



Consumer Research

Consumer acceptability is the key to a successful product. By systematically measuring consumer response and motivation in a scientific manner one is able to make accurate predictions on such things as, identifying key ingredient levels, the consequences of manipulation of a formulation, pricing points, marketing platforms and brand positioning. Exploring not only the consumer's perception of a product, but also their evaluation in functional and emotional terms, gives a significant advantage in today's competitive market place.

Consumer Perception

We can gain an accurate insight into how consumers actually perceive products and the market by using sound methodological approaches (both quantitative and qualitative) and analysing the responses using modern statistical, multivariate tools. These enable us, amongst other things, to identify gaps and trends and by including company and product images, novel marketing ideas and "ideal" positions.

Consumers' attitudes and behaviour around products can be examined using a wide variety of techniques such as in-depth interviewing, language profiling, observational behavioural studies and group dynamics. These enable us to explore, in-depth the consumers' functional and emotional response to products.

Measurement of Consumer Response

There are two main data types used to measure consumer assessment of a product:

- **Qualitative** – this is descriptive, and is mainly used as an exploratory platform.
- **Quantitative** – this is mainly numerical. It can be **Discrete** (categorical data e.g. tick boxes) or **Continuous** (e.g. a line scale).

The amount of information depends on the data type and scaling method used and this in turn affects the statistical analysis you are able to perform and the limit on data interpretation. The scales range from **Nominal** (categorical) scaling, where you can count frequencies, to **Ordinal** or ranking techniques which is more powerful, but says nothing about distances between stimuli, **Interval**, where equal intervals (e.g. time) measurements are made and **Ratio** (e.g. a line scale). Ratio scales are the most powerful and can generate the greatest amount of information. In order to conduct parametric tests you need at least an interval scale.



RESEARCH The sort of information we collect from consumers is:

Preference data; acceptance of a product, propensity to buy, it is hedonic, subjective impressions

Demographic data; e.g. age, social class, sex, religion etc. affects the priority of perceived qualities

Psychological profiles; psychometric testing can enable us to more clearly define the profile of the target consumer. Narratives of product usage and experience are very useful.

Group Conformance; e.g. the status value of some products is their most important aspect

Practice; what do consumers actually do with the product? Measurements may need to be taken over long periods in natural surroundings.

Proactive; what innovations do consumers want?

Finally **adverse reactions** are always more important than pleasant ones. One bad experience with a product is more important than ten good ones (and they always tell their friends and family about that one bad experience!).

Consumer Psychology

Consumer psychology is the study of human responses to product and service related information and experiences. Many responses are relevant, including affective (emotional), cognitive (beliefs and judgments), and behavioural (purchase decisions and consumption-related practices) responses. A broad range of product and service related information is relevant, including marketer initiated stimuli (e.g., advertisements, package labels, coupons, point-of-purchase displays), consumer magazines, and word-of-mouth communications from friends and relatives.

Responses to information about products and services are influenced by three major factors:

- person variables (e.g., personality variables, prior attitudes and opinions)
- situational variables (e.g., marketer initiated stimuli, product variables)
- person by situation interactions

The goals of consumer psychologists are to describe, predict, influence, and/or explain consumer responses to product and services.

The success of a business enterprise can be increased with thorough research and advice leading to the effective development and marketing of products and services. We also influence the welfare of the consumer by providing information to companies and consumers on products and services that best satisfy the needs of the public.



The field of consumer psychology itself brings together and integrating other psychological disciplines into an applied research endeavour, and contributing its own theories and methodologies to other areas of psychology.

Research Methods in Consumer Psychology

Research methods are the foundation for all projects and any advances depend critically on the quality and sophistication of available research methods. Fortunately, the most advanced research methods used in cognitive, social, developmental, and clinical psychology - such as covariance structure modelling, response latency-based methodologies, and computer simulation can also be found in consumer psychology. Sophisticated physiological measures, scale development procedures, and multivariate statistical techniques are also used by consumer psychologists and sensory researchers are areas we specialise in at Foster and Brown Research

Experiments are designed so that alternative explanations for a cause-effect relationship are ruled out until ideally only one-explanation remains. Questionnaires are designed so that question-wording effects, order effects, memory biases, and response-scale effects are minimized. The appropriate statistical procedures are used to control for sampling error and for other sources of variation in subjects' responses, and finally great care and attention is taken so that the most appropriate respondents are recruited for each study.

This attention to detail and scientific approach means that our clients have the confidence that they are making strategic decisions with the best information.