

Focus Group

This is essentially a group discussion on a given subject conducted by a trained moderator. The purpose of this is to create a less than formal situation, where people can exchange views, bringing out their opinions, attitudes, feelings about the given subject.

To bring out a fruitful discussion, the subject has to be carefully thought out, and moderated if it veers away from the given subject. The participants have to be called to the venue, and a system of video or audio recording should be used to record the discussion for later analysis. It is possible for the moderator and the ‘analyser’ to be different persons.

The sample is selected as usual from a target population which is specified by the needs of the study. Usually, a group consists of about 6–10 persons. The length of the discussion can be about an hour to an hour and a half, or until the group has nothing left to add.

This technique is used frequently to check out opinions about new concepts, before a product is launched, and in general, as an exploratory research tool. It is sometimes also used for conclusive research, or in combination with a survey, as a cross-check for the important findings from the survey.

Projective Techniques

There are many different techniques which can be called ‘projective’. One popular method is to show a respondent a picture and ask him to describe the persons or objects in the picture. A particular product or brand can be shown being used, or displayed, and the respondent can be asked to guess the type of consumer who would use the product shown. This is essentially a technique which seeks to get indirectly at the underlying motivations, attitudes or emotions of the respondent, which he would not reveal under direct questioning. This method of questioning overcomes some common inhibitions of respondents such as the wish to give socially desirable responses, or giving answers ‘acceptable’ to the interviewer.

Word Associations

Another variation of projective techniques is to ask respondents to associate brands with one word that they can think of when they think of the brand. It could also be a person, a celebrity, or an animal, depending on the interviewer’s or the analyst’s viewpoint. Interpretation of such association is best left to a psychologist, or a researcher with a psychoanalytical background and experience.

Sentence Completion

Another type of projective technique is giving an incomplete sentence to the respondent, and asking him to complete it. For example, “People who use brand B coffee tend to be

This method is similar to word associations, and may result in surprising or unexpected associations. It is equally difficult to interpret, and needs a trained hand to do it.