



## OVERVIEW

You hear about all sorts of trends in the qualitative research space: artificial intelligence (AI), neuromarketing, online and mobile to name just a few. Some have been around longer than others, but all have been touted as the next big thing at one point.

But, does new necessarily mean better? To decide, we'll share our perspective on the true intent of qualitative research and give tips on how to get the best insights for your next project.

# Trendy vs. Tried and True: 7 Ways to Ensure the Best Qualitative Insights

## Defining Qualitative Research

According to the Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA),

*"Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. It uses in-depth studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive."*

Here's how qualitative gets to those insightful, deep-dive results critical to decision-making:

1. The synergy among respondents to build on each other's thoughts and ideas.
2. It's dynamic nature which engages respondents more than structured surveys.
3. The opportunity to probe so you can reach beyond initial responses and rationales.
4. Being able to observe, record and interpret non-verbal communication.
5. Being able to engage respondents in projective techniques and exercises to illicit more spontaneous reactions and comments.





## 7 Tips to Get the Best Qualitative Insights

When determining whether qualitative trends or new technologies will help you get the best insights in your project, consider the true intent of qualitative along with the following:

### 1. Take your time

The ability to accelerate qualitative research with online methodologies means you may be able to turn your project around in record time. But should you? Remember, your research should be about getting that deep-dive into the hows and whys. If you can expedite the process and accomplish that, wonderful! But, if you need insight from personal interactions, for example, web cams may simply not do the trick. Don't let impatience ruin good insight.

### 2. Mix up your tools

In considering trends or new technologies in qualitative, remember it's not all or nothing. Often, it's best to mix the tried and true with the new. For example, suppose you have a hair care product. You can send it to the consumer and have them try it for a period of time while keeping video and/or photo diaries. You get the in-home and the ethnography aspect plus you could also have them participate in online bulletin boards or bring them in for an in-person focus group. That mix may be the key to the rich results you need.

### 3. Consider qualitative after quantitative

You may think you know the answer to that one, but when it comes to qualitative and quantitative studies, qualitative doesn't always need to go first. A recent

client was new to a market and didn't really know what attributes were important enough to consumers to do a qualitative discovery. They quantified that first and were then able to do a deeper dive about what different attributes meant to consumers within specific aspects of the product.

### 4. Trust your recruiter

Regardless of whether you choose a trendy or a tried-and-true methodology, recruiting is the core of qualitative research. But often we question our recruiters at every turn. Will it really take this long? Should the incentive really be this much? You should trust in the expertise of your recruiter (you did your homework in choosing them right?) and give them the opportunity to do their job. By truly partnering with those who specialize in qualitative recruiting and letting them guide you on what works for specific audiences, types of studies, incentives and more, you're on your way to getting the best qualitative insights.

### 5. Partner with the right moderator

It can be hard to truly understand the value of a great moderator until you've seen one in action. 'You'll know it when you see it' definitely applies here. It's not so much about whether the moderator is skilled in the next trendy thing, it's their skill in creating a recruiting screener and discussion guide along with top-notch probing skills and analysis of findings that are the keys to success.



So ask around. But be warned; great moderators are like hidden treasure — your colleagues may not want to share!

## 6. Let the consumer tell the story

One of the most important aspects of qualitative research is to let the consumer tell their story. Whether at home, shopping or traveling, look for the best way to go along with them to get that in-depth understanding. Today's smartphones have made that easier than ever with the ability to do video and/or picture diaries. Just as important, find an online platform that makes it easy for the consumer to upload those diaries and for you to manage that insight.

## 7. Keep participants engaged

This is one of the burning questions for any type of research. Consumers today have incredibly short attention spans and everyone's vying for it. Using a trendy qualitative research tool isn't necessarily a sure thing to overcome this. Just because you think it's cool doesn't mean the consumer hasn't already been there, done that — particularly younger audiences. And without that engagement in-person, you have no depth; without it online, it's basically a survey. What do you do? Use the trendy where it makes sense, but also make sure to keep it short, set clear expectations and be engaging for goodness sake — *it is qualitative* (remember our moderator tip)!



For more information on how we can help with your next qualitative research project, contact **Ironwood Insights Group** today.

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