" – which can include friends, family members and colleagues and people whose stories have affected them in some way.

"There is strong evidence that you will be more deceptive to the out-group versus the in-group because you feel relatively more responsibility toward the in-group and you like them more," says co-author Daniel Skarlicki, a professor at the UBC Sauder School of Business. "If we go back in time, the out-group is whoever you're competing with for food. It's evolutionary."

For Quirk's Event speakers, change was in session

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Joe Rydholm can be reached at joe@quirks.com

Our Quirk's Events don't have themes or tracks, which is by design, as it frees us up to present a wide range of topics and viewpoints without the need to shoehorn a session into a track that's not a good fit. And, selfishly, as the person in charge of finding and curating the client-side speakers for our four events, it makes my job a lot easier. (Shoot me a note at joe@quirks.com if you're an in-house researcher interested in speaking at one of next year's events!) So that typically means that any post-event trends or themes that emerge do so organically.

Two events into our 2024 slate, what has stood out to me from our Dallas (in February) and Chicago (in March) gatherings is the value – and, really, necessity – of being adaptable. Researchers have always shown a great deal of flexibility and adaptability: In my almost 36 years in this role I've watched them evolve from landline telephones and paper and pencils through the rise of the internet and now to the advent of AI, morphing and changing as the times demand.

A big part of that is being curious, about what's going on now and what might happen in the future, and in their Chicago session Marybeth Andrews and Aly Ferry of McDonald's told a packed room about the goals for their recently launched internal Curiosity Club (which is open to any employee, not just those in insights), including fostering innovation, enhancing decision-making, boosting employee morale and improving collaboration. They urged anyone interested in doing something similar to dedicate time to be curious (say, an hour a week), hone your question-asking skills to be able to ask better questions and to not be afraid to look for outside perspectives when you're trying something new.

Talk of curiosity was also on tap in a session on changing generational views on alcohol consumption featuring panelists Eboni Washington, director, consumer insights at Beam Suntory, and Sean McCullough, senior insights manager, above premium seltzers and emerging at Molson Coors. One of the beauties of the marketing research industry, McCullough said, is its curiosity. Washington urged marketers and researchers of all stripes to "get out there and live life and understand people who are different," such as the Gen Z respondent who told Molson Coors researchers that the hallowed Boomer tradition of having a drink by yourself after a long, hard day at work sounded "kind of sad." (What would Don Draper say to that?) Companies need to be open to their category norms changing, Washington said, and take a good look at their internal capabilities to assess if they are set up to understand and react to change.

Understanding and reacting to change were much on the minds of pollsters following the disastrous 2016 election, said MaristPoll's Director of Survey Solutions Michael Conte in his candid and thorough Chicago Event session. Predictions of a Hillary landslide were tragically (for pollsters and the nation, some might say) wrong, leading to a lot of soul-searching around the whole act of political polling. Too much emphasis was being placed on polls' predictive value, Conte said, overlooking the reality that polls are really just a snapshot in time. In addition, pollsters now have a greater awareness of the role that geography has in influencing votes, he said, and how it is more of a driving factor on voting than level of education.

Speaking of change, no 2024 article would be complete without a mention (or 10) of the most talked-about current changemaker: AI. In his Dallas session, Heiko Schafer, senior director, global consumer insights and analytics with Kimberley-Clark, argued that researchers need to be masters of generative AI tools. Instead of waiting to be asked, he said, researchers should show curiosity and initiative and develop an understanding of when and how to use AI tools. By in effect becoming the face of AI with your internal audiences you can reinforce your critical advantage over AI – your humanity – and use it to strengthen the standing of the insights function. After all, he asked, who would your business partners likely rather talk to, you or a robot? Ⓠ

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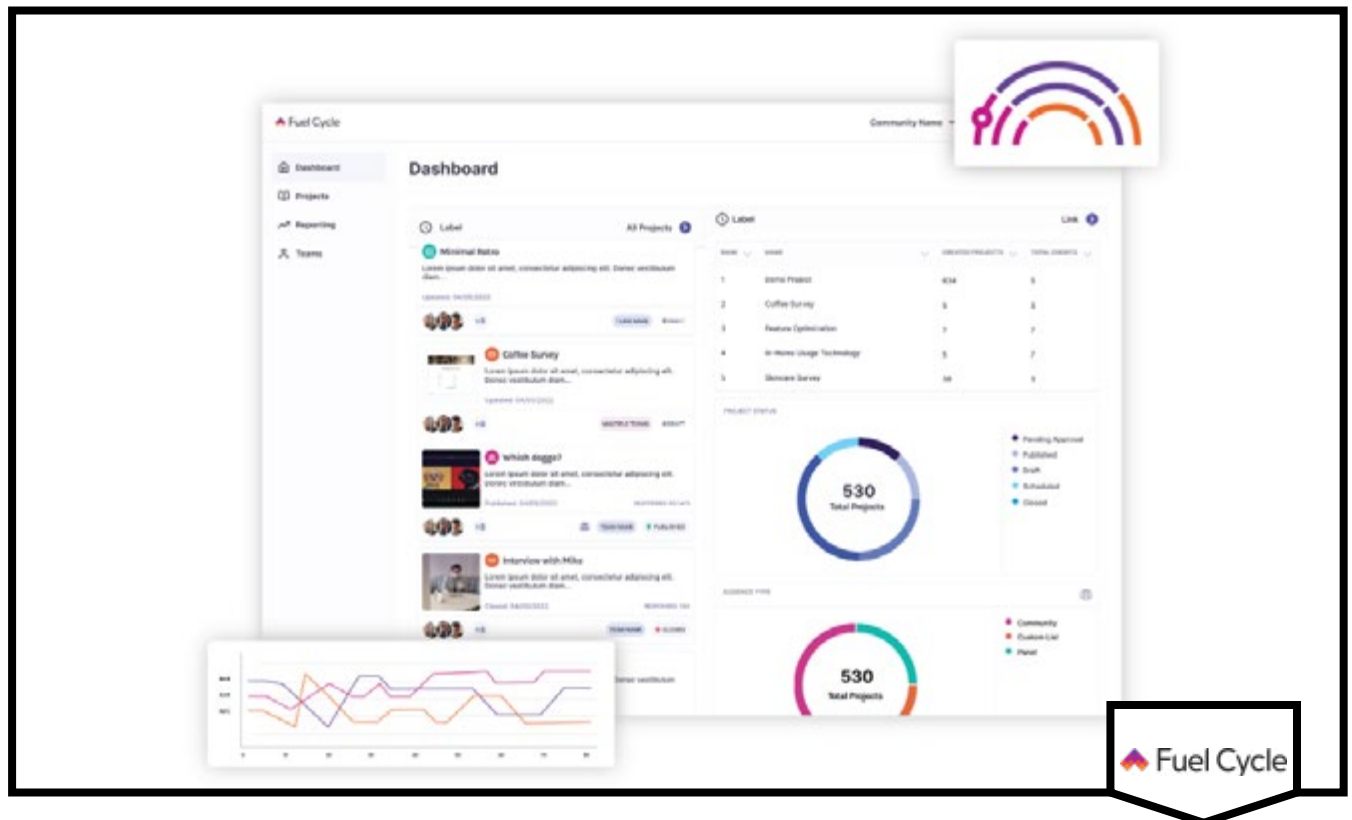
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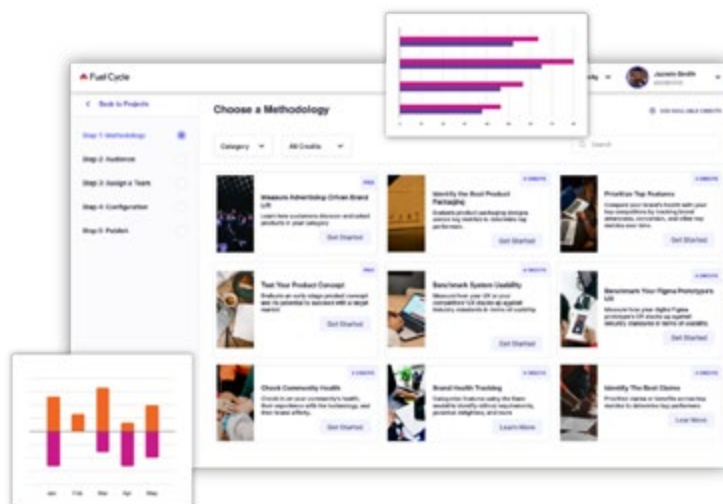
Respondent Recruiting System

Considering a new respondent database/ recruiting system?

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- Optional: Full self-scheduling

dramatically reduces recruiting hours.

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- Survey system can also collect homework including audio, photos and videos.

Contact management system – Reduces recruiting cost:

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- Recruiters can view in survey format for validation and to ask hidden questions.

- Distributes call-ins across your team avoiding time-wasting telephone tag.

Respondent database – Improves panel quality:

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less of the size or shape of your survey, including sentiment analysis, data integration, team collaboration and multilingual autotranslations. Used by market research agencies, coding providers and in-house researchers the world over.
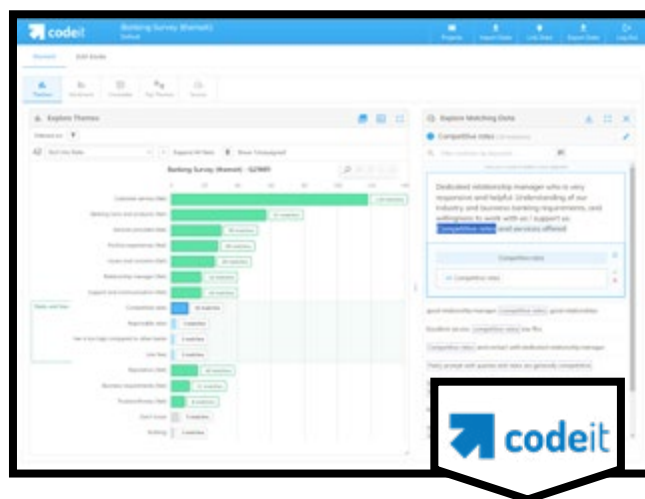
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discover.ai's OPEN platform – Your key to unlocking the insights hidden in online content and social media data

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Our simple and intuitive tool allows you to explore your data set at speed – whether that's online content, transcripts, survey open-ends or social media.
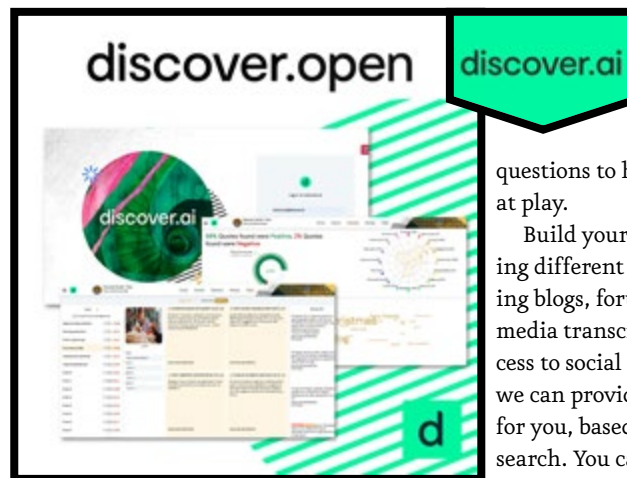
OPEN reads the content for you, breaking it down to point you towards the most meaningful and interesting themes first.

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QUIRK'S IN FOCUS

••• shopper research

Buffeted by change

Checking in with grocery shoppers, diners

Self-checkout continues to gain traction, with 43% percent of consumers expressing a preference for it over traditional checkout. Digital commerce solutions company NCR Voyix found that 53% of younger shoppers (ages 18-44) prefer self-checkout. Of those consumers who prefer self-checkout, speed, shorter lines and privacy are most important. Shoppers aged 45-60+ prefer traditional checkout but the top reason behind their choice is that they often have many products and find a regular lane less time-consuming.

While online grocery shopping may be more convenient for those who don't have time to shop in person, two-thirds of survey respondents prefer to shop for groceries in store. Challenges like out-of-stock items (62%), incorrect deliveries (52%) or unfulfilled orders (38%) contribute to poor online ordering experiences. Nearly two-in-five survey respondents (37%) indicate having abandoned an online order due to high service fees. Some consumers also prefer to hand-select specific items like produce (59%), meat (51%), dairy (40%), frozen foods (29%) and bakery items (42%) themselves.

With inflation driving higher grocery prices, 74% of consumers surveyed have changed how they shop for groceries. Most are looking for less-expensive items (56%), buying less overall (49%), making a more deliberate decision to shop where they find the best deals (46%), using digital coupons more often (26%) and 22% are joining store loyalty programs to save money.

Consumers increasingly rely on technology to navigate smarter ways to shop. When asked how technology has changed their shopping experiences, consumers cited the ability to compare prices more frequently, research products before purchasing more frequently and use more digital payment options.

In the restaurant industry, consumers want the best customer service – but the surge in tipping prompts may be tipping them the wrong way. Fifty-nine percent of consumers reported that they don't like tipping prompts. Out of those, 61% say they don't tip while 39% indicate that they still do.

Like grocery shopping, inflation has impacted consumer restaurant dining habits. Forty-eight percent say they dine out less now because of higher prices and 27% say they dine out the same amount. More than half of consumers (58%) have purchased a meal at a gas station one or more times this year.

Although some consumers may be slowing down on traditional dining out, they still want to keep up with their favorite restaurants and access any deals they can. Signing up for a loyalty rewards program (49%), downloading a restaurant's app (49%) and signing up for e-mail updates (31%) are among the top three actions consumers have taken to receive updates on their favorite restaurants.

With consumers eager to stay in the know and gain access to special deals and rewards, half of them prefer to use a restaurant's app or website to place their order, while 23% prefer to call the restaurant directly. Consumers cite their top reasons for going directly to the restaurant's app or website for order and delivery as convenience, the ability to easily customize orders and lower or no service fees.

As consumers look to the future and consider new technology in restaurants, they hope to see customized digital menus personalized per diner, full meal vending machines and robot delivery service.

NCR Voyix commissioned a survey of 1,133 American consumers in November 2023.

••• environmental research

Greener options wanted

Consumers demand eco accountability

Recently, a range of societal issues have moved to the forefront of consumers' minds but one thing remains a clear influence over spending behavior: sustainability. According to GfK Consumer Life, more than half the U.S. population (53%) expressed serious concern for the environment, noting it should be a priority for everyone. Sixty-seven percent also agree that environmental pollution is a serious issue, up three percentage points from 2022. Events like the pandemic have prompted consumers to connect with the environment in more personal ways, placing a heightened emphasis on conservation.

While inflation is the No. 1 societal concern for consumers today, global climate change ranks No. 6 out of 24 – on par with issues like recessions and the cost of health care. As a result, Americans are noticing the impacts of climate change. Seventy-seven percent of consumers agree that extreme weather is increasing because of climate change and just one-in-three believe the government is doing an excellent or

Though concern is growing, many consumers grapple with barriers to living a sustainable life
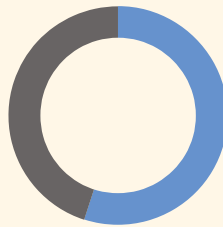
55% of Americans say environmentally friendly products are too costly.
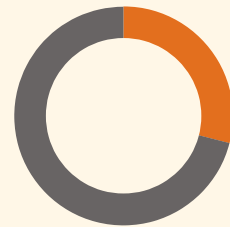
29% of consumers consider the environment when purchasing.

good job addressing the issue. Consumers expect companies to step up too, with 67% agreeing that it is important for companies to take environmentally responsible actions.

Though concern is growing, many consumers grapple with barriers to living a sustainable life. There's an issue with the perception of high prices and lower quality when it comes to "green" products, with 55% of Americans saying environmentally friendly products are too costly (up four points since 2021). Additionally, only 29% of consumers consider the environment when purchasing, down three points from 2022. The impact of ongoing inflationary pressure is prompting consumers to reconsider where they spend their pre-

cious dollars. However, consumers play a balancing act during these moments of reduced spending: They turn to the home for their eco-friendly actions.

Sixty-seven percent of consumers will conserve energy in the home through actions like turning off lights, monitoring cooling and heating devices and using major appliances less frequently. These actions serve a double purpose, serving as financial savings in the face of economic uncertainty and an expression of sustainable values. Consumers want to do more – in fact, 80% want greener energy options to be more accessible.

With all this in mind, it's important to look ahead at what consumers think the future of sustainability looks like, and that lies in circularity. Eighty percent agree that a waste-free lifestyle is possible in the next 20 years and a staggering 87% agree that it's important for companies to source materials responsibly. From electronics to clothing, consumers are interested in extending the useful life of products and they expect companies to step up with them.

The 2023 Green Gauge study was conducted among approximately 35,000 consumers in 20+ core global markets, including 2,059 interviews in the U.S. from January-April 2023.

53% expressed serious concern for the environment, noting that it should be a priority for everyone.
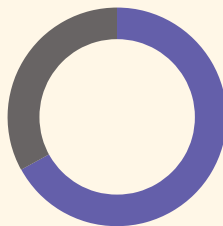
67% also agree that environmental pollution is a serious issue.

● ● ● health care research

Physicians growing weary

Worn out and seeking help from AI

Excessive administrative workloads, reduced staffing, concerns over financial viability and rising patient expectations around communications are all contributing to major challenges for America's health care industry, athenahealth's Physician Sentiment Survey, conducted by The Harris Poll, has revealed.

Most physicians (93%) surveyed say that they feel burned out on a regular basis, with doctors reporting that they spend an average of 15 hours per week working in "pajama time," outside their normal work hours. When asked about their current employment situation, over half (56%) said they have considered leaving the field or remaining in the field but no longer seeing patients.

Eighty-three percent of survey respondents say AI could eventually reduce many of the problems health care is facing. Most physicians already use electronic health record solutions

Widespread physician burnout

Moreover, physicians are spending about

15 hours

each week working outside of normal business hours

93%

of physicians today feel burned out on a regular basis
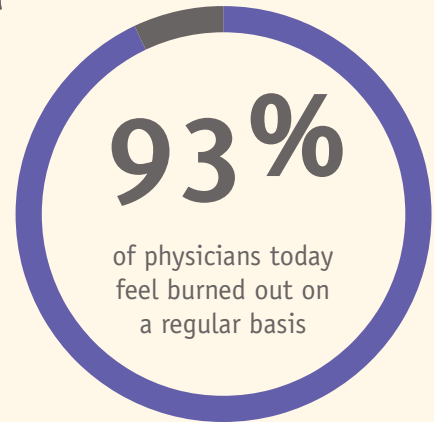
and praise them for helping provide high-quality care (65%) and improving efficiencies (54%).

Nearly all physicians (94%) agree that getting the right clinical data at the right time is very important, but most physicians (80%) don't believe that more clinical data is always the answer to achieving higher-quality care. The majority are currently so overburdened by information that it raises their stress levels (63%) and for many, this information overload is a growing cause of their regular burnout (30% vs. 24% in 2022).

Only 38% of physicians believe their organization/practice is on solid financial footing and fewer than half (45%) believe they have the resources and/or tools to deliver quality care. An additional indication of their financial vulnerability: over the past 12 months half (50%) felt they have been unable to provide quality care based on volume and cost, at least once a week or more frequently.

Those who believe in the positive potential of AI are much more hopeful that the field of health care is headed in the right direction. They also felt less burned out on a regular basis than those who were pessimistic about AI's positive role. Most respondents (60%) see the loss of human touch as their biggest concern regarding the use of AI, reinforcing the belief that the best use of AI in health care will be by creating efficiencies in administrative functions, improving diagnostic accuracy, data monitoring and other back-office tasks. Four in 10 physicians report being concerned that AI will just be one more thing that will complicate health care (42%) and that AI is being overhyped and cannot meet expectations (40%).

This survey was conducted online in the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of athenahealth from October 23-November 8, 2023, among 1,003 physicians.

A cause for optimism: Concerns and drivers of AI in health care

⊖ **Barriers/Concerns**

60% The loss of a human touch in health care

42% AI will just be one more thing that will complicate health care

40% AI is overhyped and can't meet expectations

⊕ **Benefits/Drivers**

39% Reduced adminsitrative burdens and streamlined tasks

35% Increased health care efficiencies

34% Improved accuracy of patient diagnosis

••• entertainment research

Tuning in

Americans de-stress with digital audio

In a nation defined by its diverse tastes and cultural shades, audio series platform Pocket FM found that 90% of users engage with audio entertainment daily, reflecting the influence of audio in their daily lives. Storytelling takes the spotlight, inspiring half of users to prefer audio, while one-third of users opt for audio due to its convenience and another third values it for the diverse range of content.

While consuming audio content, 63% of Americans favor smartphones, 15% opt for tablets and 22% spread their audio consumption across smart TVs, desktops and other devices. Genres such as drama (21%), romance (23%), suspense/thriller (16%) and sci-fi (15%) emerge as top choices.

Regarding content duration, 43% of U.S. listeners lean towards shorter episodes, spanning five to 15 minutes, while 38% prefer a slightly longer duration of 15-30 minutes. Only 18% are inclined toward lengthier content, opting for episodes lasting approximately 45-60 minutes.

Audio entices the imagination with 45% of respondents visualizing the storytelling while listening, while the remaining 55% lean toward a visual experience, desiring the audio storytelling to be adapted to media like movies, TV series or web series.

Trust in content recommendations emerged as a crucial factor, with 38% relying on platform recommendations, 31% seeking guidance from social media and, surprisingly, only 3% swayed by influencers.

The survey uncovered that audio serves not only as an entertainment source but also as a productive tool, with 65% of users leveraging audio to de-stress, 17% to avoid distraction and 17% to enhance focus, showcasing its versatility in meeting various user needs. Additionally, 62% of U.S. listeners are keen on recommending their favorite audio content. When it comes to spreading the word, good old-fashioned word of mouth leads the pack with 42% of users relying on recommendations from friends. Social media is a little behind, influencing 34% of users.

Zooming into specific audio content, audio series steal the spotlight, with 67% giving five-star recommendations. In comparison, 42% give five-star ratings to TV entertainment but get a rating of three or below from 37% users. Online music and video OTT also fare well, with 53% and 58% giving five-star ratings, respectively, but rated three or below by 29% and 20% of users, highlighting a shift in the audience's digital entertainment preferences and reflecting fatigue with the existing format.

While audio series emerged as the most loved and preferred entertainment format, the findings have shown that 36% of users shifted from music to audio series, 22% of users replaced audio series with video streaming and 18% moved from audiobooks and podcasts, illustrating the dynamic evolution of American entertainment preferences.

Twenty-nine percent of American users lean toward subscriptions, though 32% are more inclined to pay for individual episodes, signaling a potential shift in monetization strategies towards microtransactions. Meanwhile, 39% prefer ad-supported models and other promotional offerings.

The survey was conducted from October 28-November 15, 2023, with a total sample size of 4,394 internet users in the U.S.

••• beverage research

The perfect pick-me-up

Consumers ditch coffee shops for homemade brews

While coffee is known to provide a sometimes-necessary boost of energy and alertness, the caffeine high is not the No. 1 factor fueling coffee consumption. Drive Research's online survey about coffee consumption and preferences found that for 83% of consumers, taste is the most influential reason they drink coffee. This reason tops others such as coffee giving them energy (67%), increasing their productivity (43%) and its perceived health benefits (29%).

Seventy-three percent of people drink coffee every day, 20% drink it at least once a week and only 2% drink it less than once a month. With popular coffee chains consistently raising their prices, many have taken to making coffee at home. Sixty-six percent of respondents say they make coffee at home every day with 19% making it a few times a week and 4% making it once a week.

With most people drinking coffee for the taste, it comes as no surprise that only 18% of people prefer to drink their coffee black – a 56% decrease from 2022. This suggests a notable change in growing preferences for coffee variations with added flavors such as milk/creamer (39%), sweetener (5%) or both (38%).

More specifically, both almond milk and oat milk are growing in popularity among coffee drinkers. Preferences for oat milk grew by 90% and preferences for almond milk grew by 71% since 2022. Furthermore, people love the taste of coffee so much that they consume it in other ways than their morning or afternoon pick-me-up. Over half of the respondents surveyed enjoy coffee cake (61%) and coffee ice cream (54%). Plus, we can't forget about espresso martinis which are adored by one-in-four people – a 79% increase from 2022. Big fans of the trendy cocktail are Millennials (36%) and Gen Z (33%).

Drive Research surveyed 1,325 individuals and ended its fieldwork in January 2024.

••• transportation research

The future of travel

Generations list priorities

Technology has the potential to enhance our travel experiences throughout the surface transportation ecosystem, as well as improve safety, reliability and equity. However, user attitudes – from uncertainty about AI to the importance of sustainability – underscore the need for planning. The MITRE-Harris Poll found that U.S. residents believe their transportation experience will improve in the next 10 years with 40% saying it will get better, compared to just 23% who believe it will get worse.

Of the improvements respondents want to see, safety (90%) tops the list, followed by lower costs (83%), im-

proved data privacy (79%), increased predictability (78%) and environmental sustainability (77%).

However, priorities vary among generations. Baby Boomers (62%) rate safety as the highest priority for transportation improvements. Gen X (47%) cites cost as the top priority. For safety improvements, Millennials (22%) are most likely to say city driving should be the top priority, while Gen Z are most likely to say that walking (26%), trains (13%) and buses (13%) should be the top priority. Twenty-four percent of respondents say highway driving and 21% say city driving is the No. 1 priority for safety improvements.

Acceptance of artificial intelligence and automation will play a significant role in determining the future of transportation. Less than half of U.S. residents expect AI and automation to have a positive impact in the next 10 years, with nearly 30% saying the technology will be harmful.

Forty percent expect to use driverless cars, taxis, ridesharing vehicles and delivery vehicles in their lifetime, with nearly 60% expecting to use driverless taxis in urban areas. Respondents in rural areas and Baby Boomers are least likely to say their transportation experience will improve. Sixty percent of respondents expect to use hybrid or electric vehicles in their lifetime but just 12% already do.

MITRE-The Harris Poll conducted this online survey with 2,096 U.S. adults from October 10-12, 2023.

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Clients truly appreciate the value in pure in-context research to understand the 'why'. Researchers definitely love the closer rapport and ability to observe or pick up on nuances they don't get over a video call. The insights delivered are 'more alive' and build even more compelling findings to our clients.
Jon Ward, VP of Sales at EMEA

While online tools are impactful in achieving many Qualitative research objectives, there is just nothing like having the face-to face interaction with our consumers and clients – something that online just cannot replicate. The interaction between Moderator and Respondent becomes more immersive and natural – body language is key when tapping into the System 1 which is integral in a lot of the work we do. Finally, the back room and client engagement is just as important – bringing key stakeholders together to workshop live during research is unmatched and super effective.
Paul Markovic, Director of Behaviorally

I have enjoyed helping clients return to in-person research. You can see the excitement as they leave, re-energized with a very enthusiastic "We'll be back!" I think this is something we are all experiencing in our lives as we also return to more social gatherings, making more interpersonal connections face to face. I have been very grateful for technology through the pandemic, but what once seemed like a suitable substitute now pales in comparison to the real thing.
Megan Pollard, President of Fieldwork Network

The rich and robust nature of in person research is the best avenue for much of the qualitative work to be conducted. We are fortunate to see this back to its full potential with questions answered, ideas generated and collaboration amongst so many. As the conversations flow, we are gaining the much needed information to move ideas, products and plans forward.
Debby Schlesinger

#facetofacemrx

Research mirrors society: something gets lost when our only form of communication is on a computer screen or telephone. Of course there are the three senses...taste, touch and smell...that cannot be replicated online. But there's also the fact that humans are social creatures, and make decisions based upon social influences. People behave differently when you meet them in-person versus how they respond on a FaceBook neighborhood group post, do they not? Research is no different.

Smart companies know new products and ideas cannot be tested solely online: they need to be exposed "in the real world", with people interacting together. Much can be learned from what people do and react, versus solely about what they say...just like the real world, researchers are remembering the value of in-person research, and the incredible learning.
Brett Watkins, CEO of L&E Research

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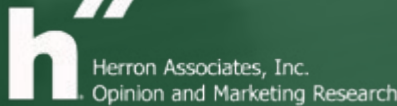
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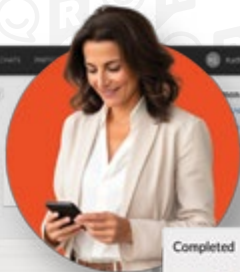
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Exploring brand extensions: Balancing risk and reward with marketing research

| By Tracy Tuten

abstract

Brand extensions can hold the tantalizing promise of increased market share and a wealth of new customers but they are not without their dangers. Tracy Tuten explores how to use research to boost your chances of success.

Brand extensions are a strategic move by a well-known brand to introduce new products or enter different markets beyond its original offerings. The strategy can be effective when the brand extension reinforces the parent brand's positive associations but it is not without risk. In this article, we'll review the potential benefits and risks associated with a strategy of expanding a product portfolio for a premium brand into lower-price bands. While the strategy holds promise in tapping into a broader consumer base, it necessitates careful consideration to mitigate the inherent risks of brand dilution. Fortunately, market research can inform tactics designed to minimize the likelihood of brand dilution.

Rewards versus the risks

Let's kick things off with a quick primer. Brand extensions – those strategic moves where a brand introduces new products or ventures into new markets – potentially open new revenue streams alongside other rewards:

- Revenue diversification: Casting your net wider with products at lower price points can reel in a whole new audience and boost revenue streams.
- Customer acquisition: Attracting those entry-level consumers sets the stage for long-term brand loyalty, especially as they climb the price ladder over time.
- Market share expansion: Penetrating the sales of lower-price bands may help the brand gain market share and compete with mid-range competitors.

But let's not overlook the risks:

- Brand dilution: The primary concern is the risk of diluting the brand's image of exclusivity, innovation and prestige, resulting in lower brand equity.
- Cannibalization: Lower-priced offerings may cannibalize sales of premium products, impacting overall profitability.
- Consumer perception shift: The brand may face challenges in maintaining a consistent image across different price segments.

A deeper look at brand dilution

Brand dilution is the diminishment of a brand's image and perceived associations related to quality, exclusivity and desirability that can occur when the parent brand follows a vertical brand extension strategy of adding lower-priced, lower-quality products to the product portfolio. Prestige brands, especially those providing self-expression benefits, face a higher dilution risk when launching products at lower price/quality levels. Premium brands, known for exclusivity, face a higher risk of dilution when offered at significantly lower prices, potentially leading to a loss of rarity factor and exclusivity.

The price discount level, reflecting the difference between the parent brand's typical price and the price of the new extension, is a contributing factor. Consumers use price/quality perceptions to evaluate the distance between parent brands and vertical-downward extensions. A closer proximity in price points between the parent brand and the extension leads to less dilution, while substantial price differences lead to more dilution.

Brand fit – the alignment and coherence between the attributes, values and essence of a brand and its product

Welcome to the first installment of Quick Take, our new semi-regular column showcasing short-form articles on all aspects of marketing research.

extensions – is also a mitigating factor. Low-fit extensions are more likely to result in dilution.

To minimize the potential for brand dilution, the following best practices are recommended.

• Evaluate market success indicators with caution: Instead of relying solely on the typical success indicators of the brand extension, measure and prioritize perceived brand fit to avoid damaging the parent brand's brand equity.
• Maintain brand fit across the product portfolio: Ensure that the extension is perceived to mesh well with the brand's image and values to minimize the likelihood of dilution.
• Calibrate the pricing strategy for the brand extension to manage price discount levels: Because dilution is more likely when the price discount level is high, carefully align price points across the product portfolio.
• Communicate the reason for the extension: Clearly explain its rationale

to consumers, emphasizing a commitment to maintaining quality and exclusivity.
• Reinforce the parent brand's premium essence in marketing communications: Protect the parent brand from potential dilution by reminding the market of the brand's positive association.

Inform your strategy with research

Market research can further inform the execution of brand extension strategies by exploring opportunities to align the extension to the parent brand on brand fit, evaluating price sensitivity in order to minimize the price discount level and assessing the potential for brand dilution.

• Market perception and brand dilution risk: Assess how the target audience perceives the brand and its potential extension into lower-price bands. Include assessments in the marketing research study to

gauge consumer reactions based on the direction of extension (vertical-downward vs. horizontal) and its impact on brand perceptions.
• Price sensitivity: Integrate a detailed analysis of price discount levels to understand consumer reactions and the potential impact on perceived brand quality and exclusivity.
• Communication strategy and message testing: Examine messaging tactics to determine optimal approaches for protecting parent brand equity and preventing brand dilution.

Proceed with caution

Brand extensions can be the ticket to growth and glory but proceed with caution. With a dash of strategy informed by market research, companies will be ready to navigate the twists and turns of expansion opportunities while also protecting their established brands. Ⓞ

Tracy Tuten is vice president of qualitative research at Illuminas. She can be reached at tracy.tuten@us.illuminas.com.

THE Q REPORT

CORPORATE **RESEARCHER** REPORT

Findings from the Q Report, an independent study, written for and developed with the help of client-side marketing research and insights professionals

Portrait of a researcher

Facts and figures on a slice of Quirk's readership

| By Joseph Rydholm

abstract

From job satisfaction levels to where the insight function fits within the organization, how do you compare to these findings from Q Report survey responses?

No two researchers are alike, that's for sure. But it sometimes seems like as a group they don't change much. After a decade of fielding our Q Report survey of client-side Quirk's readers, one of the most surprising outcomes has been how consistent the data has been from year to year on some of the questions we ask (job satisfaction levels, staff sizes, etc.). For this issue's deep dive into Q Report findings, we present a snapshot of a Quirk's corporate researcher reader, drawn from data gathered for our most recent Q Report (fielded in 2023), based on survey responses from 707 client-side researchers.

Top five job titles

1. MARKET RESEARCH DIRECTOR/SENIOR DIRECTOR | 28%
2. MARKET RESEARCH MANAGER | 23%
3. CUSTOMER INSIGHTS MANAGER | 11%
4. SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST | 9%
5. SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OR PRESIDENT | 8%

What are the annual revenues/sales of your organization?

< $1 million	54%
$1-$3 million	9%
$3-$6 million	6%
$6-$10 million	7%
$10-$50 million	5%
$50-$100 million	8%
$100-$300 million	2%
$300-$500 million	3%
$500 million - 1 billion	2%
>$1 billion	4%
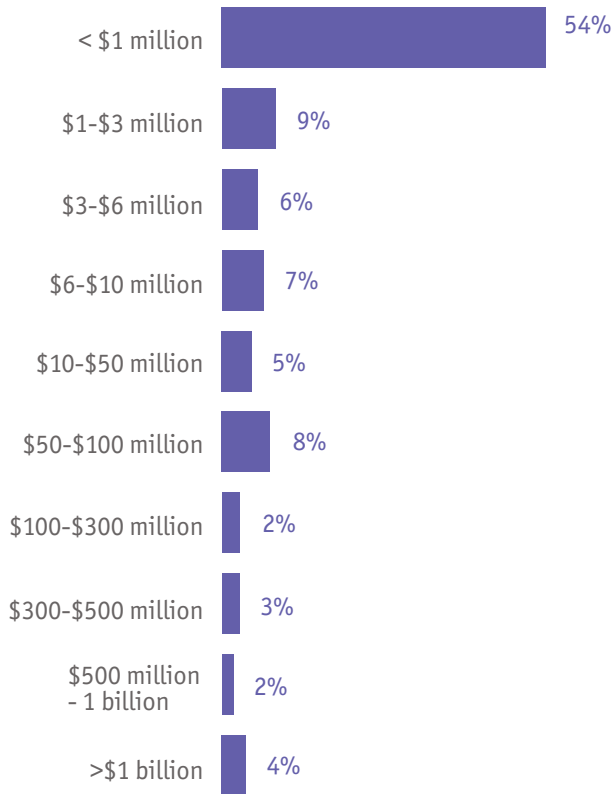
Number of marketing research employees in the organization

0	3%
1-2	24%
3-5	20%
6-10	17%
11-15	8%
16-25	6%
>25	22%
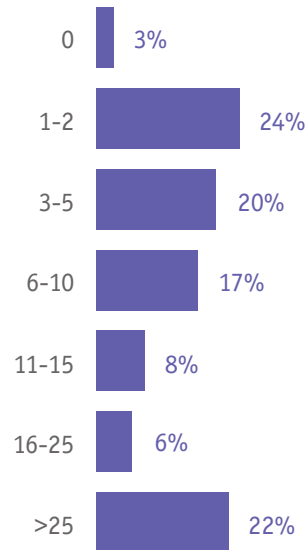
Not much has changed over the past 10 years. In 2013, 27% said 1-2; 27% said 3-5; 15% said 6-10; 14% said more than 25.

How many years of experience do you have in marketing research?

- < 1 YEAR
- 1-2 YEARS
- 3-5 YEARS
- 6-10 YEARS
- 11-15 YEARS
- 16-25 YEARS
- >25 YEARS

2% 4% 7% 14% 18% 29% 26%
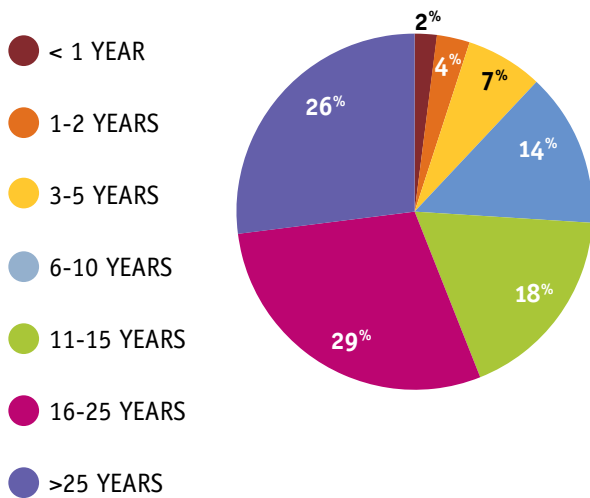
How many years have you been employed at your current organization?

- < 1 YEAR
- 1-2 YEARS
- 3-5 YEARS
- 6-10 YEARS
- 11-15 YEARS
- 16-25 YEARS
- >25 YEARS

2% 9% 22% 24% 21% 12% 10%
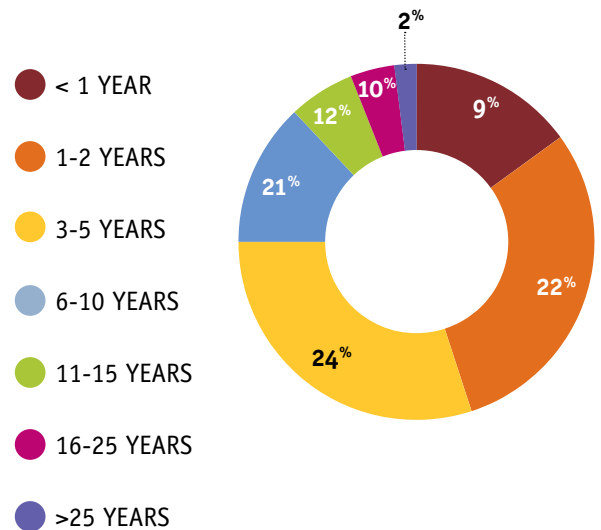
How many employees do you supervise?

- **>10**
- **6-10**
- **3-5**
- **1-2**
- **0**

3%
8%
16%
27%
46%
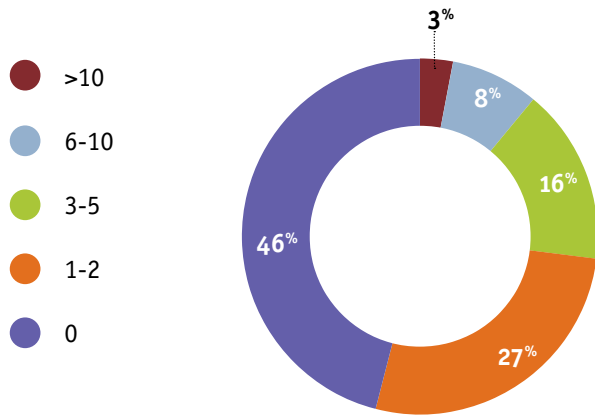
It's always been kind of mind-boggling how small the insights departments are (if you can call one person a department!) in billion-dollar organizations but these levels have been consistent over the years. Talk about doing more with less!

How satisfied are you with your current employment?

- **VERY DISSATISFIED**
- **DISSATISFIED**
- **SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED**
- **NEUTRAL**
- **SOMEWHAT SATISFIED**
- **SATISFIED**
- **VERY SATISFIED**

2%
3%
9%
10%
22%
37%
17%
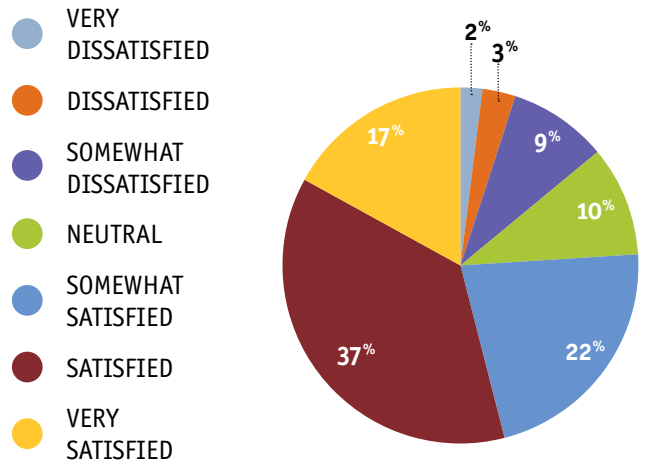
Hard to know what to attribute it to (maybe it's as simple as researchers just happen to like their jobs?) but 2023's levels are remarkably similar to 2013's: 37% satisfied; 19% very satisfied; 9% somewhat dissatisfied; 5 % dissatisfied.

In what region are you located?

600

0

As expected, with a U.S.-based, English-language publication, respondents are largely located in the U.S. (81%), U.K. (7%) and Canada (3%), with Western Europe at 4% the largest readership group after that.
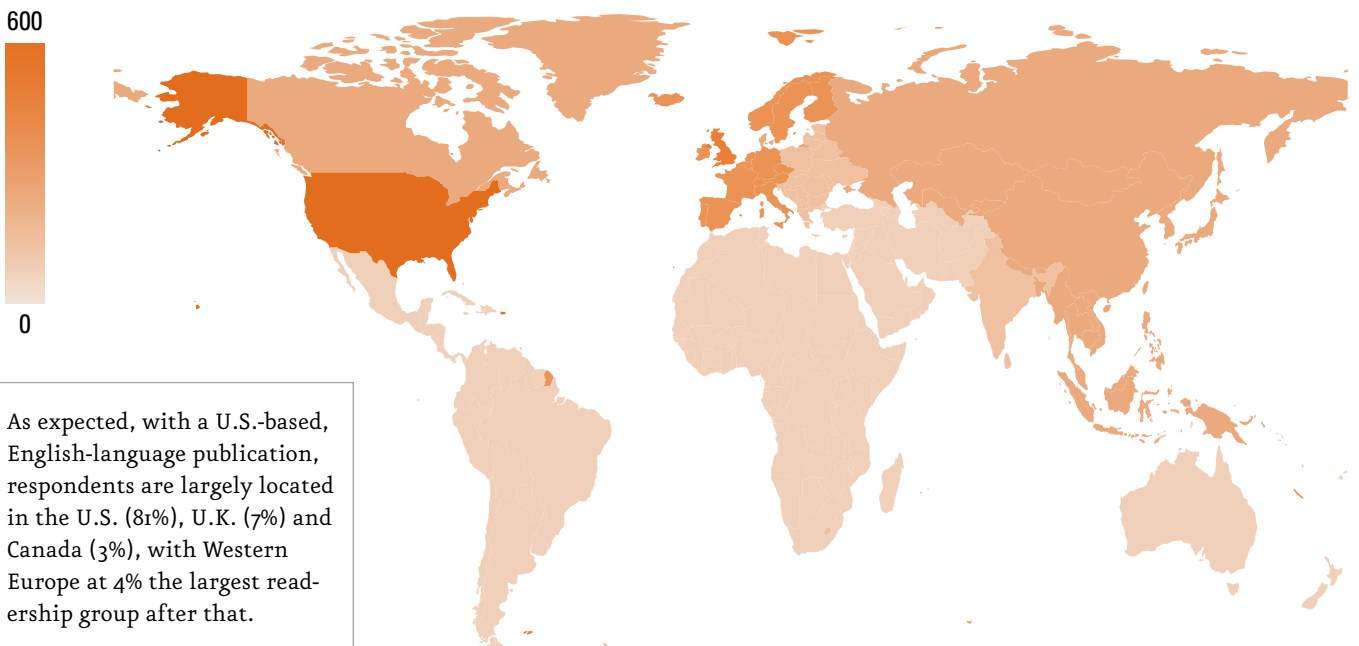
How important is it to you that your organization allows the flexibility to work remotely, either partially or fully?

- **NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT**
- **SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT**
- **MODERATELY IMPORTANT**
- **VERY IMPORTANT**
- **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT**

2% 3% 10% 25% 60%

Like most office workers, researchers don't want to return to the old days of being bound to their cubicles. A combined 85% say that the ability to work remotely either fully or partly is extremely/very important.

In your organization, is the marketing research/insight function its own department or is it part of a larger group?

- **SALES**
- **INFORMATION/IT**
- **USER EXPERIENCE**
- **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**
- **OTHER**
- **OWN DEPARTMENT**
- **MARKETING**

2% 1% 1% 8% 20% 32% 36%

In a related open-end, some respondents indicated that research's place in the company has generally stayed the same, with moves into strategy, analytics or CX as the most-cited internal umbrellas.

What is your age?

- < 25 YEARS
- 25-30 YEARS
- 31-35 YEARS
- 36-45 YEARS
- 46-55 YEARS
- 56-65 YEARS
- >66 YEARS

1%
2%
7%
10%
31%
32%
17%
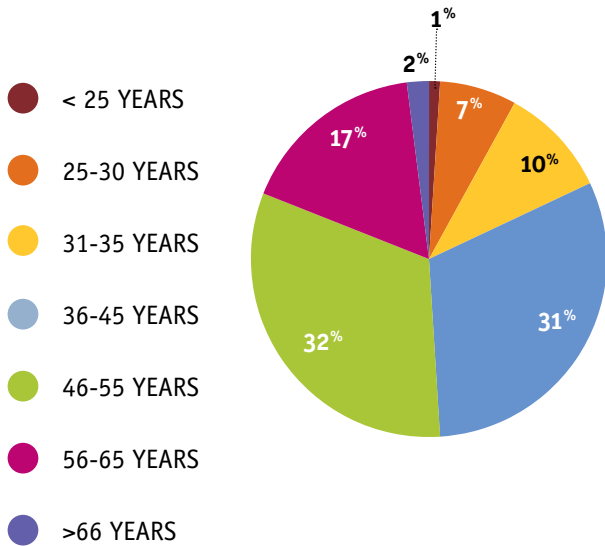
What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE
- COLLEGE GRADUATE
- MASTERS PROGRAM GRADUATE
- PH.D. GRADUATE

1%
6%
35%
58%
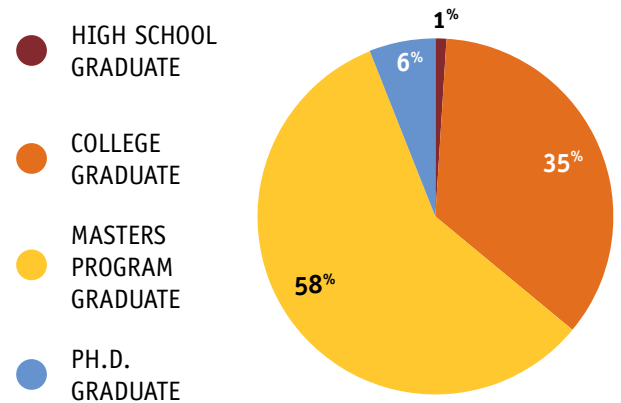
Again, these levels are almost identical to those from 2013 – 57% master's and 35% college graduate.

How do you identify?

PREFER NOT TO ANSWER/
ANOTHER GENDER
2%

MALE
39%

FEMALE
59%
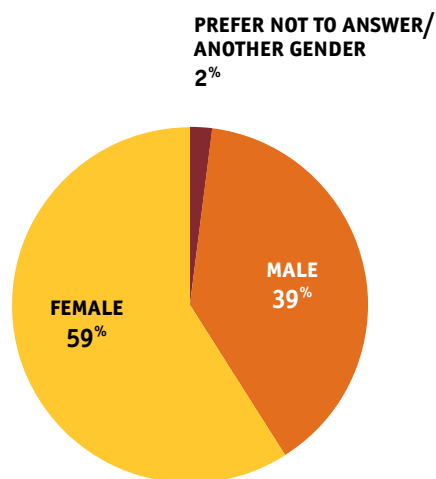
METHODOLOGY

The Q Report work life and salary and compensation study of end-client/corporate researchers is based on data gathered from an invite-only online survey sent to pre-qualified marketing research subscribers of Quirk's. The survey was fielded from May 24 to July 10, 2023. In total we received 1,969 usable qualified responses of which 707 were from end-client researchers and used for this end-client report. An interval (margin of error) of 2.17 at the 95% confidence level was achieved for the entire study. (Not all respondents answered all questions.)

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STOP TAKING ORDERS!

TIPS FOR ELEVATING YOURSELF AND YOUR ROLE AS A RESEARCHER

By Anne E. Beall and Mark Geniesse
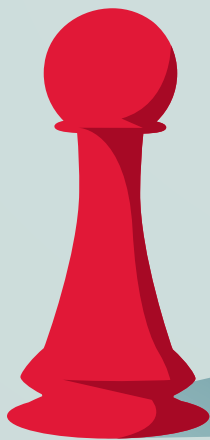
THE AUTHORS DRAW ON THEIR TIME AS CONSULTANTS TO EXPLORE HOW COURAGE, HONESTY AND PATIENCE CAN HELP YOU ESTABLISH YOURSELF AS AN EXPERT IN THE EYES OF YOUR RESEARCH CLIENTS.

Early in our careers, we always executed the research design we were given. Whether it involved conducting six focus groups or collecting 250 surveys, we did what we were told. We were both service-oriented, so we believed that doing what the client wanted was paramount. However, we had a significant challenge: Our roles weren't as simple as flipping burgers at a fast-food restaurant. We were employees of professional services firms that clients relied on for high-level insights and consulting. But the transition from merely following orders to offering consultative insights wasn't something we were prepared to do early in our careers. And, even with training, it's all too easy to slip back into old habits.

One of us took a job at the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), an organization that conducted both qualitative and quantitative research. It was routine for partners and case team members to outline their research needs, often specifying the exact research design they wanted. Compelled to meet these requests unquestioningly, one of us felt there was no room for deviation.

While at BCG, a critical juncture was an early performance review. The memory of that meeting is sharply etched in one author's mind. It was a high-tension, charged atmosphere. The feedback was critical. The supervisor highlighted a fundamental issue: passive acceptance of research designs given from clients without challenging or refining them.

"You are the expert. You're the consultant. It's your job to design the research for our clients, not merely to carry out their instructions," the supervisor firmly stated.

However, presenting alternative suggestions to senior BCG employees, often partners in the firm, was incredibly daunting.

"But these are senior people at the company. They are set in their desire for a specific research design. When I propose alternatives, they always insist on their initial plan."

The supervisor remained firm. "Exactly, but they aren't the market research specialists – you are. That's the very reason we hired you."

SERIES OF REALIZATIONS

The other author's journey didn't pivot on a single moment of revelation but developed through a series of realizations with the accumulation of experience. Often research designs seemed misaligned with the objectives they were supposed to meet, whether the survey population being targeted seemed off, the sample sizes for important subgroups weren't substantial enough or the chosen analytical approach wasn't the most appropriate option. This author frequently encountered the challenge of sifting through data that fell short of addressing the clients' true needs.

This predicament was inherited; the research design, already cast in stone by the time they were brought into the project, could not be adjusted. It was a recurring theme: arriving too late to shape the study, yet early enough to foresee the limitations of its outcomes. Over time, however, as this author gained experience and the confidence to advocate for the right approach earlier in the process, they saw the positive impact this had on the results and clients' reactions to the insights.

The transition into research consultants wasn't an overnight transformation. For one author, the metamorphosis was sparked by the ongoing guidance at BCG. With this help, the author altered their strategy, resulting in a career advancement in just one year. Moreover, it transformed their client interactions and improved the quality of their analysis and insights. It enabled case teams to delve deeper, uncovering and addressing the unvoiced needs of their clients.

For the other author, the journey took a different path. It was the responses to their proposed research designs that led to a shift in their client interactions. Initial successes in advocating for alternative approaches emboldened them, fostering confidence. These early victories weren't just wins; they were stepping stones, paving the way towards a more assertive stance in client engagements.

The experiences of both authors helped to shape our careers. The way we approached conducting research led to the success of Beall Research, which now celebrates over two decades in the industry.

Throughout our careers, we've met many researchers who felt they were largely order-takers, just following a research design prescribed to them rather than thinking through the objectives and questioning when the objectives and design seem misaligned. Falling into this pattern is deceptively easy. It's easy to respond to requests for bids, timelines or feasibility assessments without reevaluating the design to ensure it represents the best approach.

We're eager to share strategies that have not only empowered us but have also significantly increased our value as consultants. It involves transforming the client-consultant relationship, so we become indispensable thought partners our clients rely on, offering not only our research designs but also guiding them to understand the critical questions they truly need to answer. This is the crux of our value. Below are the techniques we've adopted to accomplish this. They're applicable whether you're an agency/vendor researcher or an in-house/client-side researcher working with internal clients.

"YOU ARE THE EXPERT. YOU'RE THE CONSULTANT.

REORIENTING THE CONVERSATION

The most critical step is to take control of the initial conversation. Instead of immediately discussing the specifics of the study the client wants, we introduce a pivotal question. Sometimes, we smoothly transition into this by asking for permission, "Do you mind if I first get some background to fully understand your study?" At this juncture, we ask, "What exactly is the objective of this study? What are you trying to understand?"

These questions often uncover the underlying need, directing us toward the most effective research design. For example, if a client is tracking a new trend in the market, a survey might suit their needs better than qualitative research. Alternatively, if the goal is to delve into consumers' decision-making processes, immersive tools like discussion boards while they're actively buying something could yield deeper insights.

The reality is that many clients – whether internal or external – believe they understand market research more than they actually do. Moreover, they tend to lean towards familiar methodologies. If they've previously used focus groups, they're likely to suggest this approach again because it's within

their comfort zone. This is often why we're presented with research designs that are not ideal.

It's crucial to engage the client before they become too entrenched in a specific research design. Dwelling too long on their suggested approach makes it challenging to pivot to a more appropriate methodology later. Our goal is to steer the conversation toward effective research design early on, before clients become committed to their initial plan.

Securing our influence and ensuring our place at the table involves posing pointed, insightful questions that delve beneath the surface. The following questions have been invaluable in our experience once we begin the conversation about the goal of the research.

Our follow-up query is usually, "How do you plan to use the information gathered from this study?" This question helps pinpoint the actual purpose of the study, allowing us to tailor the research design to meet their real needs. Understanding how the client intends to use the research findings is essential. This insight not only clarifies the study's objective but also informs its design to ensure it effectively meets their requirements.

IT'S YOUR JOB TO DESIGN THE RESEARCH FOR OUR CLIENTS, NOT MERELY TO CARRY OUT THEIR INSTRUCTIONS."
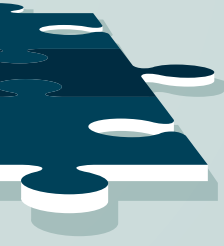
We also ask, "What are your current hypotheses?" This question uncovers the client's expectations and thoughts about the research outcomes. If they hypothesize a difference in perception between current and potential customers, the study design must differentiate these groups. It's remarkable how articulating these hypotheses can significantly influence the research approach.

ELEVATE OUR ROLE

These inquiries do more than just shape our research design; they elevate us to the role of a consultative partner, moving beyond the realm of executing tasks. By asserting our position as an equal, we're not just seeking respect; we're providing value. These questions ensure the insights we provide are actionable.

After gathering this information, we're well-positioned to propose alternative methodologies or approaches. At this point, we usually say, "Given your objectives, [alternative methodology] could offer new insights into [specific aspect]." This approach isn't about negating their initial request but rather showing our expertise, giving them new perspectives to consider. By presenting these suggestions as additional options, we demonstrate our depth of knowledge

and offer them angles they might not have considered. We encourage them to look beyond their initial plan while respecting their primary objectives.

However, it's crucial to remember our role as service providers. We consciously avoid transforming these discussions into power struggles or suggesting that our recommended research design is the only way forward. We always adopt a collaborative approach: "I understand your preference for [their chosen design], and I'm prepared to proceed if that's your wish. Every methodology has its strengths and weaknesses. I just want to make you aware of the trade-offs involved."

This tactful method honors the client's initial desires while introducing our added-value perspective. It's about steering them back into the decision-making seat, armed with our consultancy expertise. By framing the discussion this way, we not only respect their desires but also affirm our commitment to help them fulfill their research goals. Discussing the advantages of their preferred approach alongside our suggested one enables the client to make informed choices. This strategy reassures them of their control but with the added advantage of our expertise. It's about finding the perfect equilibrium between adhering to their requests and demonstrating our value as a consultant, ensuring that the research surpasses their expectations.

This consultative method does more than enhance the research; it amplifies our role in the eyes of the client. Through meaningful dialogue, expert insights and respect for their decision-making process, we become an irreplaceable resource. This transformation is the essence of a true consultant.

COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY

Among the many tools in our arsenal, honesty stands out as one of the simplest and most powerful. Our commitment to transparency is unwavering: "Yes, we can do that for you, but to be perfectly honest, I'm concerned it might not be the best use of your resources. While I'm prepared to proceed, part of my responsibility is to ensure the research truly serves your interests, even if it doesn't benefit us." This candid approach not only demonstrates our integrity but also

significantly strengthens our relationships with clients. It transforms our role from service providers into trusted advisors, deeply invested in our clients' success. By daring to voice concerns and prioritize the client's needs over short-term profits, we transcend the traditional vendor-client dynamic. Instead, we forge a partnership rooted in mutual respect and a shared commitment to achieving meaningful, impactful outcomes. Honesty, in this sense, is not just a policy but a foundational principle that elevates our work and solidifies our place as a partner to our clients.

In navigating the complex terrain of market research, adopting a consultative stance transforms the very fabric of client interactions. It's not merely about enhancing the research design; it's about forging a partnership where mutual respect and collaboration pave the way for groundbreaking insights and actionable results. This journey from being viewed as task executors to becoming valued consultants is both challenging and rewarding. It requires patience, strategic questioning and courage.

As we embed ourselves deeper into the consultative role, we find that our contributions extend beyond the immediate project at hand. We become the "experts" and our clients ask us to give input on major decisions – we are more than just researchers. This shift not only elevates our status in the eyes of our clients but also enriches our professional satisfaction, knowing we've guided them towards more informed, effective solutions.

CHAMPION THE CAUSE

In the end, the essence of a true consultative relationship lies in its ability to transcend transactional boundaries, fostering a deeper, more meaningful engagement with our clients. It's about setting a higher standard for the industry, where the focus shifts from what is requested to what is truly needed. As we continue to navigate these relationships with tact, expertise and a collaborative spirit, we not only enhance the value of our services but also champion the cause of thoughtful, impactful research. ⬤

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••• data quality

A threat not a crisis

Ensuring quality survey responses in an age of uncertainty

| By Mike Booth

abstract

From Tor browsers to headless Chrome, take a journey through the many tools and tricks used by fraudulent respondents to corrupt the survey-taking process – and how panels try to defeat them.

Getting good-quality data from research panels has been a challenge ever since research panels became a thing. But let's be honest – it wasn't always a major challenge for the research industry. Data-checking techniques meant we could all stay one step ahead of bad-faith respondents – those only in it for the incentives. But in recent years there have been increasing concerns about respondent quality and for good reason.

What's changed?

- There are more online survey panel providers than ever. Many panels are linked through aggregators and subcontracting, making it unclear who is responsible for quality assurance and whether the same level of quality is guaranteed throughout field.
- A rapid increase in the availability of consumer privacy tools is making cheating easier and more accessible than ever.
- Easily available automated survey-taking software has become prevalent. For instance, Browser Automation Studio allows a user without any programming knowledge to create a bot and deploy it repeatedly on a survey.
- The gig economy created professional survey takers who are in a rush to cash in and may not be reliable or honest.
- There are highly motivated fraudsters in foreign, non-target markets who stand to make a substantial amount of money relative to their native economy. For instance, a fraudster acting from Bangladesh can make $1,500 per month in survey incentives, or $18,000 per year, which is almost seven times greater than the average income of their country.

While there is growing chatter in the corridors of research conferences that, at some point in the future, the bots could take over or sample quality issues could render the panels useless, the reality is that panel com-

Like, really? When data is bad it's hard for you to do your job. Our job is to analyze data, identify interesting relationships and extract inspiring insights and use them to aid decision-making. But how do you know that the survey responses themselves – the bedrock of your analysis – are fit for purpose?

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Consider for a moment the different types of survey responses you can get using the symbolic classification system shown in Figure 1.

So, bored? Fraud? Which is it? Bored respondents are our fault. Overly long surveys, poorly worded questions, complex answer grids – it's enough to make anyone tune out for a question

panies are stepping up, innovators are stepping in and as industry we are pushing back against sampling issues to maintain our integrity. But there is a problem for agencies to solve: Not all panels provide the same level of security and quality. How can a market researcher looking to contract a panel know what type of quality they will receive? And if the panel contracts with other vendors, will the quality be the same and is there any guarantee?
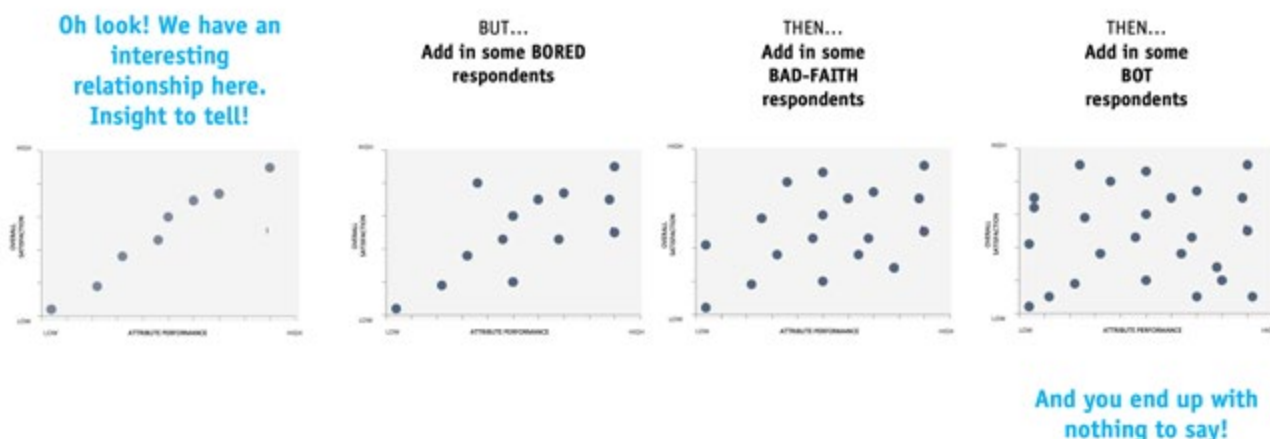
Hard to do your job

Why should you, as a researcher, care about data quality and go to the lengths required to verify that you are receiving high-quality respondents?

Figure 1

www.quirks.com

or two. Fraudulent actors, on the other hand, are a different problem and can be difficult to distinguish from bored respondents unless you look for certain clues.

Fraudsters are real people acting in bad faith and can comprise 5-25% of respondents. They pretend to know the product category, lying their way through screeners. Once they know how to get past the screener, they can sell that information online, post it on web forums and repeatedly complete your survey for the incentives. There are Reddit communities built around doing exactly this and profiting from it, with people posting their monthly earnings of survey income as a badge of honor and bragging rights. And now the frauds are leveraging AI to infect surveys with greater efficiency than ever before.

Lately our team have come across a new crop of open-ends that we call "beauty queens," created by ChatGPT or other AI language tools. They are perfectly worded responses, expertly crafted and sound too good to be true. Because they aren't true!

Peeling back the layers

Quality-verification methods can be divided into roughly four categories: device- and browser-specific signals; survey-specific behavior; content of survey responses; and the broader survey-taking environment (something panel providers have access to but most agencies do not).

There are many device-fingerprinting signals one can gather about a respondent. To be clear, these signals do not on their own indicate fraud but they are often used by frauds. Several are consumer-level privacy tools that are used by honest people and should not on their own disqualify someone. But by tracking each and looking at combinations of their use, you have clues to add to survey behavior and content to get a clear view of a respondent.

VPNs: Virtual private networks mask the user's real IP address, allowing fraudsters to appear as if they are accessing surveys from different locations than they are in and can also encrypt internet traffic.

Incognito mode: A browser feature preventing the storage of browsing history and cookies, aiding frauds in avoiding detection when reentering surveys.

Virtual machines: Allow a user to run multiple instances of an operating system, enabling frauds to access a survey repeatedly or multiple surveys at the same time, while appearing to be different people/devices.

Device tampering: Alters device settings or configurations and can help bypass security measures of surveys.

Privacy settings: Adjusting these settings can limit the amount of detectable information about a user's device and browser.

Tor browser: A browser that largely anonymizes internet activity.

Android emulators: These simulate Android devices on a computer, allowing frauds to mimic being different users for survey entry.

Jailbroken devices: These have removed restrictions, giving frauds the ability to modify device properties or install unauthorized apps.

Geolocation spoofing: This involves faking one's geographic location, enabling frauds to access location-specific surveys that are meant to prevent users outside that region.

To peel back the layers of what a respondent is doing in the survey, the old tools are no longer enough. Frauds have learned the game. More innovative tools are needed to capture things you can't see in the survey data alone.

The following are tried-and-true tools for flagging bored respondents that are no longer useful for catching fraudulent respondents:

Speeding: Your fastest five to 10 percent of respondents are largely not paying attention and not comprehending the survey contents. But those are likely your bored respondents. Frauds know better and have learned to program bots to move at a reasonable pace or to themselves move slowly while taking multiple surveys to increase profits.

Straightlining: Giving the same answer repeatedly on Likert scales will show that a respondent is bored but frauds know this will get them kicked out or flagged and are unlikely to do it.

Attention traps: The "click Answer 2 if you are paying attention" trap is not going to trip up the professional survey takers or the frauds who have seen this trick hundreds of times. If you are going to use traps, they should aim to catch someone answering dishonestly, which is what frauds do. Either through testing their content knowledge or asking questions that set up potentially contradictory answers, you need to monitor for dishonesty.

Open-ends: There is a lot of innovation happening in this space with AI and text-based machine learning models that make classifying the quality of open-ends fast. But at the same time AI poses a new problem. The open-ends are no longer silver bullets for detecting fraud: the beauty queens can now sound product-educated. We've even seen some beauty queens try to disguise themselves by muddying themselves up a bit with intentional spelling and grammatical errors.

Some newer methods that can detect fraud include:

Detect copy-and-paste and odd behavior in open-ends: The beauty queens need to be dealt with and detected. To remedy the situation mentioned above that open-ended content can no longer reliably expose fraud, more sophisticated analyses of behavior are needed. The key here is that behavior is now the thing to watch: like monitoring characters typed per minute, the use of copy-and-paste and looking for repeat or questionably similar open-ends across respondents. We've seen some AI-generated answers across respondents in the same survey that are nearly identical, enough to then look further into device-specific metadata and determine they were generated by the same person.

Atypical mouse movements, page navigation and browser rendering: Bots try to hide what they are. Many third-party security plug-ins can detect programmatically driven browsers like headless Chrome, but some bots are subtly obfuscated, so the more sophisticated the detection of anomalous behavior, the better.

Developer console open: No doctor or regular consumer should have the developer console open while taking a survey. Altering the html code of a webpage is how frauds block scripts and other plugins that would otherwise catch them.

Random choosing: As mentioned, watching for straightlining is not enough to catch frauds, but in its place you can use statistical tools to differentiate and classify atypical response patterns from the larger sample. For instance, in a conjoint study, isolating and removing random choosers. In a large grid, using dimension reduction techniques or latent-class analysis to isolate anomalous patterns.

More tools

The panel providers have more fraud-detection tools at their disposal. Panels can see what is happening across multiple surveys from different agencies, as well as the response history of any single respondent. As mentioned at the outset, the proliferation of panels and the sub-vending that occurs leaves agencies uncertain as to whether all panels involved in a recruit are doing these things.

In our opinion panels can and should:

Identify professional survey-takers based on survey response history. This requires the same respondents to have the same ID or a means of linking IDs across panels.

Flag problematic respondents. If a respondent has been flagged as low-quality by multiple agencies, it's time to remove them from the panel. This requires agencies and panels working together to submit quality deletion knowledge and reasons and the panels to aggregate that knowledge.

Pre-screen respondents: Use many of the fingerprinting and survey-specific techniques discussed above during panel screen-in surveys.

De-duplication for cross-panel repeats: The more panels involved in a single sample recruit, the higher the duplication rate. Panel providers can and should cooperate to prevent duplicate survey entry when subcontracting.

Registration security: IP blacklists, Captcha systems and filtering out registrations from temporary and throwaway e-mail addresses.

Validating professional credentials: Require licensure proof for professionals and cross-checking with publicly available data.

Many panels do these things or a combination of them. However, in our experience panel quality varies substantially. As mentioned, the sub-vending across panels can create issues; for instance, a lower-quality panel is brought on at the end of field to get the last bit of hard-to-reach sample. If you are not watching your data closely, you will not know if these sub-vendors are providing the same quality as you got at the outset. Panels could help here by being transparent about sub-vending and tracking quality of their sub-vendors to remove or remediate unreliable vendors.

Front-door security as prevention

Looking at the above tools discussed, it's clear that agencies and panels should be working together to prevent fraud: each has their own opportunities and strengths to combat the issue. In our experience, there is one more thing an agency can do to protect against fraud and it's an important one. The front door to your survey is the screening section. The more times a dishonest actor accesses your survey, the higher the probability they figure out your screening criteria and let themselves in. Stopping repeated survey touches should be one of your highest priorities.

I advise against using an open survey link – one that is the same for all respondents. They are easily shared, can be used repeatedly by the same person and even if you add a unique query string label it can be modified to break the protections you've added. Use restricted survey links that are unique for each respondent with a complex hash key and only allow those links to open the survey. For instance, our survey URL links contain a unique 108-alphanumeric-character string for each respondent. Only links generated by us can access the survey, meaning the probability of reentering our surveys

by guessing the hash of another of our links is about 4.69×10^{-195} – which is essentially zero. Each link can only be used once, then it's dead.

By combining unique, restricted survey links with advanced fingerprinting methods, you can block people visiting the survey repeatedly from the same device. That severely limits a fraud's ability to take the surveys multiple times and crack the screener. For example, if you signed up with a panel using six throwaway e-mail addresses and have six unique links to our survey, after you use one link and screen out, if you try another link from the same device, we kick you out. Same goes if you complete the survey. You will only have as many attempts as you have combinations of links and unique devices that we haven't blocked. We are making it a pain in the neck for someone to guess their way through our screeners or take the survey multiple times!

The solution is collaborative

You may be reading this and thinking, "The panel we use says they are constantly looking into this and they say they have the highest-quality respondents." Many panels employ security but not all security systems are equal. We've seen failures in security from providers touting rigorous protocols dozens of times. I don't necessarily blame the panels; the incentives are misaligned. Panels want to make money providing as many respondents as possible to agencies, while we as agencies don't want to pay for low-quality respondents and require strict timelines for field. Some audiences are hard to find and frauds commit fraud, which means bypassing security. It's a complicated issue and the solution is collaborative.

I mentioned at the beginning that I don't believe as an industry we are in a respondent quality crisis. I do, however, believe it's a threat we must continue to respond to. Based on our company's experience doing extensive verification of panel quality from most of the major vendors, we believe in doing due diligence to verify data quality in an ongoing, systematic manner. ⓘ

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Units of measure

Methods for determining your B2B brand's value

| By Ken Donaven

abstract

From brand mapping to apostle analysis, burgeoning B2B firms have many ways to gauge and grow the impact and awareness of their brand.

There is an increasing need among growing business-to-business companies to determine the value of a compelling brand. Often previously overlooked in the B2B space, the concept of brand value is becoming more readily embraced by the leaders of B2B companies, particularly small and mid-sized firms. B2B companies increasingly recognize the value of brand perception and brand positioning, regardless of size and industry sector, but often don't know where to begin to measure the value of their brand.

A compelling brand is no longer the domain of consumer-facing companies, nor a luxury for only sophisticated, mature enterprises. In fact, if not nurtured with purpose and communicated with clarity, the lack of control over a company's brand can very much become a liability, particularly if competitors are more purposeful and deliberate about their brand's position in the marketplace.

Those new to brand insights and brand development suddenly find themselves in somewhat foreign territory. On one hand, they recognize the intrinsic value of maximizing their brand's position in the marketplace; on the other, they often are unaware of how nuanced and sophisticated brand insights analysis can be. For a startup or fledgling entrepreneurial undertaking, the concept of brand often is relegated to the realm of a company logo, tagline and basic brand messaging.

To elevate a brand and maximize revenue, B2B companies need to understand the entirety of their brand's value. This can only be accomplished by understanding how the market perceives it and then optimizing it at every potential customer touchpoint. Yet B2B companies have much less access to point-of-purchase data than their consumer-facing counterparts, who often can track and contextualize hundreds (if not thousands) of purchases per day to harvest data and statistics for valuable brand insights.

It is for these reasons that growing business-to-business companies and emerging franchisors typically strive to move from traditional (and often ba-

sic) brand analyses to more advanced methodologies that yield better insights and inform more confident and informed decision-making.

BRAND INSIGHTS METHODOLOGIES, FROM BASIC TO ADVANCED
The more sophisticated brand insights methodologies become, the more granular – and, indeed, more actionable – the intelligence yielded becomes. While we feel all of the following have merit and application for B2B brands, we often start with the most basic brand insights and evolve to more advanced

methodologies as our B2B clients become more sophisticated and purposeful with their brand positioning efforts.

Brand funnel analysis
Many insights professionals are familiar with using a traditional brand funnel to measure brand value. Traditional brand funnel questions include:

Awareness: How familiar is the market with your brand?
Consideration: What percentage of the market considers buying from your brand?
Purchase: What share of the market does your brand currently own?
Loyalty: How many customers make repeat purchases from your brand?
Advocacy: To what extent do people actively recommend your brand to their friends and colleagues and with what degree of enthusiasm?

Studying the behaviors of a market relative to your brand is a baseline for understanding the current state of brand health. This methodology is very valuable as far as it goes. But for many companies and brands, it doesn't go far enough. That said, if a brand has yet to engage in this analysis,

Figure 1

The apostle model classifies customers by their satisfaction and likelihood to repurchase, yielding a more complete assessment of customer loyalty and allowing a firm to prioritize how it addresses its customers.

Loyalists
Satisfied customers who are highly likely to buy from you again. They often almost serve as an extension of your sales force.

Hostages
Are less satisfied on an overall basis but are likely to purchase again. These customers may be locked into a contract or may feel that no other viable alternatives exist.

Transients
Satisfied customers who are not highly loyal (repurchase). More likely to be price sensitive and will switch suppliers whenever the opportunity arises.

Defectors
Are less satisfied and have a low likelihood of repurchase; further they may bad-mouth you on their way out the door.
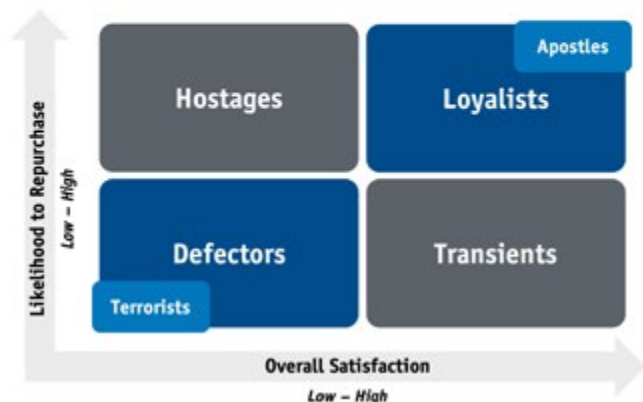
it is a logical starting point, as it will inform more advanced brand insights studies to follow.

Apostle analysis

An apostle analysis (Figure 1) involves a combination of customer satisfaction (CSAT) metrics along with some grounding in customer spending. Apostle analysis dictates that respondents are divided into customer cohorts based on customer loyalty metrics, with each cohort studied as a distinct buyer persona rather than looking at the respondent pool as one homogenous group.

The apostles among the respondent pool are those who score the brand very highly for the CSAT metrics of likelihood to repurchase and overall satisfaction. On a scale of 1 to 10 against which to rate the brand, with 10 being the most positive responses, the apostle cohort includes respondents who rate both metrics a 10.

The value a company derives from its apostles in the market is almost always higher than other, lower-scoring cohorts. Apostles are often brand advocates and such individuals do some of the brand's marketing and advertising for the brand. By understanding all satisfaction drivers and purchase motivators of this specific cohort, the brand is armed with valuable intelligence as to where to spend its marketing dollars and customer-nurturing efforts.

A brand obviously wants more apostles than it wants those less loyal to the brand – call them transients. Transients are likely to leave a brand over price or some other fickle desire. In many cases, you may also have cohorts who score the brand very highly on likelihood to repurchase but lower on overall satisfaction. These buyers are considered hostages and they are not your advocates. Such customers feel as though they are committed to a given provider out of contractual obligation or lack of viable options, so these customers are more likely to abandon your brand if other options become available. Even worse, some identify the extremely negative respondents as terrorists – those looking to actively detract from the brand, do it harm or discourage others from purchasing. Although these are extreme examples, in this day of rampant online reviews, identifying and eliminating brand terrorists is in your brand's best interest.

Focusing the brand-value analysis on various cohorts – especially the apostles – yields far more actionable intelligence than looking at the entirety of the survey data and drawing overly generalized conclusions that might be imperfect (at best) or entirely inaccurate (at worst).

Brand mapping

Brand mapping is an extremely effective way to understand your brand's market position. It is conducted by mapping customer perceptions of your brand across various qualitative or quantitative metrics, allowing the brand to draw direct lines from public perception to hard numbers such as sales, pricing strategy and other financial metrics that move the revenue needle in meaningful and measurable ways.

Brand mapping analyses – such as price-value mapping – allow the brand to uncover and visualize opportunities to improve upon key metrics according to the market's preferences, rather than merely on internal hunches. For example, a common brand mapping study might examine two metrics – price and perceived product quality – beginning with internal stakeholder analysis then moving out concentrically until the perceptions of the customer are factored in.

Internal stakeholders may believe the brand is perceived very positively on both price and product quality. However, when considering the perceptions of the sales team, it might be revealed that both metrics are in reality less robust. Perhaps this team is closer to the front lines and can more readily access negative perceptions from the customers' perspective. Finally, when customers are surveyed, maybe product quality scores are even lower.

Once all of these various insights are mapped against the competitive field, it becomes intuitive to visualize where the brand truly stands in the marketplace. Overlaying pricing study data allows informed decision-making relative to pricing strategy vis-à-vis customer perceptions. As a result, brands can identify otherwise hidden opportunities to increase product quality, customer service or the perceptions thereof. They may also uncover opportunities to position the brand at a more premium price point if that's how the brand is perceived by the market against competitive alternatives.

Sentiment analysis

As we've highlighted in previous contributions to Quirk's ("Art and science: Injecting emotion into business-to-business marketing," Quirk's e-newsletter, July 5, 2023), even business-to-business brands need to work diligently to understand the human, emotional drivers behind the consumer's affinity to a given brand. In fact, in some cases, it's even more important for them than it is for their consumer-brand counterparts.

Businesses typically don't purchase products and services from other businesses. Rather, people at businesses buy from people at businesses. Intrinsically, these human buyers and prospects are driven by emotion just as much as consumers in retail and other CPG sectors. Understanding the brand's emotional value using emotion intelligence (EI) methodologies is perhaps the most critical – but the most often overlooked – brand insights analysis for B2B and consumer brands alike.

It's important to understand which emotions drive consumer behavior in a given category and to be careful not to oversimplify the calculus. Some brands actually need to lean into what might otherwise be considered negative emotions, such as fear or avoidance. (Think insurance and personal injury law, to name two examples.) Other brands must evoke desire or attraction (say, fashion, hospitality or food brands).

However, the nuance lies in understanding the connective tissue between one's target market's preferred emotional state and that which your product or service can credibly deliver against. Sometimes a negative emotion (fear, say) can be a positive purchasing motivator. But just because the negative emotion may be driving the decision to buy, that doesn't mean the market can't have a very positive sentiment with respect to your brand.

An effective approach to studying and documenting these emotional drivers works along eight major channels/dimensions (Figure 2):

- Pleasant vs. unpleasant – as discussed above.
- Active vs. passive – Pepsi's "joy" versus Coke's "serenity," for example.
- Inward vs. outward – Is a person feeling the emotion or is the brand expressing it?

• Passion vs. dispassionate – A sliding scale, ranging from 0 (no passion) to 10 (a great deal of passion).

Once these emotions are detected, documented and aligned along a matrix, the brand can build the emotional DNA of its brand messaging, visual identity, marketing and advertising strategy, packaging, customer service, product development and so on. It also empowers those who chose to lean into sentiment analysis to better identify, nurture and celebrate the brand advocates and ambassadors who will summon those emotions to maintain brand loyalty and affinity, as well as to enthusiastically recommend it to family, friends and colleagues.

Emotion intelligence is largely a brand-value-oriented analysis – studying the emotional connections between human and company, product or category. Sophisticated EI combines elements of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, because emotions are so complex, often difficult to express in language (as well as interpreting that language) and can be deeply buried in a person's subconscious.

Even neuroscience has begun to play in this area of research, deploying sophisticated technology and tools to study emotions in humans by hooking them up to machines to detect brain activity and monitor chemical changes that might demonstrate emotions that they won't necessarily freely articulate.

Of course, AI is gaining favor in this arena, as it is in nearly all walks of life. However, because we are dealing in understanding emotions that only humans have truly experienced, we believe that it's critical to inject human oversight and participation in such studies. We call this technique augmented intelligence – the empowerment of artificial intelligence applied with the supervision and scrutiny of human intelligence.

Lifetime value analysis

The important thing about brand insight analyses is that they don't exist in a vacuum or as a single snapshot in time. In fact, another type of study not mentioned specifically above is lifetime value analysis, which is key to understanding whether the value of the brand is increasing over time, especially as the company grows, its market expands and the stakes get higher with each evolution of the company's growth

Lifetime value analysis allows the brand to establish baseline metrics, using any or all of the methodologies explored above, and to chart progress over time. This dynamic data set also empowers leadership to zero-in on various cohorts over time to see how fluid various customers are relative to affinity and loyalty. We can measure the brand loyalist against the brand transient and observe brand perception and buying behaviors using time-series analysis.

All of this allows the growing midsized business, franchise operator or other B2B brand to apply the same level of granular analysis that consumer brands employ more readily, using real-time sales data that happens every day, everywhere, at scale. Most business-to-business companies don't have access to such volume of data, so they need to mine for it to uncover its hidden treasure.

BRAND AS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE – YOURS OR THEIRS?

At the end of the day, brand value analyses should be much more than merely intangibles that many often associate with branding and perception. Such studies should be rooted in data science and aligned with key performance metrics that drive growth and impact the bottom line. They should be used to capture market share, increase profitability and drive specific desired financial outcomes.

Regardless of the metrics your particular brand chooses to optimize for, what's common to all is that better informed equals better decisions. Data is out there; it just needs to be mined and refined into intelligence. That intelligence, once converted into action, is the fuel that the winning brands use to separate themselves from the also-rans. ⓠ

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Figure 2

Emotion Landscape

Adding the human touch

Why B2B research is about more than data

| By Jim Nowakowski

abstract

Don't overlook the value of personal experiences – talking to clients, talking to customers, getting involved beyond the data-gathering – to boost the impact of your B2B research.

William Wrigley, Jr. originally turned to chewing gum as a way to bring attention to the premium baking powder he was selling. He included gum along with the powder as a kind of cheap, easily portable premium he could carry with him as he made his rounds. According to Erin Blakemore, "Wrigley may not have come to gum first, but he brought a salesman's savvy to the product. He knew that in order to get gum to consumers, he'd have to hook dealers. Soon, gum itself was his main attraction alongside free perks like display cases or coffee grinders that sweetened the sale for retailers."[1]

How much research do you think Wrigley did on gum and baking soda? How much research should he have done? No one knows the answers to these questions but Wrigley knew (consciously or unconsciously) the secret of research whether B2B or B2C: emotion drives sales. His instincts guided his decisions but the decisions themselves were based on observations, encounters, testing and the best of all research tactics: his own experiences.

We call this idea – of bringing a salesperson's savvy to the research – the Wrigley Effect, which is remembering to use your own human experiences outside of the data to shape research for clients. This makes research more than just a numbers game, something anyone can play.

Always doing research

In one sense, Wrigley had it much easier because the pace of business, the pace of life was slower. Yet that didn't change the fact that he was probably always doing research on his sales trips, talking to people, observing behaviors. His personal, emotional involvement was really research – the best kind.

Wrigley's experience as a salesperson gave him the psychological insight to connect gum to baking powder and then, over time, to see gum's potential. If researchers could be more like Wrigley the salesperson, we

Wrigley didn't hit the road with the idea that chewing gum was going to take off. He let the conditions of the road shape his thesis. And then once he found it, the rest was history. As a researcher, your personal experience can be the single most important factor in guiding clients properly in using any research tactics.

Moving targets

There's a principle in quantum theory (don't stop reading) that says the more the position of a particle is determined, the less precisely the velocity is known, and vice versa. To put it another way, the more you figure out where something is, the faster it changes position. And the more you figure out how fast it's going, the more you don't know where it is.

Sound familiar? The conclusions you drew from your last research project are obsolete but research that merely feeds more research is waste; research that feeds sales is progress. And because human beings are being measured, you need that Wrigley Effect (randomness and experience) to make it work.

When measuring emotion in B2B we find a purchaser is almost 50% more likely to buy a product or service when they see personal value – such as opportunity for career advancement or confidence and pride in their choice – in their business purchase decision.[4] And, purchasers are eight times more likely to pay a premium for comparable products and services when personal value is present.[5]

> **It's always been about emotions and the Wrigley Effect is the way to bring in emotions around a piece of research. If people were rational and not emotional, there would be no need for research, would there? 2+2 would always equal 4.**

It's always been about emotions and the Wrigley Effect is the way to bring in emotions around a piece of research. If people were rational and not emotional, there would be no need for research, would there? 2+2 would always equal 4.

would rely on our personal experiences to help drive the data and not let data be the only driver on the path forward for our clients. Purchasing decisions, after all, are made by human beings, and researchers can't forget to layer the human element into the data.

Speaking on a webinar, Emily Walgenbach, shopper insights lead, frozen divisions for Nestlé USA, said, "We can't get to perfect, but we have to get as close as we can get to it because it is better than throwing up our hands. We should plan for good-better-best…certainly. But aligning ourselves with 'what's the insight we can get for right now' versus 'what we can get in nine months' is critical. That means research should take three months tops. But even then, every month, if not even faster, we are reevaluating and updating our scenario-planning."[2]

Walgenbach was expressing that the speed of change at which information travels necessitates measurement and remeasurement. In other words, no matter how much research you do, there's always more to do. But ask a simple question: What is your client doing with the research you just produced? If the answer isn't "selling more," you're probably doing the wrong research.

Another complicating factor is the decrease in response rates[3] because everyone is constantly bombarding their lists with surveys! Our insatiable need for insights is overtaxing our main sources of obtaining them.

One or two or 10 surveys or focus groups aren't going to cut it these days. For B2B researchers to be successful, they have to become salespeople and be researching all the time. Every piece of evidence – every encounter, planned or unplanned – can play a role in eventual outcomes for a project. This accumulation of insights gives you unduplicated power to recognize the smallest, most insignificant detail that might just spark a meaningful recommendation for your client.

Uncovering emotions in any project comes from your own emotional involvement in that project – and personal experiences that you've gathered over the years.

CASE STUDY ONE

Once, on a direct-mail campaign, the client called, irate about the response rate. We were conducting A/B testing offers and the client said response was "…horrible. It was zero. You better find out what happened."

I have learned there are always – always – reasons for things and so after driving out to see the client immediately, I asked to see the non-deliverables. I wasn't formulating a research study to find out what went wrong; I was letting the situation dictate the recommendation.

When the batch of non-deliverables came in from the mailroom, I picked up one envelope from the stack and knew immediately what had happened (the weight of the envelope told me). I opened it with my finger and saw, lo and behold, that the offer had been sliced off the letter in the lettershop

process: There was no way for the target to respond!

You would never know that from a spreadsheet. No amount of research would provide that insight.

After being embarrassed, I told the client, "I've seen this before…and I would recommend doing the mailing correctly to make sure that this was the reason for the lack of response."

The redo actually beat the control mailing we were measuring against.

I could have recommended another focus group, another survey, another whatever. But being in the field…constantly researching…my experience gave me the clues to solve the problem. Was this analysis research from a survey? What made me ask for the non-deliverables? The Wrigley Effect!

CASE STUDY TWO

Another time, the IT person came running into my office saying there was an angry person on the phone demanding to know where we got his name from for the e-mail campaign we had just launched for a client. I immediately got on the call, first apologizing and telling the person we would remove

his name from our list, never to bother him again.

"Fine, but I want you to tell me where you got my name," he said, still fuming. "I've been getting e-mails all day long and I don't know where they are coming from."

List sources are always interesting, and in this case, the source was a comprehensive construction database our client had; we were looking for key people who controlled the specification for faucets in retail stores. This person (call him Charlie) was listed as the key specifier for over 2,750 stores in the U.S. for a major retailer. Our client wanted to get on the company's list to supply the faucets.

I told Charlie the truth, that we were doing an e-mail campaign, we got his name from so-and-so, etc. There was silence on the phone for five seconds after I finished my story.

"Are you still there?" I asked.

"Yeah, I'm still here," Charlie said with a sigh of relief. "What did you say your name was again?"

I told him and he thanked me – profusely. He was grateful that I had taken the time to tell him where I got

Here are some of the tactics you might consider in using the Wrigley Effect in your own work

Conducting surveys and interviews

Most of us believe asking questions about the target's needs, pain points, decision-making processes and preferences will suffice. Use the Wrigley Effect before you launch; visit some targets or make random calls to similar targets and engage in spontaneous conversations. You will be surprised by the insights you'll uncover.

Data analysis

When you analyze an existing dataset and do the usual identification of patterns and trends, purchase history, frequency, average order value, etc., pick up the phone and call some of them. We did this with a dataset of 650 continuing-education course-takers. In scanning the Excel file, my eye fell upon a designer for Netflix. I called her and found out she used our client's product (lighting) on her set for one Netflix's major series. The director of marketing looked like the God of Marketing at the board meeting the following day after we notified him and shared this single fact. Stopping at the dataset analysis would have never revealed that nugget but the Wrigley Effect did.

Customer feedback

Traditional tactics tell us to collect and analyze feedback from customers through various channels such as e-mail, social media and customer support interactions. This is true of both positive AND negative feedback. The Wrigley Effect, which draws on randomness and experience to address issues, means not necessarily using additional research to figure things out. That's what JC Penney did years ago when one of its products (a Michael Graves Design teapot) was compared (because of its shape) to Hitler on social media. Of course, it spiked in views as word spread but the retailer took a team to respond to each and every post regarding this issue. The result? The teapots sold out and became a collector's item.

Competitor analysis

Study your competitors and their interactions with customers. The Wrigley Effect here is secret shopping – going undercover to understand and help your clients position their products properly. When our client came out with a new product and was about to be copied by a major competitor, we went undercover into the showroom launch of that product. We talked to the product manager for the product, listened as he explained to dealers what the product could do, its benefits, etc. Our report back to the client contained all that information and a simple observation: There's nothing to worry about. Our client was in the market first and we knew the laws of branding: The first brand into the brain, on average, gets twice the long-term market share of the No. 2 brand and twice again as much as the No. 3 brand. The Wrigley Effect depends on knowledge YOU bring to a situation.

Customer journey mapping

Mapping out the entire customer journey from awareness to purchase and beyond to identify key touchpoints and moments of truth where customers make decisions or interact with your brand is useful, but use the Wrigley Effect to reveal the "wormholes" in the map. These are areas where unseen influencers lurk either to disrupt or help the path to purchase. At one trade show, after the show closed, a couple was examining the display for our client. I walked up to them and began the conversation. The president of the company was still there and eventually saw me and I introduced him to the couple. He took over the pitch and after they left, I asked him if he knew who they were. "No," he said. "They are architects – at two of the leading firms in the United States. They are married and redoing their bathrooms and they want to use your product in all five of those rooms." He said I was his best salesperson. I said, "I'm just doing research." Which is what working a booth at a trade show is really all about: research using the Wrigley Effect.

Building trust and relationships

Emotions such as trust, loyalty and rapport are crucial in B2B relationships. Buyers are more likely to do business with companies they trust and feel connected to emotionally. A study emphasized the importance of emotional connections in driving customer loyalty, repeat business and advocacy in the B2B context: "The B2B elements of value: How to measure – and deliver – what business customers want," by Eric Almquist, Jamie Cleghorn and Lori Sherer, in Harvard Business Review, March-April 2018.

his name, because he was unable to get through to any human being anywhere else for the past half hour. It was voicemail after voicemail, so by the time he got me on the phone, I was hearing all the frustration that had built up.

We actually had a good, three-minute, spontaneous conversation, especially after I asked him about his work. Before he hung up, he said to me: "By the way, I'm not the guy."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean I'm not the guy you are looking for. You want Dave O. for faucets in our stores."

And he gave me Dave's e-mail and phone number and told me to say that Charlie sent me over. "We work together all the time and he's the one your client will want to talk to for putting their product in our stores."

No amount of research would have turned that up. No research technique could do this – turn what was not a mistake but an emotional encounter into an important piece of evidence: the exact contact to begin the sales relationship. Only the Wrigley Effect could do that.

CASE STUDY THREE

We were conducting phone interviews with people who purchased and used our client's product. We developed a script, found the targets and started down the path.

After a dozen calls, the client changed the parameters of the research, switching the product type they wanted to know about. We adjusted and continued, merely altering the script.

I often participate in these studies myself because it's not only good practice, I use the Wrigley Effect: I go off-script when the situation presents itself – and it always does! These off-script variations more often than not produce key sales insights for clients.

I was talking to an industrial engineer who owned this product and our conversation moved toward his work and his passion for the client's product. He had learned about it from his father, purchased it and "loved" it. The conversation turned on his owning a Tesla. The conversation went like this:

Me: And you've been enjoying it [our client's product] ever since. Right?

Engineer: I say it's my favorite thing I own. I joke – and it's no joke – and

say the Tesla Model 3 is my second-happiest purchase in my life. The [client's product] is number one.

Me: I would love to hear more about this.

Engineer: Absolutely. You think I'm obsessed with that thing [client's product]? I tell everyone, "You need to get one." Honestly, it's true. It's like, if I could only pick one, where I'd be banned from buying a Tesla or banned from having [client's product], I give up the car.

Me: Really?

Engineer: Yeah, for sure.

Me: What do you attribute that to that kind of passion?

For the rest of the conversation (which lasted another 22 minutes) he told me why, breaking it down like the engineer he was. This is the Wrigley Effect on full display, because it offered unduplicated insight into the level of advocacy our client was uncovering about their product – only totally unsolicited, unscripted and so, so human.

Best secret weapon

Research – all research – seeks to guide clients on which way to go. Using the Wrigley Effect – letting the types of personal experience so often found in sales guide the research, not just data – can be the researcher's best secret weapon.

When Alice meets the Cheshire Cat sitting on a bough of a tree during her adventures in Wonderland, this conversation takes place:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where–" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"–so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

There's a lot of wisdom in classic literature, and like Wrigley and the Cat, we have to walk long enough to get it. Our problem today is not walking but running. When you run, you don't see what's around you; when you walk, you see everything. It takes longer when you walk, and in this speedy society, walking gets overlooked and bypassed.

However, your accumulated experience can't be duplicated. Your knowledge gives you the Wrigley Effect basis to make recommendations based on what you see and hear – not just data.

Start walking. ⓿

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3 John Boyle, senior advisor at survey research for ICF, says there are three primary reasons for declining response rates. First is cost. As the response rates decline, you have to work a lot harder – do a lot more calls or send out a lot more questionnaires and possibly offer incentives – just to get enough respondents. Second is credibility. For years, we've used response rate as the gold standard of survey quality. We've seen the response rates decline on major surveys – in some major federal surveys from 70% to 40% or less – over the last 20 years. The 2018 Survey of Medicaid in Ohio had a response rate of just 12%. The face validity looks bad, which undermines our ability to judge how good these surveys are and how much we can rely on them. Third is non-response bias. The larger the proportion of non-respondents to respondents, the more the opportunity for non-response bias grows. You may have a perfectly drawn sample but if a majority are non-responders, you don't know how that group differs from the responders. The overall results of the research can get skewed by overindexing on the types of people who are more likely to respond to surveys.

4 "From promotion to emotion: Connecting B2B customers to brands." Sam Nathan and Karl Schmidt. October 2013. Think Google Consumer Insights.

5 Ibid.

From a position of strength

How to maximize the benefits and avoid the pitfalls of corporate advocacy

| By Eric Scheer and Jeremy Cochran

abstract

Six recommendations for brands that want to take a stand on an issue and emphasize purpose over profits.

Willingly or unwillingly, today's brands have stepped into the spotlight as unlikely advocates of social causes, such as LGBTQ+ rights, environmental conservation and reproductive rights. This coincides with a waning sense of faith in traditional leadership platforms, especially when it comes to effecting societal change. As such, we see consumers' expectations shifting – it's not just about products and experiences, it's about products, experiences, communications and cultural influences that all combine to make a positive impact.

In some cases, consumer expectations for corporate advocacy – that is, corporations' contributions to, and support of, broader causes – push brands into causes and concerns that transcend the products and services they sell. Consider Levi's stand on gun control or Patagonia's push for sustainability. These initiatives have come to define both brands in ways that aren't directly connected to selling jeans and jackets (and yes – we'll talk about Bud Light in a minute).

Long story short, advocacy has become an essential component of what defines success for a modern brand. In our approach to assessing brand strength, we use five key metrics to determine market relevance and competitive momentum. We've found that advocacy plays a critical role in driving a brand's momentum but in a world of shifting perspectives, building a growth strategy that effectively leverages advocacy can be extremely challenging. Even risky.

As we've all seen in recent years, advocacy can breed controversy. There's no getting around it. However, with careful planning, strategic assessment and goal-setting, brands can successfully embrace advocacy while minimizing and managing potential risks.

But what, exactly, do we mean by "successfully embracing advocacy"?

A recent Harvard Business Review (HBR) article describes success in this area as a "long-term competitive advantage" and increased cultural relevance. Moreover, the article frames success as the result of intentional strategies and processes that help manage short-term controversy.[1]

With that in mind, let's take a closer look at why advocacy is so important for brands today.

Strong link

Burke's research on brand growth shows a strong link between advocacy and increased topline revenue (Figure 1). When consumers see brands advocating for issues they believe in, those brands tend to have stronger business outcomes as well as a stronger social media presence than brands rated lower in terms of advocacy. Furthermore, these brands often show stronger year-over-year growth than their competitors, demonstrating the link between advocacy and business success.

According to a recent study, a majority of surveyed consumers agree that it's important for companies to think beyond their profits. In fact, 94% of consumers state that it's important for companies to have a strong purpose and 83% say companies should only profit if they also deliver a positive impact.[2]

Similarly, a series of HBR surveys found that when consumers are aware of a brand's societal initiatives, loyalty to and trust in that brand increase.[3] The surveys also found that employees exhibit greater trust and loyalty – as well as more positive word of mouth – when a chief executive's social-issue commitments are backed by action.

Moreover, Burke's research also suggests that younger consumers (i.e., Gen Z and Millennials) are more attuned to brands' level of advocacy than older consumers. These findings correspond to broader research indicating that a brand's stances and corporate practices are a bigger driver of purchase choice for younger consumers.[4] However, this isn't to say that older consumers care less about these issues; indeed, controlling for political alignment, there is little difference in attitudes across generations. Rather, younger generations are simply more likely to expect more from brands in terms of pursuing these issues. And, assuming their attitudes stay this way, their expectations will only increase over time.[5]

Unfortunately, we see plenty of examples where brands miss the mark in terms of what and how they're advocating. We all know about Bud Light's poorly received attempt to court a more progressive audience by sponsoring transgender social media influencer Dylan Mulvaney in 2022. Earlier that same year, Target faced accusations of abandoning its decades-long advocacy for the LGBTQ community when it moved and removed Pride merchandise in response to in-store protests. Fueled by the pervasive power of social media, these situations negatively affected both brands' image and their topline.

As mentioned, advocating for an issue/cause never comes without some risk. But remaining silent on societal issues presents risks as well. Based on our own research – as well as the lessons we've learned from observing other brands – it's clear that when brands don't actively manage the conversation on their social positions, they run the risk of losing engaged consumers to more vocal competitors. Moreover, silent brands will miss out on opportunities to build a sense of trust and rapport with passionate consumers, who often have the highest potential for loyalty.

For example, in 2018, Nike showcased NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick in its advertising campaigns during a time of deep polarization around Kaepernick's decision to kneel during the national anthem (as a protest of racial inequality). While Nike initially lost 3% of its stock value and videos emerged of people burning their shoes in protest, within a month the stock recouped that loss and grew by 5%.[6] In the end, Nike did not suffer long-lasting financial implications and the brand likely benefitted from a favorable impression among consumers who were engaged by this issue. Moreover, it's likely these same consumers will demonstrate continued loyalty to Nike for supporting their beliefs.

Finding the right path

As a brand, how do you "do advocacy" the right way?

After studying brands that have successfully embraced advocacy as part of their growth strategy, we've identified six key recommendations that can help you navigate the complexities of corporate advocacy, while managing risk and maximizing a strong, authentic presence. While the exact path forward for any brand is complex and varied, these recommendations can help maximize the benefits and reduce risks.

Recommendation 1: Weigh the effect of your advocacy on key audiences.

Three main groups will determine if your advocacy efforts are a success:

Current consumers – those who can promote and buy more of your product.

Potential consumers – those who will be drawn to your brand by your advocacy efforts.

Your employees – those who will ensure your brand delivers authentically.

Know these audiences and their values. For both consumer groups, it's helpful to understand the degree to which your efforts will influence their purchase decisions. This information should inform your choice of issue and its place in your overall strategy. Consider primary and secondary research that can provide an objective measurement of these audiences' beliefs and values.

For employees, you will want to know their opinions but it is also important to identify who is driving the success of your brand and who will be most affected by your decision. While advocacy can increase loyalty and engagement, if employees feel at odds with their employer, they may disengage or leave. In all cases, your objective is to anchor your decision in data, while remaining sensitive to your brand's values and the social context. So, make a plan to reach out to these groups early and regularly.

Recommendation 2: Build authenticity into your advocacy strategy.

For modern consumers, authenticity is of the utmost importance. It is closely related to brand trust, which is a foundational element of brand strength. Consumers can quickly identify when

companies are wading into waters where they have no knowledge or experience, rightly tagging them as phony or out of their element. Consider advocating for issues that align with your corporate responsibilities or brand values. Issues aligned with the business you are in and the benefit you provide are more naturally authentic to your brand.

Start with your brand's value proposition and brand purpose; if these elements are missing or outdated, refresh them. Clear articulations of your brand's DNA will be essential to identifying the link between your brand and its cause. Consider Nike – known for supporting athletes – getting behind Colin Kaepernick, or Dawn dish soap as an icon for cleanliness being used to clean toxic chemicals from marine birds. These brands have a logical association with their causes.

Recommendation 3: Build relationships to ensure relevance.

Do your homework and make sure you pursue advocacy in a truly helpful way. Start by creating an organizational structure and identify the people who will manage your commitment for the long term. Encourage your leaders to meet with leaders of the cause you choose and, together, identify what would truly help and what would potentially just create a distraction.

For instance, many companies have drawn attention to certain issues without having a true beneficial impact. It's sometimes called "woke-washing" – and consumers have become more adept at

identifying it, or at times misidentifying it when there is authentic, positive corporate intent.

Recommendation 4: Balance impact with visibility.

Despite the inherent value of supporting needed causes, your advocacy efforts must also provide an effective means of promoting your brand's image and reputation – otherwise your efforts will not be justifiable to your organization in the long run. At the same time, your motives could appear self-serving if you tie your advocacy work too closely to your brand, so establish an appropriate distance.

For example, in 2016 Ben and Jerry's created a limited-edition ice cream flavor and donated a portion of sales to the NAACP to support voting rights. A limited-edition product is a great way set distance and accomplish business objectives and advocacy. Other tactics include sponsoring independent research or a conference where your issue is the focus.

Striking a balance between authenticity and business objectives can be tricky, so ensure stakeholders from both your brand and the cause are involved in the discussions.

Recommendation 5: Plan your brand's response to controversy.

As mentioned, controversy is inevitable, but it's usually only intense in the short term. Brand teams can mitigate the impact by preparing and vetting responses as well as maintaining consistency in their messages and actions.

Moreover, think of how you see the long-term relationship between your brand and the issue at hand; assess how your strategy and your position will shift over time, as society's perspectives on the issue shift. Finally, consider how your brand will respond if your position becomes divisive. In all cases, balance the need to react quickly with the need to maintain consistency in your position, while also considering new information that may alter your position.

Recommendation 6: Monitor and assess advocacy as a competitive advantage.

At the end of the day, your brand's advocacy efforts must provide a competitive advantage over the long term. The goal is to reward your employees and stakeholders – both intrinsically and extrinsically – based on your brand's ability to build a stronger bond with consumers.

Once you embark on your advocacy journey, monitor your brand's image and actions to ensure you're getting credit for your efforts. Monitoring can also help you gauge your brand's reputation for advocacy compared to that of your competitors.

Stand for more

For brands today, there is no magic formula for mastering the machinations of advocacy. And there are plenty of ways to do it poorly. But this is the reality of the modern market – a reality fueled by the ever-increasing expectations of modern consumers. People today expect brands to stand for more. More than their profits and, in many cases, more than their business. As such, brands must find ways to fulfill their obligations as corporate citizens while not straying too far from their core competencies.

However, if brands can advocate for causes that are important to their consumer base – while fighting for these causes in authentic and transparent ways – advocacy can become a valuable strategic asset that fosters loyalty, respect and, ultimately, growth.

Not to mention doing some real good in the world. ⦿

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This way to fun

Eye-tracking research helps Indianapolis museum steer guests in the right direction

| By Marlen Ramirez, Assistant News and Content Editor
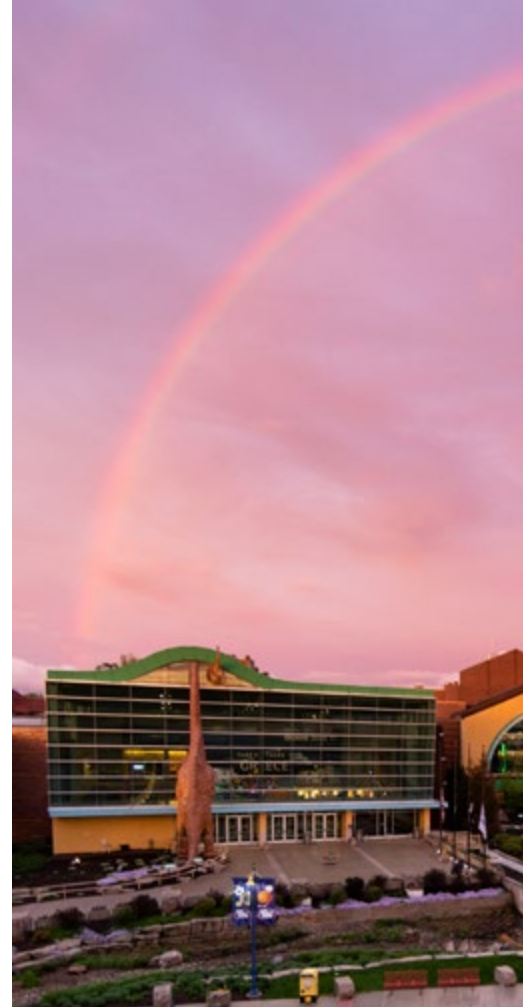
abstract

To better understand their experience, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis and the University of Southern Indiana recruited first-time visitors to determine how prominent and effective wayfinding signage and marketing materials were.

Prominent signage is key when navigating a new space. This is especially true when the majority of a location's visitors are parents or guardians who are attempting to guide themselves while caring for young children. In partnership with the University of Southern Indiana (USI), the Children's Museum of Indianapolis used eye-tracking to determine how effective their wayfinding signage truly was for first-time guests.

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the largest children's museum in the world, sees over 1 million visitors annually. It aims to inspire and empower children worldwide by cultivating learning, celebrating people and encouraging innovation. To achieve innovation themselves, the museum's marketing and external relations and research and evaluation staff decided to work with the Biometrix Discovery Lab at USI to gather wayfinding insights to understand the effectiveness of their wayfinding signage and how future adjustments can improve it, examining why participants are drawn to specific wayfinding signage, what captures their attention and for how long, what subtle behaviors they are exhibiting and what ultimately affects their decision-making.

The museum recruited a total of 15 research participants using advance and day-of recruitment. The museum staff invited friends and family who had not yet visited and also asked people as they walked in. Along with the opportunity to use the eye-tracking technology, many of those recruited were interested in giving back to the museum and were surprised it cared enough to conduct studies of that nature.

To qualify for the study, the participants had to be at least 18 years of age as they had to consent to have their eyesight and audio monitored and recorded. To accurately reflect the kinds of visitors it sees most, the museum required participants to have at least one child under the age of 13 with them. Having children was also important because most parents and guardians are often distracted by them, helping them walk through

crowded areas and listening to their thoughts about the space, resulting in them only paying partial attention to the signage as they navigate. Their attention is often divided between what they are doing, where they are going, where all their belongings are and where their child is.

Being a first-time visitor was a crucial requirement for participants as returning customers would likely not use or need the wayfinding signage.

In exchange for their participation, the museum offered those who had not purchased their ticket in advance free entrance. It also gave them a $20 gift card to its store since most first-time visitors purchase a snack or souvenir.

Visual and audio data

For this project, eye-tracking glasses were deemed the most appropriate biometric tool to collect data in real time. The eye-tracking glasses let researchers capture visual data from participants, allowing them to see the behaviors participants might not have remembered, noticed or were not able to articulate. They also offered audio data, which allowed researchers to gather additional information from the comments participants made to their children or party regarding their navigation plans after either seeing or not finding directional signage. "We don't know exactly what your mind thinks but we know what information your mind was receiving as you were making decisions," says Chad Milewicz, chair of the economics and marketing department at the University of Southern Indiana and coordinator of the Biometrix Discovery Lab.

WAYFINDING WITHIN THE MUSEUM

Navigating the museum entrance. The participants who were recruited in advance were met in the parking garage. Since the parking garage requires visitors to find the skyway leading them to the entrance, the museum wanted to gather insights on where the visitors looked and how challenging the route was.

When visitors first enter the museum, their first mission is often to find the ticket counter but how easy does wayfinding signage make that task? After entering the museum, visitors are faced with crowds and are consumed by eye-catching sights, often leaving them unable to find the signage they need. While researchers thought the museum had clear messaging in its busiest areas, the heat maps indicated that some of the signage in place wasn't working, including a large arrow near the entrance steps. "How do you account for the activity of the space and design if you are designing it without the activity there?" says Milewicz, emphasizing that what makes the most sense when laying out signage in an empty building may prove to be ineffective once the museum is full of visitors.

The wayfinding missions. The wayfinding project continued by asking participants to scan their tickets at the entry gates, enter the Sunburst Atrium and find the outdoor sports area, the Riley Children's Health Sports Legends Experience, from the third level of the museum.

While completing these tasks, visitors shifted their views upwards as some followed architectural details while others were looking for ceiling-height banners. The eye-tracking showed that some types of signage – including directions to the museum's current or upcoming exhibits, ongoing theater shows and membership messaging – were not as effectively designed or placed as they could be.

A task that was noticeably more difficult than the others was wayfinding from the third level of the museum to the Riley Children's Health Sports Legends Experience. Whether it was due to the museum's layout, a lack of signage at key intersections or simply a lost sense of direction, navigating the route proved to be a challenge for many.

A key component when conducting research is to avoid any interference. In this project, researchers did not want to influence participants' decisions when completing navigational tasks. Susan Foutz, director of research and evaluation at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, says a crucial part when answering any navigational questions was to encourage them without directing them. "We really did follow behind them a discreet distance…there were people who would turn around and say, 'Now what do I do?,'" says Foutz. Implementing the

advice they had received from Milewicz and his team, they would respond with questions, including "Well, what do you think?," "There's two ways to go, which way would you go?" and "Why don't you walk that way and see."

Instead of offering every participant a map to navigate from, the museum only gave them to those who asked. "We did get some really cool views of people using the map but who were still not quite able to figure out where they wanted to go," says Foutz. This gave researchers additional insights as to how effective museum maps were when trying to find specific areas of the museum.

Triangulate their answers

In addition to wearing eye-tracking glasses, research participants also completed a short interview to help researchers triangulate their answers with the data they collected. To better grasp their thoughts, participants were asked if they recalled any specific messaging about the events at the museum or museum memberships. While researchers could see the visual data from the eye-tracking glasses and heat maps, they still wanted visitors' input on what caught their attention the most, what they remembered and if they had any specific difficulties navigating the space.

Researchers also asked about participants' experience navigating from the interior of the building to the Riley Children's Health Sports Legends Experience. They were asked what tools they used to find it, how challenging they found it and if they had any sugges-

tions to improve navigation including implementing a color-coding system or adding a staff member to the area to answer questions.

While the participating adults were asked the questions, children weren't afraid to voice their input. Foutz says that at times children would pay more attention to the signage and its location ("It was right there on that monitor, we walked right under it, mom.") or would be more than happy to brag about knowing where to go next, contradicting what their parent or guardian ultimately did. "I should have just listened to him," says the father of an eight-year-old who suggested going the correct way.

Another important finding highlighted by both Foutz and Milewicz was that when a stimulus was used on one side of the museum, the participants would often continue to look in that direction, even after they had passed the attraction. "One of the things I'll keep going back to is this idea that if visitors' attention is drawn and they look one direction, they're going to keep looking in that direction for a long time…even if that thing that drew their attention has already passed, they're still looking that way," says Foutz.

"People never went 180 degrees to the other side of their vision," says Milewicz. "Their attention was attracted towards exactly what you wanted them to look at but then, after

As visitors shifted their views upwards in spaces like the Sunburst Atrium, some followed architectural details while others were looking for ceiling-height banners. The eye-tracking showed that some types of signage – including directions to the museum's current or upcoming exhibits, ongoing theater shows and membership messaging – were not as effectively designed or placed as they could be.
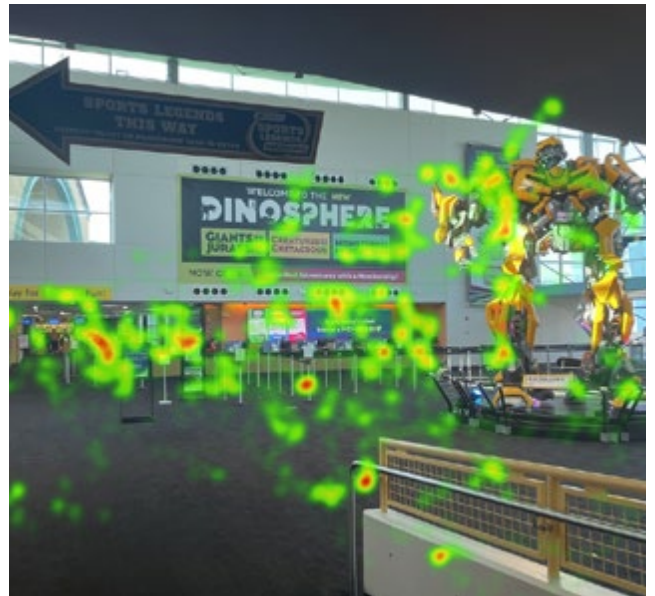
While the heat maps indicated that some of the signage in place wasn't working, including a large arrow near the entrance steps, the museum's goal was not to completely redesign its layout or to purchase new marketing materials but to instead use the insights gathered to make gradual adjustments and improvements over time.

they turned from that major item, their vision never went 180, it always went, at best, 90 degrees."

This insight helps researchers understand why some signage received little to no attention. If signage is placed immediately after a large attraction in the opposite direction of it, it can be predicted that few people will notice it.

Gradual adjustments

The museum's goal was not to completely redesign its layout or to purchase new marketing materials but instead to use the insights gathered to make adjustments to the signage. "We do want to use the data to inform our decisions going forward," says Foutz. "We're not going to tear down every sign and start over, we're going to replace things gradually."

The museum staff implemented the insights when replacing seasonal materials, like multi-story banners, this past winter. They chose to feature signage that consisted of more visuals and fewer words.

Great first impressions

When visiting a new educational place like a museum, zoo or other attraction, exploring and having fun are the top priorities. The last thing any facility wants is for its visitors to have a rocky start to their adventure by feeling lost, frustrated or confused by how to navigate the entrance and its exhibits. As the staff of the Children's Museum of Indianapolis found, conducting research is an effective way to help ensure guests of all ages continue to have great and lasting first impressions. ⓠ

The participants who were recruited in advance were met in the parking garage. Since the parking garage requires visitors to find the skyway leading them to the entrance, the museum wanted to gather insights on where the visitors looked and how challenging the route was, especially for parents with curious, excited kids in tow.

••• consumer psychology

What's the buzz?

How hype analysis lets companies find value in customer excitement

| By PK Lawton and Marcelo Bursztein

abstract

Moving beyond social listening, hype analysis aims to harness online fandom communities and AI to better understand the emotional momentum underlying consumer reactions to brands, products and other aspects of culture.

What gets customers excited about a product? What are they anticipating before it even goes to market? What is it about a product that generates the most buzz? Marketers can now potentially unlock the answers to these questions through a new way of analyzing data: hype analysis.

Hype analysis revolves around the strategy of understanding the pathways to significant anticipation and enthusiasm among consumer-driven communities of interest that have become key to driving the hype that surrounds a brand, service or product by imbuing these with community status. Integral to hype analysis is the growing power of internet communities of fans or followers who collectively form a fandom. These niche fandoms constitute a community of devoted enthusiasts deeply involved with the brand, product or franchise.

Drawing on Zoe Scaman's trailblazing insights in her Substack post "The new formula for fandom," our hype analysis methodology highlights the evolution of fandom into an essential cultural and commercial asset across diverse areas such as fashion, music, sports and other burgeoning sectors. Following Scaman's work, the core of our hype analysis is deepened by the integration of community, autonomy and equity. This shift points to a future of more inventive and cooperative community involvement, driven by algorithmic interest networks, the development of highly specialized niches and social infrastructures.

This approach is a fresh way to understand and incorporate the role of community in marketing beyond seeing them as a place to serve programmatic ads. By understanding what drives communities, we can do a better job of forming bonds and co-creating with the most passionate individuals.

Hype analysis can offer brands actionable insights into fandom, letting marketers and researchers understand and quantify the what, why and how happening in fan and consumer conversations in social media and popular online communities like Reddit. The driving force behind hype analysis is the

power of AI and natural language processing to analyze large amounts of this chatter into patterns and turn them into actionable insights.

In this article, we delve into how hype analysis can help market researchers and brands, its potential advantages over social listening and how AI makes it all possible.

Excitement drives sales

It's safe to say that hype, or excitement, drives sales and brand engagement. Products that successfully generate positive hype can sell out rapidly due to increased consumer demand, whereas those that fail to create or sustain hype might suffer from slower sales, discounting, product returns or negative market reception.

Hype analysis involves using AI to track, combine, classify and analyze consumer and fan conversations to understand their impact on product demand and sales performance – helping marketers and analysts gain insights into the mechanisms by which hype drives or hinders market success. When customers are excited about a new product on the market, often underpinned by an influencer marketing campaign, they will flock to social media and online communities like Reddit or TikTok to discuss this product with others who share their interest. Potential customers will use search engines to learn more about it. If the campaign is a real success, it will spill over into mainstream media coverage.

All of online buzz provides a rich tapestry of insights for market researchers. It captures the fan community sentiment from a product's most engaged and knowledgeable audience and reflects organic consumer reactions, giving brands a holistic view of a product's perception.

In addition, hype analysis involves recognizing that different consumer categories have distinct factors driving their hype. For example, coffee enthusiasts often discuss product quality, scrutinizing every aspect to inform their purchasing decisions. In contrast, the sneaker community's hype is propelled

by a mix of early leaks, influencer endorsements and the intentional scarcity of products.

When analysts acknowledge the specific drivers of excitement in each category, they can better predict market trends and identify key levers for generating and sustaining hype. These levers include messaging and search engine optimization.

Making sense of qualitative and quantitative data with AI

Hype is measurable through both qualitative and quantitative means. Qualitative analysis involves analyzing language to understand concepts, opinions or experiences. It helps marketers understand what consumers think and, most importantly, why they think these things.

Quantitative analysis involves objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of social data metrics (social media mentions, review scores and search engine queries) and answers to surveys. For researchers, it can be expensive, time-consuming and taxing to measure hype from these multiple data sources, let alone classify it and find hidden patterns. Hype analysis, therefore, must rely on AI, large language models (LLMs) and natural language processing to reveal the why behind the numbers. Tools that combine generative with classical AI can unlock capabilities when it comes to hype analysis. These tools can analyze conversations and online mentions – including positive and negative reviews within fan communities, the frequency of these mentions and organic search volume – and quickly extract information about what people are saying about a product.

In addition, AI can help analysts ask questions from the data using plain language – including questions that combine both qual and quant metrics – substantially reducing the time to insight. The latest AI platforms let analysts verify the AI-generated insights for accuracy by tracing the AI claims back to the datapoints that underpin the insights, effectively mitigating the misleading hallucinations that are intrinsic to even the most sophisticated LLMs and gen AI tools.

While AI takes care of the data analysis, market researchers and brands can use hype analysis to focus on what's most important: engaging with consumers and building loyalty.

Emotional and psychological triggers

Hype analysis offers marketers and researchers a data-driven toolkit for understanding consumer behavior, predicting market trends and crafting effective marketing strategies. First, it analyzes the source and nature of hype, giving researchers valuable consumer insight. Hype analysis reveals the emotional and psychological triggers behind consumer enthusiasm, which allows for more tailored and resonant marketing messages.

Additionally, it can help create targeted marketing campaigns – identifying the most effective channels and messages to reach audiences. By knowing where the conversation is happening and what resonates with their target consumers, brands can craft campaigns that are more likely to capture attention and generate excitement.

Hype analysis also helps analysts identify emerging trends before they become mainstream. When researchers can monitor the early signs of consumer interest and excitement, they can forecast market shifts, helping companies stay ahead of the curve in product development and marketing strategies.

Additionally, market researchers can use hype analysis to better understand what aspects of a product generate the most buzz. These insights can inform product development and innovation and help companies focus on features in future iterations or new products that align more closely with consumer desires and expectations.

When it comes to reputation management, hype analysis can serve as a tool for assessing emerging risks associated with new product launches or marketing campaigns. Researchers can understand the negative aspects of hype, such as consumer skepticism or a backlash against perceived over-marketing, allowing their companies to adjust their strategies proactively.

In addition, hype analysis can support influencer and partnership strategies by identifying key influencers and analyzing their content, which can contribute to building hype and optimizing influencer and collaborative efforts. Marketing budgets can then be allocated to the most impactful collaborations and promotional activities.

Ultimately, timing is everything, and hype analysis can guide brands in choosing the best moment to unveil new products to maximize media coverage and social buzz by understanding when and how consumer excitement peaks.

Hype analysis is also useful when it comes to brand positioning and differentiation. By understanding what drives hype in their industry, brands can position themselves to stand out in a crowded market. Insights from hype analysis can reveal unique angles for differentiation, whether through product innovation, marketing messaging or customer experience enhancements. Furthermore, when market researchers understand the mechanics of hype around other products, they can help give their client a competitive edge. Hype analysis on the competition helps companies adopt successful strategies from other sectors while also avoiding pitfalls that led to failures within other companies.

Hype analysis vs. social listening

Until recently, the primary means of accessing vast amounts of community-level data was through social listening tools. These tools provide marketers with a comprehensive overview of consumer activities across various social media platforms, despite limitations such as the restricted access to data within the "walled gardens" of Facebook and Instagram, among other online forums. By capturing real-time conversations, sentiments and trends, social listening has been invaluable in understanding the discourse within micro-communities on brands, products, competitors and industry-related topics.

However, while effective in outlining the what (what is being said about a brand), the who (who is discussing

the brand) and, to an extent, the where (which channels are being used for the discussions), it doesn't unpack the underlying excitement or momentum driving these discussions – a task that still requires a great deal of manual work from a trained analyst.

Hype analysis delves deeper into understanding consumer perspectives by focusing on the how and why behind their evaluations of brands and products. It zeroes in on the ways consumer audiences and relevant niche communities perceive and integrate brands, products or services into their lives. This approach, powered by AI-driven qualitative analysis, lets researchers uncover the reasons underlying a brand's momentum or lack thereof. By examining how these communities and engaged consumers make sense of a brand's role, hype analysis can simplify the analytical process by decoding the values and expectations within these communities.

This approach provides a detailed perspective on brand perception, facilitating an in-depth exploration of consumer attitudes and behaviors. It can liberate analysts to delve into the nuances of attitudes, motivations and shifts within communities that brands face daily. By focusing on the factors that drive consumer interest and their influence on market dynamics, this method can offer marketers a unique edge. It allows for a thorough analysis of the specific elements that fuel consumer engagement, assisting brands in crafting marketing strategies that resonate with their audience's motivations and aspirations.

Hype analysis not only enhances marketing precision but can also improve demand forecasting by analyzing the buildup of excitement prior to a product launch or event. This predictive capacity allows companies to fine-tune their supply chain and marketing tactics, positioning them to seize market opportunities proactively. Furthermore, by exploring the depth of consumer enthusiasm and its roots, hype analysis empowers companies to replicate success or circumvent failures in future initiatives, offering a strategic edge in understanding and leveraging consumer excitement.

Opening the promise of big data

Market researchers have an enormous amount of data available at their fingertips but have struggled to generate actionable insights from it. Hype analysis, made possible by AI and LLMs, combined with natural language processing, opens up the promise of big data – which has been a marketing industry topic of conversation for well over a decade – and puts the tools of analysis in the hands of people who don't hold advanced degrees in mathematics or chaos theory. With the speed of development on AI, we are just scratching the surface of its vast capabilities in hype analysis and marketing research. ⓞ

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BRANDS THAT ATTEND THE QUIRK'S EVENT – NEW YORK 2024

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Below is a list of just some of the corporate brands that attend the Quirk's Event.

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LEARN FROM THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS

Closing the loop with your customer

Pixel United

One of the biggest drivers of customer satisfaction is closing the loop aka telling the customers what we are doing with their data. Although it is a huge driver, it is often overlooked or done via impersonalized, mass messages. This approach leaves a lot of value on the table. Our study will show the results of a series of mini tests we conducted doing different types of personalized close-the-loop messages. It will also show our partnership with our data science team and the impact each of those mini tests had on our business KPIs (spend, tenure, engagement).

Don't throw away your shot! Your next presentation should be...a poem?

Vanguard

Leading with Black insights

Hunter-Miller, Inc.

Connecting the dots to deliver creative that drives full funnel awareness and business results

LinkedIn

Inclusive research: Unveiling the truths of Latino consumers

COMARKA Research

NEW YORK

Quality quest: Navigating the challenges of opt-in samples through hybrid solutions

SSRS

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Sarid Research Institute

## Consobox: Unlocking the power of historical data to drive insight, innovation and partnership

Curion and L'Oréal

The sky is falling! Why didn't anyone tell us?

Organon & Co., LLC and Merck & Co. Inc, USA

It's one thing to see future possibilities. It's quite another to bring them to life and make them actionable in the present. Too often insights into macro trends and the changing landscape fail to land with business leaders who are focused on delivering results today. Trends are seen as interesting but not terribly relevant in the moment. It is hard to get attention, and harder yet to get traction, for something that feels far away.

ALT, CTRL, SHIFT and UNDO: The 4 keystrokes that define the Gen Z worldview

GTR Consulting; Session curated by QRCA

Neurodiversity: Understanding the largest target audience you've never considered

Understood.org

Understood.org researchers will get you thinking about the estimated 70 million Americans who learn and think differently (ADHD, dyslexia, etc.). Gain insights on differences in learning and thinking that will inspire consideration of this often "invisible" yet sizable audience as valuable to your brands, your research and your life!

Your consumers are talking. Are you listening? How consumer-centricity sparks innovation ideation at Mondelez

Mondelez International
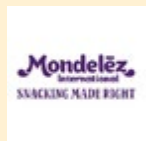
At Mondelez, understanding how and why people snack is a full-time obsession. The maker of Chips Ahoy, Triscuit, Oreo and dozens of other A-list snack brands focuses year-round on discovering the emerging signals and consumer expressions that show us the path to new treats based on consumer tensions and unmet needs. Learn how Mondelez is mining unprompted consumer data from social listening, search and ratings and reviews to uncover emerging signals, understand consumer needs and spark ideas for product and marketing innovation.

NETWORKING **&** FUN

Be Yourself LGBTQ+ Pub Meetup

The evening before the Quirk's Event begins meet fellow LGBTQ+ researchers and allies for a beer or cocktail. There is no pre-registration required. Drinks and food will not be provided but are available at the bar. See thequirksevent.com/new-york-2024/networking/ for more information.

Expo Hall Celebration

During the last hour of the event, mingle in the expo hall — grab a beer or wine and stroll through the expo hall to learn and experience all of the latest and greatest the industry has to offer.

Real Networking Technology

The Quirk's Event utilizes the technology-enabled Klik badges and app, offering easy and fast networking in a touch-free environment. Attendees in close proximity can quickly exchange information simply by both pressing and holding down the bottom of the badge. Bright LEDs will illuminate and flash, letting you know that the information has been exchanged. All your connections are stored in the app, allowing you to chat and reach out.

Karaoke Cocktail Reception

Sing your heart out, sip on delectable cocktails and create unforgettable memories with your fellow researchers. There will be a friendly competition, with prizes, for the most enthusiastic performer with the ability to captivate the audience!

cocktails WITH QUIRK'S

After the first day of the show is done, mingle and network in the expo hall and take in the experiences with other attendees. Free drinks and appetizers will be provided. Select exhibitors offer fun and tasty beverages at their stand.

Additional Networking

The Research Club and Women in Research (WIRe) will also be hosting networking parties during the events. Make sure to check out the Networking pages to learn of all the opportunities to connect with friends old and new.

12 TOP TELEPHONE INTERVIEWING COMPANIES

Telephone interviewing offers companies a wide range of respondents. Since most people always have their phones with them, telephone recruiting can result in high response rates. Companies that specialize in this method are prepared with the necessary tools and tech to reach your desired audience.

The following companies are ready to assist with any telephone interviewing needs. Whether you need a CATI call station operating 24/7 or need to reach niche audiences in a wide range of languages, these companies can offer you the reliable services you require.

Evolving Insights

Founded 2020 | 10 employees
Founder and CEO, Jessica Dogali

Evolving Insights is your premier partner for nationwide market research recruitment, excelling in both qualitative and quantitative projects. Our project management sets the industry standard, characterized by meticulous attention to detail and unparalleled responsiveness. We offer comprehensive telephone interviewing services, leveraging our expertise to conduct insightful conversations with participants. Additionally, our numerous in-house CATI stations help streamline data collection, ensuring efficiency and accuracy. With a commitment to excellence ingrained in every aspect of our services, Evolving Insights delivers actionable insights that empower informed decision-making, making us the go-to choice for organizations seeking unparalleled research solutions.

Phone 1-551-815-5626
www.evolvinginsights.net

Fieldwork

Founded by moderators 1980 | 400 employees
Steve Raebel, President

Let us support you! We know what you need. Our specialties feature consumer (including global) research, medical, physicians and patients, B2B, mock

jury, CX/UX, taste tests and sensory research. For over 40 years, Fieldwork has recruited the highest-quality consumer, medical and business 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 our commitment to hospitality and solutions-driven partnership is at the core of everything we do. When you choose Fieldwork, customer service will seamlessly blend into the background while we handle the details and create the perfect environment for your next research project. Focus on the research. We'll do the rest!

Phone 1-800-863-4353
www.fieldwork.com/market-research-services

High Beam Global (HBG)

Founded 2010 | 150 employees
Rajat Sahni, Founder

With more than 14 years of delivering quality research, High Beam Global (HBG) is one of the top-rated market research and data collection firms, globally. HBG's unparalleled research experience and domain knowledge adds an authentic layer of competitive advantage. Our clients call us as their "trusted global partner in success." HBG stands out for its unmatched expertise in audience sourcing, leveraging an extensive proprietary database of more than 10 million business decision makers across industry domains and job functions. With in-house capability to utilize multimode research solutions, HBG becomes a top choice for researchers and advisors, globally. Our team of 150 highly experienced and skilled researchers, interviewers/moderators and project managers ensures that each

project is delivered within timelines and with utmost quality. We don't just help our clients acquire insights, we strive to add value at each level of our collaboration.

E-mail rajat.sahni@highbeamglobal.com
www.hbgknowledge.com

I/H/R Research Group LLC

Founded 1976
Steve Clark, CEO

I/H/R Research Group specializes in providing the highest-quality marketing research data collection using both traditional and online methodologies. Our experienced CATI team delivers representative best-in-class data across a variety of categories including consumer surveys, political polling, CSAT, NPS, B2B, health care, multilingual, qualitative recruiting, executive interviewing, as well as multimodal studies. Our state-of-the-art Las Vegas call center is fully TCPA-compliant and offers digital call monitoring/recording to ensure quality. We offer full programming capabilities and accept survey links from any platform. We are experts in conducting low-incidence studies using RDD, ABS and superior targeted sampling methodologies, and adhere to traditional AAPOR/government-based data collection standards. Together with our sister company, Scientific Telephone Samples, we are one of the only CATI vendors with a full-service sampling company under the same management. Our seasoned team, high-quality standards, affordable CPI for both landline and wireless interviews and decades of sampling expertise distinguish us from the rest.

E-mail info@ihr-research.com
Corporate office/sales 1-888-761-8985;
Call center 1-702-734-0757
www.ihr-research.com

Information Specialists Group

Founded 1993 | 12 management employees
Bob McGarry Jr., CEO

Information Specialists Group offers a complete range of research services, from consultation and customized study design to data collection, analysis and reporting – for virtually any type or size of quantitative or qualitative study. Our in-house data collection capabilities include phone recruiting, phone surveying, phone recruit-to-web surveys, online programming and hosting, as well as live intercept interviewing. Well-known for more than 25 years of experience reaching the hardest-to-find and hardest-to-engage B2B and B2C audiences, some industries we routinely serve include agriculture, financial services, health care, industrial manufacturing, legal and medical technology. Clients appreciate exceptional service and our turnkey ability to support critical decision-making with actionable intelligence.
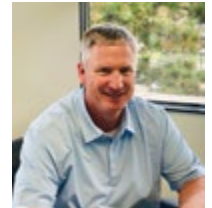
Phone 1-800-279-5314 or 1-952-941-1600
www.isgmn.com

Insights Opinion

Founded 2015 | 100 employees
Sharoz Ghauri, CEO

Insights Opinion stands as a globally recognized leader in the field of data collection services, specializing in CATI and online panel services. Our cutting-edge CATI center boasts an impressive array of over 150 stations, equipped

with state-of-the-art features including call recording, live bargaining and a comprehensive quality-auditing system. This allows us to offer extensive multilingual support to cater to a diverse range of project needs. With a wealth of experience spanning consumer, B2B and health care sectors, we pride ourselves on delivering meticulously tailored solutions to meet the unique demands of each industry. Additionally, as an ISO 20252- and 27001-certified company, we are dedicated to upholding the highest standards of quality, ensuring unparalleled data integrity and confidentiality. Moreover, our commitment to compliance extends to strict adherence to telecalling privacy laws, providing our clients with added assurance of the protection of their sensitive information.

Phone U.S. 1-646-475-7865; U.K. +44 20 3239 5786; India +91 120 498 7860
www.insightsopinion.com

Ironwood Insights Group LLC

Founded 2017 | 300 employees
Brian Cash, VP Research Services

Ironwood Insights Group is a recognized industry leader in quantitative telephone research. With three domestic call centers, an offshore call center and an extensive remote interviewing staff, Ironwood boasts one of the largest-capacity telephone data collection operations in the industry. We bring a best practices mind-set to all of our telephone engagements, applying specialized knowledge to consult across a full spectrum of services: survey design and programming, precise sample and quota management, stringent dialing protocols and data security measures. Our systems and data collection operations seamlessly integrate to accomplish comprehensive multimode methodologies, incorporating online, text-to-web and e-mail. Operationally, Ironwood leverages multiple computer-assisted telephone interviewing platforms equipped with predictive and Telephone Consumer Protection Act-compliant dialing solutions to accomplish studies quickly and efficiently. Contact Ironwood to learn more about our full suite of high-quality, cost-effective telephone research solutions.

E-mail info@ironwoodinsights.com
Phone 1-602-661-0878 x2110
www.ironwoodinsights.com

Just The Facts Inc.

Founded 1994
Bruce Tincknell, Managing Director

Quality research at budget-friendly costs! For 30+ years clients have rated JTF's quantitative methods as No. 1 in cutting-edge tools providing rich insights. Our quantitative methods use a range of techniques to better assess a product/service's hidden advantages. JTF works in both B2C and B2B environments uncovering customers' motivating actions, behaviors and decision-making. Our toolkit uses state-of-the-art CATI phone methods providing the most robust insights. We also offer an array of tech-savvy online techniques. JTF is your "go-to partner" for high-quality quantitative. Your research investment leads to optimal business strategies, achieving stronger sales, profits and ROI. Let's discuss your specific needs, ensuring your initiatives are aligned with your project expectations! We listen to you! Call today for a no-obligation consultation or e-mail info@jtfacts.com. Testimonials: www.justthefacts.com/testimonials-x-30

Phone 1-847-506-0033
www.justthefacts.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. We deliver valuable solutions, high-quality recruitment and data collection for consumer, health care, business-to-business and technology projects. Specializing in all methodologies and audiences. MHN has the ability to host and deliver your results across the U.S. MHN has worked diligently over the past 25 years and advanced to one of the leading market research services companies in the U.S. Our teams are committed to meeting your research needs. We provide high-quality recruitment with access to 3.5 million consumers, 500,000+ B2B, 500,000 physicians, nurses and more, and we organize 100+ patient panels. Our qualitative services extend far beyond the traditional focus group. Our services include online, digital, remote, home use test and any other methodology needing to find an audience with feedback or expert knowledge. Validations...specialized in quick turnaround validation of your quant studies. Call us today for your next project! MHN are your "national" recruiting experts!

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Precision Opinion

Founded 2007 | 750-1,000 employees
Matthew McCoy, Chief Operations Officer

For nearly 20 years Precision Opinion has provided its clientele with boutique data collection and sourcing services. With a rich history of utilizing multiple data collection modes to obtain accurate quality samples across both small and large population and geographical segments, Precision has the experience to solve your greatest research challenges. Additionally, we offer 600 in-person CATI interviewing stations, SMS text-to-web, online panel, mail-to-web and IVR. Since 2022 the new executive leadership team has built upon our quality tradition, reinvented our corporate culture and reaffirmed our commitment to our clients and employees. For as long as clients care about quality data for making critical decisions, Precision will be here to serve them.

E-mail Sales@PrecisionOpinion.com
Phone 1-702-286-7700
www.PrecisionOpinion.com

RONIN

Founded 1998 | 250+ employees, recruiters and interviewers
David Burdon, Senior Vice President, International Projects

CATI is dying!! Or so they said. In a time where the industry is crying out for verified people to give real opinions, CATI is more valuable than ever.

So much so that at RONIN we have expanded our CATI operations, opening two new centers in the past 18 months to facilitate the industry's need for quality B2B and B2C data. With over 25 years of experience, RONIN is generally recognized as the industry leader of quality and verified data, covering over 80 countries and 40 languages. From farmers to fund managers, from tradespeople to tech experts: RONIN gets people, real people.

Phone +44 (0)20 7091 1400
www.ronin.com

Telepoll Market Research

Founded 1990 | 75 employees
Christine Schmakies, Director of Operations

Telepoll Market Research specializes in telephone data collection and outreach campaigns for marketing firms, companies and associations of all sizes and within industries of all kinds. Our 35 years of expertise has allowed us to craft unique and proprietary data collection practices enabling us to specialize not only in B2B and executive interviewing, but in hard-to-reach and low-incidence campaigns. Our success in recruiting, tracking and consumer studies is unparalleled; all studies are monitored in real-time to ensure exceptional quality control. Located in Toronto and calling throughout North America, we conduct multilingual research with ease. All projects are conducted in-house by a rigorously vetted team of skilled interviewers and overseen by our expert group of career managers. There's a lot on the line. Make the call!

Phone 1-416-977-0608 x222
www.telepoll.net

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

●●● can't-miss activities

Reuters Events will host Customer Service & Experience West on **May 13-14**. Visit https://events.reutersevents.com/customer-service/customer-service-san-diego.

WBR will host eTail Nordic Connect on **May 14-15** in **Copenhagen**. Visit https://etailnordicconnect.wbresearch.com.

Strategy Institute will host the Customer Experience Strategies Summit on **May 14-15**. Visit https://www.customerexperiencecanada.com.

WBR will host eTail Asia on **May 14-16** in **Singapore**. Visit https://etailasia.wbresearch.com.

Merlien Institute will host the UX360 Research Summit on **May 16-17**. Visit https://www.eu.ux360summit.com.

GIA Global Group will host the World Data Summit on **May 15-17** in **Amsterdam**. Visit https://worlddatasummit.com.

AAPOR will host its Annual Conference on **May 15-18** in **Atlanta**. Visit https://www-archive.aapor.org/Conference-Events/Upcoming-Conferences.aspx.

IQPC will host the Generative AI Summit on **May 20-22** in **London**. Visit https://www.aidataanalytics.network/events-generativeaisummit.

MSPA will host its Europe/Africa Conference on **May 21-23**. Visit https://mspa-ea.org/en_GB/events/eventitem/30-mspa-ea-conference-21-23-may-2024.html.

Forrester Research will host the CX Summit APAC 2024 on **May 28**. Visit https://www.forrester.com/event/cx-apac/.

CMSWire will host The CONNECT Conference on **May 29-31** in **Austin**. Visit https://connect.simplermedia.com.

IQPC will host CX Healthcare Exchange West 2024 on **June 4-5** in **San Diego**. Visit www.cxnetwork.com/events-cx-healthcare-exchange-west.

Customer Management Practice will host Customer Contact Week Las Vegas on **June 3-6**. Visit https://www.customercontactweek.com.

Strategy Institute will host Big Data and Analytics Summit Canada on J**une 5-6** in **Toronto**. Visit https://www.bigdatasummitcanada.com.

CRIC will host The Human Factor on **June 5-6** in **Toronto**. Visit https://www.canadianresearchinsightscouncil.ca/the-h-factor-2024-conference/.

The Research Club will host the Manchester Summer Social on **June 6**. Visit https://theresearchclub.com/events/manchester-summer-social/.

ASA will host the Symposium on Data Science and Statistics on **June 4-7**. Visit ww2.amstat.org/meetings/sdss/2024/index.cfm.

AMA will host the AMA Marketing and Public Policy Conference on **June 6-8**. Visit https://www.ama.org/events/academic/2024-ama-marketing-and-public-policy-conference/.

IQPC will host the CDO Europe Exchange on **June 10-11**. Visit https://www.aidataanalytics.network/events-chief-data-officer-exchange-europe.

Informa Connect will host Front End of Innovation: The Future is Now on **June 10-12** in **Boston**. Visit https://informaconnect.com/feiusa/.

Corinium Global Intelligence will host CDAO Mexico on **June 11-12** in **Mexico City**. Visit https://cdao-mx.coriniumintelligence.com.

Quirk's Media will host The Quirk's Event – New York on **July 17-18**. Visit https://thequirksevent.com/new-york-2024/.

Event details as of April 3, 2024. Please see websites for more details.

To submit information on your upcoming conference or event for possible inclusion in our print and online calendar, e-mail info@quirks.com. For a more complete list of upcoming events visit www.quirks.com/events.

MEET THE BOARD

Thank you to the Marketing Research Education Foundation Board of Directors for unifying the industry to create a positive impact in 2024.

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The Marketing Research Education Foundation (MREF) is a high-profile, industry-wide initiative that includes researchers across the globe. Consider joining our community as an MREF board member.

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

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10 minutes with...

Anthony Buzzanca
Director of Consumer Insights, Taco John's International

What led you to a career in consumer insights?

I've always been curious about consumer behavior and why people make one choice over another – in particular how these decision-making processes can have such significant business impacts.

The dynamic nature of the field keeps it interesting – it's constantly evolving with advancements in technology and new methodologies emerging to help answer pressing business questions.

I also enjoy the collaborative nature of the role, working closely with various stakeholders in the business to integrate consumer insights (CI) and market research best practices to improve and enable strategic decisions.

Could you share an example of the role consumer insight plays when bringing a food product from concept to market-ready item?

The consumer insights team is involved at multiple touchpoints as a product moves from an idea to a concept and then to a market-ready item. We are constantly collaborating with cross-functional teams throughout the process.

While it can vary by certain products and initiatives, here's a general idea of how the CI team is involved through this process:

Idea generation – the CI team will analyze the competitive landscape, conducting research and working with syndicated data partners to identify trends and need states.

Concept testing – the CI team will conduct concept testing, where a wide range of potential new menu items are developed and put in front of participants in an online environment. Participants will evaluate an image and description and provide feedback across a variety of measures. This data is analyzed, compared to historical benchmarks and cut by various user groups to determine which concepts make it to the next phase.

Central location testing – the product then moves into central location testing where the CI team will work with the culinary team to serve the test products, typically four to six total, to a large group of participants who will taste the products and provide feedback. The CI team will develop and field a questionnaire using our sensory and consumer research software to ask participants a variety of Likert, JAR and hedonic scale questions. The CI team will also run a penalty analysis on each product to identify factors that lead to the greatest reduction in overall liking. We'll then discuss results with the product development and brand marketing teams to determine how to optimize a certain item or move it into a market test.

Market testing and buyer reaction studies – the potential menu item(s) then enter the market testing phase where the CI team conducts a buyer reaction study to gather consumer opinions of the product in a real-world environment. This feedback is a critical component when deciding to move this item to a national promotion, or if it needs to be optimized.

"The dynamic nature of the field keeps it interesting – it's constantly evolving with advancements in technology and new methodologies emerging to help answer pressing business questions."

Scan to read the full article at www.Quirks.com.

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toluna

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Toluna is here to transform your journey as a consumer research and insights professional. Our holistic insights approach combines agility, flexibility, cutting-edge technology, and expert consultation to empower you with dynamic guidance, ensuring confident decision-making even in challenging times.

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