



Harness the Power of Projective Marketing Techniques

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To gain an understanding of motivation, beliefs, or attitudes during the personal interview or focus group process, projective marketing techniques can be invaluable qualitative tools. Considerable time and skill are required to use the techniques, then analyze and develop a report that adequately and accurately reflects the findings, but the insights gained are often well worth it.

You might decide to use such techniques in order to elicit responses that subjects might not be willing to give—or might be unable to give—if they knew the study purpose. Perhaps you are reaching for a deep understanding that is not readily obtained otherwise. Or, you may be looking for underlying beliefs and attitudes that may be operating at a subconscious level. These techniques are powerful for gaining emotional insights, understanding impulses, and drawing metaphorical descriptions from consumers.

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES TO ACQUAINT YOU WITH PROJECTIVE MARKETING TECHNIQUES:

- Brand Obituary** Respondents create a written obituary for a product, service, company, or other item being explored. The purpose is to capture respondents' perception of the brand spirit or personality. Another option is to write an epitaph--the words that would appear on a tombstone. This provides a pithy response to the question: "How would XYZ soap be remembered if it were to die today?"
- Draw-a-Person** Respondents are asked to draw a person (stick drawing only – no artistry required!) that represents a brand, product, or service. The respondent then explains the physical characteristics, clothing, and other items included in the drawing and why they were included. On a variation of this, respondents may be given the task of drawing the subject as multiple persons, such as a man, woman and child.

Family of Brands

What are the relationships among various brands? To explore this question further, respondents are given a list of products. They are asked to imagine that these brands are a family—not necessarily from the same biological family, and not necessarily living in the present. Perhaps it's a team or another group like a family. Respondents describe the role of each brand in the family, its characteristics, and how it relates to the other members of the family. This exercise may easily lead to role playing or guided fantasy fabrication. If the brand could speak, what would it say about other members of the family?

Montage Creation

Focus group participants are asked to make a montage to express how they feel or what they think about a brand, something they do (such as brush their teeth), etc.. Magazines, scissors, paper, and glue sticks are provided. Their assignment: select photos that best represents their thoughts and feelings on the subject. (Photos can also be selected as a homework assignment). The group makes a montage using the photos, drawings and the words they find in the magazines. During the process, they explain their montage elements and why they included them. For example, participants are asked to create a montage of what it's like to be an IT manager. In their montages, maps and race car drivers are recurring images.

Sentence Completion

A word association technique that helps explores feelings about a product or service, often negative, and also provides some contextual perspective. Respondents are given incomplete sentences to finish. The sentences are usually in third person and open-ended. For example, "People who drive mini-vans tend to be _____," "A mini-van driver is not _____," or "I would tell the president of the company that makes this product that _____." Using sentence completions, a respondent can be "forced" to consider specific aspects of a brand: "The reason that women will not purchase this product is _____."

Stereotypical Drawings

This technique encourages respondents to identify a stereotypical person or thing with a product or other image. This approach helps better identify a product user or brand traits. For example, respondents are presented with three or four stereotypical images—a grandmother, a Yuppie, a soccer mom, and a male construction worker—and asked what brand of product each would use and why. Or respondents are presented with a series of images that include different types of people, and are asked which ones would use a specific brand and why.