

## The Eternal Question: Qual or Quant?

April 2011 newsletter

While many people have a preference for qualitative or quantitative research, we enter the picture without any preconceived bias, preferring to tailor the methodology to the needs of each project.

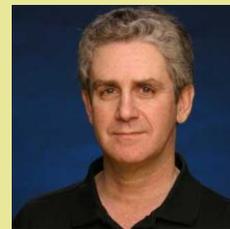
While this may create a bit of ambiguity at the front end, ultimately an open-minded approach will ensure that the chosen methodology will deliver on the research objectives. Here are some criteria to help you choose between a quantitative or qualitative methodology:

- **Incidence in the Population.** What is the incidence of your targeted customers within the general population? If your incidence is under 10 percent, then it might be overly expensive to use a quantitative methodology to screen through 90 percent of the universe to reach the relatively small group who will quality. But with the smaller samples used in qualitative research, the cost of screening is much lower.
- **Showing Stimuli.** While you can show visual stimuli using online quantitative platforms, for most purposes, qualitative research is a better choice when you need to have respondents react to stimuli (such as an advertisement, logo or design). It may be tempting to use qualitative research to choose the best version, but you will be best served by allowing the respondents to tell you how to make the creative ideas even better.
- **Projecting Results.** Qualitative results can be representative of a certain population (by screening for very specific types of respondents),

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**Prell Organization** is a marketing research firm that uses qualitative and quantitative methods to help our clients and their agencies see their brands more clearly.

**Brand Clarity** is a process by which consumers reveal the essence of a brand to make sure that the products and services being offered are closely aligned to their needs.



but qualitative cannot be projected onto the overall population unless you conduct at least a dozen of focus groups. And if that is your plan, it would be more cost-effective to conduct an online survey that can show stimuli and allow the respondents to express their preferences.

- **Universe Size.** Because response rates for all types of quantitative surveys have been falling, you now need more potential respondents in your universe to secure enough participation. If you only have 500 people in your universe, you cannot expect to generate a sample size that is adequate for a quantitative analysis. But with as few as 100 people in a chosen universe, all sorts of qualitative methodologies can be employed.
- **Number of Segments.** Qualitative research can get very tricky if there are too many segments and the deliverables for many small segments are often too skinny to justify the extra expense. Once the number of segments exceeds four, then quantitative research, which is very scalable, makes much more sense; just add more interviews.
- **Corporate Culture.** This factor is often ignored until the research project has reached the finally sign-off. If your organization is heavily dominated by financial or accounting types, they might have a hard time understanding why you need to understand your customers' emotions. On the other hand, an organization that is run by people who value soft skills (such as persuasion) naturally will find an affinity with qualitative.
- **Why or How Many?** The decision can be boiled down to a very simple question: Do you want to count "how many" or do you want to know the "whys?" While quantitative research can supply a list of the reasons "why" your customers will behave as they say, the emotions that really drive their behavior will remain elusive. On the other

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hand, don't expect qualitative research to yield a reliable count of "how many" consumers will buy your concept.

Do not to call up your research suppliers and order some focus groups or a survey, just like you would order lunch. Instead, try to include your research partners in the discussion early on and remain flexible about the methodology until your research objectives have been fully considered.