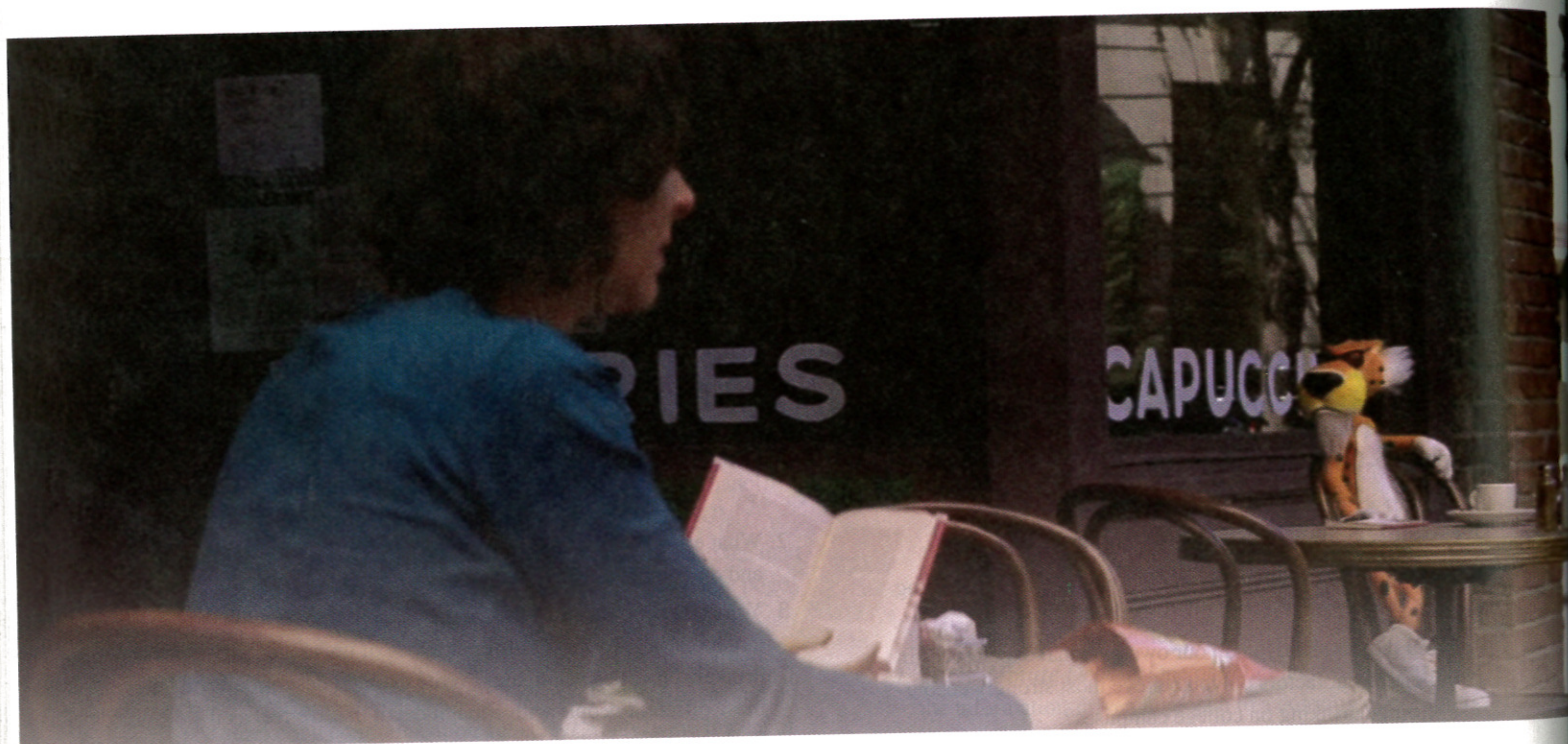


Strategic Research



It's a Winner

Campaign:

"Mischievous Fun
with Cheetos®"

Company:

Pepsico/Frito-Lay

Agency:

Goodby,
Silverstein &
Partners

Award:

2009 Grand
Ogilvy Winner

CHAPTER KEY POINTS

1. What are the basic types of strategic research and how are they used?
2. What are the most common research methods used in advertising?
3. What are the key challenges facing advertising researchers?

Cheesy Fun. It's Not Just for Kids.

What do you think of when you think of Cheetos? The crunch and maybe orange fingers? A product that's been marketed to kids for its 60-year history, Cheetos is a brand long-associated with fun.

But it wasn't so funny when competitors Goldfish and Cheez-It started spending double the amount that Cheetos did on media.

The competitive problem was complicated by some social responsibility issues. Growing concerns about childhood obesity and the ethical concern of marketing to kids were serious challenges to Pepsico/Frito Lay, which is Cheetos' parent company. A commitment to be socially responsible led Pepsico to voluntarily sign the Children's Food & Beverage Advertising Initiative in 2007, which restricted advertising of not-so-healthy foods to children under age 12.

The result? Cheetos chose to abandon its position as a favorite kids' snack and target a new audience. That's a scary new strategy for any brand. It started its quest to find a new direction by setting specific objectives to help focus its research efforts:

1. Discover if an alternate adult target could be identified for Cheetos.
2. Develop a better understanding of the Cheetos' consumption experience.
3. Understand the overlaps between kids and the new adult target so that existing brand equities could be carried forward.
4. Develop and evaluate compelling new message strategies for the new target audience.

Findings from this research might surprise you. Even though Cheetos had been marketed as a children's snack, adults ate them too. Several studies revealed fascinating insights that eventually led to a new campaign for adults.

One study investigated attitudes of adults and children (ages 10 to 13) who claimed to be Cheetos brand lovers. Interestingly, both the adults and the kids communicated feelings of stress. A key insight from the research revealed that the playfulness associated with Cheetos could help these consumers escape some of their daily pressures.



Researchers also listened to what Cheetos fans said about the experience of eating Cheetos and watched how they acted when they ate Cheetos. Group members loved eating them and licking their fingers as if to say they were looking for permission *not* to act their age or conform to expected adult behavior.

Cheetos spokes-animal Chester Cheetah related well to kids. But would he appeal to adults? To test this idea, someone dressed up in a Chester Cheetah costume and walked the hot spots in San Francisco. Grown adults embraced the mascot by hugging and posing for pictures with him, proving this icon was up to the job no matter what the age of the Cheetos' fan.

Another study asked 1,000 adults about their attitudes to play. The respondents answered questions about when they played hooky from work and when they last skinny dipped and so on. Findings from this survey were telling. About half of those labeled "very playful" were most likely to eat a lot of Cheetos, and the "least playful" were also least likely to consume the product.

From literature on cultural trends, the agency was able to define an emerging group of people who were likely to be passionate for Cheetos. A book by Christopher Noxon¹ identified a new breed of adults called "rejuveniles." These are the folks who think playing isn't just for kids. Yankelovich, a leading consumer research firm, confirmed the emerging trend of adults who liked being just a tad naughty and child-like regardless of their age. These people identified with brands such as Disney, Wii, Lego, and, not surprisingly, Cheetos.

Cheetos' agency, Goodby, Silverstein & Partners synthesized information from these research efforts and came up with a Big Idea. The new adult target, "rejuveniles," could "bend the rules with mischievous fun." The tone of the campaign was edgy fun for adults rather than the sweet fun that had been used for kids. The big idea played out in a campaign that might not appeal to everyone, but it sure did to the target audience. Three TV spots illustrated how the inner child could be released with pranks involving Cheetos. One spot featured a woman at a laundromat who'd been berated by another woman. To get revenge and encouraged by mascot Chester Cheetah, the young woman put a bag of orange Cheetos in the other woman's white load of wash.

The online component of the campaign, OrangeUnderground.com, encouraged adults to play mischievous pranks with the orange snacks by creating Random Acts of Cheetos. The only rule: the pranks had to be "benign and harmless, never malicious or hurtful." Cheetos partnered with Comedy Central for a promotion that encouraged fans to make mischief, video it, and post it to the website. The interactive website itself features oddball humor with games, the Legend of Cheetocorn, a giant Cheetos pet, and all sorts of crazy stuff.

The ad lessons from this Cheetos story? Sometimes what looks like bad news about your product can lead to new opportunities that research can help you identify. A more important lesson: stay true to your brand. To see if the lessons learned from research paid off, go to the end of the chapter and read the *It's a Wrap* feature.

Sources: "Advertising Research Foundation Case Study: 'Mischievous Fun with Cheetos,'" <http://thearf.org/assets/ogilvy-09/>; Bob Garfield, "Cheetos Ads That Promote 'Random Acts' Are Irresponsible," May 26, 2008, <http://adage.com>; Steve Centrillo and Dave Tutin, "Cheetos Offers How-to-Guide for Reaching Look-at-Me Gen," January 28, 2008, www.brandweek.com; Eric Newman, "Strategy: Cheetos on the Prowl for Adult Consumers," January 7, 2008, www.brandweek.com; Bruce Horovitz, "Don't Worry, Buy Happy: Cheerful Stuff Is Selling Well," March 30, 2009, www.usatoday.com.

In our previous chapters on how to plan marketing communication that has a real impact on consumers, we noted that marketers such as Frito-Lay need to do brand, market, and consumer research. This research effort becomes the foundation for objective setting, segmenting the market and targeting the audience, and developing the brand communication plan. So now that we understand the need for research, let's talk about how to do it. This chapter presents some key research concepts, beginning with an explanation of the two most basic categories of research, primary and secondary; the basic categories of research tools, quantitative and qualitative; and the most common research methods used in planning marketing communication. We also discuss the key challenges facing advertising researchers.

HOW DO YOU FIND CONSUMER INSIGHTS?

In the previous chapter we talked about insight—in fact, an effective marketing communication program is totally dependent on consumer insight. Know your customer—and listening is the first step in understanding customers.

What does that mean? It means that brand strategy begins with consumer research—the tools of listening. Consumer research investigates the topics we discussed in the previous chapter on segmentation and targeting, including attitudes, motivations, perceptions, and behaviors. The research findings then lead to planning decisions based on these insights. But first we must understand the principles and practices of advertising research and how to listen effectively to consumers.

In-house researchers or independent research companies hired from outside the company usually handle a client's market and consumer research. The objective at all stages of the planning process is to answer the question: What do we need to know in order to make an informed decision? Here are the various types of research used in planning advertising and marketing communication, such as the Cheetos campaign:

- **Market research** compiles information about the product, the product category, competitors, and other details of the marketing environment that will affect the development of advertising strategy.
- **Consumer research** identifies people who are in the market for the product in terms of their characteristics, attitudes, interests, and motivations. Ultimately, this information is used to decide who the targeted audience for the advertising should be. In an integrated marketing communication (IMC) plan, the consumer research also acquires information about all the relevant stakeholders and their points of contact with the brand.
- **Advertising research** focuses on all elements of advertising, including message development research, media planning research, evaluation, and information about competitors' advertising. **IMC research** is similar, except that it is used to assemble information needed in planning the use of a variety of marketing communication tools. IMC is particularly concerned with the interaction of multiple messages from a variety of sources to present the brand consistently.
- **Strategic research** uncovers critical information that becomes the basis for strategic planning decisions for both marketing and marketing communication. In advertising, this type of research covers all of the factors and steps that lead to the creation of message strategies and media plans. Think of strategic research as collecting all relevant background information needed to make a decision on advertising and marketing communication strategy. The importance of finding an adult target audience who appreciated having fun was important to the Cheetos campaign.

In another example, whether you knew it or not, you were engaged in strategic research when you looked for an



Knowledge about consumers' needs and wants is at the heart of all marketing communication plans. The foundation for all strategic decisions about segmentation, targeting, and positioning is consumer research.

U.S. Census Bureau

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Census Director Testifies on 2010 Census Budget and Commitment to Accurate Count

JULY 17, 2007 – Director Charles Louis Kincannon testified before the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security. He discussed:

- The status of the redesigned decennial census program – which includes the American Community Survey, MARTIGER Enhancements Program, and the short-form only 2010 Census.
- The Census Bureau's commitment to the decennial census, as outlined in Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution.
- The Census Bureau's overall request for funding in FY08, of which \$797 million is for the 2010 Census.
- How the use of handheld computers in the 2010 Census will improve the accuracy and efficiency of the count.

Director Kincannon's Statement

RECENT NEWS

- Census Updates Congress on Outreach Challenges
- Census Workers to Update Address List at Dress Rehearsal Sites
- U.S. Census Bureau Kicks Off 2008 Dress Rehearsal, Opens Local Census Offices
- Census Bureau Submits Subjects for 2010 Census to Congress
- Census Bureau Hires Managers for New Dress Rehearsal Offices

POPULATION CLOCKS

U.S. 302,791,482
World 6,516,379,835
10:41 GMT (EST-4) Sep 05, 2007

POPULATION FINDER

Type in a:
city/town, county, or zip

Select a state:

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1790, the first census was taken by U.S. marshals on horseback and counted 3.9 million people. Census 2000 counted more than 281 million people.

Demographic information, such as that available from the U.S. Census Bureau, is fundamental to marketing and communication planning.

Source: www.census.gov/2010census.

Secondary Research Background research that uses available published information about a topic is **secondary research**. When advertising people get new accounts or new assignments, they start by reading everything they can find on the product, company, industry, and competition: sales reports, annual reports, complaint letters, and trade articles about the industry. They are looking for important facts and key insights. This kind of research is called secondary, not because it is less important, but because it has been collected and published by someone else.

A typical advertising campaign might be influenced, directly or indirectly, by information from many sources, including in-house agencies and outside research suppliers. The use of secondary information for the Cheetos case—finding the information about the “rejuvenile” market in Christopher Noxon’s book—underscores the importance of reading widely.

Here are a few of the more traditional sources of secondary information that are available to advertisers doing backgrounding:

- **Government Organizations** Governments, through their various departments, provide an astonishing array of statistics that can greatly enhance advertising and marketing decisions. Many of the statistics come from census records on the population’s size, geographic distribution, age, income, occupation, education, and ethnicity. As we explained in Chapter 5, U.S. Census Bureau demographic information of this kind is fundamental to decision making about advertising targets and market segmentation. An advertiser cannot aim its advertising at a target audience without knowing that audience’s size and major dimensions. In addition to census information, other government agencies generate reports that help advertisers make better decisions, such as the *Survey of Current Business* from the U.S. Department of Commerce (www.bea.gov/scb).
- **Trade Associations** Many industries support trade associations—professional organizations whose members all work in the same field—that gather and distribute information of interest to association members. For instance, the American Frozen Food Institute or the Game Manufacturers Council are both organizations that assist members in conducting their business. The trade associations for marketing communication include the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA), which issues reports that help ad agencies monitor their performance and keep tabs on competitors; the Radio Advertising Bureau publishes *Radio Facts*, an overview of the commercial U.S. radio industry; the Account Planning Group (APG) conducts seminars and training sessions for account planners; and the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) serves the professional needs of opinion researchers.
- **Secondary Research Suppliers** Because of the overwhelming amount of information available through secondary research, specialized suppliers gather and organize that information around specific topic areas for other interested parties. Key secondary research suppliers are FIND/SVP, Off-the-Shelf Publications, Dialog Information Services, Lexis-Nexis, and Dow Jones’ Factiva.

acceptable college to attend. You conducted market research (what information is available?), strategic research (what factors are most important in making a decision and how do the schools stack up?), and evaluative research (how will I know I made the best decision?). An advertising plan goes through similar stages of development with research as the first step.

What Are the Basic Types of Research?

New advertising assignments always begin with some kind of informal or formal background research into the marketing situation. This is called *secondary research*, and we’ll compare it with *primary research*, which is original research conducted by the company or brand.

- **Secondary Information on the Internet** For any given company, you're bound to find a website where you can learn about the company's history and philosophy of doing business, check out its complete product line, and discover who runs the company. These sites offer credible information for account planners and others involved in market research. Other sources of Internet information are blog sites and chat rooms where you can learn about people's reactions to brands and products. There are also many industry-related sites for marketing that report on research, essays, and best practices:

BrandEra (www.brandera.com) offers information by product category.

MarketPerceptions (<http://marketperceptions.com>) represents a research company that specializes in health care research. The site has information about its focus group capabilities.

Forrester Research (www.forrester.com) provides industry research into technology markets.

Greenbook.org (www.greenbook.org) is a worldwide directory of marketing research focus group suppliers.

Cluetrain (www.cluetrain.com) publishes new ways to find and share innovative marketing information and ideas.

Primary Research Information that is collected for the first time from original sources is called **primary research**. To obtain primary research, companies and their agencies do their own tracking and monitoring of their customers' behavior. An example of a company that took on its own research is Perdue Farms and its classic "tough man" campaign. In contemporary times, companies usually hire specialized firms to do this type of research.

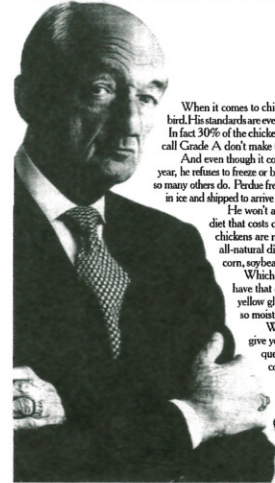
In another example of a company doing its own primary research, Toyota undertook a huge two-year study of ultra-rich consumers in the United States to better market its upscale Lexus brand. A team of nine Lexus employees from various departments was designated the "super-affluent team" and sent on the road to interview wealthy car buyers about why they live where they do, what they do for enjoyment, what brands they buy, and how they feel about car makes and models. One surprising finding was that these consumers don't just buy a car, they buy a fleet of cars because they have multiple homes and offices.²

Primary research suppliers (the firms clients hire) specialize in interviewing, observing, recording, and analyzing the behavior of those who purchase or influence the purchase of a particular good or service. The primary research supplier industry is extremely diverse. Companies range from A.C. Nielsen, the huge international tracker of TV viewing habits, which employs more than 45,000 workers in the United States alone, to several thousand entrepreneurs who conduct focus groups and individual interviews, prepare reports, and provide advice on specific advertising and marketing problems for individual clients.

Many advertising agencies subscribe to large-scale surveys conducted by the Simmons Market Research Bureau (SMRB) or by Mediamark Research, Inc. (MRI). These two organizations survey large samples of American consumers (approximately 30,000 for each survey) and ask questions about the consumption, possession, or use of a wide range of products, services, and media. The products and services covered in the MRI survey range from toothbrushes and dental floss to diet colas, camping equipment, and theme parks.

Both SMRB and MRI conduct original research and distribute their findings to their clients. The resulting reports are intended primarily for use in media planning, but because these surveys are so comprehensive, they also can be mined for unique consumer information. Through a computer program called Golddigger, for example, an MRI subscriber can select a consumer target and ask the computer to find all other products and services and all of the media that members of the target segment use. This profile provides a vivid and detailed description of the target as a person—just the information creative teams need to help them envision their audiences. To give you an idea of what the media data look like, check out Figure 6.1 for a sample MRI report of the types of TV programs adults ages 18 to 34 watch.

IT TAKES A TOUGH MAN TO MAKE A TENDER CHICKEN.



When it comes to chicken, Frank Perdue is a tough bird. His standards are even higher than the Government's. In fact 30% of the chickens that U.S.D.A. inspectors call Grade A don't make the grade with him.

And even though it costs him an extra \$3 million a year, he refuses to freeze or blast-chill his chickens the way so many others do. Perdue fresh, young chickens are packed in ice and shipped to arrive fresh, not freshly defrosted.

He won't allow his chickens to be fed a diet that costs chicken food, either. Perdue chickens are raised on a more expensive, all-natural diet that consists mainly of corn, soybean meal, and marigold petals.

Which explains why they always have that distinctive, healthy, golden-yellow glow. And why they're always so moist, tender, and delicious.

What Frank Perdue will do is give you your money back—no questions asked—if you're not completely satisfied.

Now you know why he's so tough.



CLASSIC

"It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken" was the signature line for a long-running campaign that began in 1971 for Perdue Farms. It featured the owner, Frank Perdue, as the plain-spoken farmer who cared about the quality of his chickens. Scali, McCabe, Sloves was the agency behind the campaign that created the first recognizable brand for an unlikely commodity product—chickens. But the reason the campaign was successful wasn't just the iconic, perhaps ironic, "tough man" line, but rather Frank Perdue's knowledge of his market. When he decided in the 1960s to eliminate brokers and sell directly to stores, he spent months on the road talking to butchers about what they wanted in chickens and identified 25 quality factors. Then he modified his operations to produce chickens that delivered on those 25 factors—a tough man who was obsessed with tender chickens.

	Respondent 18-34 1-Person Household					Respondent 18-34 and Married, no children				Respondent 18-34 and Married, Youngest Child <6				Respondent 18-34 and Married Youngest Child 6+			
	A	B	C	D		A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
	Total U.S. 000	% Down	% Across	Index		% Down	% Across	Index		% Down	% Across	Index		% Down	% Across	Index	
<i>Base: Adults</i>																	
All Adults	184274	5357	100.0	2.9	100	7559	100.0	4.1	100	18041	100.0	9.8	100	4978	100.0	2.7	100
Program-Types: Average Show																	
Adven/Sci Fi/West-Prime	19969	590	11.0	3.0	102	875	11.6	4.4	107	2303	12.8	11.5	118	694	13.9	3.5	129
Auto Racing-Specials	6590	*226	4.2	3.4	118	*242	3.2	3.7	90	634	3.5	9.6	98	*251	5.0	3.8	141
Awards-Specials	16490	397	7.4	2.4	83	514	6.8	3.1	76	1576	8.7	9.6	98	*451	9.1	2.7	101
Baseball Specials	28019	806	15.0	2.9	99	1128	14.9	4.0	98	2671	14.8	9.5	97	*506	10.2	1.8	67
Basketball-Weekend-College	7377	*222	4.1	3.0	104	*244	3.2	3.3	81	531	2.9	7.2	74	*183	3.7	2.5	92
Basketball Specials-College	17096	529	9.9	3.1	106	694	9.2	4.1	99	1459	8.1	8.5	87	*423	8.5	2.5	92
Basketball Specials-Pro.	32470	1057	19.7	3.3	112	1369	18.1	4.2	103	3128	17.3	9.6	98	886	17.8	2.7	101
Bowling-Weekend	16808	312	5.8	1.9	654	744	9.8	4.4	108	1476	8.2	8.8	90	*386	7.8	2.3	85
Comedy/Variety	26254	930	17.4	3.5	122	1150	15.2	4.4	107	3257	18.1	12.4	127	999	20.1	3.8	141
Daytime Dramas	7621	*192	3.6	2.5	87	*287	3.8	3.8	92	845	4.7	11.1	113	*343	6.9	4.5	167
Daytime Game Shows	7747	*97	1.8	1.3	43	*194	2.6	2.5	61	734	4.1	9.5	97	*235	4.7	3.0	112
Documen/Information-Prime	22514	532	9.9	2.4	81	504	6.7	2.2	55	1739	9.6	7.7	79	*454	9.1	2.0	75
Early Morning News	12226	280	5.2	2.3	79	*429	5.7	3.5	86	1065	5.9	8.7	89	*330	6.6	2.7	100
Early Morning Talk/Info/News	14681	258	4.8	1.8	60	580	7.7	4.0	96	1291	7.2	8.8	90	*268	5.4	1.8	68
Early Eve. Netwk News-M-F	25946	596	11.1	2.3	79	836	11.1	3.2	79	1822	10.1	7.0	72	*594	11.9	2.3	85
Early Eve. Netwk News-Wknd	11338	*197	3.7	1.7	60	*208	2.8	1.8	45	795	4.4	7.0	72	*187	3.8	1.6	61
Entertainment Specials	19630	408	7.6	2.1	71	701	9.3	3.6	87	1719	9.5	8.8	89	*494	9.9	2.5	93
Feature Films-Prime	17232	371	6.9	2.2	74	*538	7.1	3.1	76	1209	6.7	7.0	72	*475	9.5	2.8	102
Football Bowl Games-Specials	13322	369	6.9	2.8	95	*381	5.0	2.9	70	1512	8.4	11.3	116	*245	4.9	1.8	68
Football Pro.-Specials	44804	1471	27.5	3.3	113	1766	23.4	3.9	96	4555	25.2	10.2	104	1104	22.2	2.5	91
General Drama-Prime	19880	581	10.8	2.9	101	571	7.6	2.9	70	2095	11.6	10.5	108	*555	11.1	2.8	103
Golf	5161	*102	1.9	2.0	68	*152	2.0	2.9	72	*324	1.8	6.3	64	*15	.3	.3	11
Late Evening Netwk News Wknd	5146	*146	2.7	2.8	98	*114	1.5	2.2	54	*293	1.6	5.7	58	*104	2.1	2.0	75
Late Night Talk/Variety	9590	313	5.8	3.3	112	*297	3.9	3.1	75	1009	5.6	10.5	107	*198	4.0	2.1	76
News-Specials	14508	234	4.4	1.6	55	510	6.7	3.5	86	1297	7.2	8.9	91	*212	4.3	1.5	54
Pageants-Specials	22025	439	8.2	2.0	69	952	12.6	4.3	105	2503	13.9	11.4	116	547	11.0	2.5	92
Police Docudrama	23575	726	13.6	3.1	106	1179	15.6	5.0	122	2309	12.8	9.8	100	731	14.7	3.1	115
Pvt Det/Susp/Myst/Pol.-Prime	28183	673	12.6	2.4	82	763	10.1	2.7	66	1739	9.6	6.2	63	*493	9.9	1.7	65
Situation Comedies-Prime	19097	598	11.2	3.1	108	919	12.2	4.8	117	2737	15.2	14.3	146	688	13.8	3.6	133
Sports Anthologies-Weekend	4847	*218	4.1	4.5	155	*232	3.1	4.8	117	*403	2.2	8.3	85	*108	2.2	2.2	82
Sunday News/Interview	5809	*70	1.3	1.2	41	*116	1.5	2.0	49	*214	1.2	3.7	38	*97	1.9	1.7	62
Syndicated Adult General	10444	*271	5.1	2.6	89	462	6.1	4.4	108	766	4.2	7.3	75	*221	4.4	2.1	78
Tennis	10033	338	6.3	3.4	116	380	5.0	3.8	92	826	4.5	8.2	84	*105	2.1	1.0	39

FIGURE 6.1

MRI Consumer Media Report

This MRI report breaks down the 18-34 age market into four market segments based on size of household and age of children, if any, and describes their television viewing patterns. Here's a question: Where would you advertise to reach single adults in the 18-34 category? First look at the Index column under that category heading and find the two highest percentages. Then, for each high rating, look across to column A and determine the size of that group. As a point of comparison, do the same analysis for the Married with the Youngest Child over 6 category. How do the two groups differ in the television viewing patterns?

Source: Mediamark Research, Inc.

Quantitative Research Primary research can be both quantitative and qualitative. **Quantitative research** delivers numerical data such as number of users and purchases, their attitudes and knowledge, their exposure to ads, and other market-related information. The MRI page is an example of data obtained through quantitative research. It also provides information on reactions to advertising and motivation to purchase, sometimes called *purchase intent*. Quantitative methods that investigate the responses of large numbers of people are useful in testing ideas to determine if their market is large enough or if most people really say or behave in a certain way.

Two primary characteristics of quantitative research are (1) large sample sizes, typically from 100 to 1,000 people, and (2) random sampling. The most common quantitative research methods include surveys and studies that track such things as sales and opinions. Quantitative research is usually designed either to accurately count something, such as **sales levels**, or to predict something, such as attitudes. To be predictive, however, this type of research must follow careful scientific procedures. The Cheetos campaign used a study with a sample of 1,000 adults to find out about their frequency of game playing in order to correlate that information with their levels of Cheetos consumption.

One of the biggest problems in using quantitative methods to study consumer decision processes is that consumers are often unable to articulate the reasons they do what they do because their reasons may not fit into answers provided in a survey. Furthermore, most people aren't tuned in to their own thoughts and thinking process so that they are comfortable saying yes or no or checking a space on a rating scale. Respondents also have a tendency to give the answers that they think the researcher wants to hear. These are all reasons why qualitative research has become much more important in brand communication in the last 20 years. It offers the ability to probe and move beyond the sometimes superficial responses to a survey.

Qualitative Research The goal of qualitative research methodologies, therefore, is to move beyond the limitations of what consumers can explain in words or in responses to preplanned questions. **Qualitative research** provides insight into the underlying reasons for how consumers behave and why. Common qualitative research methods include such tools as observation, ethnographic studies, in-depth interviews, and case studies. They trade large sample sizes and scientific predictions for greater depth of insight. These exploratory research tools are useful for probing and gaining explanations and understanding of such questions as these:

- What type of features do customers want?
- What are the motivations that lead to the purchase of a product?
- What do our customers think about our advertising?
- How do consumers relate to the brand? What are their emotional links to the brand?

Qualitative methods often are used early in the process of developing a brand communication plan or message strategy for generating insights, as well as questions and hypotheses for additional research. They are also good at confirming hunches, ruling out bad approaches and questionable or confusing ideas, and giving direction to the message strategy. However, because qualitative research is typically done with small groups, researchers cannot project their findings to the larger population.

Rather than drawing conclusions, qualitative research is used to answer the question why, as well as generate hypotheses that can be tested with quantitative methods.³ As Sally Reinman, worldwide market planner at Saatchi & Saatchi, wrote for this book, research is more than numbers. She explains:

Research processes are more varied and exciting than ever before. Examples include asking consumers to draw pictures, create collages, and produce home videos to show how they use a product.

As consumers around the world become better informed and more demanding, advertisers that target different cultures need to find the "commonalities" (or common ground) among consumer groups from these cultures. Research for Toyota's sports-utility vehicle (SUV), the RAV 4, showed that consumers in all the targeted countries had three common desires: They wanted an SUV to have style, safety, and economy.

To find these commonalities, I work with experts to learn the cultural meaning of codes and symbols that people use to communicate. The experts I work with include cultural and

Principle

Quantitative research investigates the attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of large numbers of people in order to make conclusions that can be generalized to the total population; qualitative research provides insight into how and why consumers think and behave.

Principle

Quantitative research can be used to draw conclusions about how much and how often; qualitative research answers questions about why and generates questions for quantitative methods.

cognitive anthropologists, psychologists, interior decorators, and Indian storytellers. Anyone who can help me understand consumers and the consumer decision-making process is fair game.

Experimental Research Tightly controlled scientific studies are sometimes used to puzzle out how people think and respond to messages and incentives. **Experimental research** is designed using formal hypothesis-testing techniques that compare different message treatments and how people react to them. The idea is to control for all factors except the one being tested; if there is a change in the results, then the researcher can conclude that the variable being tested caused the difference. Experimental research is used to test marketing factors as well as advertising appeals and executions in such areas as product features and design, price, and various creative ideas.

Do your professors and instructors talk about the research they conduct? Here's an example of one professor's research about cigarette advertising that has practical implications for the tobacco industry and policy makers. It tests the idea that cigarette advertising can prime (or prepare) teens to think that smoking is cool. The *A Matter of Principle* box explains how this researcher used experimental studies to determine the impact of advertising on behavior.

Sometimes in experimental research the measurements are electronically recorded using such instruments as MRI or EEG machines or eye-scan tracking devices. Electrodes can be used to monitor heart rate, pulse, and skin temperature to determine if people have a physical response to a message that they may not be able to put in words. Emotional responses, in particular, are hard to verbalize but may be observable using these types of sensors. Hewlett-Packard Company, for example, wired a group of volunteers with electrodes to see how they reacted to photos of people smiling. The study found that there were obvious differences in brain activity in people looking at photos of smiling people, particularly pictures of children smiling.

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

Does Advertising Make Smoking Cool?

Cornelia (Connie) Pechmann, Professor of Marketing, University of California, Irvine



In 1991, I began a program of research on tobacco-use prevention through advertising and the mass media. I wondered how often people saw advertisements for products shortly before experiencing the products. It occurred to me that advertising exposure and product experience were perhaps most likely to occur concurrently in the case of cigarette advertising and encounters with smokers. In 1991, cigarette advertising on billboards was ubiquitous and 20 percent of high school seniors smoked daily, so I reasoned that adolescents might see cigarette advertisements and peers smoking concurrently. I also reasoned that encounters with smokers would often be ambiguous.

Looking at the literature, I could find few controlled experiments on cigarette advertising. However, surveys indicated there was a strong association between adolescents' perceptions of smokers and smoking initiation. With the assistance of coauthors, I completed two research projects that documented that cigarette adver-

tisements can prime adolescents' positive beliefs about smokers and thus alter their social encounters with smokers. Specifically, cigarette advertisements serving as primes can favorably bias adolescents' perceptions of peers who smoke and thus increase their intent to smoke. One of our papers on this topic received the Best Paper Award from the *Journal of Consumer Research*. I continue to conduct research in this area.

I am told that my tobacco-related research has been cited by expert witnesses in legal cases such as the federal tobacco case, in legislative hearings, and in U.S. Attorney General meetings. I believe that some academic research should be conducted to inform public policy and that if research is not designed for this purpose, it likely will not have this effect.

Sources: J. A. Bargh, M. Chen, and L. Burrows, "Automaticity of Social Behavior: Direct Effects of Trait Construct and Stereotype Activation on Action," *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 71, No. 2 (1996): 230-244; C. Pechmann and S. J. Knight, "An Experimental Investigation of the Joint Effects of Advertising and Peers on Adolescents' Beliefs and Intentions about Cigarette Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29, No. 1 (2002): 5-19; C. Pechmann and S. Ratneshwar, "The Effects of Antismoking and Cigarette Advertising on Young Adolescents' Perceptions of Peers Who Smoke," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, No. 2 (1994): 236-251.

The Uses of Research

Agencies and clients use research to make strategic decisions, as we have just discussed, but agencies rarely *conduct* research. Most research has become so specialized that separate research companies, as well as in-house client research departments, are the most likely research sources. These firms and departments collect and disseminate secondary research data and conduct primary research that ultimately finds its way into brand communication efforts. DDB is one of the few large agencies that still does its own in-house research. Its annual Life Style Survey, which we discussed in Chapter 5, is a major source of consumer information.

As markets have become more fragmented and saturated, and as consumers have become more demanding, the need for research-based information in advertising planning has increased. Figure 6.2 summarizes the seven ways research is used in marketing communication planning:

1. Market information
2. Consumer insight research
3. Brand information
4. Media research
5. Message development research
6. Advertising or IMC plan
7. Evaluation research

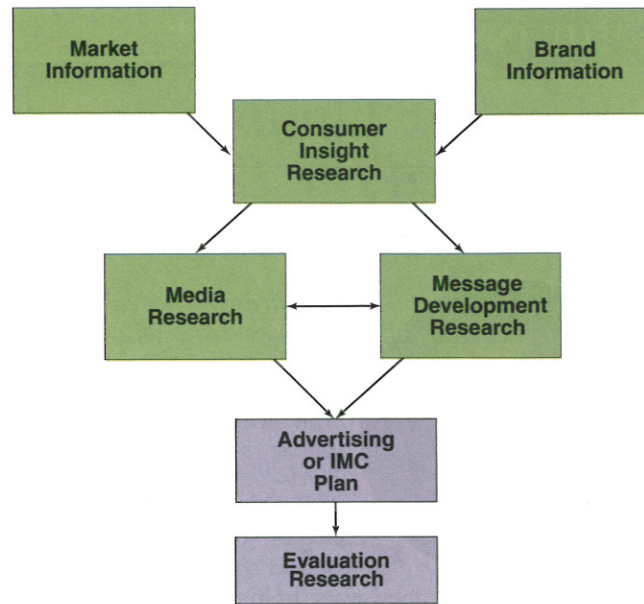


FIGURE 6.2
The Use of Research
in Marketing
Communication Planning

Market Information Formal research used by the marketing department for strategic planning is called **marketing research**. It includes surveys, in-depth interviews, observational methods, focus groups (which are like in-depth interviews with a group rather than individuals), and all types of primary and secondary data used to develop a marketing plan and ultimately provide information for a brand communication plan. A subset of marketing research, *market research* is research used to gather information about a particular market.

An example comes from Iceland, a country hard hit by the global economic downturn that started in 2007. As explained by Ingvi Logason, principal in his own advertising firm in Reykjavik, “Iceland, with its overexpanded banking sector, was hit worse than any other Westernized country.” With all of its banks except one going into bankruptcy or only barely being saved by serious rescue activities by the government, national debt outweighed gross national production by 2 to 1. Iceland was on the brink of national bankruptcy. *The Inside Story* details how Logason and his agency guided his client, the lamb industry, through this difficult time.

Market information includes everything a planner can uncover about consumer perceptions of the brand, product category, and competitors’ brands. Planners sometimes ride with the sales force and listen to sales pitches, tour manufacturing plants to see how a product is made, and work in a store or restaurant to evaluate employee interaction with customers. In terms of marketing communication, planners test the brand’s and its competitors’ advertisements, promotions, retail displays, packaging, and other marketing communication efforts.

Brand information includes an assessment of the brand’s role and performance in the marketplace—is it a leader, a follower, a challenger, or a subbrand of a bigger and better known brand? This research also investigates how people perceive brand personalities and images. Here are some common methods used to gather information about a brand and the marketplace:

- **The Brand Experience** When an agency gets a new client, the first thing the agency team has to do is learn about the brand through brand research. That means learning where the brand has been in the past in terms of the market, its customers, and competitors, as the Cheetos campaign demonstrated. Also important is eliciting the corporate point of view regarding the brand’s position within the company’s line of products, as well as corporate goals and plans for the brand. Another critical area of brand research is the brand’s relationships with its customers. Researchers, for example, may go through all of the experiences

THE INSIDE STORY

How the Lamb Industry in Iceland Survived the Economic Downturn

Ingvi Logason, Principal, H:N Marketing Communication, Reykjavik, Iceland



In 2009 (when this was written) the whole world was facing probably its greatest economic crisis since the early 20th century. This recession hit the Icelandic public suddenly and it hit hard—obliterating purchasing power. Overnight the situation changed the way Icelanders search and shop, as well as what they want from their brands. In this market planners had to truly understand the role a brand plays in the lives of its target audience clarifying “what’s in it for me” in all communication.

One brand that my marketing communication firm has handled and had to adapt to the changed market is Icelandic Lamb. Traditionally lamb had been around a 29 percent share of Icelandic meat consumption with heavy and almost exclusive emphasis on the prime (and more expensive) parts of the lamb. That left farmers with a high percentage of the lamb unsold. Now lamb was down to a 26 percent share and falling.

Anyone could see that this was not a good situation with the sharp decrease in purchasing power leading to fewer sales in luxury and expensive food items. Furthermore, sales figures showed that consumers were not going for the less expensive cuts of lamb, but rather opting for other cheaper meat products. Although we were quick to catch the trend and see the possible sales decline, we were not sure why sales hadn’t moved to less expensive lamb cuts.

We assembled focus groups to determine the underlying problem. With clever probing, the main problem became clear: consumers simply did not know how to prepare the less costly parts—it was a forgotten art. Lamb had become such a luxury item that it was easier for our target group to increase their consumption of less costly meat than learn new recipes. Our extensive consumer research showed that:

- Our target group liked lamb meat but didn’t know how to cook it.
- Lamb meat had the highest top-of-mind (TOM) awareness of all meat products in Iceland.
- Our target group was always looking for ways to find economic and quick solutions to the question “What’s for dinner?”
- Our research also found up to 25 percent better engagement in food advertising when recipes were included.



So how do you connect with your target group and teach time-pressed people new tricks in a world with ever-expanding media options and less time for anything domestic like cooking?

We developed a strategy to counter the trend away from lamb. Fast dissemination of information for a fast-moving world became our goal.

The big idea we developed was “micro-cooking” shows—we would teach you to cook in 90 seconds or less. The recipes were tasty, simple, and easy. In addi-

tion, the lamb website carried the cooking shows, which also became viral ads. We created and recruited a Facebook group interested in lamb who passed the shows on, extending their reach to new customers.

By researching and understanding the role that our brand played in the lives of our target group, we were

able to come up with a campaign that matched our target group's needs and pace of life. These insights resulted in a strategy that connected with consumers and delivered the sales figures we needed to help the lamb industry survive the downturn.

that a typical consumer has in buying and using the product. If you were taking on a pizza restaurant account, for example, you might work in the store or visit it as a customer. Brand buying is also a form of commitment to the client: the parking lots of agencies that have automotive accounts are usually full of cars made by their clients.

- **Competitive Analysis** It's also important to do a competitive analysis. If you handle a soap account, you obviously want to use that brand of soap, but you may also buy the competing brands and do your own comparative test just to add your experiences to your brand analysis.
- **Marketing Communication Audit** Either formally or informally, most planners will begin an assignment by collecting every possible piece of advertising and other forms of marketing communication by the brand, as well as its competitors and other relevant categories that may have lessons for the brand. Often these pieces are attached to the walls in a "war room" where team members can immerse themselves in messages to stimulate new ideas. This includes compiling a historical collection as well. There's nothing more embarrassing than proposing a great new advertising idea only to find out that it was used a couple of years ago by a competitor or, even worse, by your client.
- **Content Analysis** The marketing communication audit might include only informal summaries of the slogans, appeals, and images used most often, or it might include more formal and systematic tabulation of competitors' approaches and strategies, called a **content analysis**. By disclosing competitors' strategies and tactics, analysis of the content of competitive advertisements provides clues about how competitors are thinking and suggests ways to develop new and more effective campaigns. Planners also try to determine what mental territories or positions competitors claim and which are still available and relevant to the brand.

Consumer Insight Research A basic principle in this book is that effective marketing communication rests on truly understanding the consumer. As Regina Lewis, a member of this book's Advisory Board, explained in the Part 2 opener, brands have to be true to the consumers who buy them. Consumers, even brand loyal ones, are more loyal to themselves and their own interests than they are to brands. Both the creative team members (who create messages) and the media planners (who decide how and when to deliver the messages) need to know as much as they can, in as much depth and detail as possible, about the people they are trying to reach. That's the point of *The Inside Story* about selling Icelandic lamb during the recession. To turn the sales pattern around, the agency had to really know how its target market was adapting to the new economic situation.

We mentioned in the discussion of the communication role of marketing communication that feedback can be obtained from customers as a part of a research program that uses customer contact as an information source—systematically recording information from customer service, technical service, inbound telemarketing calls, and online sites. Some businesses use the Internet to involve customers in making decisions about product design, distribution, price, and company operations using online surveys, blogs, online communities, and other social media.

You've probably heard the phrase "This call may be monitored for quality assurance." These recordings are used for training, but they also can be analyzed for marketing intelligence.⁴ If customers say they are confused or ask the representative to repeat a phrase, then it could indicate that the sales offer or technical explanation isn't working right. These calls can provide instant feedback about the strength of a brand's offering as well as competitors' offers. Specific questions such as "Where did you hear about this?" are used to monitor brand contact points and media performance.

Principle

Do your homework about your brand. There's nothing more embarrassing than proposing a great new advertising idea only to find out that it was used a couple of years ago by a competitor or, even worse, by your client.

More importantly, as we explained in Chapter 5, researchers try to determine what motivates people to buy a product or become involved in a brand relationship. But a note of caution, sometimes the biggest consumer research projects may not give reliable results. A classic example is the New Coke reformulation introduced in 1985 after some 200,000 consumers participated in blind taste tests. Based on this huge \$4 million research effort, Coke managers decided to dump the old Coca-Cola formula, which had been in use since 1886, because researchers concluded that Coke drinkers preferred a new sweeter taste. The reaction was overwhelming from loyal Coke drinkers who wanted the “Real Thing,” an emotional bond that wasn’t revealed in the consumer research.

Principle

Insight research is designed to uncover the whys of the buys, as well as the why notes.

The objective of **consumer insight research** is to puzzle out a key consumer insight that will help move the target audience to respond to the message. Insight research, in other words, is basically about asking and listening, and then asking more questions to probe deeper into thoughts, opinions, attitudes, desires, and motivations.

Researchers often try to uncover the *whys of the buys*, but insight research may also uncover reasons why people don’t want to try or buy a product. For example, Dunkin’ Donuts found in its consumer research several reasons why its customers were uncomfortable ordering fancy coffee drinks. Mostly they were intimidated by the whole “barista” thing and the fancy coffee names.

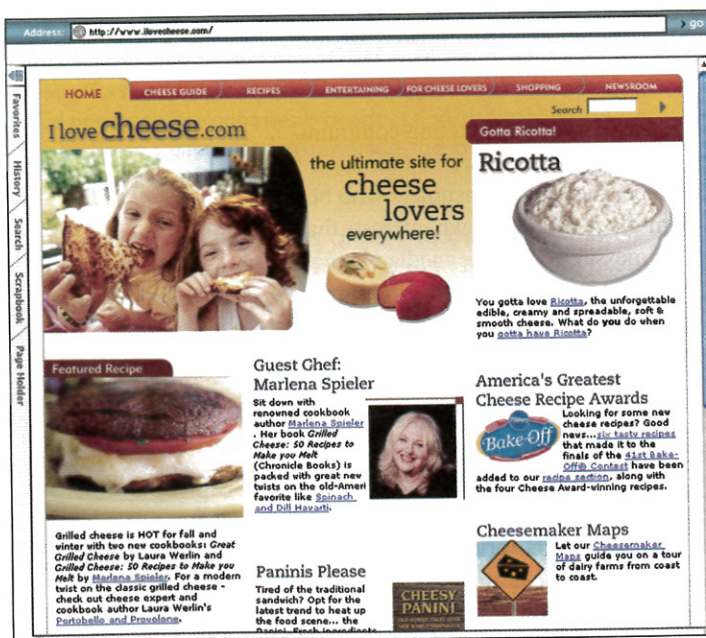
The DDB agency regularly conducts “Barriers to Purchase” research⁵ realizing that these barriers often create an opportunity for advertising messages to present information or change perceptions. The American Dairy Association, for example, asked DDB to find out why cheese consumption was declining. A study identified one barrier that was most easily correctable through a marketing communication effort: the absence of simple cheese recipes for home cooks. Ads and the association’s website (www.ilovecheese.com) offer many such recipes.

Emotions are elicited by asking consumers what they think people in various photos and situations are feeling. Associations are investigated by asking people what comes to mind when a word or brand is mentioned. In **association tests**, people are asked what they think of when they hear a cue, such as the name of a product category or a brand. They respond with all of the things that come to mind, and, as we have said, that forms a **network of associations**. Brand perceptions are tested this way to map the structure and logic of these association networks, which lead to message strategies. For example, what do you think of when you think of Taco Bell? Wendy’s?

Arby’s? Each restaurant should bring to mind some things in common (fast food, cheap food), but they also have distinct networks of associations based on type of food (Mexican, hamburgers, roast beef), restaurant design, logo and colors, brand characters, healthfulness, and so forth. Each restaurant, then, has a distinctive profile that can be determined from this network of associations.

To get inside consumers’ minds to see what they are really thinking, marketers have turned to the tools of neuroscience, which uses highly technical equipment to scan the brain as it processes information and makes decisions. Neuromarketing, which we have mentioned in previous chapters, is the application of this research technology to consumer behavior. One study by a UCLA researcher, for example, mapped how viewers responded to Super Bowl ads below the level of their awareness. In the *A Principled Practice* feature at www.pearsonhighered.com/moriarty, Professor Ann Marie Barry explains how this research works and raises some ethical questions about just how private our thinking should be.

Campbell’s Soup used neuromarketing and biometrics to analyze consumer responses to brand communication. As part of a major two-year study and



The DDB agency found that a barrier to purchasing cheese was the lack of good recipe ideas using cheese products. The American Dairy Association responded by getting more recipes distributed through advertising and its website.

redesign of the labels on its iconic red and white soup cans, Campbell's used neuromarketing techniques to see how consumers reacted to everything from pictures of bowls, to the use of a spoon, and other graphic cues, such as steam rising from the bowl. The objective was to find ways to help consumers connect on a deeper and more emotional level with the brand. Changes included color coding the different varieties; depict steam to make the soup in the picture look warm; remove the spoon, which consumers said served no purpose; update the look of the bowl; and move the Campbell's logo to the bottom in order to better identify the varieties.⁶

Media Research Media planning begins with consumer research and questions about media behavior that help with the media selection decision. Media planners often work in conjunction with the information account planners uncover to decide which media formats make the most sense to accomplish the objectives. The goal is to activate consumer interest by reaching them through some medium that engages their interest.

Next, **media research** gathers information about all the possible media and marketing communication tools that might be used in a campaign to deliver a message. Media researchers then match that information to what is known about the target audience. The MRI data shown earlier in Figure 6.1 illustrates the type of information media researchers consult to develop recommendations.

Message Development Research As planners, account managers, and people on the creative team begin to develop a message strategy, they involve themselves in various types of informal and formal **message development research**. They read all of the relevant secondary information provided by the client and the planners to become better informed about the brand, the company, the competition, the media, and the product category. As Jackie Boulter,⁷ head of planning at the London-based Abbott Mead Vickers-BBDO agency, explained, creative development research is focused on refining message ideas prior to production. It uses qualitative research to predict if the idea will solve the business problem and achieve the objectives.

Sometimes called **concept testing**, it can help evaluate the relative power of various creative ideas. It's a "work-in-progress" type of evaluation. The idea is to test the big idea that communicates the strategy behind the message—or various types of *executions* of the concept. These interviews are often conducted in malls and downtown areas where there are lots of people who can be asked to look at a rough sketch of the idea or ad and respond to it. They can also be conducted over the phone, by mail, or online.

As writers and art directors begin working on a specific creative project, they almost always conduct informal research of their own. They may do their own personal observational research and visit retail stores, talk to salespeople, and watch customers buy. They may visit the agency information center or library, browse through reference books, and borrow subject and picture files. They will look at previous advertising, especially that of competitors, to see what others have done, and in their hearts they will become convinced that they can create something better than, and different from, anything that has been done before. This informal, personal research has a powerful influence on what happens later in the message development process.

Another technique used to analyze the meaning of communication is **semiotic analysis**, which is a way to take apart the signs and symbols in a message to uncover layers and types of meanings. The objective is to find deeper meanings in the symbolism that might be particular to different groups of consumers. Its focus is on determining the meanings, even if they are not obvious or highly symbolic, that might relate to consumer motivations.

For example, the advertising that launched General Motors' OnStar global positioning system (GPS) used a Batman theme. By looking at this commercial in terms of its signs and symbols, it was possible to determine if the obvious, as well as hidden, meanings of the message are on strategy. For example, the decision to use a comic book hero as the star created a heroic association for OnStar. However, Batman is not a superhero, but rather more of a common person with a lot of great technology and cool gadgets—remember Jack Nicholson as the Joker and his famous comment: "Where does he get all those wonderful toys?" The "bat beacon" then becomes OnStar for the average person. Batman is also ageless, appealing to young people who read comic books and watch movies today as well as older people who remember

Batman from their youth.⁸ A highly successful effort, this Batman OnStar campaign won a David Ogilvy Research Award.

Evaluation Research Concept testing is actually the first level of evaluation. After an advertisement or other type of marketing communication (marcom) message has been developed and produced, it can be evaluated for its effectiveness both before and after it runs as part of a campaign. **Pretesting** is research on an execution in its finished stages but before it appears in media. While creative development research looks at the power of the advertising idea, pretesting looks at the way the idea is presented. The idea can be strong, but the target might hate the execution. This type of test elicits a go or no-go decision for a specific advertisement. Sometimes pretesting will also call into doubt the strength of the advertising idea, forcing the creative team to rethink its strategy.

Evaluative research, often referred to as **copytesting**, is done during a campaign and afterward. If it's used during a campaign, the objective is to adjust the ad to make it stronger. Afterward, the research determines the effectiveness of the ad or campaign.

We will explore many different types of evaluation methods in Chapter 19, but let's just mention two common forms here. Memory can be measured using **aided recognition** (or recall). A researcher might page through a magazine (or use some other medium) and ask respondents whether they remember seeing a particular ad. **Unaided recognition** (or recall) means respondents are asked to tell what they remember without being prompted by seeing the magazine (or other medium) to refresh their memories. These tools are used both in developmental research and also in evaluation. Strategic, developmental, and evaluative research share some common tools and processes and we briefly describe some of these in the following section.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON RESEARCH METHODS?

This section focuses on the types of research used in message development and the research situations where these methods are typically used.

Ways of Contact: Quantitative Methods

Consumer research methodologies are often described in terms of the ways researchers contact their respondents. The contact can be in person, by telephone, by mail, through the Internet or cable TV, or by a computer kiosk in a mall or store. Most quantitative research in marketing communication is survey based, however, consumers can also be contacted in malls where they are invited to participate in experimental research.

Principle

Careful scientific procedures are used in survey research to draw a representative sample of a group in order to accurately reflect the population's behavior and attitudes.

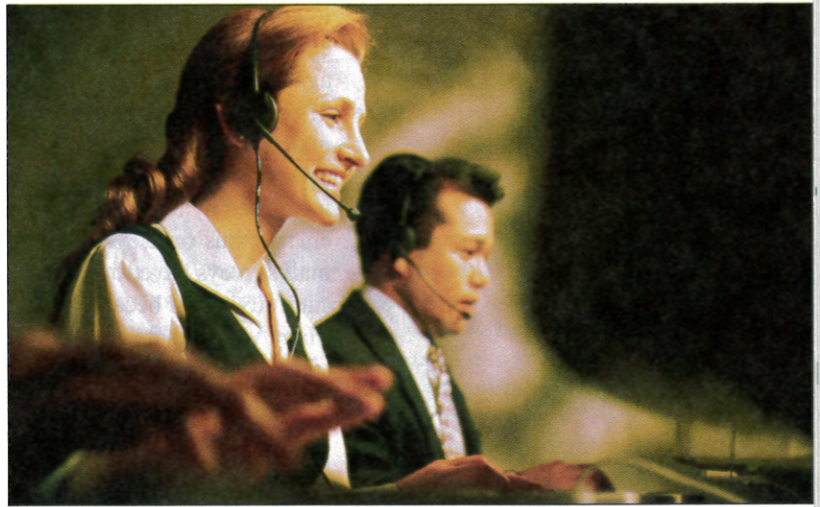
Survey Research In a survey, questionnaires are used to obtain information about people's attitudes, knowledge, media use, and exposure to particular messages, and this was an important part of the Cheetos retargeting campaign. **Survey research** is a quantitative method that uses structured interviews to ask large numbers of people the same set of questions. The questions can deal with personal characteristics, such as age, income, behavior, or attitudes. The surveys can be conducted in person, by phone, by mail, or online. There are two big questions to consider: how to build a representative sample of people to be interviewed and what method is best to collect the data.

Sampling is used because in most cases, it is cost prohibitive to try to interview everyone in the population or target market. Instead the people interviewed are a representative **sample** of the larger group, a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population.⁹ For survey research to be an accurate reflection of the population, those who participate must be selected at random, which means every person who belongs to the population being surveyed has an equal likelihood (probability) of being chosen to participate. For a classic example of how nonrandom sampling can create inaccurate results, consider the *Literary Digest* presidential election polling of Landon versus Roosevelt in 1936, which produced incorrect results for the presidential election, even though it had a sample size of more than 2 million households. Why? Analysis of the poll results indicates that both the magazine's sample and the response were biased and did not accurately predict voter behavior.¹⁰

Incentives are important when doing surveys. As Karl Weiss, a member of this book's Advisory Board and president of a marketing research company explains, choose an incentive that



Survey research can be conducted in person and is often conducted in malls, supermarket aisles, or other public places.



Phone surveys are commonly used. Often they come from commercial call centers where many people hired by a research company staff a bank of phones. In recent years the contact is made through electronic dialing and when respondents answer, the call is transferred to an interviewer.

is appropriate for your audience—perhaps \$5 or \$10 in cash, a drawing for a Wii or iPhone, or even a summary of the results. Different audiences have different interests so make your incentive appealing to them. Be careful, however, not to bias your results in the process. If you are studying airline travel behavior and your incentive is a PlayStation, don't be surprised to find that most of those who complete the survey are males under 35 years old.

Since survey research first began, the way researchers have gone about collecting data from respondents has seen almost constant change as new technologies have made such research more cost efficient:

- **Door-to-Door Interviews** In the 1950s and 1960s, marketing researchers literally roamed the streets knocking on people's doors with clipboards in hand in order to gather their survey data. Following complex sampling strategies, they made their way through everything from apartment buildings to rural farm areas, with their sampling road map designed to maximize the randomness and representativeness of the population they studied. It wasn't surprising to see this laborious and oftentimes even dangerous approach to collecting survey data replaced by telephone interviewing by the 1970s.
- **Phone Interviews** As access to telephones increased after World War II, calling soon became the survey mode of choice, as it was much less expensive and far less invasive than sending interviewers out to people's homes. The listing of phone numbers in phone directories gave researchers the perfect source from which they could draw a **random sample**, which means each person in the population has an equal chance of being selected to be in the sample. Although telephone interviewing was more practical than going from door to door, researchers lost the ability to interact directly with their participants when communicating just by telephone, especially when there was a need to show pictures or samples of what they were evaluating. However, telephone surveys were not only more cost effective but necessary as people stopped answering their doors due to solicitation efforts (door-to-door sales were very common at that time) and concerns over personal safety.

But over time, telephone interviewing too faced its challenges. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, telemarketing efforts became so pervasive that consumers sought ways to make it stop, from the use of call-screening devices such as answering machines and Caller ID to signing up on the National Do Not Call Registry, which put legal ramifications behind unsolicited phone calls. Although marketing research calls were exempt from this legislation, because nothing is being sold, research calls were screened out with the rest as consumers fortified their privacy efforts. Today it is not uncommon for up to 60 percent of households

to not answer their phones when called for a survey. Just as door-to-door surveying met its end as more cost-effective and acceptable alternatives became available, researchers once again need to look for new alternatives for gathering survey data.

- **Mail Surveys** As household addresses became readily available after the Second World War, mail surveys increased in use because researchers could pull addresses from city directories. Specialized research companies sold lists of addresses to direct marketers and these lists also were used by researchers. Mail surveys were popular because they didn't use live interviewers and thus were even less expensive than telephone surveys. In terms of survey design, the mail surveys have to be extremely easy to understand and all of the questions need to be carefully tested because an interviewer won't be present to clarify respondents' questions. Many variables determine the response rate, such as the interest level of the topic to the respondent, personalization of the message, the quality of the paper, the design of the envelope, and the inclusion of a prepaid return envelope. In spite of all the testing that has been done on mail survey design, the problem continues to be a low return rate, in addition to the loss of direct contact with the respondent.
- **Internet Surveys** Today, the world of data collection is changing again. Landline telephones are on the decline as cell phones become more popular and are beginning to be used for research. Unlisted phone numbers are becoming more common. Mail surveys have become largely ineffective, with response rates sometimes as low as the 1 to 3 percent range, which can fail to meet the statistical criteria necessary for valid random sampling. Researchers have been forced by these changes to find new ways to collect data from respondents. Telephone and mail surveys are gradually being replaced by online survey methods.

The Internet has opened up new opportunities for collecting data (see the *A Matter of Practice: Part 1* feature). In Chapter 7 you'll read about the Billings, Montana, rebranding campaign in which the campaign was launched with an online survey of more than 1,000 people. We have printed here the screen download, "Take the Survey," from this effort.



The rebranding campaign for Billings began with a broad survey of people involved in the business of supporting the city. For online surveys to work, they need to be supported by an invitation to participate that showcases the easy-to-use message.

In addition to survey research, the Internet can also be a useful tool for monitoring online behavior. Jason Cormier, co-founder of social-media agency Room 214, explains that marketing communication research can be based on the data provided by members of social networks such as Facebook. One example of this type of research is pay per click. In this method, when a user clicks on an ad in Facebook, the advertiser is charged a fee based on each click of the ad. This method is extremely targeted due to the volumes of data being collected.

Ways of Contact: Qualitative Methods

Various types of surveys are the most common quantitative research methods, but certain types of surveys can also be used for probing and to gather more insightful responses.

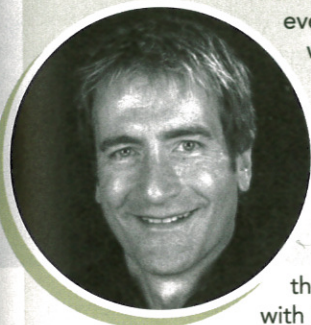
In-Depth Interviews One qualitative method used to survey consumers is the **in-depth interview**, which is conducted one-on-one using **open-ended questions** that require respondents to generate their own answers. In a personal interview the researcher asks questions to the consumer directly. The primary difference between an interview and a survey is the interviewer's use of a more flexible and unstructured questionnaire. This is the type of research method used by the Lexus "super-affluent team" we discussed earlier. Interviewers use a discussion guide, which outlines the areas to be covered during the session.

The discussion guides tend to be longer than surveys with questions that are usually very broad. Examples include "What do you like or dislike about this product?" and "What type of television programs do you like to watch?" Interviewers probe by responding to the answer with "Why do you say that?" or "Can you explain in more detail?" Interviews are considered qualitative because they typically use smaller sample sizes than surveys, their results cannot be generalized, and they are subjected to statistical tests.

A MATTER OF PRACTICE: PART 1

Online Survey Research

Karl Weiss, President/CEO, Market Perceptions Inc., Denver, CO



Without a doubt, the Internet has forever changed the world in which we live, and the way in which we do marketing research. Online surveys are much less intrusive than phone surveys, allowing participants to complete them whenever they like. Also, the self-administered approach provides a greater sense of privacy than answering these questions with a stranger over the phone (or in your home!).

In their most basic form, online surveys look and feel pretty much like paper-based surveys, with radio buttons or check boxes for people to click or check instead of filling in a bubble on a computer-readable form. But the online environment allows researchers to do much more. They can not only ask questions and request answers, but they can share sound, pictures, video, and even other websites with the participant. Photos or images can be dragged and dropped into various categories or "buckets" to indicate preference, scales can be continuous sliders, and written product descriptions can be replaced or enhanced with video, audio, and images. If desired, a live interviewer can even "join" the survey midstream or at the end to ask additional questions based on the participant's responses.

Of course, the Internet has not proven to be a replacement for phone and mail surveys because two concerns still limit this approach. First, not everyone has a computer and access to the Internet, and those who do not are demographically different from those who do, making online results skewed to the more educated and affluent. Although the digital divide is shrinking every day, the bigger problem remains—that of obtaining a random sample. With telephone and mail surveys, it is possible to obtain listings of almost everyone with a physical address or to use random digit dialing to include every possible phone number.

For online surveys, however, we must reach our participants by e-mail (exceptions are panels of prerecruited respondents and survey solicitation through online banner ads or even print ads to sign up to do research surveys on a website), but there is no universal listing of

e-mail addresses like there is of physical addresses. Furthermore, even when a list of a population can be obtained (such as a customer database of e-mail addresses), typically more than 90 percent of the e-mail survey requests are deleted or ignored by the user, or never make it to the user's in-box because of spam or junk mail filters. So, although Internet surveys are even more cost effective than telephone and mail surveys, the lack of representativeness of those who participate leaves us uncertain as to whether the results are projectable to the population or just to those who like to do surveys.

Online surveys can be created easily using free services such as SurveyMonkey.com and SurveyGizmo.com. But just because these services are free (or very low cost) and easy to use, that should not be a license to send out questionnaires every time a question arises or to spend less time thinking about the quality or necessity of questions. Survey participants are not an easily renewable resource. Overuse them, especially with poorly constructed questionnaires, and participants won't help again when you might really need them.

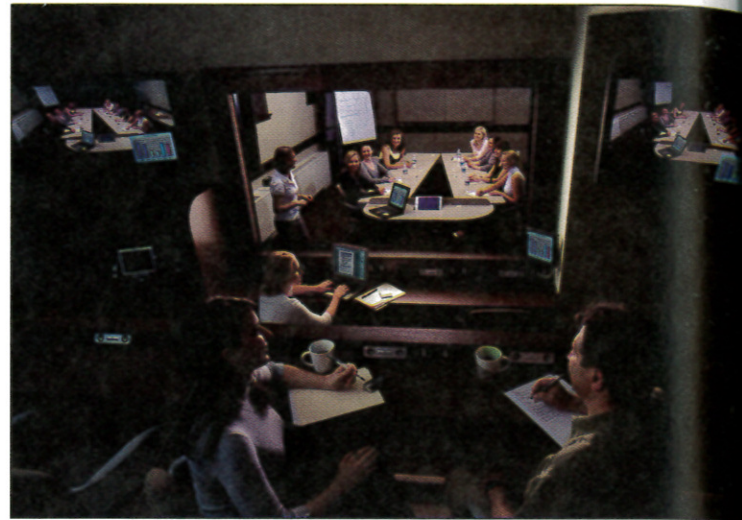
Boring surveys equal poor results. One of the greatest challenges with online surveys is getting quality data. Most people today do online surveys to get something, from cash to frequent flyer miles to a chance to win something. Their goal is less about giving you the best answers they can and more about finishing the task at hand to get to the carrot at the end of the stick. Long online surveys, especially those with long lists of attributes to rate on the same scale (such as "Extremely Important" to "Not At All Important") are easy sections to randomly pick answers without reading the questions. Make your surveys interesting so that participants want to read them and provide the best answers.

Check your online data for speeders and cheaters. Look at how long it took to complete the survey and discard those that were done so quickly that you know they probably didn't really give the questions much attention. Let people know you are watching for speeders by asking them to provide a certain response to a question to make sure they are paying attention. For example, a question early in the survey could be, "To make sure only real people are completing this questionnaire and that they are paying attention, please mark 'Somewhat Agree' to this question."

Focus Groups Another qualitative method is a **focus group**, which is a group interview of 6 to 10 users and potential users of a product who are gathered around a table to have a discussion about some topic, such as the brand, product category, or marketing communication. The objective is to get participants talking in a conversational format so researchers can observe the dialogue and interactions among the group. It's a directed group interview. A moderator supervises the group, providing direction through a set of carefully developed questions that stimulate conversation and elicit



In-depth interviews are conducted one on one with open-ended questions that permit the interviewee to give thoughtful responses. The informal structure of the questions allows the interviewer to follow up and ask more detailed questions to dig deeper into attitudes and motivations.



Focus groups are conducted around a conference table with a researcher serving as the moderator working from a list of prepared discussion questions. The session is usually held in a room with one-way glass so the other team members from the agency and client can observe the way respondents answer the questions.

the group members' thoughts and feelings in their own words. Other qualitative tools can also be used with groups such as asking participants to create posters, diaries, or poems or complete exercises in day mapping or memory associations (what comes to mind when you think of something, such as a brand, situation, or location).

Focus groups can be used at any step in the planning process, but they are often used early in information gathering to probe for patterns of thought and behavior that are then tested using quantitative research tools, such as surveys. For example, the Cheetos team conducted focus groups with adult heavy-users of Cheetos. Information from focus groups can uncover, as it did in this case, answers to "how" and "why" questions. The Cheetos participants said they gave themselves permission to lick their fingers and not act like adults. Focus groups are also useful in testing creative ideas or exploring various alternatives in message strategy development.

A **friendship focus group**¹¹ takes place in a comfortable setting, usually a private home, where the host has recruited the participants. This approach is designed to break down barriers and save time in getting to more in-depth responses. For example, one study of sensitive and insensitive visuals used in advertising directed to black women found that a self-constructed friendship group was easier to assemble and yielded more honest and candid responses than a more traditional focus group where respondents are recruited by a research company.¹²

The Web is not only a tool for online surveys, but also for online focus groups based on the idea of getting a group of brand loyalists together as a password-protected online community. Online research company Communispace has created some 225 online communities for marketers, including Kraft Foods, Unilever for its Axe brand, and Charles Schwab. You can read more about this technique at www.communispace.com. In the *A Matter of Practice: Part 2* feature, Karl Weiss continues his discussion of the various ways the Internet can be used to conduct qualitative research.

A broad-based approach to online focus groups is available through the new practice called **crowdsourcing**, a term coined by Jeff Howe in *Wired* magazine in 2006.¹³ It refers to aggregating the wisdom of Internet users in a type of digital brainstorming. In a search for "collective intelligence," crowdsourcing collects opinions and ideas from a digital community.

Suggestions and Comments Informal feedback has always been available in stores through suggestion boxes and customer satisfaction cards. Target took that idea online by publishing an ad in the *Wall Street Journal* asking customers to "Tell us what more we can do for you." Some 627 respondents e-mailed suggestions. Target then published the suggestions and the company's responses to them in two-page ads. It was a novel way of eliciting comments, listening to them, and

A MATTER OF PRACTICE: PART 2

Online Qualitative Research

Karl Weiss, President/CEO, Market Perceptions Inc., Denver, CO

Qualitative research methods have benefited from the new technologies of the Internet, allowing researchers and respondents to see one another using webcams, and online focus groups provide a way for people across the state or globe to easily come together to discuss a topic.

But the Internet has provided the marketing research community with more than just a new method for collecting and reporting data; its mark on the industry is truly much more profound. With the massive explosion of the Internet and all that we can do on it, researchers now have a new *kind* of data, data that they can obtain without asking a single question. This shift is far more significant than the transition from telephone to online surveying.

The Internet allows today's researchers to observe consumer behavior in many ways previously not only unimaginable but impossible. The most obvious of these are Web surfing patterns, seeing where people go on the Web, what they are looking for, and what they choose to buy and not buy. But that's really just scratching the surface. With social media networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn, not to mention other user-generated content through blogs, **vlogs**, podcasts, wikis, forums, chats, and discussion boards, researchers are now able to "listen" to what people are saying and see how consumers might be reacting to a competitor's new product or even what they are saying about a television ad. They can troll through millions of pages of blogs and discussion groups in seconds to find key words or phrases and perform content analysis to even classify the age and gender of the author.

Combining the data of the Internet with other electronic forms of information, such as credit card transac-

tions, phone call records, and even GPS tracking, the amount of knowledge that can be surmised about *individuals* provides a whole new playing field for marketers, not to mention a growing area of concern for privacy organizations.

We don't need to look too far into the future to imagine how easy it would be to learn that Chris, a 19-year-old male college student who holds a season pass to an area ski resort, has been researching different brands of snowboards although has yet to purchase one. We could even know from the GPS information transmitted from his cell phone that he is about to walk past a ski and snowboard shop that just happens to be having a sale on one of the boards he has been considering. A message to his phone with a photo of the board, address of the store, and the sale price of the product he was considering, reaching him at exactly the right time, completely redefines "target marketing."

While privacy concerns certainly come to mind (not to mention that it's a bit creepy to have someone, even a computer, know that much about us), these types of systems are already in development and in some shape or form will become a significant piece of marketing research of the future. (For more on this topic, see *The Numerati* by Stephen Baker listed in the Recommended Readings section at the end of this chapter.)

But for now, the Internet provides us with a new way of surveying people, a new way of reporting back results to those who need them, and endless possibilities for making research less like a test laboratory and more like the real world.

then responding. Starbucks, and many other companies, use an online suggestion box incorporating the practices of *crowdsourcing*. MyStarbucks Idea is a website for Starbucks customers to contribute ideas, join the discussion, and vote on the ones they like best. Check it out at <http://mystarbucksidea.force.com/ideaHome>.

The Internet has made it even easier to track comments about a brand. Many marketers, such as IBM and Microsoft, monitor chats and blogs, and also do more general scanning for key words to find out what people are saying about their brands and products. These findings can be incorporated back into other methods, such as focus groups, to verify and explain the sentiments expressed online.¹⁴

Panels An **expert panel** gathers experts from various fields into a focus group setting. This research tool can stimulate new ways of looking at a brand, product, or customer pattern. More commonly, however, a marketing or **consumer research panel** is an ongoing group of carefully selected people interested in a topic or product category. A standing panel can be maintained over time by a marketer as a proprietary source of information or by a research company whose clients provide topics for the panel members' consideration. Panels can gather in person or be contacted by phone, mail, or the Internet. An example of this type of research comes from cool hunters and trend watchers who may use proprietary panels to track fashions and fads.



A DAY IN THE LIFE

A Stopwatch, Codesheet, and Curiosity

Kate Stein, University of Florida

I interned as a consumer-behavior researcher in grocery stores for Brian Wansink, director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, and got an eyeful of insight about how people select the products they buy. I observed shoppers in the aisles as they checked the freshness of produce, compared prices, and read package labels.

Collecting data and running studies like these require observing thousands of supermarket customers in situ as they complete their shopping expeditions. The goal is to collect data that will be descriptive of reality without interfering with it. So I'm a participant, as well as a researcher.

My observations were made across several different types of grocery stores to obtain data about a wide variety of shopper types and of products available to select. I spent between 5 and 10 hours a day in grocery stores, pacing the tiled floors as I conducted my research. Setting up a study requires creating a detailed map of the grocery store, complete with measurements of the width of the grocery aisles.

To remain unnoticed and observe real behavior, researchers must appear to be supermarket shoppers themselves, blending in with their surroundings as just another innocuous grocery store patron. Using a cart and pretending that your data sheet is a grocery list are two useful measures to enhance the credibility of an undercover researcher.

Much like people watching in an airport, the appeal of observational research is easy to understand. One can feel like a true spy as you attempt to blend in with the surroundings and pose as a neutral participant in an environment where you are actually conducting research.

Observational research requires a sharp eye and a curiosity into the actions of others. Anyone with a natural interest in human nature should find consumer behavior research to be a rewarding pursuit. For more on this study, check out Professor Wansink's website: www.mindlesseating.org.

When this research project was undertaken, Kate was a finance and mass communication major at the University of Florida and a student of Professor Richard Lutz.

Observation Research Like anthropologists, observation researchers study the actual behavior of consumers in settings where they live, work, shop, and play, acting as what Shay Sayre refers to as "professional snoops."¹⁵ Direct **observation research** is closer and more personal than most other types of research. Researchers use video, audio, and disposable cameras to record consumers' behavior at home (with consumer consent), in stores, or wherever people buy and use their products. A marketer may rely on observation in the aisles of grocery, drug, and discount stores to watch people as they make product selections. Grocery shopping might seem like a mundane, mechanical activity, but look around next time you're in a store and watch how your fellow shoppers make their product choices. An example of this type of experience comes from a *New York Times* article written by Kate Stein, a University of Florida student, who describes what it's like to participate in observational research.

Cool watchers, researchers who keep tabs on trends, also use observational research when visiting places and events where their target market gathers. The Cheetos team used observational research to discover how adults respond to Chester Cheetah, the brand's character. They determined that Chester still appealed to adults because when he showed up on the street in big cities such as San Francisco, adults came up to him and gave him hugs or had their pictures taken with him.

The Consumer Behavior Odyssey was a classic observational research project that opened the door for this type of research in marketing. The Odyssey put a team of researchers in a Winnebago on a trip from Los Angeles to Boston. Along the way, the researchers used a variety of observational techniques to watch and record people behaving as consumers.¹⁶

A variation on observational research is **participant observation**. In this research method, the observer is a member of the group being studied. For example, research into television viewing behaviors sometimes uses friendship groups of the researcher who unobtrusively records his or her friends' behavior as part of the viewing session. The idea is that by immersing themselves in the activity, observers have an inside view—perhaps a more empathetic view—of their groups' experiences.

Ethnographic Research Related to observation, **ethnographic research** involves the researcher in living the lives of the people being studied. Ethnographers have elevated people watching to a science. In ethnographic research, which combines anthropology and marketing, observers immerse themselves in a culture to study the meanings, language, interaction, and behavior of the people in the group.¹⁷ The idea is that people's behavior tells you more than you can ever get in an interview or focus group. This method is particularly good at deriving a picture of a day in the life of a typical consumer. An example comes from a Walgreen's vice president who wore glasses that blurred his vision, taped his thumbs to his palms, and wore shoes containing unpopped popcorn. The exercise was designed to help him and other retail executives understand the difficulties facing elderly shoppers—confusing store layouts, eyesight problems, arthritis, and the inability to reach or stoop.¹⁸

Major companies like Harley-Davidson and Coca-Cola hire marketing experts trained in social science research to observe and interpret customer behavior. These participant observers then meet with the company's managers, planners, and marketing staff to discuss their impressions.¹⁹ The case of Eight O'Clock coffee is an example of the use of a videotaped ethnographic study. The brand's agency, New York-based Kaplan Thaler, got 14 families in Pittsburgh and Chicago to use video cameras to record their typical mornings in order to identify the various roles that coffee played in their morning rituals.²⁰

Direct observation and ethnographic research have the advantage of revealing what people actually do, as distinguished from what people say they do. It can yield the correct answer when faulty memory, a desire to impress the interviewer, or simple inattention to details would cause an interview answer to be wrong. The biggest drawback to direct observation is that it shows what is happening, but not *why*. Therefore, the results of direct observation often are combined with personal interviews afterward to provide a more complete and more understandable picture of attitudes, motives, and behavior.

The McCann agency is dedicating a \$2.5 million research effort to understanding the lives of low-income Latinos from Mexico to Chile.²¹ A new division named "Barrio" studies the marketing efforts of its clients, such as Nestlé and Danone. It has transformed conference rooms into "bodegas" (corner grocery shops) and sent employees to live with families amassing some 700 hours of video recordings. The reason is that practical insights into low-income groups are hard to find, yet these people are consumers, too, and marketers need to understand their needs as emerging economies bring new lifestyles to the disadvantaged.

Diaries Sometimes consumers are asked to record their activities through the use of diaries. These **diaries** are particularly valuable in media research because they tell media planners exactly what programs and ads the consumers watched. If comment lines are provided, then the activities can also be accompanied by thoughts. *Beeper diaries* are used as a way to randomize the recording of activities. Consumers participating in the study are instructed to grab the diary and record what they are doing when the beeper goes off. Diaries are designed to catch the consumer in a more realistic, normal life pattern than you can derive from surveys or interviews that rely on consumers to remember their activities accurately. This can also lead to a helpful reconstruction of a typical day in the life of a consumer.

An example comes from Dunkin' Donuts. Regina Lewis, formerly vice president of consumer and brand insights, explained that she used a young adult diary study to determine when this target audience starts drinking coffee. She recruited 20 people in five cities. From their records, Lewis and her team had hundreds of points of observations. At research centers, the participants were then asked to explain what was going on when they thought about having coffee—what day, what time, why are they thinking about coffee, and so forth. From that research, the team learned that many young adults want "chuggable" coffee, particularly because they want an immediate caffeine hit. As a result, they drink iced coffee because hot coffee is too hot and they can't get their caffeine shot fast enough. Dunkin' responded with "Turbo Ice" coffee with an extra shot of espresso.²²

Principle

Direct observation and ethnographic research methods reveal what people actually do, rather than what they say they do, but they also lack the ability to explain *why* these people do what they do.

Other Qualitative Methods Marketing communication planners are always probing for reasons, feelings, and motivations behind what people say and do. To arrive at useful consumer insights, they use a variety of interesting and novel research methods. In particular, they use stories and pictures. Cognitive psychologists have learned that human beings think more in images than in words. Most research continues to use words to ask questions and obtain answers, but recent experiments with visual-based research opens up new avenues of expression that may be better able to uncover people's deep thoughts.

Researchers use pictures, as well as other tools to uncover mental processes that guide consumer behavior. Professor Larry Soley refers to these methods as **projective techniques**, which means they ask respondents to generate impressions rather than respond to more controlled quantitative surveys and rating systems. He describes projective techniques as psychoanalytic.²³

Harvard Business School professor Gerald Zaltman believes that the conventional wisdom about consumer research, such as using interviews and focus groups that rely on talking to people and grilling them about their tastes and buying habits, is only good for getting back predictable answers. If you ask people what they think about Coke, you'll learn that it is a "high-energy, thirst-quenching, fun-at-the-beach" kind of drink. But that may not be an adequate description of how people really feel about the soft drink.²⁴

Here is a collection of some of the more imaginative ways qualitative researchers use projective techniques as games to gather insights about people's relationships with the brands they buy:

- **Word association** is a projective technique that asks people to respond with thoughts or other words that come to mind when they are given a stimulus word. The idea is to uncover the networks of connections in their thought patterns. These are used to test brand personalities, as well as other types of meanings that govern consumer behavior.
- **Fill in the blanks** is a form of attitude research in which people literally fill in the blanks in a story or balloons in a cartoon. Perceptions can come to the surface in the words participants use to describe the action or situations depicted in the visuals.
- **Sentence completion** tests give respondents the beginning of a sentence and ask them to finish it. These are good at eliciting descriptions, causes, results, as well as the meanings in personal experiences.
- **Purpose-driven games** allow researchers to see how people solve problems and search for information.²⁵ Games can make the research experience more fun and involving for participants. They also uncover problem-solving strategies that may mirror the participants' approach to information searching or the kinds of problems they deal with in certain product situations.
- **Theater techniques** use games in a theater setting where researchers have people experience a variety of exercises to understand how they think about their brand. Some of these games have people tell stories about products or simulations where they have to convince others to use a brand.
- **Sculpting and movement techniques**, such as positioning the body as a statue, can be a source of insight in brainstorming for creative ideas and new product ideas. Sculpting involves physically putting product users in static positions that reflect how they think about or use a brand. Physical movements, such as dance movements and martial arts, can be added to increase the range of insight.
- **Story elicitation** asks consumers to explain the artifacts of their lives, such as the photos displayed in their homes and the objects they treasure. These stories can provide insights into how and why people use or do things.
- **Artifact creation** is a technique that uses such ideas as life collages, day mapping (tracking someone's activities across a day), and the construction of instruction books as ways to elicit stories that discuss brands and their role in daily life. These projects are also useful later in explaining to others—clients, the creative team, or other agencies—the triggers behind consumer insights.²⁶
- **Photo elicitation** is similar to artifact research except it uses visuals to elicit consumer thoughts and opinions. A form of photo-based interviewing, consumers are asked to look at a set of visuals or instructed to visually record something with a camera, such as a shopping trip. Later in reviewing the visuals, they are asked to explain what they were thinking or doing.

- **Photo sorts**, which is yet another visual technique, asks consumers to sort through a deck of photos and pick out visuals that represent something to them, such as typical users of the product or situations where it might be used. In identifying typical users, they may be asked to sort the photos into specific piles, such as happy, sad, angry, excited, or innovative people.
- **Metaphors** is a tool used by researchers to enrich the language consumers use to talk about brands. (Remember your grammar: A **metaphor** compares one thing to another without using the actual words *like* or *as*.) The Evian ad, for example, uses a strong metaphor to define its product. The insight into how people perceive brands through such connections comes from exploring the link between the two concepts. Metaphor games are used in creativity to elicit new and novel ideas, but they can also be used to analyze cognitive patterns in people's thinking.

These methods can be combined. Harvard professor Zaltman is the creator of ZMET (pronounced ZEE-MET), the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, which uses metaphors and visual images to uncover patterns in people's thinking. For a typical session, the respondents bring images that they think relate to the product category or brand being studied. Then they make up stories that describe their feelings about the product or brand.²⁷ The Cheetos research team used the ZMET and uncovered the unexpected finding about stress and how Cheetos was an escape from those pressures.

For Coca-Cola in Europe, Zaltman asked volunteers to collect at least a dozen pictures that captured their feelings about Coca-Cola. Then they discussed the images in personal interviews. Finally, the volunteers created a summary image—a digital collage of their most important images and recorded a statement that explained its meaning. The ZMET team found that Coke is not just about feelings of high energy and good times; it also has an element of calm, solitude, and relaxation.²⁸

Choosing a Research Method

Determining the appropriate research method to use is an important planning decision. It might help to understand two basic research criteria, validity and reliability, that are derived from what researchers call the “scientific method.” **Validity** means that the research actually measures what it says it measures. Any differences that are uncovered by the research, such as different attitudes or purchasing patterns, really reflect differences among individuals, groups, or situations. **Reliability** means that you can run the same test again and get the same answer.

Quantitative researchers, particularly those doing experiments and surveys, are concerned about being faithful to the principles of science. Selecting a sample that truly represents the population, for example, increases the reliability of the research. Poorly worded questions and talking to the wrong people can hurt the validity of surveys, as well as focus groups. The problem with experiments is twofold: (1) experiments are limited by a small number of people in the experimental group, and (2) they are conducted under artificial conditions.

The information you get from surveys of a broad cross section of a population is limited to your ability to develop good clear questions that everyone can understand and answer. This tight control makes it harder to ask questions around the edges of a topic or elicit unexpected or unusual responses. On the other hand, focus groups and in-depth interviews that permit probing are limited by small numbers and possible problems with the representativeness of the sample.

Generally, quantitative methods are more useful for gathering data (how many do this or believe that?), and qualitative methods are better at uncovering reasons and motives (why do they do or believe?). For these reasons, most researchers use a variety of research methods—quantitative and qualitative and occasionally experimental designs. Which method should you choose when you conduct research? The answer depends on what questions you need to answer.



This metaphoric ad equating Evian sparkling water with a mermaid tries to add a touch of originality, as well as meaning, to the Evian brand image.

RESEARCH TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

Marketing communication researchers face a number of challenges: **globalization** and new media technology are reshaping the industry. Practices are also changing as the industry searches for ways to more naturally embed research as feedback, as well as gain more insightful analysis and move into IMC planning. Let's examine each challenge briefly.

Global Issues

The key issues that global researchers face include how to manage and communicate global brands in widely different localities and how to shift from studying differences to finding similarities around the world. The biggest problem is cross-cultural communication and how to arrive at an intended message without cultural distortions or insensitivities. Researchers are becoming more involved in puzzling out cultural meanings and testing marketing communication messages for cultural sensitivity in different countries. They struggle to determine how other cultures will interpret the elements of a campaign so that they convey the same brand message across cultures. Cultural differences complicate planning as account planner Susan Mendelsohn, who is a member of this book's Advisory Board, discovered in planning for a new analgesic that contained caffeine. In test markets the agency discovered that perceptions about caffeine vary positively and negatively in different cultures.

IMC Research Challenges

The deluge of data is only complicated by IMC planning, which requires research into many stakeholder groups and contact points. Instead of campaign planning where messages are tweaked slightly to fit different media, *strategic consistency* in IMC planning suggests that different audiences, as well as media, need different messages. Susan Mendelsohn calls this a more radical trend in planning research and points to "companies that are experimenting with multi-message strategies that fit each vehicle uniquely and yet might be radically different from each other." She cautions that the company needs to be clear about the goals for its brand, recognizing that there might be multiple goals—a set of integrated goals—rather than one big underlying goal and that suggests multiple measurements of effectiveness, as well.

Planning for Feedback

Learning how to better listen to consumers has become an important factor in effective marketing communication. Earlier we mentioned the use of customer contact to elicit feedback; there are also ways to structure feedback into message strategies. In **embedded feedback research**, the research method is built into the response, including the contact point, purchase activity, and use situations. Campaigns that encourage interested prospects to contact a company, for example, are setting up response monitoring as part of the message strategy. *Call centers*, both inbound (customer calls to complain or get assistance) and outbound (telemarketing), can also be used as research centers to gain real-time feedback about the brand and its marketing and advertising strategies. In other words, whenever a call is made, for whatever purpose, that contact provides an opportunity to ask a brand-related question. Marketers also monitor blogs, chat rooms, and social media (Facebook, MySpace, Twitter) for clues about what people are saying about a brand.

An example of a structured feedback program comes from Nordstrom's Personal Touch Program, which uses a team of *personal shoppers* who are fashion consultants on one level but on another level are trained to gather information from their clients to feed back into the company's business planning and marketing.

Looking Ahead

Research, analysis, and new techniques such as crowdsourcing, lead to marketing communication plans and strategic decisions, which will be the topic of the next chapter. The research findings also lead to message strategies, which we introduce in Part 3, and media strategies, which will follow in Part 4.



IT'S A WRAP

Comfort Food for Thought

Cheetos' research shifted the focus of its strategy from kids to "rejuvenile" adults as a target audience. Key insights from research efforts shaped the creative direction to create edgy humor that spoke to those current and would-be Cheetos lovers. The message became "It's all about fun"—and that appealed to a certain segment of the adult audience, who just happened to be fans of Cheetos.

Consultant Howard Papush, aka Dr. Play, said, "When we're stressed, we revert back to the things that comforted us as kids. We want to play our way through stress." It seems to be a universal truth, at least for some of us, that comfort food, aka Cheetos, can occasionally be a good way to relieve stress. And orange fingers are fun.

Interestingly, little in the campaign speaks about the product. Yet, the campaign seems to succeed, maybe because the audience it seeks rejects a direct push about the product. Besides, who doesn't know what Cheetos are? Did the campaign work to accomplish the objective of repositioning the brand for a new target market? Several indicators suggest the success of the Cheetos campaign.

First, and most importantly, Cheetos' sales rose significantly, almost doubling the targeted rate. In a tracking study about the best-regarded snack brands, Cheetos improved from 41st position to 34th, and this improvement was mainly from households without children.

The repositioning strategy created energy for the brand by connecting the message that this snack could help consumers lighten up with its audience in a variety of traditional and digital media. Disregarding your mother's admonition not to play with your food, this campaign tells you it's okay in ways that speak effectively to the target audience. The new Cheetos campaign created more than mischievous fun. It made award-winning advertising communication. In 2009 the Advertising Research Foundation awarded this campaign its best of show, the Grand Ogilvy Winner.

Key Points Summary

- 1. What are the basic types of strategic research and how are they used?** Secondary research is background research that gathers already published information, and primary research is original research findings collected for the first time from original sources. Quantitative research is statistical and uses numerical data to investigate how people think and behave; qualitative research is exploratory and uses probing techniques to gain insights and identify questions and hypotheses for further quantitative research. Experimental research tests hypotheses using carefully designed experiments.
Research is used to (1) develop an analysis of the marketing situation, (2) acquire consumer information and insights for making targeting decisions, (3) identify information about available media to match the media to the target audience, and (4) develop message strategies and evaluate their effectiveness.
- 2. What are the most common research methods used in advertising?** Survey research is used to amass quantities of

responses from consumers about their attitudes and behaviors. In-depth interviews probe the reasons and motivations consumers give to explain their attitudes and behavior. Focus groups are group interviews that operate like a conversation directed by a researcher. Panels are long-running consumer groups that permit tracking of attitude and behavior changes. Observation research happens in the store or home where researchers watch how consumers behave. Ethnographic research is an anthropological technique that involves the researcher in participating in the day-to-day lives of consumers. Diaries are records of consumers' behavior, particularly their media use. A number of other qualitative methods are used to creatively uncover patterns in the way consumers think and act.

- 3. What are the key challenges facing advertising researchers?** Globalization complicates the way research is conducted for global products because it adds a cultural dimension and varied legal restrictions. Media fragmentation and convergence complicate the process of

determining media effects. New research techniques are being created as a result of new media technology as well as the Internet, which offers opportunities for virtual interviews. Embedded research is a way to get immediate feed-

back that comes from the process of buying or using the product. Beyond the accumulation of numbers and information, the search for insight is a driving force in advertising research.

Words of Wisdom: Recommended Reading

Baker, Stephen, *The Numerati*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

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Key Terms

advertising research, p. 163

aided recognition, p. 174

association tests, p. 172

concept testing, p. 173

consumer insight

research, p. 172

consumer research, p. 163

consumer research panel, p. 179

content analysis, p. 171

copytesting, p. 174

crowdsourcing, p. 178

diaries, p. 181

embedded feedback

research, p. 184

ethnographic research, p. 181

evaluative research, p. 174

experimental research, p. 168

expert panel, p. 179

focus group, p. 177

friendship focus group, p. 178

globalization, p. 184

IMC research, p. 163

in-depth interview, p. 176

market research, p. 163

marketing research, p. 169

media research, p. 173

message development

research, p. 173

metaphors, p. 183

network of associations, p. 172

observation research, p. 180

open-ended questions, p. 176

participant observation, p. 181

pretesting, p. 174

primary research, p. 165

projective techniques, p. 182

qualitative research, p. 167

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reliability, p. 183

sales levels, p. 167

sample, p. 174

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survey research, p. 174

unaided recognition, p. 174

validity, p. 183

vlogs, p. 179

Review Questions

1. Explain the difference between primary and secondary research and between quantitative and qualitative research.
 2. What are the four uses of research in advertising? Give an example of each one.
 3. How many different ways are there to contact people to gain information for use in advertising planning?
 4. What is survey research and how is it conducted? How do in-depth interviews differ from surveys?
 5. Explain when to use the following research methods: focus group, in-depth interviews, observational research, ethnographic research, and diaries.
 6. Explain the difference between validity and reliability and explain how these concepts affect advertising research.
 7. What are two ways to gather feedback? Explain how to acquire this information and why feedback is important.
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Discussion Questions

1. Suppose you are developing a research program for a new bookstore serving your college or university. What kind of exploratory research would you recommend? Would you propose both qualitative and quantitative studies? Why or why not? What specific steps would you take?

2. Consult the MRI data reproduced on p. 166 and do the following analysis: Look first at the four Index columns and find the highest viewing category of late evening weekend news and compare that with the highest viewers of early evening weekend news. If you were advertising a new hybrid car, which category and time slot would deliver the greatest *percentage* of viewers who might be in the market? Now analyze the size of the category to determine which of the high viewing categories delivers the greatest *number* of viewers.
3. Bottled water is an outgrowth of the health and fitness trend. It has recently moved into second place in the beverage industry behind wine and spirits, beating out beer and coffee. The latest twist on bottled water is the “enhanced” category with designer waters that include such things as extra oxygen, vitamins, or caffeine. You have a client with a product that fits this new category. Go online and find secondary data about this market. Indicate how you would use this information to design a branding program for this product.
4. **Three-Minute Debate** You have been hired to develop and conduct a research study for a new upscale restaurant chain coming into your community. Your client wants to know how people in the community see the competition and what they think of the restaurant’s offerings. It uses an unusual concept that focuses on fowl—duck, squab, pheasant, and other elegant meals in the poultry category. A specialty category, this would be somewhat like a seafood restaurant. One of your colleagues says the best way to do this study is with a carefully designed survey and a representative sample. Another colleague says, no, what the client really needs is insight into the market; she believes the best way to help the client with its advertising strategy is to use qualitative research. As a team, choose one side in this debate and identify its strengths in terms of this campaign problem. Prepare your point of view and a brief presentation to your class that will convince them.

Take-Home Projects

1. **Portfolio Project** Assume you are working for Gerber Baby Foods. You have been asked to identify the relevant trends that are forecasted for U.S. birth rates between 2012 and 2015. Identify Internet sources that would provide that information. Gather as much information as you can from these sites and write a one-page report on the trends you find.
2. **Mini-Case Analysis** What were the key research findings that led to the Cheetos repositioning campaign? You have just been assigned to the Cheetos team for the next year of the campaign. What research would you want to do before planning the next year’s efforts? Identify a list of key research questions that have to be answered before the campaign can move forward.

Team Project: The BrandRevive Campaign

For the BrandRevive campaign, we need to know what people interested in this category think about the brand. All team members should identify friends and family members who would be willing to be interviewed. Identify those among your pool of interviewees who are users of your brand or the category. Also identify those in your group category users who are *not* users of your brand. (For Avaya, consider the category to be business hardware and software, similar to IBM offerings.)

- Interview both groups about their attitudes to the category and specific brands. Build a profile of the brand users—what characteristics distinguish them from the nonusers?

- What are their perceptions of the brand (of both users and nonusers)?
- What brands compete with your brand in the minds of your interviewees?
- What other research would you propose doing to better understand this market and brand?
- Present your findings in a one-page report and a PowerPoint presentation that is no longer than three slides.

Hands-On Case

The Century Council

Read the Century Council case in the Appendix before coming to class.

1. How did “The Stupid Drink” campaign team use research to better understand the problem they were trying to solve?
2. How did “The Stupid Drink” campaign team use research to inspire a creative solution to the problem of underage binge drinking on college campuses?
3. What other methodologies would you recommend to the team to better understand the success of its program in the market?