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BIG QUALI

SCALING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

 **QUALIQUANTI**
CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE

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Introduction: From Qual to Big Qual

If data is the new oil for businesses, where does qualitative data fit in? How can it be produced, harvested, exploited, and refined into the fuel needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century? In a world ruled by data, by the magic of numbers, what is the place of qualitative research and human intelligence? Alongside algorithms and Artificial Intelligence, what is the place of a qualitative, creative, cultural, and empathetic approach to enlightening decision-makers?

NB: The commonly accepted definition “Big Qual” focuses on reaching a critical mass of respondents and exploiting verbatims. In this book, the term encompasses a larger dimension including the semiological study of words, images, and texts at scale. Documentary monitoring and literature reviews are coupled to data observation and analysis for an in-depth study and the production of comprehensive qualitative results.

Qual to understand and inspire, quant to measure

Qualitative research involves questioning and observation methods. They are traditionally based on individual interviews and group meetings (focus groups of around ten people) with limited samples, ranging from a few to a few dozen people. They include observation in situ and documentary collection. They aim to understand a market and decipher a material, social and symbolic reality. They draw on the human sciences (ethnology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, etc.) as well as the language sciences (communication, semiology, linguistics) and general culture (history, politics, economics, art history, etc.) to give meaning and to understand the underlying motivations of consumers.

Qualitative research is often opposed to quantitative research, which is associated with the idea of measurement and correlation. These methods involve panels, barometers and surveys involving samples of several hundreds or even thousands of individuals. Their function is to generalize the results to many people, giving priority to representativeness of the population under investigation.

Quant has always been taken more seriously than qual. Marketing is synonymous with effectiveness, measurement, and quantification. Quantitative research benefits from the legitimacy of behavioral measurement studies and polls. Qualitative studies are considered interesting and intellectually enriching, but the synthetical power of a figure remains supreme.

Qual control turned upside down by digital

With the development of IT and digital technology, qualitative research has made productivity gains at every stage. There are more and more methods of questioning, with increasing sample sizes. A qualitative study can survey communities of several dozen or even hundreds of individuals. Qualitative data is increasingly abundant, with considerable processing capacity.

Table 1 - Qual: Three areas of digital transformation

1/ Digitalized questioning and multiple methods	2/ Sample sizes and data collected	3/ Software-enhanced processing and analysis
<p>Synchronous and asynchronous remote and long-term interrogation tools</p> <p>New modes of interrogation (forums, chats, <i>online</i> focus groups, communities, blogs, <i>crowdsourcing</i>, mass observation)</p> <p>New ways of participating (audio, photos, drawings, self-videos, auto-ethnology, co-creation)</p>	<p>Increase in sample size (communities, forums) facilitated by proprietary panel and <i>online</i> recruitment</p> <p>New collection technologies (photos, videos, captures)</p> <p>Access to qualitative megadata (on Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, TripAdvisor, Amazon, communities and websites)</p>	<p>Processing by software or social listening, artificial intelligence to avoid being drowned out</p> <p>Creating qualitative databases with YouTube or WordPress</p> <p>Network organization for data classification and collaborative approach to analysis</p>

This digital tsunami affects every stage, from the co-design of research (interaction with the customer via collaborative tools) to the communication of results, with video extracts overlaid.

With the ability to process large-scale data, the quality/quantity dichotomy is shrinking. The explosion of digital data is leading to new ways of seeing and analyzing the world. A new complementarity is emerging between structured data (Big Data) and unstructured data (Big Qual).

Structured and unstructured data

Big Data deals with structured data: computer megadata that has been tagged and coded so that engines can process it.

Table 2 - Big Data / Big Qual: two types of data

	Structured: Big Data	Unstructured: Big Qual
Nature	Words, signs, numbers, codes, amount, date, etc.	Photos, videos, sound, text, testimonials, etc.
Treatment	Designed for machines: search engine robots	Designed for humans helped by software
Limits and strengths	No risk of interpretation But a volume of data that's hard to sort through	Includes irregularities and ambiguities But with nuance and meaning

Faced with unstructured data, Big Data will seek to structure it to exploit it. This is *data crunching*.

The challenge with unstructured data is that it is everywhere, created by everyone, escaping the logic of the tools, like a liquid that spreads. If Big Data were an iceberg, unstructured data, sometimes referred to as dark data, would be the tip of the iceberg. Unstructured data refers to any data outside any type of structure.

Big Qual is the expression we use to describe the collection and analysis of unstructured data, and to emphasize the complementary nature of Big Data. Big Qual is used¹ to evoke the idea of a "*large qualitative data set*" or "*big qualitative data*", qualitative samples of over 100 people, *computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software* (CAQDAS), *large-scale mixed methods*, longitudinal and iterative approaches.

Big Qual is based on a cultural, creative, and emotional vision of research, whereas Big Data favors a positivist, rationalist and behaviorist vision. The power of qualitative research lies in its ability to shed light, provide an overview, identify *insights*, project into the future, encourage optimization and build theories.

¹ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1609406919880692>

Big Data and Big Qual

Big Qual works with smaller quantities of data than Big Data: from a few dozen to a few hundred (for photos and videos) to a few thousand or even more for texts. The challenge for Big Qual is to achieve a relevant critical mass. The ideal corpus is large enough to appreciate nuances without being drowned out.

Table 3 - Big Data / Big Qual: what are the differences?

	Big Data	Big Qual
Number of data	A few thousand or a few million	A few dozen to a few thousand
Nature	Structured data from transactions, sensors, machines, collection tools, etc.	Unstructured data and data created from reality and humans
Typical applications	Scientific, health, political, financial, economic, commercial, ecological, reputational, sociological	Sociological, marketing, creative, experience review, 360° studies, search for <i>insights</i> , asset evaluation, validation of concepts, etc.
Sources and methods	Social networks, media, Open Data, Web, private and public databases of a commercial or scientific nature, clicks, browsing data, etc.	<i>Offline</i> or <i>online</i> observation, document monitoring, archives, benchmarking, monitoring, social web, forums, communities, real-life recording, open questions, use tests, creative workshop, etc.
Criteria	Volume, velocity (real time), variety, veracity, value, visualization, metadata	Critical mass, originality, relevance, sensitivity, nugget, explicatory value
Analysis	Modelling, algorithms, semantic analysis, data intelligence, prediction, sentiment analysis, indexing	Cultural analysis, creative intelligence, trends, innovation

An agile Qual

With digital technology, the research industry has the capacity to process a mass of qualitative data. The risk is setting up long, costly projects where clients expect quick, profitable results. This is particularly true for start-ups, which operate on a continuous learning curve and optimize their offering over time in a *lean*

management culture. They are looking for rapid initial contact with consumers. It implies submitting a mock-up, a simulation of the offering, a sketch, examples of the competition or an MVP (*Minimum Viable Product*) as soon as possible.

Qual *Online* favors iterative processes with affordable budgets. A forum of a dozen people combined with a few videoconference meetings remains economical and easy to organize. Big Qual has variable geometry in terms of deadlines and budgets: it ranges from large-scale studies that give a complete picture of the puzzle to rapid studies with short loops. The alternative of traditional qualitative studies is still very relevant for rapid, one-off, focused studies. One solution is to combine traditional qualitative research with a Big Qual system.

Table 4 - Classic Qual or Big Qual?

	Classic Qual	Big Qual
Duration	Occasional	Over time, iterative
Objective	Focused	360°, holistic
Sample size	5 to 30 people	Greater impact on part of the system
Methodology	Simple	Hybrid, interdisciplinary
Amount of data	Limited	Important
Analysis	Manual or partially assisted	Assisted, technology integration
Calendar	2 weeks to 1 month	3 weeks to 6 months
Budget	Limited	Variable geometry

Back cover

In the age of Big Data and new technologies, every company has access to a mass of qualitative data - photos, videos, testimonials, etc. - that can be used to improve the insights from qualitative studies.

What is the value and economic interest of this qualitative data?
How can we produce and exploit this material without drowning?

Part of the answer lies in **a new dimension of qualitative research: Big Qual**. The goal is to scale qualitative data, both in terms of the quantity and quality of the findings. This approach goes beyond traditional qualitative research in several respects:

- **larger samples** - forums, communities, *social listening*;
- **longer interrogations** - up to several weeks.
- **automated interactions enhanced by technology** - software, sensors, smartphones, video, etc.
- **expanded documentary databases.**

What are the keys to the success of Big Qual?

- **Produce quality data on a large scale, in cooperation with the public** - provided you know how to stimulate them.
- **Analyzing this data with a human and cultural approach** when artificial intelligence is limited to identifying and classifying data.
- **Promoting assimilation of the results through inspiring deliverables.**

Trough examples, this book aims to-illustrate the transformation of qualitative research *via* digital technology and to demonstrate its full potential. Shaking up traditional research approaches, Big Qual is an effective method, accessible to everyone - marketing professionals, managers and decision-makers thinking about the future of their company and their brands - and within a limited time and budget.

Daniel Bô, HEC and SciencesCom, CEO and founder of the QualiQuanti research institute, is a pioneer of *online* panels and qualitative and quantitative research.-Author of blogs and white papers on research, he has published articles on brand content and brand culture with Dunod. With Big Qual, he offers an illustrated overview of digital methodologies and reflects on how to scale qualitative research.

Preamble: What makes a good study?

To fully understand the philosophy behind this book, we propose to begin by defining what a "good study" is and setting out our approach to this profession.

The institutes go through various phases (preparation, fieldwork, analysis with results, deliverables, and presentation).

Table 5 - Criteria for a relevant quality study

	Quality criteria
Definition of objectives	Detailed and prioritized objectives, valid short- and long-term results, ambitious and fruitful issues
Methodology	Transparent on the different phases of the analysis, intermediate working documents, agile, progressive, hybrid, possibility of monitoring
Preparatory research	Comprehensive benchmarking, identification of best practices, taking account of the context
Consumer land	Targeted recruitment, high quality and quantity of consumer contributions (opinions, photos, videos), faithful recordings and transcriptions
Viewpoint	360° approach, on different scales, covering the whole subject (holistic), interdisciplinarity
Analysis	Depth of analysis, expertise, cultural added value, search for meaning, evolutionary, concrete, creative, human, multidimensional
Results	<i>Insights</i> , cultural insights, broadening horizons, making complexity accessible, nuances, stimulating creativity, sustainable

To achieve this, here are a few guidelines.

Cultivate a high level of long-term ambition:

- Embracing complexity. The role of an institute is to take account of multi-dimensional issues and to help people see clearly, starting from chaos.
- Think of the research business in terms of expertise and R&D, with a gradual capitalization of knowledge on complementary subjects

Moving away from positivism and the cult of numbers:

- Study reports must incorporate the emotional, cultural, and sensory aspects of reality.
- Do not limit yourself to the number of interviewees and the quantity of testimonies. It's also about covering the whole spectrum of realities, until we reach a critical mass of cases with significant diversity.

Staying agile, on a human scale:

- Ensuring quality insurance is a fascinating profession. Creativity and emotion have a real place in it.
- Guaranteeing participants and customers a rich and stimulating experience with continuous learning.
- Proposing a highly visual deliverable that facilitates the appropriation and circulation of the material collected.
- Putting in place systems that mobilize stakeholders in a collaborative and iterative approach.

Throughout the book, we will provide links to publications, *slide casts* and videos to illustrate the concepts we cover.

Chapter 1: Understanding the impact of technology on qualitative

Qualitative research is an encounter with the field. This encounter has been revolutionized by the power of technological tools for collecting or producing data, analyzing it, classifying it, structuring it and giving it meaning. Techniques for recording reality (photo, video, audio, sensors) enrich research. Qual *online* gives access to a new form of collective intelligence and encourages long-term research.

The explosion of qualitative data

Originating in the 1960s, qualitative studies have historically been based on in-depth interviews and face-to-face round tables. They draw on methods from psychoanalysis, ethnology, psychology, semiology, and structuralism. The French tradition gave center stage to non-directive methods, to the exploration of motivations and attitudes with the ambition of probing the unconscious, and to observation.

Large-scale qualitative studies have been around for decades, with systems of 40 interviews or 10 groups. Manually processed, they can be long and tedious, resulting in waste. Technology makes it easier to collect and process massive amounts of data.

With the advent of digital technology, the web and the widespread use of PCs and smartphones, there is a proliferation of sources and collection methods, with greater flexibility in the use of the material collected.

Today's technology provides analysts with a single screen:

- Media archives from around the world: articles, reports, polls, opinion pieces, influencer content, experts, etc.;
- Data from manufacturers and distributors: product photos, description, videos, communication, content, shelf photos, product sheet, history, etc.;
- User reviews and testimonials: photos, videos, comments, forums;
- Data from social networks: publications, tweets, photos, and videos.

To see the wealth of data available:



For a long time, consumers were selected for qualitative research based on telephone records or recruitment at the point of sale. From the 2000s onwards, panels of volunteers were developed, making it possible to select targets from all over the world. Social networks make it easier to make contact based on criteria such as interests, location and consumption.

Technological advances have made it possible to transcribe interviews automatically. Speech-to-text software has made great strides and can now be used to transcribe an interview with a high level of quality.

Advances in smartphone technology are giving consumers professional-level tools. This democratization of technology facilitates the production of enriched qualitative data. Massive ethnographic systems based on self-videos can be launched.

Data collection methods have gone digital. *Online* tools make it possible to interview 10, 20 or 100 people remotely over a period of several days, weeks or even months. They generate hundreds of pages of verbatim data, as well as photos and videos. Messaging applications such as WhatsApp can be used to run high-quality *online* forums at little or no technical cost. The same goes for video-conferencing meetings on Zoom, Teams, Meet, Gotomeeting, tools that have spread with the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have entered an era of qualitative data overload. This data can be processed with software and organized using artificial intelligence. The aim of this book is to show how to make the most of this sea of data while preserving its richness. We will look at textual data as well as photographic, audio and video data.

Online and face-to-face

The Internet has enabled the development of qualitative *online* questioning. To fully understand the changes, here are a few observations on the differences with face-to-face interviews:

Table 6 - *Online* / face-to-face data collection: how do they complement each other?

Online	On-site
Written, voice and video speeches	Verbal and non-verbal speech
Limited sensory and 3D perception	Promoting the sensory dimension

Complete anonymity in the forum and no pressure from the group on the individual: uniform speaking time	Phenomena of social representation and leadership that influence the group: heterogeneity of speaking time; creative regulation of group life by the facilitator
Variable duration	Limited questioning time
One or more moderators	The key role of the presenter
Opening the geographical criterion	Restrictive geographical criterion

With digital technology, customers and moderators do not need to travel, which simplifies logistics and saves time and money. In face-to-face interviews, the interview period is generally **limited**. It is very rare and very costly to interview the same group or the same households several times. On the Internet, re-interviewing over time is natural: respondents can be approached periodically.

Recording reality

Photo, audio, and video recording represent a cultural revolution. According to semiologist Raphaël Lellouche, too much emphasis has been placed on words as the fundamental vectors of meaning. The discursive representation we have of culture is an atavism from the Gutenberg era. In the Gutenberg era, media were symbolic. Since the mid-19^e century, technical progress has enabled us to move from the symbolic to the real. All contemporary culture is thus conditioned by technical media which record the real. Meaning no longer passes solely through the medium of speech or writing, but connects directly to our physiology, to our sensory organs. We need to capture these new manifestations of culture (through the body and through machines) at the various stages of a study.

Proof through images

Video recording has a strong impact. Employees can no longer contradict the problems identified. The video gives a much stronger sense of the facts, a concrete visualization of the context and empathy with the user than a verbatim report.

Technology now makes it possible not only to film usage but also to ask consumers to film themselves using a product (ethnological self-video). The UserTesting platform² provides tools for filming oneself and producing accounts of customer experience. This makes it possible to gain an intuition of usage by seeing it done rather than by telling it, and to appreciate the difference between what the user says and what he does. This is a goldmine for Research & Development

² <https://www.usertesting.com/>

departments who need to visualize usage. An international survey of current research tools shows that technologies are being used in a variety of ways: video diaries³ over a five-week period to assess the use of a range of shampoos over time, a study for Carlsberg⁴ with respondents tasked to record themselves at every moment of consumption, to photograph the pubs they visit, to take pictures of the menu and to film themselves to explain their choice in the bar. Some studies use GoPro cameras to show the user's point of view:

- patients⁵ equipped to show nurses the point of view of those they care for
- students who choose their books in the library

Research clients are looking for real-life recordings (photos, videos, audios) with a compilation of reactions and highlights.

Forms of collective intelligence

Collective intelligence refers to the form of intelligence that human communities or organizations (companies, teams, groups) are capable of when faced with the complexity of their environment. Digital technology fosters a new form of collective intelligence: network intelligence.

In 2004, in *Collective Intelligence, the invisible revolution*⁶, Jean-François Noubel identified three main forms of collective intelligence.

- 1) The original collective intelligence** is that of the small group, the tribe, team sport, the commando.

The preferred medium for this type of organization is the 5 senses, including sight, hearing, and touch, to sense our neighbors and adapt our behavior. *The qualitative group* and the individual interview correspond to the original collective intelligence.

There are two limitations to this form of organization:

Numerical limit: these communities can only function with a limited number of individuals, who establish interpersonal relationships.

³ <https://www.mustard-research.com/case-studies/mustard-helped-tangle-teezer-launch-new-products/#1491298731152-18e3c6da-2c2707e5-61e8eddf-af78>

⁴ <https://www.mustard-research.com/case-studies/mustard-helped-carlsberg>

⁵ <https://www.nursingsimulation.org/article/S1876-1399%2821%2900063-3/fulltext>

⁶ https://testconso.typepad.com/Intelligence_Collective_Revolution_Invisible_JFNoubel.pdf

Spatial limits: people need to be close together, so that they can see the whole picture (*holoptism*) and match their behavior to that of others.

2) Pyramidal collective intelligence. To overcome the two major limitations of the original collective intelligence, hierarchical organization of the pyramidal type has become the norm. When it comes to building, planning, cultivating, transporting, manufacturing, and coordinating many individuals and spatially dispersed activities, self-regulation is impossible. You need a leader who makes decisions and people who defer to him.

The preferred medium for this form of pyramidal collective intelligence is writing. This type of pyramidal collective intelligence is common and powerful: companies, administrations, governments, and armies all operate on this model. It requires:

- Division of labor, specialization of tasks
- Authority: by divine right, by descent, by merit, by expertise, by legality, by diplomas...
- Norms and standards: they ensure the objectification, circulation, and interoperability of knowledge within the group.

Quantitative face-to-face surveys correspond to pyramid intelligence, with a division of labor and a logic of splitting up and standardizing questions. As for those who collect the results, they do not have a detailed vision, which disappears when the results are aggregated.

Pyramid-based collective intelligence has its limits, because unlike the original, evolutionary collective intelligence, the pyramid-based hierarchy is cumbersome and demonstrates its inability to adapt to the shifting, unpredictable ground of complexity.

3) Swarm intelligence. This form of collective intelligence is found in certain animal colonies. How can thousands or even millions of individuals, individually limited like birds, fish, bees or penguins, organize themselves into groups with a collective intelligence and incredible capacity for resistance and adaptation.

The Internet and global intelligence

Developments in technology and the emergence of the collaborative Internet point to a new form of collective human intelligence - global intelligence. The emergence of wikis (such as Wikipedia) and free software are examples of collaborative work, where many individuals scattered across the planet work together. The contributors position themselves in an invisible architecture, without a hierarchical structure, in a democratic way.

Let's look at how *online* longitudinal qualitative research works in terms of global intelligence.

- With communities or forums, qualitative is ***freed from physical spaces (invisible architecture)***. There is no fixed organization in time and space (like a round table).
- Everyone in the group can ***acquire a vision of the project as a whole (holoptism)***
- **The long-term** nature of Qual *online* means that the community can be seen as an ***evolving organism***
- *Online* self-administered data collection makes it possible for a ***large number of people to work together in depth and creatively.***

Seen in this light, *online* research opens a new stage in collective intelligence. It's a new way of conceiving research, better adapted to complexity, fully collaborative, reducing the asymmetry between interviewer and interviewee.

The gift of time

One of the key characteristics of *online* qualitative research is that it can take place over time. A Qual *online* forum or community takes place over time and operates as an evolving, iterative process.

Table 7 - Face-to-face versus *online* forums

The group, face-to-face interview	The Qual <i>online</i> forum
Encourages expression and reaction, everything done on the fly; once the group has finished, you can no longer participate.	Allows for spontaneous reactions, but also for reflection and distance: time for maturation
Separating the spheres of questioning and use	Possibility of interviewing respondents in their sphere of use

Giving missions

Online qualitative research allows us to carry out assignments and test products in several stages. For example, in the case of a study on television viewing in the morning, individuals can be questioned about their daily viewing habits, before being asked to watch a show the following day. On D+1, they can react during the day to the show they saw in the morning, before watching another show on D+2, and so on. In this way, it is possible to follow the programming daily over the course of a week, without separating the sphere of use from the one of questioning.

Towards participatory research

The timeframe is also very useful for innovation-oriented studies, where participants are required to accompany the research and development process. An online forum can react as and when concepts, products and communications are developed, keeping pace with the company. It's a three-way relationship, then, with the customer in the background. This requires a great deal of responsiveness on the part of the moderator.

By enabling a series of back-and-forth exchanges, *online* qualitative research marks the entry of research into the era of participation. Qual *online* is establishing itself as a multi-directional method of interviewing. It replaces the traditional one-way interviewer/interviewee relationship with a multiplicity of relationships with interviewees and those around them.

When all is said and done, the system generates a huge amount of data (150 to 400 pages of verbatims for a forum, hundreds of photos), which poses the challenge of dealing with the overabundance.

GDPR and security requirements

Managing panels with nominative databases and collecting data online is a responsibility in terms of cyber security. In early 2021, hackers attacked a survey institute and demanded ransom. Every precaution must be taken to ensure the security of panelists' personal details and information. File transfers must use secure procedures and key data must be destroyed after use or stored in electronic safes. To prevent fraudulent access attempts, passwords must be used systematically, ideally with two-factor authentication. Every precaution must be taken to protect confidential data. Only the team working directly on the study has access to relevant information.

Originally, qualitative research was mainly based on focus groups or interviews. These face-to-face meetings last a few hours and take place in physical locations, often equipped with one-way glass so that the customer can observe discreetly. Digital technology frees us from these physical and time constraints. It encourages the creation of virtual communities of consumers that can last several weeks and that can be followed virtually. Technology also encourages new ways for consumers to express themselves through text, audio, or video.

These new forms of questioning raise questions about the conditions for effective participation. First and foremost, consumers need to be selected and stimulated.

Chapter 2: Encouraging consumer input

Qualitative research relies on the active participation of the public, who works to feed the research. Let's look at how these participants are motivated, depending on the questioning channel, and what are the keys to qualitative selection.

The consumer's job

Qualitative studies are partly based on data produced by consumers (testimonials written in a forum or suggestion box, opinions, accounts of experiences, photos or videos, DIY tips, recipes, etc.).

These data are the result of what Marie-Anne Dujarier calls "The work of the consumer", in a work on the sociology of work. The author distinguishes two forms of consumer work:

- **Directed self-production** where the consumer is **forced to work**: outsourcing certain tasks to consumers, with the emphasis on saving time, autonomy (self-service at the petrol station, assembling Ikea furniture) and purchasing power.
- **Collaborative co-production** is when the individual is **encouraged to participate**: his or her contribution ranges from capturing data to creating works. This form of work is similar to participation in research.

Consumer contributions to brand initiatives can be categorized as follows:

- **depending on the stage of product development**: upstream, by participating in product design; downstream, by prescribing the product, promoting it or even providing after-sales service;
- **depending on the nature of the contribution and the degree of creativity required**: information, data, testimonials, tips, ideas or inventions, personal productions, works of art.

Table 8 - Consumer work: types of contribution

Coproductio				
↓ Information (data, profiling)	↓ Behavior (testimonials, accounts of product or human experiences)	↓ Inventions (new recipe, new concept, ideas box)	↓ Personal productions (photos, videos, amateurs)	↓ Works

Contribution to Creation

Cooperation with interviewees

The marketing research sector in France takes the willingness of interviewees to participate in surveys for granted. It is true that we are fortunate to have a population that readily expresses itself in open-ended questions.

However, the fall in response rates for certain target groups, and the rise of a certain disaffection with surveys, raises the question of what motivates respondents to reply. The participation of interviewees cannot be limited in the long term to simple "nonchalant cooperation", as the academic Alain Garrigou puts it⁷. We need to aim for a partnership in which everyone benefits. A major challenge lies in renewing the population and getting respondents involved. We need to examine the levers of motivation to preserve this valuable source.

Table 9 - Why take part in a study?

	Motivations	Brakes
Feeling useful	Being consulted and getting things done	Too closed questioning
Comfort	Schedules, duration, contact,	Intrusive or disturbing questioning
Interest in the subject of the study	Learning, discovering ideas and tips, receiving feedback	Boring experience Boring questioning

⁷ L'ivresse des sondages, Paris, La Découverte, 2006

Share	Exchanging with others, comparing practices	No return
Incentive	Receiving a reward or symbolic gratification	Feeling used, lack of recognition

Employee participation

As well as consumer surveys, there are also employee surveys: weekly, monthly, or annual social barometers to identify HR projects and commitment drivers, surveys on well-being and quality of life at work, support for transformation, surveys to keep in touch through teleworking, co-creation of the company project and raison d'être.

Employee surveys require a great deal of explanation upstream and feedback downstream. They involve large-scale and very open consultations, as well as co-creation workshops. The purpose of these workshops is to unite teams, co-construct solutions, accelerate the stages of transformation and explore the areas of unique social responsibility.

A bit of theory

The importance of emotion

Research in the cognitive sciences has highlighted the major role played by emotions and memory in the functioning of the brain. Since Descartes, reason and emotion have been regarded as opposites, the latter even being subordinate to the former: barring temporary disorders, it is reason that governs us. Even theories of left-brain/right-brain complementarity have always postulated the separation of reason and emotion.

The discoveries popularized by Professor Damasio (*Descartes' Mistake, Spinoza Was Right*), have shown that the opposite is true: not only are emotion and reason not opposed, but our behavior is above all guided by our emotions, which are the foundation of our reason.

This research confirms the need for surveys to capture consumers' emotional reactions. Standardized quantitative surveys where the interviewee simply has to tick a few boxes elicit little emotion. Yet emotion stimulates brain activity, enabling more accurate, more committed and more predictive responses. Open-ended questions have the merit of encouraging an emotional state by inviting interviewees to associate themselves with their feelings.

Identification, selection, and recruitment of interviewees

One of the keys to the success of research is the ability to identify and recruit suitable profiles. There is a lot of talk about the risk of professionalizing consumers with black sheep who would turn them into a source of income. Of course, we need to be vigilant and know how to weed out profiles attracted primarily by the incentive. Above all, you need to have the resources to reach the right, motivated consumers.

Experience shows that core target consumers are more interesting to interview than occasional consumers or non-consumers. By regularly renewing their act of consumption, core target consumers are more aware of their perceptions and motivations and are in a better position to criticize. The key is to be able to select them.

Recruitment in two stages

For recruitment to be successful, it is often necessary to consider quantitative requirements (contacting many potential participants) and qualitative requirements (selecting interesting and useful profiles) while respecting economic constraints. The Internet is a very interesting channel for meeting these requirements. When we created the TestConso.fr panel in 2000, we wanted to control recruitment and no longer depend on a traditional selection process. Very early on, we identified a screening/phoning system that has become the norm.

The ideal solution is to work in two stages:

- **A semi-open online survey** to select the most interesting profiles.
- **A telephone selection** based on the quality of the participants' speeches, identified through an in-depth telephone dialogue to ensure the relevance of the respondents (targeting, effective availability, ability to express oneself, etc.).

This pre-recruitment survey method has several advantages, as it enables to:

- contact participants quickly and set up a group in two days if necessary.
- reach rare targets effortlessly using panel information and surveys designed to interest the potential target.
- concentrate one's energy on listening to people who are available and interested, rather than looking for and convincing participants.
- offer an incentive in the low range to avoid regulars and ensure that motivation is linked to the subject rather than to remuneration.
- dialogue with the client on the reality of the profiles and choose the participants with full knowledge of the facts.

The recruitment survey is not intended to be representative, but it is an interesting stage to analyze:

- A detailed analysis of the recruitment process helps to place the profiles chosen in relation to those rejected.
- The recruitment phase can be likened to a preliminary survey.

Having your own panel is a key advantage, even for qualitative fields. It allows you to gain in quality, speed, and efficiency, thanks to the decisive advantage of the recruitment survey.

Face-to-face in the field

Digital recruitment offers major advantages in terms of productivity, cost, and margin of error. It's easy to replace the wrong person online. Face-to-face recruiting has all the advantages of a human relationship, mobilizing all the sensory channels, the non-verbal and unconscious dimensions. Having received training in NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), I've been made aware of the subtleties of human interaction: congruence, cognitive processes, internal states, external behaviors. Interacting well with another individual means observing and synchronizing, considering the words used, breathing, voice and the sensory channels favored. To use certain facilitation and human interaction techniques, face-to-face meetings are essential.

We can also see that qualitative researchers who are used to face-to-face contact are often frustrated with having to go 100% digital. Traditional qualitative researchers have a sensitivity and empathy that thrives on a physical, human relationship with consumers.

Research should be a rich and stimulating experience for interviewees. This requires a human interviewing process, emotional involvement and an incentive that is at least symbolic. Recruitment is made easier by digital tools, which can be used to identify a pool of volunteers who match the criteria. All that remains is to carry out the final selection by phone, to ensure that it is of the highest quality.

Online qualitative research began in France around 2006 with the democratization of the internet. They have coexisted with face-to-face research until becoming essential in 2020 with the pandemic. Methods have diversified, drawing inspiration from virtual forms of interaction (forum, blog, chat, videoconference, webinar, community) and available software.

Chapter 3: Using *online* qualitative data collection tools

Digital technology is transforming the way we gather qualitative data. It loses in psychological depth, but gains in observational power, productivity, and the ability to record realities on the ground.

Qualitative methods date back to the pre-computer era. The main medium for gathering information was the spoken word, the story. Consumers were interviewed by human science specialists who led interviews or round tables. This gave rise to sessions that could last half a day or even a weekend, with mime exercises, dreaming aloud, fights and even psychodramas.

Online methods completely change the role of the moderator. Responsibility for expression is shifted to the interviewee. The challenge is to get them to participate by asking open-ended questions and producing photos and videos. Some software, such as Klaxoon, have features that encourage creativity and group dynamics. But most contributions are based on self-administration.

Self-administered *online*

With self-administration, the interviewee answers questions independently and without assistance. Self-administration avoids the bias associated with the influence of an interviewer but requires questions that are easy to understand.

The absence of an interlocutor encourages them to put into words or signs what they would have expressed non-verbally (laughter, intonation, facial expressions, etc.). With voice recognition software, speech can be automatically transcribed into text.

With video, the smartphone and digital technology, the self-administer is broadening his or her techniques of expression and moving towards autoethnography: voice or dictated response, screen capture, annotated image, story or commented video, self-video. It is omnipresent in *online* Qual.

International qualitative methodologies

GreenBook⁸ is an American organization that surveys institutes and sponsors around the world about their practices and publishes the GRIT Report (*Green Research Industry Trends Report*) every year. The *Insight Practice Edition* focuses on tools and methods. Here is the 2020 edition:



The 2020 sample is made up of 274 buyers and 769 institutes, with more than 60% from North America, 20% from Europe and 10% from Asia-Pacific. 92% of research players use quantitative tools and 85% qualitative methods.

The GRIT report points to the adoption of new methods with increasing use of the smartphone (dedicated mobile data collection studies, mobile qualitative, mobile ethnography) alongside social network analysis and Big Data.

Greenbook highlights the shift from qualitative to digital from 2020.

Hereunder are the details of the methodologies used in 2020 according to GreenBook. The digital will dominate, but face-to-face and telephone contacts will continue.

Table 10 - GRIT What qualitative methods in the USA in 2020?

	Regular use	Occasional use	Total
Semi-structured interviews with webcam	41%	33%	74%
Online focus groups with webcam	40%	34%	74%
Online communities	35%	36%	71%
In-depth telephone interviews	31%	32%	63%
Face-to-face focus groups	31%	38%	69%

⁸ <https://www.greenbook.org/mr/grit/usage-of-established-methodologies-top-quantitative-and-qualitative-research-methods/>

In-depth face-to-face interviews	29%	38%	67%
Mobile surveys (daily newspapers, image collection, etc.)	28%	40%	58%
Forum Qual <i>online</i> (<i>bulletin board</i>)	18%	37%	55%
Interviews and observations at the point of sale	16%	37%	53%
Written focus groups in chat	14%	32%	46%
Semi-structured <i>online</i> chat interviews	11%	27%	38%
Blog watch	11%	28%	39%
Telephone focus groups	8%	17%	25%
Automated interviews thanks to Artificial Intelligence	5%	17%	22%

Online qualitative surveys

Established in the United States in 1998, the market for online qualitative research has gradually expanded in France.

The year 2020 has seen the widespread use of *online* qualitative research, including for in-person consumer meetings, which are now being transformed into video conferences. Among the various online qualitative methodologies, we can distinguish individual, collective, and mixed methods. In face-to-face interviews, there is a clear separation between individual questioning (interviews, observation) and collective questioning (group meetings).

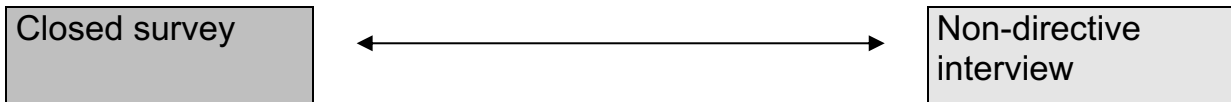
Digital technology makes it possible to compare respondents' answers with those of others and to alternate or mix approaches:

Table 11 - Qual *online*: individual and collective?

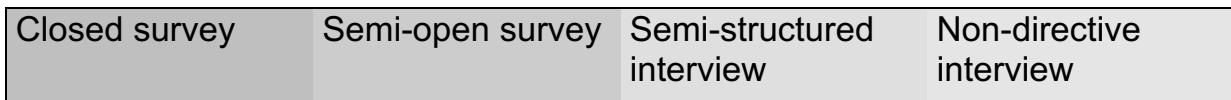
Individual methods	Mixed methods	Group methods
Semi-open online survey	Interactive suggestion box	Focus group chat

Interview by e-mail, messenger, or chat	Consumption log via blog or mobile app	Focus group with webcam or video
Webcam or video interview	<i>Online</i> qualitative forum	Virtual creative workshop
	<i>Online</i> communities	

In the *online* qualitative landscape, we include semi-open surveys, whereas most institutes consider surveys to be a quantitative method.



There is a continuum running from "Qual" to "Quant". The survey can be seen as a structured semi-structured interview.



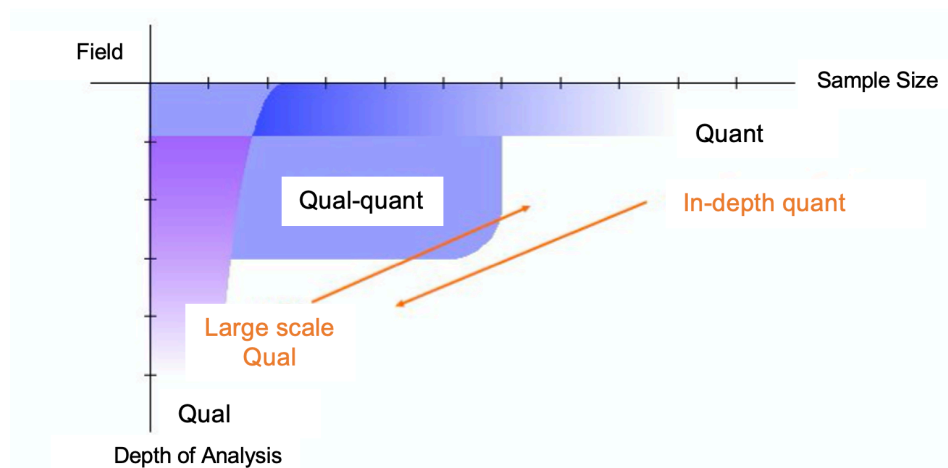
The use of semi-open surveys opens the field of large-scale Qual and in-depth Quant. It's a Qual-Quant approach.

Qual-Quant, the 3rd way

To illustrate the Qual-Quant approach, we are using a mining metaphor. Let's think of a subject of study as a piece of ground that needs to be probed:

- The qualitative approach (groups, interviews) involves digging deep into a small area.
- The quantitative approach, on the other hand, involves covering a large population with close-ended questions, covering the ground at a shallow level.

Table 12 - Qual-Quant approach: in depth and on a large scale



There is a third way, Qual-Quant, which involves digging deep into a large area. This third approach is facilitated by information technology and the Internet, which make it possible to collect and process unstructured data at a massive scale. It's as if we could move the soil over a large area and exploit this mass. This 3rd way, both in depth and on a large scale, can take different forms.

Large-scale *Online* qualitative research

The most obvious form of large-scale Qual consists in interviewing populations of a hundred or so people with open-ended questions. The advantage of such an investigation is that it saturates the field of possibilities to understand and prioritize perceptions. Experience has shown that with 100 to 200 targeted responses, the range of reactions can be inventoried, and the subject covered. Beyond this sample size, the contribution of information becomes marginal.

In a study for the Gulli television channel⁹ on the relationship between children and screens in 2008, we asked around thirty parents to photograph their children in front of screens and to answer a few open-ended questions. We suggested situations to be photographed (in front of the television, a computer, console, tablet, etc.) and asked them to comment on the photos. This survey generated over 80 photos with comments. It brought to light the different types of posture children adopt when faced with screens (sleeper, watcher, cocoon), revealed the immersive power of screens and the low degree to which screens can be adapted to children.

⁹ https://testconso.typepad.com/semiologie/files/qualiquanti_gulli_enfants_et_crans_2_.pdf



Table 13 - Linking Qual and Qual-Quant

Qual groups	The Qual-Quant survey
Focus Group	Individual interviews
Limited numbers: 20 to 30 people for 2 to 3 groups	Larger workforces 100 to 300 people
Face-to-face (oral presentation, interaction with the presenter, non-verbal communication, sensorial reactions)	Self-administered (written moderation, absence of influence from the interviewer and between interviewees, spontaneity)
Local interrogation (2 or 3 sites)	National survey (online)
Exploratory questioning (ability to improvise, creativity, looking for ways to optimize)	Structured questioning for systematic analysis
Focus on core target + other targets	Targeting a wider audience

Crowdsourcing, anyone's creativity

Crowdsourcing is another large-scale use of Qual. It consists of soliciting more or less expert profiles to gather mass data. This could be consumers from all over the world, a network of students or trend experts who will be invited to share their findings. The challenge is to generate ideas and harness the creative power of the crowd to extract valuable insights. The aim is to produce a wealth of original ideas.

Crowdsourcing can be used to address a wide range of issues:

- identify innovative locations
- visualize visited places
- get consumers to work on a benchmark
- enriching ideas

With *crowdsourcing*, you mobilize the strength, diversity, powers of observation and creativity of a network of volunteers.

Online qualitative research formats

Section 1.01 1. Queries by blog and then by mobile application

This methodology corresponds to the need to follow an individual over time. Before the advent of the Internet, interviewees produced a handwritten consumer diary or logbook. Sometimes they were given a disposable camera to collect images.

In recent years, there has been a surge in the number of diary or journaling applications designed to organize digital memories.

These free or paid applications (Keep, Evernote, Day One, Journey, Momento, Everyday, Daylio, Grid Diary, 365 &) allow you to keep track of your daily life (drawings, photos, videos, geotagged thoughts, moods, activities, food, travel, goals, hobbies, etc.) in complete confidentiality.

Research institutes have followed this practice and created tools to enter the lives of consumers. Ipsos¹⁰ has created a proprietary AppLife application¹¹ for exploratory research (mobile diaries on the daily use of a product) and for gathering feedback *in situ* (at home, in the workplace or at the point of sale).

Smartphone applications such as Indemo, OvertheShoulder, Civicom and Touchstone Research make it easier to produce and transmit feedback.

Section 1.02 2. Internet interviews

The methodology of individual interviews via the Internet has developed considerably since its inception. For a long time, telephone interviews were the most suitable means of remote interviewing. It offers a high quality of exchange and great flexibility. Initially, *online* interviewing consisted of conducting a written interview live (via a *chat room*) or asynchronously with a list of questions sent by email.

¹⁰ <https://www.ipsos.com/en/mobile>

¹¹ <https://www.ipsos.com/en/applife>

What changed with the arrival of videoconferencing software such as Zoom, Teams or Gotomeeting was the addition of the webcam. We were finally able to interact visually with the interviewee, using all the non-verbal elements, and ask them to show us their environment. Another major advantage is the ability to show material to interviewees remotely.

Section 1.03 3. Online focus: from chat to videoconferencing

Online focus groups have also evolved considerably. This began around 2005 with group meetings facilitated over the Internet using specialized *chat* software (virtual lounges). In these *chat* meetings, it is the moderator who controls the mechanisms and logic of the discussion. Selected Internet users join the virtual "meeting room" and type in their answers to the questions asked by the moderator. The moderator has prepared his or her questions and reminders and can react very quickly by prompting an individual or the whole group.

Videoconferencing has transformed online consumer meetings. The first advantage is that participants can be brought together without space constraints.

The other advantage of videoconferencing is all the interaction software tools. These can be used to integrate "*whiteboard*" modules where participants react to visual material and express themselves by circling, selecting, and arranging the elements being tested according to their preferences (cf. logo testing, print and web advertising, etc.).

Table 14 - Consumer meetings: in person or by videoconference?

	Meeting room	Videoconference meeting
Duration	2h30 to 4h	1h30 to 2h30
Number	7 to 10 participants	5 to 12 participants
Benefits	Group dynamics, non-verbal language, synchronization of participants, physical or projected stimuli Room with one-way glass for monitoring	Flexibility of organization, ubiquity for national or international sites, stimuli via everyone's screen Virtual monitoring by customers and employees
Disadvantages	Unique location, travel constraints, position of participants in the space which can condition relationships	Technical connection problems, inability to touch products, background noise (cicadas singing, noisy surroundings)

Participation	Audio, physical, non-verbal, flip chart	Audio, webcam, chat, screen sharing, whiteboard
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Videoconference meetings require you to limit the number of people speaking, as it is more difficult to get the message across. With a microphone that only accepts one person at a time, overlapping must be avoided.

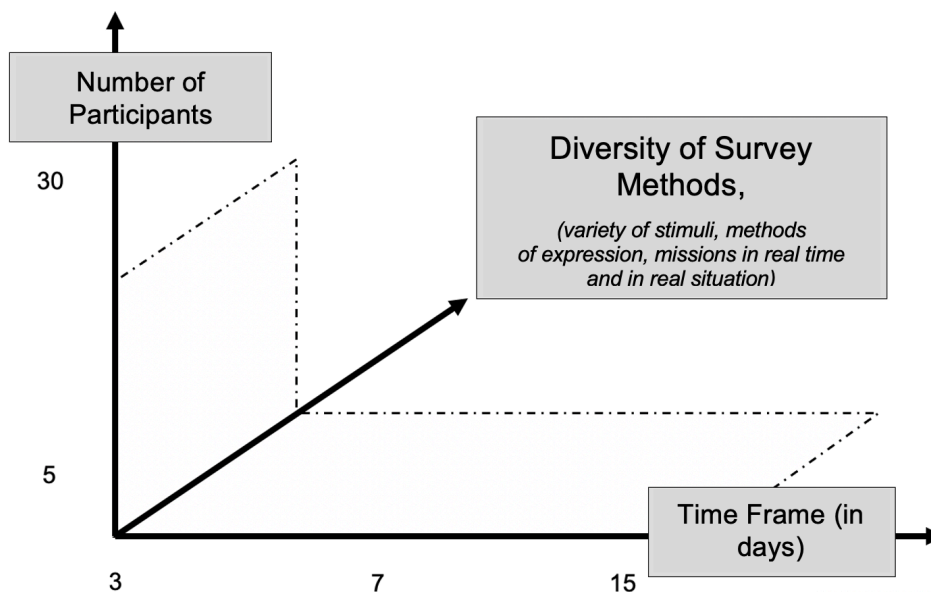
Videoconference meetings are an opportunity to rethink the use of focus groups. It is interesting to:

- hold meetings after a forum phase, when participants have had the opportunity to express themselves individually and are familiar with the subject.
- organize several successive videoconferences with the same participants (which would be difficult or very costly in the physical world)
- conceive the meeting in terms of the stimuli to be presented.

Section 1.04 4. Bulletin board or online qualitative forum

Bulletin board methodology, which first appeared in the United States in 1998, has established itself as the most in-depth and comprehensive online qualitative research technique. It is also known as a Qual *online* forum. Many research institutes use the term *online* community, even if it involves 10 to 30 participants.

Table 15 - *Online* forum: variable geometry methodology



The method used consists of an asynchronous dialogue via the Internet between a moderator and the participants, using different modalities. Depending on the situation, the interviewees can answer the questions:

- without seeing other people's answers;
- accessing the other answers only after having answered them themselves;
- seeing the other answers straight away.

The Qual *online* forum makes it possible to organize real group discussions, where participants can see and react to each other's answers, as well as individual phases where they are assured that their answers remain confidential.

Face-to-face group	<i>Online</i> forum
In-room entertainment, isolated in a neutral room with one-way mirror	Immersive animation (natural context) with missions and meetings
Close injection of stimuli (over 2 to 4 hours)	Progressive injection of stimuli and subjects over several days
Collective dynamics	Individual and collective relaunch procedures
Presenter very present (speaks 1/3 of the time for a 3-hour group)	More say for participants

Working over time and the flexibility of questioning mean that the questioning has to be scripted in such a way that participants alternate between periods of reflection and more playful breathing space, periods of individual questioning and periods of group discussion.

Since the *online* qualitative forum is asynchronous and self-administered, the questioning must be well mastered beforehand, even if adjustments can be made as the fieldwork progresses. This involves:

- controlling the number of open questions per questioning session (5 to 15) and the response time per participant (30 to 45 minutes)
- encouraging wide-ranging questions at the outset, encourage extended answers and avoid overly methodical or academic lists of reactions
- showing that the answers are used to enrich the questioning from one day to the next

The founding principle of the Qual *online* forum is the time frame participants must answer the questions asked. Each respondent spends 30 minutes to 1 hour a day answering, from their own terminal (computer, mobile, tablet) and at their own pace.

Table 16 - Type of study and time spent by consumers

Type of study	Expression time	Total time	Mode
Focus groups	2 groups of 3 hours	6 hours	collective
Individual face-to-face interviews	12 people X 1 hour	12 hours	individual
Individual telephone interviews	20 people X 1 hour	20 hours	individual
Online forum	12 people X 9 days X 45 min/day	72 hours	Individual and collective
Survey with 12 open questions	300 people X 15 min	75 hours	individual

In addition to time of availability, the online forum offers another advantage: participants can respond whenever they wish. This flexibility makes the methodology particularly suitable for surveys requiring the participation of very active people.

A bit of theory

The Qual online forum, the new frontier of qualitative research?

Beyond its most directly operational aspects, the forum is shifting the traditional categories and boundaries of qualitative research. Let's look at the main changes brought about by the Qual online forum.

- **It establishes a new relationship with time**
- **It blurs the boundaries between individual interviews and focus groups**
- **It inaugurates a hybrid mode of expression, between the written and the spoken word, between text and image.**

Table10 - Interviewees' expression: oral or written?

	ORAL	WRITTEN
Function	Spontaneous and informal expression	Official and more solemn expression, conservation, distancing and reflection
Disadvantages	Words fly away and are forgotten	Writings are binding on their authors (annoying or inhibiting)

Section 1.05 4.1 Applications of the Qual online forum

The characteristics of the forum make it particularly suitable for certain uses.

- Query close to user experience
- Evolving interaction between pollster and respondents

Here are a few examples of *bulletin board* and *online* forum applications that we have tested at QualiQuanti:

- evaluation of all points of contact for a brand or product (360°);
- study of an extremely large corpus, with almost a hundred examples to be viewed over ten days;
- study of the imaginary world of a brand, using projective methods such as virtual collage (selection of images or photos from a database);
- advertising communication test with progressive evaluation of the uses of the category, the perception of the product, the brand, the current communication, the competitive context, etc.

Section 1.06 4.2 Creative forum facilitation techniques

The *online* forum opens a very wide range of facilitation techniques. Here are a few examples suggested by Claire-Marie Lévêque from Happenability.

The moderator can give the participants tasks based on creative techniques and ask them to produce:

- reports, a mock article, a situation under pressure to project themselves into problem solving;
- mood boards using images found on the web;
- draw pictures of their vision of their neighborhood and present them to others;
- a one-page storyboard or comic strip, or a story about how a product is used.

These recreational activities, with no demands on the formal quality of the finished product, create emulation and bounce-back among the participants.

To diversify participation methods, respondents can play or even compete. It is possible to organize synchronous meetings within an asynchronous system, either in chat mode or videoconference mode.

Section 1.07 4.3 Measuring intensity in small samples

Qual *online* software offers flash survey modules. These surveys generate interest, purchase intention or satisfaction scores for a small number of individuals.

The intensity of an experience is just as predictive of success as the number of people interested. The high satisfaction score, revealing a level of enthusiasm, is more informative than the total of "average satisfaction + high satisfaction". Intensity is assessed on both small and large samples.

Table 17 - Small and large samples: which measure?

	Small sample	Large sample
Sample	12 to 50 individuals per qualitative survey	100 to 2000 individuals per survey
Example	Test of 200 20-second videos with 12 people	Test of 50 umbrella designs with 300 people
Questioning time	2 to 10 hours over several days or weeks	5 to 20 minutes
Measurement on a scale	Intensity measurement	Coverage measurement + intensity measurement
Open feedback	Systematics	Partial
Benefits	Compare and rank many objects. Combine scoring and feedback.	See how many are members, who is a member

Section 1.08 5. Qual online software

After using the American Qualboard software, which, along with itracks, was one of the few available in the early days of *online* Qual, the profession saw a multitude of solutions flourish: Kernwert, SoQual, Krealinks, Dialogmaker, LiveLoop, Incling, VisionsLive, Recollective, FocusVision and Collabito.

In this book, we will look at three solutions that we have tried out: Krealinks, WhatsApp and Bilendi Discuss.

Krealinks is a platform available in more than 150 countries with a full range of *online* exchange tools (*bulletin board*, communities, online meetings, etc.) which exists since 2009.

WhatsApp is a mass-market application for private discussion groups that can also be used to host forums.

Bilendi Discuss is a tool where participants choose the response channel that suits them best, including SMS, email, Messenger, WhatsApp, Slack or LinkedIn Message in the near future.

Section 1.09 6. Online communities, from 20 to 20,000 participants

An *online* community is a public or private social network that consumers join to discuss a brand, products, or services. A community can last from a few days (short-term or pop-up community) to several months (long-term community) or even several years. Community members are regularly involved in synchronous or asynchronous activities.

Table 18 - The *online* community: closed or open?

Closed community	Open Community
50 to 2000 people	1000 to 50,000 people (no limit)
All members are active and must participate regularly in the various surveys conducted on the platform.	Wears the brand colors and has inactive members
Moving towards an <i>online</i> forum	Moving towards a proprietary panel: https://voicebox.curo-group.co.uk/auth/sign_in

Participants receive regular tasks (at least one a week) The community is led by discussion "facilitators" who create a certain familiarity and habits.

Section 1.10 6.1 The objectives of an online learning community

The study communities meet several objectives that will evolve as the methodology develops and its mastery is perfected.

Here are the main objectives identified:

- Get immediate and rapid feedback on a product, customer service, sales support, advertising, recruitment campaign, the company's corporate image, etc. It's a tool dedicated to all the company's departments: R&D, Sales, Product Marketing, Customer Relations, HR, General Management, which facilitates decision-making in real time;
- Helping the creation and ideation process: the creative power of brainstorming to develop concepts: new services, new uses, new ideas;
- provide a natural public relations tool for viral marketing: we recruit the core target and *early adopters* to create buzz.

Case Study

Some examples of online communities

The "Stars Insight community" is an online community developed by TNS for Mercedes-Benz (Germany). It brings together 500 participants a year who are questioned on marketing issues relating to the German automotive industry. The community platform includes questionnaires, online forums and focus groups, creative competitions and a free expression zone.

Since 2018, Béatrice Maccario from Krealinks has seen a rise in requests for "*long term communities*" or "*Insight communities*" of 100 to 500 people, with the need to be able to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research over a long period. It cites a number of examples, including a community of several thousand members for Zalando, which is present in various European markets, a Generali France community that enables the brand to interact with its customers, and a community of several thousand '*movie lovers*' in the United States for a subsidiary of NBC Universal.

Section 1.11 6.2 Online communities versus ad hoc panels

Table 19 - Participation: panel or study community?

<i>Ad hoc panel</i>	<i>Study community</i>
Each individual is isolated	Each individual is "in society"
Panel members are free to accept or decline invitations.	Each member of the community is (more or less) obliged to participate whenever they are asked
There is no systematic interaction between panel members	There is systematic interaction between members of the community
A member is a "panelist"	A member is a "co-researcher"

Section 1.12 6.3 Consultation platforms

Some players are setting up consultation systems for very large populations. The public broadcasting companies embarked on this approach in 2018 and again in 2020. In 2018, more than 120,000 listeners and viewers produced more than 400,000 comments. By the end of 2020, just over 20,000 people had contributed and over 200,000 comments had been generated. The process carried out with

OpinionWay involved opening an account and filling in a profile. Subscribers were asked 21 open-ended questions, with no obligation and the option of answering several times. The aim was to understand their relationship with public broadcasting and their expectations in terms of content and formats.

The range of online questioning tools is vast and variable: individual or collective, involving tens or thousands of participants. Practical experience shows the value of using a combination of methods depending on requirements.

As well as interviewing consumers, the web is a vast library of data that can be used for qualitative research. Documentary research is a family of studies in its own right within qualitative research.

Chapter 4: Successful document exploration

Marketing research is benefiting from an increase in web-based data. Technological resources make it easy to create bespoke databases on WordPress or YouTube. To understand developments, it is useful to monitor experiential innovations, new products and services, editorial formats, sociological behavior, and micro-cultures.

A mountain of qualitative data

The digital world and the web provide easy access to a wealth of data: articles, newsletters, influencers, studies, testimonials, product information, photos, videos, social media, etc. Numerous tools facilitate this monitoring: Crawler, Pocket, Inoreader, Google alerts, Panda, Feedly, Netvibes, etc. The Anglo-Saxons call this documentary work "*desk research*". There is a wide range of free and paid sources: trade associations, specialist press, databases, off-the-shelf studies, etc.

But monitoring is not limited to collecting information via your computer. You have to go out into the field, observe where products are sold and consumed, buy them, taste them, live and collect experiences.

Software can be used to extract the available material. This software is best suited to capturing textual content. We will first look at the potential of visual data before returning to textual content in the chapter on *social listening*.

The proper use of qualitative data

For quantitative data, the focus is on the representativeness of the samples. The aim is to be able to reproduce proportions to simulate a defined population. For qualitative data, the aim is to cover and illustrate different types of situations. Experience shows that a critical mass of cases is needed to understand a phenomenon.

To build up an interesting body of documentation, you need to pursue several objectives simultaneously:

- to cover the different facets of the universe;
- to look for innovative, original and inspiring examples that stand out from the crowd;
- to identify examples that question the norm and foreshadow new uses;
- to look at all the dimensions of the universe (name, visual identity, design, arguments, communication, instructions for use, composition);

- to focus on the sub-family to which the client wishes to belong.

To understand a world, you need to bring together several dozen to several hundred examples. This is the prerequisite for drawing up an overview, identifying rules and anticipating developments. This saturation technique based on a large corpus analyzed in depth also makes it possible to become the benchmark for the subject in question.

Case Study

Overview of plant-based meat substitutes

For example, to understand the phenomenon of plant-based food products, it is useful to review several dozen or even hundreds of dry and fresh products. This allows us to identify five product families, ranging from meat substitutes (which imitate the codes, shapes and textures of meat) to plant-based alternatives:

- vegetarian meat substitutes: steak, burger, escalope, sausage, nuggets, ham
- vegetable-based cooking aids: minced meat, bacon, matchsticks, sliced vegetables
- vegetable-based ready meals: pan-fried dishes, lasagna, ravioli, polenta, bowls, dahl, curry, falafels, etc.
- vegetable cakes: galettes, fried, croquets
- raw plant products: tofu, seitan and tempeh

This scan will help you to understand these paradoxical products, which are both healthy and industrial. They are made up of valuable ingredients (cereals, pulses, vegetables, seeds and oilseeds, spices, dried fruit) but are processed. They cover a wide range of consumption occasions, but are presented as specialized products. By flirting with dietary specialization and special diets, they remain on the fringes of our habits. Their taste and qualities are uneven, with both good and bad surprises.

The macroscope for deciphering complex environments

Joël de Rosnay's book *Macroscope, Towards a Global Vision*, published in 1975, defends the idea of a systemic analysis adapted to the observation of complex environments.

Table 20 - Processing qualitative data: multiplication and reduction

Data multiplication: telescope	Data reduction: microscope
Observation of hundreds of examples	Focus on significant examples
A body of work that seeks to cover all aspects of reality	Consideration of all the facets of an object
Get an overview, identify good practice	Carry out a very detailed analysis, looking at all dimensions
Requires effort to collect, classify and ensure completeness	Requires analysis and in-depth study
Global vision of the system and encyclopedic knowledge	A detailed understanding of cells and their mechanisms

Hyperwatch or width and depth of analysis

This two-way approach, known as hyperwatch, has been theorized by phenomenology. We speak of "eidetic" variation to imply that a phenomenon emerges when one or more of its dimensions are varied. Essence is never fully realized in a single incarnation. It is by observing variations that we can acquire a good knowledge of the object and identify its elements of strength. The method involves analyzing a phenomenon by observing a cloud of similar manifestations.

Case Study

The dynamics of reality TV

Here are some of the results of a study carried out when reality TV first appeared, based on an analysis of around thirty shows.

The novelty of reality TV lies in the status given to the anonymous:

- in terms of role: anonymous people make the show;
- in terms of profile: they are ordinary people;
- in terms of treatment: over a period of several weeks.

International reality TV shows the recurrence of a number of decisive factors:

- a tendency to mix genres (fiction, games, reality, interactivity);
- the emphasis on the lived experience of the protagonists and on expressing their feelings about this experience;
- a focus on the group rather than the individual. In reality TV shows, the relationship between the participants becomes essential;
- shows that take place over time, so that you can get to know the anonymous people and follow their development;
- shows that are interactive with the audience (viewers influence the course of the show).

The more or less exhaustive combination of the mechanisms described above produces novel television effects for the viewer:

- the cumulative benefits of listening ;
- an ambiguous and impure register, as in real life;
- content plasticity ;
- promoting experience and intimacy.

Producing clean data

There are various ways of compiling a document search:

- using available data: via search engines and reference sites or with freelance databases
- by producing original data thanks to the research team and consumers.

Some content, such as advertising, is only accessible temporarily. Video recording has the advantage of guaranteeing the preservation of the medium. For proprietary material, all you need to do is take screen captures (photo or video captures), photograph or film the real thing.

In April-May 2020, during the first confinement, two hundred restaurants forced to switch to takeaway sales were scrutinized¹² with the aim of highlighting the sector's adaptation in terms of offerings, recipes, packaging, space planning, communication, prices, and opening times. The idea was to compare, to look at the Facebook and Instagram accounts, to order, to test the dishes, to audit the menus and the physical and digital tools. The most instructive thing was to order the different formulas and experience them together. We were able to organize lunches with menus from several restaurants. These experiences enabled us to appreciate the packaging, the chefs' explanations and little words, the quantities offered, the visual rendering and the suitability of the dishes for reheated and remote consumption.

Here is an article on the key results:



Creating structured databases

The risk with documentary research is that you will be swamped by the sheer number of examples. There are various ways of finding your way through the mass of qualitative data:

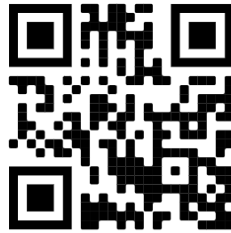
- Produce a series of PowerPoint files with key images of the situation observed, classified according to different criteria
- set videos available via YouTube or Vimeo to confidential mode, with tags to make them easier to find
- create a database on WordPress to build an observatory on a given subject

Thirty years of documentary analysis

QualiQuanti's research work has led us to carry out several hundred documentary surveys. Each study began with the creation of an observatory made up of a multitude of examples.

¹² <https://www.qualiquanti.fr/restaurateurs-mieux-vendre-a-empporter>

On brand content, a database of over 7,000 cases has been created at <http://veillebrandcontent.fr/> :



Each case is described, with photos and links to the operation. Cases are listed not only by sector, but also by genre (podcast, consumer, short film, events), by brand and by theme. This observatory makes it possible to carry out *ad hoc* analyses in a very short space of time. In particular, a decoder of brand content in the insurance sector, with over 350 examples, has been developed.

All the work mentioned above should help you to achieve one objective: to be able to go round the world of a subject in a few minutes by browsing through structured documentary material. Reviewing, analyzing, and comparing a large mass of qualitative data gives you a concrete and detailed understanding of the subject. It gives you the super-power to understand the phenomenon in all its dimensions and to glimpse operating rules, areas for innovation and improvement, and developments.

Knowledge management

Thirty years of research and document monitoring have enabled us to build up a body of expertise that complements and enriches our work on brands, media, advertising, *retail*, and locations. We have built bridges between teleshopping, advertorial, *native advertising*, and product content. All these modes of communication are based on a pragmatic relationship with the product, on putting it into a situation of use alongside more contemplative advertising. Research into brand content has benefited from work on advertising intrusion and editorial. To understand how brands become media, it is useful to have analyzed how media work. Reviewing the different communication techniques provides a map and enables us to think about the future of advertising.

To maximize the power of qualitative research, it is useful to implement a *knowledge management* approach. The principle is to identify, analyze, organize, store, and share knowledge within an organization.

Testing a multitude of stimuli

One way of generating added value is to get consumers to react to the corpus. Methodologies such as the *online* forum make it possible to progressively test dozens or even hundreds of stimuli over a period of 15 days to 3 weeks. This encourages comparisons and enables lessons to be learned. Every effort must be made to facilitate access to the cases (video links, playlists, audio content, multi-visual aids, presentation sheets, example books, products sent by post) and feedback by coding the stimuli. Videoconferencing is also very well suited to the presentation of stimuli, as each participant can see the different examples in full screen mode, and the presenter can switch easily from one stimulus to another.

These multiple case injections are highly productive. By eliciting enlightened feedback, they help to situate the different facets of the universe under consideration. Having tested several corpora, we have come to the conclusion that this approach provides a concrete understanding of what works and illustrates the results and recommendations.

Based on this kind of documentation, we can get reactions from consumers as well as experts. The ideal is to be able to enrich the monitoring work with a semiological analysis phase that draws all the lessons from the accumulated material.

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