



Mass Qualitative approach — Putting respondents front and center in a holistic approach to market research

White Paper

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Background

One of the main aims of market research is to understand the motives underlying consumer evaluation and behavior. Market research needs to validate the direction a company chooses to go in terms of marketing, but validating does not mean asking what you think. Validating is also understanding the reasons better and making sure that you explore the things you did not expect. However, most market research is unable to make use of the available data in an optimal manner; it solves only part of the puzzle. It may uncover the 'how' but not the 'why.' This is unfortunate, because if market research is conducted, it should generate maximum insights. The reports it produces typically end with several suggestions for more research. This is surprising, considering that the goal of the report was to find answers.

In addition, many surveys produced by market research agencies are extremely uninteresting or even boring for respondents to take part in. And yet, respondents are the key ingredient in any market research. Without people who are willing to take part in market research, there is no market research.

In addition to being boring, most market research does not acknowledge academic research that strongly indicates that consumers primarily respond in a spontaneous, automatic manner.^{1,2} That is, the brain flows freely, and does not think in the nicely structured grids that appear in questionnaires. Hence, market research should capture this type of behavior. Second, consumer responses to statements and questions intended to measure brand perceptions have been shown to be highly similar across brands: many brands are perceived as 'relevant,' many are seen as 'trustworthy.' Importantly, this even happens for brands within the same category!²

DVJ Insights has developed an approach to market research that addresses the limitations of traditional market research. It makes market research enjoyable again for respondents by putting them front and center. This results in market research that is holistic in nature: it both explores and validates. At the same time, it provides rich data that produce definitive answers instead of more questions.

Mass Qual approach

Our unique Mass Qual approach enables listening better to clients and consumers by integrating qualitative and quantitative research in online market research. Because of its qualitative nature, respondents are free in offering us their responses, without being constrained by pre-defined lists of statements. Because of its quantitative nature, Mass Qual enables us to conduct market research on a large set of respondents in an online environment, which enables generalization of insights to the target audience.

The uniqueness of the Mass Qual approach lies in the following aspects:

- Respondents classify and quantify their own responses to qualitative techniques. Because of this built-in validation, we are able to both explore and quantify insights at the same time. In addition, this form of internal validation creates the highest predictive validity.
- We always make use of a combination of research techniques in projects. This holistic approach enables us to generate validated answers instead of more

questions. The resulting insights tell marketers exactly which buttons to push in order to reach their goals.

- The qualitative insights are reported as part of the quantitative findings, which enriches and supports quantitative insights with statements from consumers.

Therefore, we believe that research always need to be qualitative with large numbers of consumers and customers.

Integration of innovative techniques

Mass Qual is in most cases seen as a few open techniques in an online questionnaire, but we believe it is much more. It is a vision on research that is focused on digging deeper and understanding better. We like to summarize this as “become a better listener and you will answer more questions”. In order to bring Mass Qual in practice we have developed a series of techniques that are integrated in a quantitative approach. It is exactly this understanding of how many people behave in the way they do, combined with the depth of why they behave this way which gives us the rich and detailed insight to know what steps to take. These techniques are summarized below and always integrated in solutions for shopper research, brand and communication research and customer or client research.

Free Associations 2.0

Free associations help provide answers to questions such as; How do consumers see my brand and/or the category? What is the mental position of my brand in consumers' minds? What is consumers' first reaction to my brand, the category or new concept?

In traditional market research, consumer reactions are measured by forcing respondents to react to pre-defined lists of statements. This method is not only boring for respondents, it also leads to biased or even incorrect insights, because the human brain does not work using a fixed, pre-defined list. Scientific research¹ indicates that consumers most often behave in an intuitive, fast manner when evaluating and choosing. Hence, market research should capture this type of behavior.

Traditional market research tends to take either a quantitative or a qualitative approach. And yet, market researchers seem unhappy about this distinction, as 56% of market researchers indicate that the inability to translate qualitative insights into quantitative insights is one of the biggest challenges facing market research.²

DVJ has uses free associations in combination with a smart system of classifying these associations by consumers themselves. This eliminates the need to have others interpret the associations, rendering the research extremely high in both validity and insight.

Free associations as a direct response to a stimulus immediately show the strength of an ad (quantitative) and also explain the why (qualitative). A meta-analysis on our copy test database for TV ads has shown that the quantitative data the free association technique

generates is an important predictor for in-market success and more reliable than many statements most companies use.

Free associations can be used in a large number of ways. Examples include understanding the most important themes in a category, the position of a brand within a domain, and the direct response to a stimulus.

Storytelling 2.0

What was the last experience consumers had with my brand like? What are drivers and barriers for my brand and/or the category? How appealing is my new concept?

Telling a story is a much better way to capture consumer reactions to any type of stimulus than prompting consumers with lists of pre-defined statements. Story telling helps us to focus on the 'why' question.

Similar to free associations, DVJ Insights' approach to storytelling focuses on having consumers classify their story on different aspects. These classifications ensure that all relevant aspects of behavior are unraveled. Because we ask respondents to classify their own story, the internal validation is by definition extremely high: no one can give meaning to the stories better than respondents themselves.

In addition to classifying their own stories, in our online market research, we borrow from personal interviewing techniques by asking respondents to highlight the part(s) of their stories that are particularly important or relate to a specific topic. We use online laddering to get deep insight into the why behind respondents' reactions.³

Visual Matching 2.0

What should my next campaign look like? How do I associate my brand with desirable characteristics? How do I optimize my new product? What types of emotions are elicited by my brand, product, campaign, or concept?

In our approach to visual matching, we ask respondents to classify their own responses in our visual matching tool using a non-standardized set of images. Because of this, the internal validation is by definition extremely high: no one can interpret their responses better than respondents themselves. The resulting insights integrate the qualitative and quantitative results.

Online Eye Tracking

What parts of my advertising are strong and which are weak? Does my ad or website attract consumers' attention in the way I intended? What parts of my package draw consumers' attention?

Attention is important in many different processes. The way consumers register (parts of) advertising will determine its level of success. For that reason we have developed an online eye-tracking technique that is accurate enough to replace in-lab eye tracking instruments.

Our online eye-tracking tool enables the gathering of sophisticated data on a large sample of consumers.

Implicit Behavior Measurements

Does my advertising/package/website/new concept elicit an initial 'like' response? Does it have instant appeal?

For stimuli like packaging, advertising and visual identity, the first reaction is key. This initial basic like or dislike response is constructed within 40-80 milliseconds, but is difficult to extract from other, more reasoned responses that are typically measured using statements.

That is why we measure the first reaction to certain stimuli in our evaluation products. We ask people to respond to stimuli after exposing them for 60 milliseconds. This captures the presence or absence of instant appeal.

Integration of Different Data Sources

How do I get full insight into the performance of my brand? How do I make sense of all the available data?

We have developed a unified model to make sense of the sometimes enormous amounts of available data. We integrate different data sources to provide a holistic view of the performance of the brand in all layers of the marketing funnel. It is based on scientific knowledge combined with a pragmatic, actionable view on market research. To measure the performance of your brand strategy and creative strategy, we have developed a new approach that will give more relevant information to steer and optimize your strategies during campaign periods.

Conclusion

Most companies have a strong ambition to grow. The best market research validates, explores, and provides insight, all at the same time. DVJ Research developed the unique Mass Qual approach to make this ideal a reality. The Mass Qual approach is centered around listening better to clients. This results in market research that explores and validates

at the same time. It produces richer and deeper insights, which provide answers instead of additional questions. By integrating qualitative and quantitative research in online market research, it allows respondents to indicate their responses in the freest manner possible, without the constrained of the typical lists of statements. Its quantitative parts ensures built-in validation and makes it suitable for large sample sizes in order to relate to relevant audiences. In sum, the Mass Qual results in an actionable set of validated and generalizable insights that dig substantially deeper than the majority of market research approaches.

References

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About the company

DVJ Insights is a quality-based research and consultancy agency with a global footprint. we help our clients understanding how to realize growth by identifying relevant drivers, optimizing communication, improving the customer experience and introduce winning products and solutions in organizations.

We believe that research is all about listening. listening to our clients to make sure the research is embedded in the organization and answers the right questions, and listening to consumers by giving them the opportunity to express their feelings and share their stories.

We add value by leveraging the experience and expertise of our seasoned research and consultancy team, and staying true to our innovative mass qualitative philosophy.

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