

Source/Copyright:**Research & Results – Magazine for Media, Market, and Advertising Research, issue 3/2005 - May****Abstract**

Being a new, prompt and interactive survey tool, the internet is a very good alternative to the existing qualitative research methods: The ConsumerNeeds platform allows prompt surveys on consumers' opinions and trends. Andera Gadeib from the Dialego AG presents the new tool.

In-depth online**Qualitative Research Methods Conquer the Internet**

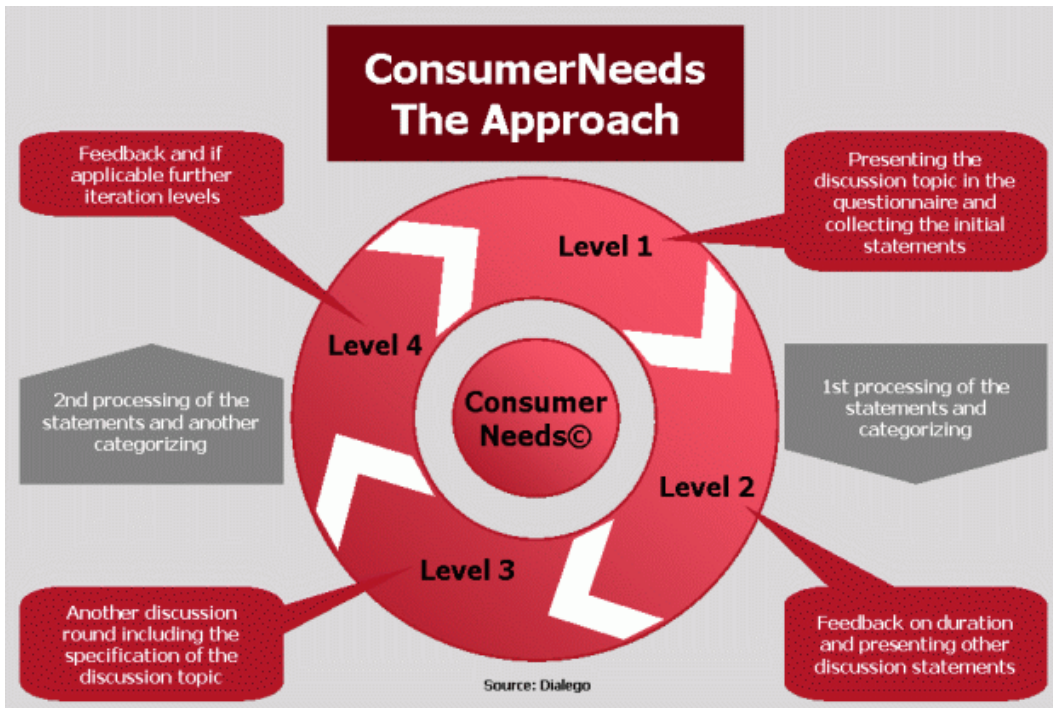
Andrea Gadeib presents a new online method for qualitative inquiries of consumer insights. Especially at the early stage of the concept development, larger number of cases and promptness are decisive advantages.

Consumer insights are the centre of gravity of each new product development and each campaign draft. Not only are they the point of departure, but they are also the inspiration or major peg. Receiving consumer insights means understanding what drives the consumer – his desires, which product experiences influence him, which concomitant emotional circumstances correspond with the use of - or the refusal to use - a certain product. Thus, a method used for generating consumer insights must help to gain valuable conclusions about the relevant consumers' needs, and to identify market trends so as to allow a prompt reaction by adapting one's own product line. Presently, consumer insights are normally gained using the classical qualitative research methods. Yet, often the basis for product development simply consists of the product management's experiences from the previous projects. This is especially the case when – because time is short or there is a need to save costs, or because it simply is just a “minor“ development – the initial dialogue with the customer cannot even take place.

Internet as a Qualitative Alternative

This is where the Internet comes into play as a new and fast survey tool – not as a copy of the focus group discussion method or in-depth interviews, but rather as an alternative qualitative research method. No other medium is more suitable for communication with the consumer: fast, prompt and interactive, it even provides the possibility of simultaneous presentation of images as a stimulus. The ConsumerNeeds method is similar to the Delphi method. The difference though, is that the classical Delphi normally strives for a consensus among experts involved in the study, while the ConsumerNeeds method is not about a majority

agreement but rather is primarily about a wide-as-possible range of consumers' opinions or trends.



An anonymous group of consumers is asked about a certain topic in several successive, interactive steps, providing open-end answers, which means that there is no structured questionnaire. The answers are continuously analyzed and re-entered into the 'ongoing discussion'. Other participants' summarized replies stimulate the consumer to enter new ideas which he thinks have not yet been represented.



ConsumerNeeds Survey: Entry mask for the test person

The survey is not interrupted for the evaluation. The advantage of the asynchronous discussion is that the test person can organize the time at which he wishes to participate in the study. This will normally create a situation in which he

is not distracted, allowing him comprehensive replies. Since an interviewer is not explicitly present, this method is free of interviewer's or moderator's influences.

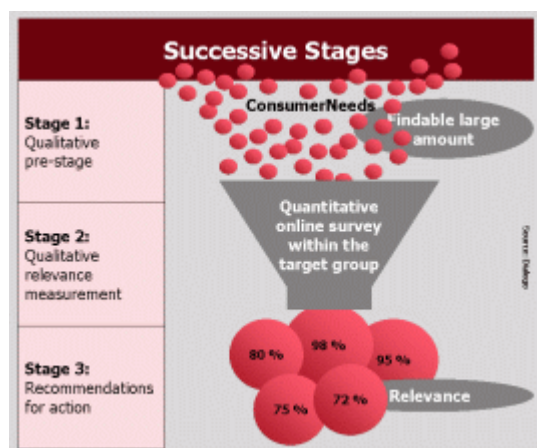
Broad Base

Typically, the ConsumerNeeds method is carried out on as broad a basis as possible, including between 150 and 200 participants – which is a much higher number than is used in the Delphi Method or other classical methods. The project duration is very short. The field work starts after a lead time of only one or two days. It is carried out in several loops and lasts between 7 and 10 days. Another 5 days later, the analysis is completed. Only two and a half weeks pass between the beginning of a project and the receipt of the results.

The sample is selected from an Online Access Panel. The availability of comprehensive master data or a screening conducted prior to the study allows one to address the desired target groups. So, for example, it is extremely easy to focus the discussion precisely on small children's mothers aged between 30 and 40 or smokers of a certain brand of cigarette. As opposed to other classical methods, the ConsumerNeeds method allows direct communication with the consumer via dialogues on the ConsumerNeeds platform. The client is able to observe the discussion in the background and to determine the focus for further repetition level in co-operation with the institute.

Successive Stages

The result of this phase provides a broad base of consumers' opinions without revealing exact indices about the relevance of individual needs. The relevance is subsequently determined by using a quantitative tool – the structured online questionnaire, which can be optionally filled in within an omnibus survey (1000 sample size) representing the population or analysing a single target group.



Finally, this method should provide a more reliable planning basis which is in accordance with the target group needs. The conclusions are then considered in the product/campaign development process and are closely tested afterwards using common online and offline methods.



Andera Gadeib is founder and CEO of Dialego, Aachen, Germany. Dialego AG is a full-service providing institute for market research with more than 20 employees in the field of online market research. Dialego collects data via internet only. Company's services include the classical methods such as ad pretests/posttests, product/concept tests, brand/image analysis, website tests and consumer satisfaction surveys. Dialego develops both software systems and hardware systems for online surveys.

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