

GLOBAL  
EDITION



# Essentials of Marketing Research

*A Hands-On Orientation*

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# Essentials of Marketing Research

A Hands-On Orientation

Global Edition

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## Research in Practice

### Elizabeth Arden: Generation Appeal

Elizabeth Arden ([www.elizabetharden.com](http://www.elizabetharden.com)) owns, manufactures, and licenses over 100 perfumes and distributes more than 200 fragrances to mass retailers. Brand names like Elizabeth Arden, Red Door, 5th avenue, and White Shoulders, as well as Elizabeth Taylor's White Diamonds, are marketed by the company. When perfume sales declined due to a recession in the United States from 2008 to 2010, Elizabeth Arden proved again that celebrities often add luster to a polished product.

To expand its target market to include younger teens, Elizabeth Arden conducted depth interviews with females in this age group. Depth interviews were chosen over focus groups because wearing a perfume can be a rather personal experience, and in-depth probing was needed to reveal the true underlying reasons that would attract the younger females to a perfume brand. The findings revealed that young teenage females are increasingly aspiring to become like their older teenage counterparts. And digital media, rather than TV, had become part of their lifestyle.

Armed with this information, Elizabeth Arden chose to pursue a younger crowd, with Britney Spears as their cover girl. This led the cosmetic company to introduce "Britney Spears Curious," a cosmetic line that coincidentally reached the market when the public eye was upon Spears's personal life. Promotions included a Web campaign featuring Spears entering a hotel room with her mysterious lover, and an online mobile number submission system, which returned voice messages from the celebrity herself. Word-of-mouth buzz spread like wildfire; according to Thomson-South Western, 27,000 teenagers received messages from Spears within a seven-week period. By understanding the high use of the Internet among young people, "Britney Spears Curious" was marketed online before reaching television and other media.

By capitalizing on teenage fanaticism uncovered via depth interviews, Elizabeth Arden introduced a best-selling new fragrance. As of 2014 the "Britney Spears Curious" line was still selling well and contributing to the company's bottom line.<sup>5</sup> <

As this example from Elizabeth Arden indicates, probing is effective in uncovering underlying or hidden information. Probing is an integral part of depth interviews.

The interviewer's role is critical to the success of the depth interview. The interviewer should (1) avoid appearing superior; (2) put the respondent at ease; (3) be detached and objective, yet personable; (4) ask questions in an informative manner; (5) not accept brief yes or no answers; and (6) probe the respondent.

### Research Recipe

Probing is of critical importance in depth interviews and you should use it to uncover hidden information and issues. The one-on-one nature of depth interviews is very conducive to in-depth questioning of individual respondents, which cannot be done as effectively in focus groups. The interviewer plays a very important role in depth interviews.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Depth Interviews

Depth interviews can uncover greater depth of insights than focus groups. Also, depth interviews attribute the responses directly to the respondent, unlike focus groups, where it is sometimes difficult to determine which respondent made a particular response. Depth interviews result in a free exchange of information that may not be possible in focus groups because there is no social pressure to conform to a group response.

Depth interviews suffer from many of the disadvantages of focus groups and often to a greater extent. Skilled interviewers capable of conducting depth interviews are expensive and difficult to

find. The lack of structure makes the results susceptible to the interviewer's influence, and the quality and completeness of the results depend heavily on the interviewer's skills. The data obtained are difficult to analyze and interpret, and the services of skilled psychologists are typically required for this purpose. The length of the interview combined with high costs means that the number of depth interviews in a project will be small. Despite these disadvantages, depth interviews do have some applications. They can be useful when detailed probing is required (e.g., automobile purchase), the topic is sensitive or subject to strong social norms (e.g., attitudes of college students toward dating), or the consumption experience is sensory or complicated (e.g., perfumes, bath soap). They are also effective with respondents who are professionals (e.g., industrial marketing research) and in interviewing respondents who are competitors (e.g., travel agents' perceptions of airline package travel programs).

## Research Recipe

Conduct depth interviews when detailed probing is required, the topic is sensitive or subject to strong social norms, or the consumption experience is sensory or complicated. They are also effective with respondents who are professionals and in interviewing respondents who are competitors.



Search the Internet, including social media as well as your library's online databases, to obtain information on why people use credit cards.

Conduct two depth interviews for determining the reasons why people use credit cards.

As the marketing manager for Visa, how would you use information on the reasons why people use credit cards to increase your market share? <

## PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES

### projective technique

*An unstructured and indirect form of questioning that encourages the respondents to project their underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings regarding the issues of concern.*

Both focus groups and depth interviews are direct approaches in which the true purpose of the research is disclosed to the respondents or is otherwise obvious to them. Projective techniques are different from these two techniques because they attempt to disguise the purpose of the research. A **projective technique** is an unstructured, indirect form of questioning that encourages respondents to project their underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings regarding the issues of concern. In projective techniques, respondents are asked to interpret the behavior of others rather than describe their own behavior. In interpreting the behavior of others, respondents indirectly project their own motivations, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings into the situation and describe their own behaviors. Thus, the respondents' attitudes and underlying themes are uncovered by analyzing their responses to scenarios that are deliberately unstructured, vague, and ambiguous. The more ambiguous the situation, the more respondents project their emotions, needs, motives, attitudes, and values, as demonstrated by work in clinical psychology, on which projective techniques are based. In a landmark study, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) used a projective technique to determine why most boys age 8 to 13 years old did not collect stamps as a hobby. A sample of boys was shown a picture on a screen of a 10-year-old boy fixing stamps in his album; they were asked to describe the scene and characterize the boy. Most respondents described the boy in the picture as a "sissy." After these findings were confirmed by survey research, the USPS undertook a successful advertising campaign directed at 8- to 13-year-olds to dispel the belief that stamp collecting was for "sissies." The campaign featured a famous quarterback who leads his team to victory on the football field and then comes home and starts fixing stamps in an album with his 10-year-old son.

## Research Recipe

In describing ambiguous situations, respondents project their own underlying values, attitudes, and beliefs, which can then be uncovered by analyzing their responses. While interpreting the behavior of others, respondents indirectly project their own motivations, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings into the situation and describe their own behaviors.

The common projective techniques are word association, sentence completion, picture response and cartoon test, role playing, and third-person technique.

### Word Association

In **word association**, respondents are presented with a list of words, one at a time and asked to respond to each with the first word that comes to mind. The words of interest, called test words, are interspersed throughout the list, which also contains some neutral, or filler, words to disguise the purpose of the study. For example, in the department store study, some of the test words might be: *location, parking, shopping, quality, and price*. The subject's response to each word is recorded verbatim and responses are timed so that respondents who hesitate or reason out (defined as taking longer than three seconds to reply) can be identified.

The underlying assumption of this technique is that association allows respondents to reveal their inner feelings about the topic of interest. It is often possible to classify the associations as favorable, unfavorable, or neutral. An individual's pattern of responses and the details of the response are used to determine the person's underlying attitudes or feelings on the topic of interest.

#### word association

*A projective technique in which respondents are presented with a list of words, one at a time and asked to respond to each with the first word that comes to mind.*

## Research Recipe

Association with words allows respondents to reveal their underlying values, feelings, and beliefs. The key is that they respond with the first word that comes to mind when you present them with the test word.

### Sentence Completion

**Sentence completion** is similar to word association. Respondents are given incomplete sentences and asked to complete them. Generally, they are asked to use the first word or phrase that comes to mind. In the context of determining attitudes toward department stores, the following incomplete sentences may be used.

#### sentence completion

*A projective technique in which respondents are presented with a number of incomplete sentences and asked to complete them.*

A person who shops at Sears is

---

A person who receives a gift certificate good for Sak's Fifth Avenue would be

---

J. C. Penney is most liked by

---

When I think of shopping in a department store, I

---

This example illustrates one advantage of sentence completion over word association: Respondents can be provided with a more directed stimulus. Sentence completion may provide more information about the subjects' feelings than word association. However, sentence completion is often clearer to the respondents, and thus many respondents may be able to guess the purpose of

the study. A variation of sentence completion is paragraph completion, in which the respondents complete a paragraph beginning with the stimulus phrase.

## Research Recipe

Compared to word association, sentence completion provides more information but its purpose is clearer to respondents.

### picture response technique

*A projective technique in which the respondent is shown a picture and asked to tell a story describing it.*

### cartoon test

*Cartoon characters are shown in a specific situation related to the problem. The respondents are asked to indicate the dialogue that one cartoon character might say in response to the comment(s) of another character.*

### role playing

*Respondents in a marketing research project are asked to assume the behavior of someone else.*

## Picture Response and Cartoon Test

In the **picture response technique**, respondents are shown a picture and asked to tell a story describing it. The responses are used to evaluate attitudes toward the topic and describe the respondents, as illustrated by the United States Postal Service example given earlier in this chapter. A special form of the picture response technique is a cartoon test.

In a **cartoon test**, cartoon characters are shown in a specific situation related to the problem. The respondents are asked to indicate what one cartoon character might say in response to the comments of another character. The responses indicate the respondents' feelings, beliefs, and attitudes toward the situation. Cartoon tests are simpler to administer and analyze than are picture response techniques. An example is shown in Figure 4.5.

## Research Recipe

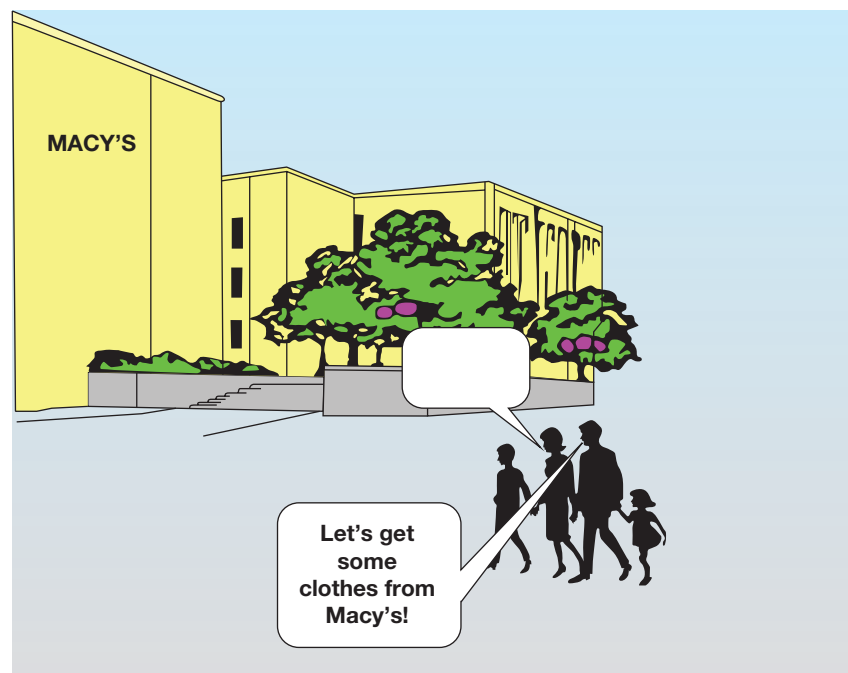
Analyze the responses to picture response techniques and cartoon tests to uncover the respondents' feelings, beliefs, and attitudes toward the situation. Cartoon tests are simpler to administer and analyze than are picture response techniques.

## Role Playing and Third-Person Techniques

In **role playing**, respondents are asked to play the role or assume the behavior of someone else. The researcher assumes that the respondents will project their own feelings and beliefs into the role. These can then be uncovered by analyzing the responses.

**FIGURE 4.5**

A CARTOON TEST



In the **third-person technique**, the respondent is presented with a verbal or visual situation and is asked to relate the beliefs and attitudes of a third person rather than directly expressing personal beliefs and attitudes. This third person may be a friend, a neighbor, a colleague, or a “typical” person. Again, the researcher assumes that the respondent will project him- or herself into the situation and reveal personal beliefs and attitudes while describing the reactions of a third person. Asking the individual to respond in the third person reduces the social pressure to give an acceptable answer.

A study was performed for a commercial airline to understand why some people do not fly. When the respondents were asked, “Are you afraid to fly?” very few people said yes. The major reasons given for not flying were cost, inconvenience, and delays caused by bad weather. However, it was suspected that the answers were heavily influenced by the need to give socially desirable responses. Therefore, in a follow-up study, the respondents were asked, “Do you think your neighbor is afraid to fly?” The answers indicated that most of the neighbors who traveled by some other means of transportation were afraid to fly.

Note that asking the question in the first person (“Are you afraid to fly?”) did not elicit the true response. Phrasing the same question in the third person (“Do you think your neighbor is afraid to fly?”) lowered the respondent’s defenses and resulted in a more truthful answer. In a popular version of the third-person technique, the researcher presents the respondent with a description of a shopping list and asks for a characterization of the purchaser.

**third-person technique**

*A projective technique in which the respondent is presented with a verbal or visual situation and asked to relate the beliefs and attitudes of a third person toward the situation.*

## Research Recipe

When you ask individuals to respond in the third person, it lowers their defense mechanisms and reduces the social pressure to give desirable answers. As in all projective techniques, the assumption is that the individuals are responding in terms of their own underlying values, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and perceptions.

We conclude our discussion of projective techniques by describing their advantages, disadvantages, and applications.

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Projective Techniques

Projective techniques have a major advantage over the unstructured direct techniques (focus groups and depth interviews): They may elicit responses that subjects would be unwilling or unable to give if they knew the purpose of the study. In direct questioning, the respondent, at times, may intentionally or unintentionally misunderstand, misinterpret, or mislead the researcher. In these cases, projective techniques can increase the validity of responses by disguising the purpose. This is particularly true when the issues to be addressed are personal, sensitive, or subject to strong social norms. Projective techniques are also helpful when underlying motivations, beliefs, and attitudes are operating at a subconscious level.

Projective techniques suffer from many of the disadvantages of unstructured direct techniques, but to a greater extent. These techniques generally require personal interviews with highly trained interviewers. Skilled interpreters are also required to analyze the responses. Hence, they tend to be expensive. There is also a serious risk of interpretation bias. With the exception of word association, all techniques are open ended, making the analysis and interpretation difficult and subjective.

Some projective techniques, such as role playing, require respondents to engage in unusual behavior. In such cases, the researcher may assume that respondents who agree to participate are themselves unusual in some way. Therefore, they may not be representative of the population of interest. As a result, it is desirable to compare findings generated by projective techniques with the findings of the other techniques that permit a more direct assessment (focus groups and depth interviews).

## Research Recipe

Use projective techniques when the required information cannot be obtained accurately by direct methods; however, do not use them naively, without regard to their assumptions and limitations. It is desirable that you compare findings generated by projective techniques with the findings of focus groups and depth interviews.

Like focus groups, depth interviews and almost all the projective techniques discussed in this chapter can be implemented over the Internet. For example, various companies and marketing researchers are using the picture response technique effectively. Coca-Cola can provide a picture on a website and ask respondents to write a story about it. The demographic data of the person coupled with the story can provide valuable insights into the respondent's psychographic profile and consumption behavior. The success of conducting qualitative research over the Internet lies in the respondents having access to and being comfortable with the Internet.



### iResearch Projecting Cosmetic Usage

Visit [www.clinique.com](http://www.clinique.com) and search the Internet, including social media as well as your library's online databases, to obtain information on the underlying reasons why women use cosmetics.

As the brand manager for Clinique, how would you use information on the reasons why women use cosmetics to formulate marketing strategies that would increase your market share? Which, if any, of the projective techniques would you use to determine the reasons why women use cosmetics? <

## OTHER METHODS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A variety of other qualitative research procedures are also used. The more relevant ones include ethnography and netnography, and mystery shopping.

### Ethnography and Netnography

Ethnography or **ethnographic research** is a qualitative research method based on observing people in their natural environment rather than in a formal research setting. The objective is to understand a culture or phenomenon of interest. The data are collected by a variety of methods, including depth interviews and participant observation. In participant observation, the researcher becomes immersed within the culture or phenomenon and draws data from personal observations. Sometimes, audio and video recordings are also obtained. **Netnography** uses ethnographic techniques but uses data that is found on the Internet and that is generated by online communities. These data occur naturally and are not affected by the presence of the researcher. The following example illustrates ethnographic research.

#### ethnographic research

*The study of human behavior in its natural context; it involves observation of behavior and setting along with depth interviews.*

#### netnography

*Netnography uses ethnographic techniques but uses data that is naturally found on the Internet and that is generated by online communities.*

### Research in Practice Kraft Singles Singles Out Moms

Kraft Singles ([www.kraftfoodsgroup.com](http://www.kraftfoodsgroup.com)), the leader in processed cheese slices, was not keeping up with the market growth. Kraft had to figure out what mothers felt about Kraft Singles by conducting ethnographic research. A group of ethnographers from Strategic Frameworking ([www.strategicframeworking.com](http://www.strategicframeworking.com)) conducted observations and depth interviews in the homes of mothers age 25 to 64 while they were making