

Qualitative Research Using Social Media

Qualitative market research is an open ended questions (conversational) based research method that heavily relies on the following market research methods: focus groups, in-depth interviews, and other innovative research methods. It is based on a small but highly validated sample size, usually consisting of 6 to 10 respondents.

The small size enables cost saving, while the "importance" of the samples and the lack of a defined questionnaire allows free and in-depth discussion and analysis of topics. Usually, the discussion is directed by the discretion of the interviewer or market researcher.

It is always better to have more heads than one. By canvassing a group of respondents for ideas and competence the quality of the data that is obtained is far more superior. This concept is known as crowdsourcing, derived from the two words "crowd" and "outsourcing".

Qualitative market research is most frequently used in political campaigning to understand voter perception of political candidates and their policies, interviewing business leaders and diving deeper into topics of interest, psychological profile studies and so on.

Qualitative market research is a relatively less expensive method to understand 2 critical factors in details " what" the respondents think and feel about a certain topic and "why" they think and feel that way.

Why do we ask for an opinion? Any opinion for that matter? We ask because the person's opinion matters to our decision making. None of the successful organizational decisions are made through mere guesses or speculations, but through real information gathered from real and valuable people.

Market research, in general, has played a critical role in inducing a thought process in present day's organizational leaders where information and data dictate policies and decisions.

However, in market research, not all information is just numbers and quantitative. Some are just " conversational and qualitative!

Remember the super hit series Desperate Housewives? And do you remember the lovely housewives calling their friends over for a cup of tea or a couple of drinks to discuss the flashy new products they have bought?

It is not just a vague practice to flaunt these products but a thoughtful one because it matters what the friends think. Whether, they agree or disagree with the quality, brand and other features of those products. It matters what people think. Voila! Welcome to the world of qualitative market research.

Qualitative market research is all about understanding people's beliefs and point of views and what they feel about the situation and what are the deciding factors that influence their behavior.

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To conduct qualitative market research usually, one of these market research methods are used:

Focus groups: As the name suggests, a group of people comprising usually of 6-10 members are brought together to discuss a particular product and its market strategies. Usually, experts in that particular field will comprise of the group. This group will have a moderator who will stimulate the discussion amongst the members to derive opinions. Since the focus groups are becoming a rare occurrence, platforms like Communities is on the rise.

In-depth Interviews: It is usually a one-on-one interview conducted with a group of people, either face to face or over the telephone. This method is more conversational and asking open-ended questions helps gather better data.

Innovative research methods: In this method, the researcher can click photographs of the person who is answering the questions or can even record their videos. Observing these photographs or videos later would tell the researcher about their responses/reactions to various situations.

Observations or "Shop-alongs": Observations or shop-alongs are now becoming an increasingly used research method in qualitative market research. This method allows the researcher to observe from afar and actually see how a consumer reacts to an actual product and purchase experience. This mitigates the scope to be dishonest with feedback or even forget about the shopping experience at a later stage.

Lifestyle Immersion: A newer method of conducting qualitative market research is attending a social or family event that user/s are at and collecting feedback. This helps with the getting feedback from users when they are in a comfortable environment. This is a great way to collect candid feedback in a comfortable environment.

Online Focus Groups: With the ease of access to social media, online focus groups are becoming easier to manage. It is easy to recruit people to a focus group based study and even manage data collection and analytics.

Ethnography: Ethnographic research is the process of being in an end user environment and seeing the user indulge with a product in a real-life example. This qualitative research method is best positioned to help create immediate and impactful product tweaks.

Projective Techniques: Projective techniques are conducted by trained moderators who uncover hidden thoughts of the respondents. The questions or questioning methods are of an indirect nature and the moderator then deduces and uncovers underlying feelings that aren't explicitly mentioned.

Online Forums: Online forums is now becoming an increasingly preferred way of conducting qualitative market research. Members in a panel are brought onto a common platform to discuss a certain topic and the moderator ensures the discussion is driven in the direction of the outcome required. The moderator probes, asks the right questions and coerces to ensure a thorough discussion is conducted.

Online Sentence Completion and Word Association: One of the easier but exhaustive nature of completing qualitative market research is to get respondents to match words that may be related to a product or even complete sentences online and this provides a deeper insight into the thoughts of the user.

Learn more about qualitative research methods

Here are the steps involved in conducting qualitative market research:

Planning & Determining research objectives: Each research study needs to have a desired outcome at the outset so that the resources behind planning and executing are not wasted and it helps towards business agility.

Deciding the method to conduct the research: Qualitative market research can be conducted in many ways. Depending on the nature of the study, target audience demographics , geographical location, a product that is being surveyed etc., would the survey method be utilized.

Getting the right personnel for the job: Conducting a qualitative market research study requires moderators that know how to elicit and track responses from potential respondents.

Sampling: The sample forms the basis for a qualitative market research survey. Better the sample, better is the research outcome and that ensures the research study is fruitful. The 3 major sampling types are: Purposive Sampling: In this method, the sample is created with a purpose in mind. The contours of the demographics are planned well in advance and users that fit this criterion are onboard for the market research survey. Quota Sampling: Quota sampling is the process of selecting samples from a given quota and the selected users are said to be a representative of the larger population. This can be a random sampling or put some qualifying criteria in. Snowball Sampling: Snowball sampling model is based on a reference model. Users that match criteria are asked to refer users that they are personally aware of that match the criteria.

Survey design: The survey has to be designed in a way to elicit maximum value so that the responses received build towards robust and actionable feedback.

Data collection: The data collection can be done via online or offline methods. It is imperative to collect the data in such a way that sense could be made of it and it could be used to analyze and report.

Data Analysis: Data means nothing if it is not analyzed. Data that has been analyzed can give actionable insights for a product or brand to build on and this is imperative for a qualitative marketing research survey.

Reporting: Once data has been collected and analyzed, it has to be reported in an easy to consume format to the relevant stakeholders as a milestone in the market research process.

There are 4 distinct types of qualitative market research testing methods that can be conducted. They are:

Direct Exploration: This qualitative market research method is a no holds barred feedback method for a potential idea or product. This method is conducted where the users are told about the idea where no physical product is provided and all possible feedback is collected. This feedback is then collected and explored to form the basis of the new product.

Monadic Testing: This method evaluates feedback by providing users with one single idea, concept, feature or product and asks for feedback. In this method, despite there being multiple concepts available, other designs are not shown. This method is important to elicit individual piece of feedback about a desired feature or concept.

Sequential Monadic Testing: This testing method is similar to monadic testing because each concept, product or feature is shown one time. The only difference is that an alternate design to each concept is shown at the same time and feedback is collected on both from a user. This testing method is also called paired testing or paired nomadic testing.

Discrete Choice Testing: Discrete choice testing is like paired nomadic testing but the only difference is that all choices are provided at once, not sequentially and the users are asked to pick one feature over another and then explain their choice.

Successful businesses tend to use qualitative market research to keep pace with the ongoing market trend, to make better-informed decisions and to achieve business excellence.

Whether your business is a start-up or a well-established entity, qualitative market research is a powerful method to identify your target audience and understand how they will respond to your product.

Before we dig deeper here are some of the real-time examples of qualitative market research case studies:

Some examples of business expansion where qualitative market research plays a critical role by crowdsourcing concrete

ideas for optimized decision-making :

Branding : Many companies fail to understand how consumers perceive their brand or what is the brand positioning in comparison to their competitors. The research is typically done by conducting interviews with customers or organizing focus groups to collect feedback on marketing content and collaterals. In this way, the surveyor can explore different topics in-depth and get feedback from the respondents. Using this market research method, brands can gather information that can help them upscale and reposition their brand better in the market.

Understanding the Consumer Behaviour: Sometimes, organizations/ companies/ entrepreneurs need more information about their consumer in order to place their product in a better manner. To do so they might need information about their gender, age, marital status etc. Qualitative market research helps them gather such information. For understanding the consumer behavior conducting in-depth interviews is the best option, as these interviews are conducted on one to one basis a decent amount of information can be collected.

Measuring the reach of marketing activities: Many businesses go an extra mile to do a better job in promoting their brands. Here is where their marketing activities come into play. Market research can provide organizations with information about their marketing effectiveness by gathering first-hand information on how consumers look at their marketing message. This helps organizations maximize their marketing budget.

Identifying new business opportunities: Market research helps organizations explore new opportunities leading to business expansion. By gathering data through market research through focus groups, organizations can pin a location, understand business dynamics, know their key competitors etc., to grow their business in the right direction. **Getting insights on products:** If a company comes up with a new product or looking to improve a current one, it is always better to take a market research in order to understand how acceptable is the product amongst the consumers. When a product comes to the market people have an opinion about its shape, size, utility, color, features etc. Qualitative market research through in-depth interviews will help gather systematic data that can be later used to modify or make the existing product better.

Research ethics are as important as important as the ethics in any other research field. It is important to safeguard the participants'™ interest. Like there is training and formal processes for researchers in other fields like in healthcare and medical research, market research is also governed by similar policies.

Due to the nature of qualitative market research, it is very important to have informed consent from a participant to be a part of the research study. This means that they are aware of basic information like:

Nature of the research

Expected time of completion

If there are any sociological or physical risks or benefits

Will a monetary or remuneration in other form be present

Confidentiality protection

How will the name and other personal details be used

Any legal repercussions

Since this is a relatively less expensive and a more flexible method of market research there are a few applications of this market research methodology:

It helps to understand the needs of the customers and their behavioral pattern. What consumers think and perceive your product as. To understand the efficiency of your business planning and also to know if the strategies and planning that you put in place are working or not. What sort of marketing messages has a strong impact on the consumers and what just fall on deaf ears? Whether or not there is a demand for your product or services in the market?

Ultimately, qualitative market research is all about asking people to elaborate on their opinion to get a better insight into their behavioral pattern. It's about understanding "Why" even before "What".

It helps you gather detailed information: One of the major advantages of this market research method is that it helps you collect details information instead of just focusing on the metrics of data. It helps you understand the subtleties of the information obtained thus enabling in-depth analysis. It's adaptive in nature: This market

research can adapt to the quality of information that is collected. If the available data seems not to be providing any results, the researcher can immediately seek to collect data in a new direction. This offers more flexibility to collect data. It operates within structures that are fluid: The data collected through this research method is based on observation and experiences, therefore, an experienced researcher can follow up with additional open ended questions if needed to extract more information from the respondents. Helps communicate brand proposition accurately: Through this market research method, the consumers can communicate with the brand effectively and vice versa. Any product terminology, product jargons etc are effectively communicated as this research method gives a chance to the brand and the consumer to express their needs and values freely, thus minimizing any miscommunication. It helps reduce customer churn: Consumer behaviors can change overnight, leaving a brand to wonder what went wrong. By conducting qualitative market research, brands have a chance to understand what consumers want and if they are fulfilling their needs or not, thereby reducing customer churn . Thus the brand-consumer relationship is maintained.

It is time-consuming: Qualitative market research can take days, weeks, months and in some cases even years to complete. This isn't good to get quick actionable insights. In some cases, the premise with which the survey began may be non-existent due to market evolution. It is expensive: Due to the time taken to complete, qualitative market research is extremely expensive. They are also expensive to conduct and create actionable insights because the data is humungous and people with certain skill sets are required to manage the research process. It is subjective: What one user may think could be very different from another. Due to this, there is no standardization of responses. This also means that the lines between true and false blur out to the point that each response is to be considered at face value. No result verification: Data collected cannot be verified because in most cases in a qualitative market research, the data is based on personal perceptions. Hence for analysis, each opinion is considered as it is valid. Halo effect: Due to the highly subjective nature of the research, the preconceived notion of the moderator or the person conducting the analysis skews the reporting of the research. It is human tendency to gravitate towards what's known and it is very tough to get rid of this bias.

With the increasing competition in the business world, the extensive need for business research has also increased. QuestionPro Communities is a qualitative research platform that is interactive, where existing customers can submit their feedback and also stay well informed about the market research activities, helps researchers undertake studies to maximize sales and profits. Through the communities platform, researchers can carry out research to effectively target and understand their customers, understand what is the market trend, prevent future problems and thereby reduce customer churn.

This qualitative research platform helps in developing businesses to know their competitors and help identify the latest trends in the market. To carry out a well-directed research, businesses need a software platform that can help researchers understand the mindset of the consumers, interpret their thoughts and collect meaningful qualitative data.

QuestionPro Communities is the World's leading platform for conducting analytics powered qualitative research. This online qualitative market research software helps researchers save their time, using niche technology like text analysis, where computers are used to extract worthwhile information from human language in an efficient manner, increase flexibility and improve the validity of qualitative research. This online platform help researchers reduce manual and clerical work.

QuestionPro Communities Qualitative Market Research Software and Tools Includes:

Discussions

The online qualitative research software and tool, Discussions, allows a researcher to invite respondents to a community discussion session and moderate the focus group online. This can also be done live at a specific time that is convenient to the researcher and offer the users the flexibility to post responses when they login to their community. Invitations can be sent out well in advance to a specific target group the researcher would like to gather feedback from.

Idea Board

In case you are looking for respondents to share their ideas and allow others to analyze and offer a feedback and vote on the existing submissions, then this is a great tool to manage and present your results to the key stakeholders.

Topics

In this online community, you can submit topics, cast your vote in the existing posts and add comments or feedback instantly.

QuestionPro Communities is the only panel management and discussion platform that offers a seamless mobile communities

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experience. When it comes to engagement, how you reach respondents matter! Go mobile and take Discussions, Topics, and Idea Board anywhere your respondents go.

Learn about the other market research method: Quantitative Market Research

Reference

[Health Sciences Literature Review Made Easy: The Matrix Method](#)

[Doing Q Methodological Research: Theory, Method and Interpretation](#)