GROWTH FOR GROWTH

EMPATHY-DRIVEN CONSUMER RESEARCH

A PRIMER

INTRODUCTION

What is consumer intelligence?

Consumer intelligence refers to the insights and recommendations generated by research teams about target demographics of consumers. It is the actionable knowledge we accumulate through our research, which informs the design of sustainable, impactful and profitable product and market innovations.

In the Growth for Growth network, ThinkPlace used a range of research methods (which have been described further on the following pages) to develop consumer intelligence. Regardless of method, this research focused on spending time with people in their context, learning about how consumers experience the world, not how we see their world externally.

Why do we need empathy-driven consumer intelligence?

Basing decisions on consumer intelligence leads to:

- Products and services that are more successful in markets because they respond to real consumer needs
- Contextually appropriate solutions that respond to subtle nuances in personal or community beliefs, preferences, or norms as opportunities rather than barriers
- Actions that are de-risked from the outset and incrementally scalable
- Opportunity to create real and sustained community benefit by responding directly to challenges that communities face

INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

ThinkPlace is a global design and innovation firm who integrates both human-centred design and systems thinking approaches to provide a deeper, richer understanding of the behavioural determinants affecting people's capability to confidently, willing and effectively change. That change may come in the form of a social norm or harmful behaviour, or it can come in the form of decision-making around a product or service.

By taking an approach that's simultaneously human-centred and systems-oriented, we look to empathise with the lived experience of a problem or challenge space and leverage that into system-level interventions that have the most potential for bridging the gap between intention and action.

This learning module is part of a set of tools and resources generated under the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Private Sector Partnerships (PSP) for nutrition initiative. The PSP initiative funded a portfolio of demonstration projects as part of a learning agenda on how to overcome barriers that have impeded private companies from making nutritious, packaged fortified foods accessible and affordable to lower-income consumers in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

This content herein is based on research funded by (or in part by) the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of ThinkPlace and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?

Influencing nutrition outcomes requires navigating a complex set of influences which drive consumer behaviour. This is far from easy, and requires a set of tools and techniques which are suitable for uncovering deep insights about what matters most to the target consumer.

While other forms of research start with a set of assumptions about consumer preferences or behaviour, empathy-driven consumer research requires the researcher to take a divergent and non-deterministic mindset. The researcher is prompted to approach the consumer's context with a child-like naiveté, exploring, sensing and perceiving to better understand what the consumer values and needs. Consumer research emphasises sensing rather than making quick judgements, as consumer demand may be latent or difficult to self-report.

Consumers operate within complex social systems characterised by high degrees of uncertainty and ambiguity – that is, decision-making is not always linear and predictable. The reasons why a consumer chooses to purchase one product over another may be driven by any number of intersecting or interdependent influences. Moreover, those influences are likely comprised of some combination of sociocultural, psychological and environmental factors. Bearing this in mind, we rely on both methods which elicit self-reported data as well as those which elicit observable, behavioural (more objective) data.

If you are practicing empathy-driven consumer research, you may be seeking to:

- Build empathy (e.g. with existing eating preferences and purchasing behaviours) to understand the nuanced drivers behind behaviour
- Understand preferences, values and beliefs (e.g. around nutrition and what it means to be healthy) that influence the consumption patterns of individuals and communities, and might support or hinder the adoption of a new product
- Identify attitudes and perceptions (e.g. of nutritious and non-nutritious foods, or the social value of eating certain products) that drive decision making and influence an individuals willingness or hesitancy to consume certain products
- Uncover the influences over consumption behaviour and decision-making that need to be considered

Why empathy-driven?

Because design is an act of problem-solving, it is essential that we first have a profound and root cause definition of the problem we're seeking to solve.

Active and empathetic listening requires us us to see the world through the consumer's eyes. Doing so allows new dimensions of the problem space emerge and better positions the designer to create a tailored, consumer-centric solution.

Taking an empathy-driven approach also offers clarity in terms of what our consumers value, what they prioritise and what they might find desirable. Together, this helps define demand and ensures we develop something which not only meets nutrition outcomes but is also highly motivating and desirable for the consumers.

WHY DO WE CONDUCT CONSUMER RESEARCH?

We run consumer research to develop consumer intelligence, with the aim to inform projects that achieve sustainable nutrition impact at scale. Understanding the beliefs, drivers, and attitudes of consumers, their experiences, and the communities and societies they operate in helps us to design products and services that are more impactful and more successful.

There are three core outcomes that we may be looking for during research. An engagement could be focused on just one of these outcomes, or could be a mix of all three. These outcomes are:

- **Describe** a context or environment to provide an overarching view of consumers, the communities in which they operate (for example: home or school), and their beliefs and attitudes. In this context, the outcome of this type of research is often a design brief
- **Explain** a root cause of a particular behaviour or phenomenon by taking a system view of the elements that might be driving an action. The outcome of this type of research is an understanding of a particular environment, context, activity, or consumer group that drives decision making
- **Inspire** a suite of ideas or concepts that overcome a consumer challenge or create an opportunity. The result of this type of research is innovative solutions that respond to real consumer need or demand that are grounded in usage context, which helps them overcome some barriers to entry from the outset

The most common type of research that ThinkPlace conducted within the Growth for Growth consortia was 'Describe'-style research. For this reason, the rest of this learning module is focused on the design, delivery and benefits that can be gained from this research focused on this outcome.

Describe research looks like:

Focus on time period

Focus on past — *Focus on present* — *Focus on future*

This style of research is focused on current user experiences, opinions and attitudes. While answers may naturally diverge to include the past and future, researchers are most concerned with current state experiences.

Conversation structure

Participant driven — *Researcher driven*

In this style of research we allow participants to guide conversations, with researchers mainly providing prompts and clarifying questions. Researchers focus on capturing what they are hearing, and providing lose structure to research opportunities.

Question structure

Answer focus — *Exploratory focus*

Rather than focusing on getting the answers to a set of questions, researchers focus on exploring topic areas and the thoughts of participants. Conversation guides are more unstructured, and leave room for additional topics to be brought in and explored as opportunities arise.

OUTCOMES OF CONSUMER RESEARCH

There are several core outcomes that consumer research can deliver. In the Growth for Growth context, these outcomes can be broken down from a range of perspectives:

Creating scaled impact to support individuals and communities

The ultimate goal of the Growth for Growth was to create sustainable nutrition impact, at scale, for low and middle income consumers. In order to do this, we needed to build empathy and help decision makers understand the unique contexts in which our target consumers make decisions about their nutrition intake. Using consumer intelligence to create products that were more attractive and accessible to our target consumers ultimately helped to develop products that were more successful, and contributed to nutrition outcomes in communities.

Driving better commercial decisions

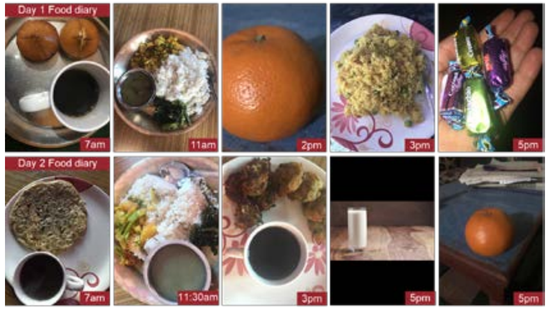
Supporting organisations to make better decisions about accessing new markets, developing products that that are attractive to consumers, and considering the context-specific elements of business model design. When done throughout product design processes, consumer research can help to de-risk ongoing investment and execution.

Supporting more successful project outcomes

Bringing the voice of the user into all elements of design and delivery can also help to driver better project decisions. In the Growth for Growth context, user research was used to make more effective decisions around elements such as sales channels, product types, product pricing, and usage scenarios.

Examples of consumer research artefacts and deliverables

This shows the eating and snacking habits of adolescent girls in Indonesia.



This digital ethnography study had users photograph every interaction they had with foods throughout a 24 hour period.

The Jobs to be done (JTBD) approach captures the daily journey of a target user and captures all of the specific challenges and requirements that our target audience has throughout the day. These can become great design opportunities.

INTENT

Setting the parameters for a divergent process

Consumer-research should always be driven by intent, rather than a pre-determined product or service intervention. While other forms of research begin with a clear question founded on assumptions about consumer preferences, the intent process is about placing that question within the broader context and higher order spirit of the enquiry.

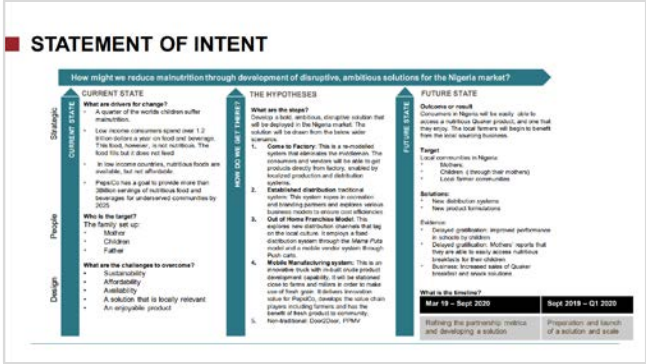
Creating space for the agenda to evolve

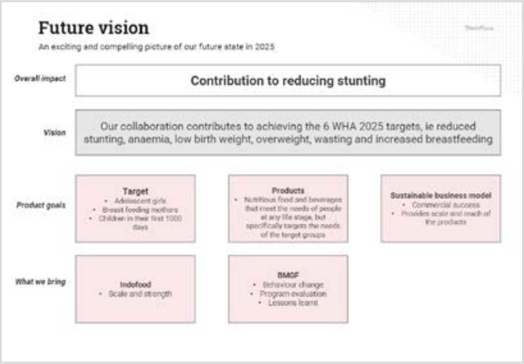
The empathy-driven consumer research process that ThinkPlace employs begins with an understanding that our initial assumptions, and therefore our research question, may be incorrect. The intent process, therefore, seeks to establishes the parameters in which a research team will operate rather than a tightly bound and pre-determined scope. It also provides stakeholders with the opportunity to forge alignment early, effectively de-risking the cost and risk of misalignment later in the process.

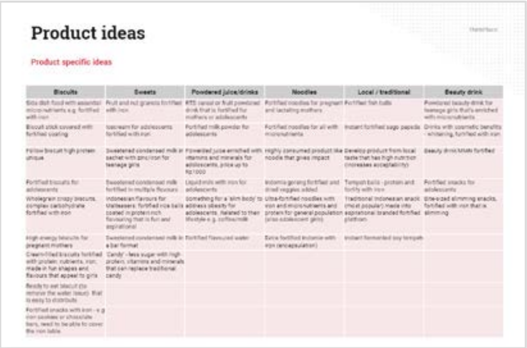
This essential stage ensures that 1) the question that will ultimately be answered is the *right* question, even if we do not know what it is at the outset, 2) that research teams have the right context, and right research setting (are we trying to describe, explain, or inspire?) to correctly adapt their approach as new information emerges, and 3) that all stakeholders are able to hold themselves accountable and honest to the driving intent, rather than pre-held beliefs and biases.

Outputs

The intent is captured in a single and foundation document, usually between 1-3 pages. This forms the basis for how all aspects of the consumer research process is designed, and acts as an accountability measure to ensure that as we iterate we continue to be striving towards our overarching intent.







Example intent statements, which articulate the initial assumptions, goals and objectives of the research approach. It also captures the constraints, challenges and key stakeholders involved.

INTENT CONTINUED

Who should be involved?

The intent process must bring together diverse group of senior stakeholders, generally between 5 and 10 individuals, who can jointly determine and agree on the overarching intent. This group should represent what we call the 'Four Voices of Design'.

1. **The Voice of Intent** is senior strategic voice(s) that can speak to the unifying purpose behind the effort.
2. **The Voice of Experience** is brought by context experts, who are deeply familiar with the target market (or perhaps are themselves members of the target community);
3. **The Voice of Expertise** represents understands the technical and practical opportunities and limitations within the challenge space. Depending on the types of interventions, these may include product and service design experts, logisticians, financial experts, and others.
4. **The Voice of Design** facilitates and brokers the conversation, bringing together each individual part into a unified intent.

What does it look like?

Intent is established during a single workshop, as short as one hour for simple challenges or spanning one or more days for complex challenges. Participants are led through a structured intent process that answer:

The Current State

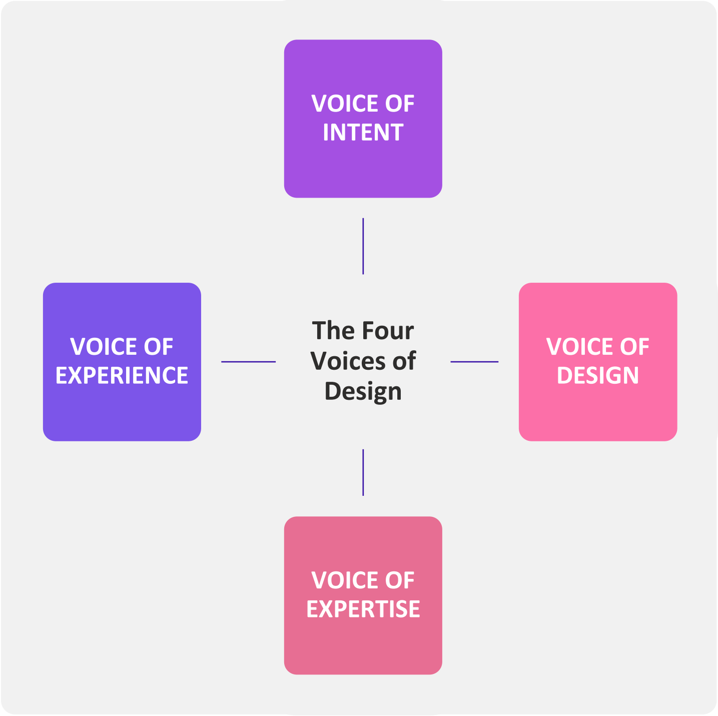
- What is the broad context and drivers which have led to the market challenge?
- Who is the target market, and what other critical stakeholders do we need to understand?
- What is known, assumed, and unknown about opportunity space in the market?

The Hypothesis

- What shift are we seeking to make with subsequent product or service intervention?
- What is our focusing question that the research will answer?

The Future State

- What is the outcome or result we are seeking?
- How will we know if our market intervention has been successful?



RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is guided by the intent of the research and the desired outcome of the research. However, there are some core design principles that we employ consistently to ensure that research delivers. These include:

Segmenting users

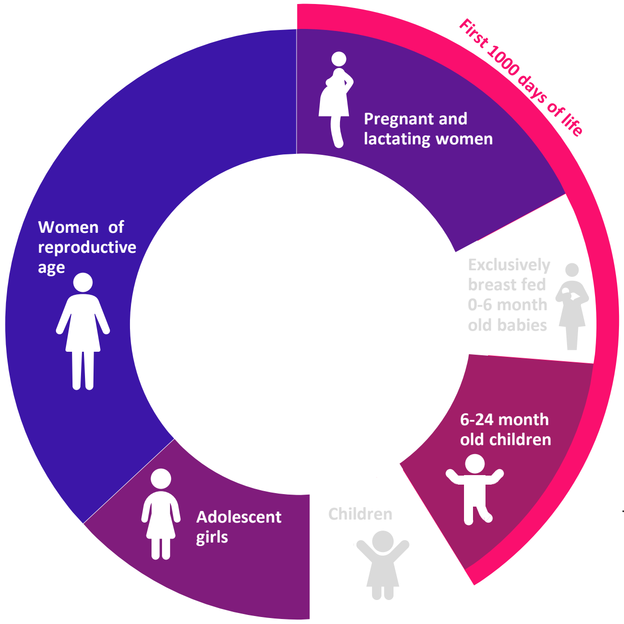
One of the first steps of our research design process is to determine the consumers that we want to understand, and why. The Growth for Growth program focused specifically on women of reproductive age, pregnant and lactating women, and children in the first 1000 days of life. In each of the Growth for Growth projects, we segmented these groups based on a wide range of elements, including their preference for traditional or modern foods, willingness to engage with technology or the amount of social pressure they feel to conform. Our approaches go beyond traditional segmentation styles (for example: work based or gender) and consider the deeper drivers of behaviour.

Developing a holistic perspective of the consumer

Taking a holistic approach to understanding the consumer means we seek to understand the consumer through a range of lenses. This means that we explore the impact a range of environments have on an individual's nutrition habits – for example, we examine the social structures, work environments, and traditional attitudes that impact the way a customer chooses, consumes, and interacts with the product they consume. This process means we develop a more robust understanding of social norms and individual attitudes, which ultimately allows us to design products and systems that are more attractive and more successful.

Asking the right research questions

We have robust processes in place to ensure that our research approach asks the right questions from the outset, and has inbuilt flexibility to adapt as required. Our qualitative research methods are also framed by desktop research. We draw on a range of academic fields (including social psychology, behaviour change, and ethnography) to first understand what is already known and develop research questions to fill gaps in our understanding or prove/disprove current hypotheses.



In the Private Sector Partnership work ThinkPlace did as part of the Growth for Growth consortia, our target users were women of adolescent age, pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls, and children in the first 1000 days of life (excluding 0-6 month babies).

Each of these groups, in each of the target countries, has unique characteristics which we considered when designing our research and working to understand their consumption behaviours.

RESEARCH DESIGN CONTINUED

Developing the right research mix

We develop the right mix of research tools based on the characteristics of our target customer segments. For example, when researching in highly collectivist societies, and particularly when researching with young girls, we know that tools such as surveys or questionnaires introduce bias into research and do not deliver effective results. For this reason, we triangulate datapoints to form a holistic view of the consumer, and design bespoke research artefacts and tools that directly respond to research contexts, research participants, and our objectives.

A key part of this research mix is secondary information, which we build on to frame our research and continuously refer back to during research to ground our ongoing findings. We also use primary and secondary quantitative data sets to determine the scale of our qualitative insights. This allows us to gain a deep understanding of behaviours and attitudes at an individual and community level, and extrapolate our insights to understand how they might influence at a macro-level. Our research mix approach means we do not have to sacrifice nuance or scale when understanding our target consumer groups,

Think about the audience for the research

At the research design phase, it is also essential to consider the research audience. Understanding the characteristics (for example: are they experts in consumer behaviour, or will they frame findings through the lens of another discipline), needs, and what the audience is trying to achieve through the research helps us to guide the way we approach our research. While we always work to build empathy and understanding for target customers through our research, our approach will vary. For example, we used 'immersion experiences' during the Growth for Growth program of work to bring diverse experts into the field so they could develop a better understanding of customers, and frame their input into the project from this perspective.

	1. CONTEXT	2. BEHAVIOURS	3. PRODUCT
	Context is about understanding relevant social, economic and technological trends	**Behaviours** is about understanding how people think, feel and behave, and their attitudes, values and beliefs	**Product** is about understanding how people interact with the product/s we offer or will offer them
LINE OF INQUIRY	1. How large is the population of adolescent girls in peri-urban areas of Indonesia? 2. How is this population stratified across SES? 3. What are the nutrition needs, both met and unmet today, of adolescent girls in Indonesia? 4. What other demographic trends are important for understanding this population e.g. mother's age at first birth?	5. What is the lifestyle of an adolescent girl in peri-urban Indonesia today? How does food fit into this lifestyle? 6. To what extent to demographic factors (location, age, SES profile) affect the behaviours of adolescent girls? 7. Who and what influences the current lifestyle and aspirations of adolescent girls? 8. What understanding do adolescent girls have of nutrition and health, and how was this formed?	11. What are the roles or patterns around food purchasing and consumption? 12. What types of food products are being purchased by adolescent girls? Why? 13. What are the factors that adolescent girls consider when making food purchases? 14. What is the purchasing power of adolescent girls? What are their sources of income and currency mix used for purchases? 15. Where do adolescent girls purchase food products?
APPROACH	Desktop research, including information from Indofood and BMGF	Ethnography, including: • In-situ observation • In-depth interviews • Digital self-ethnography	Sales data from Indofood Ethnography, including: • In-situ observation • In-depth interviews • Digital self-ethnography

An example of a research design outline, which captures the lines of inquiry, approaches and areas of interest.

DELIVERY BEST PRACTICE

Empathy-driven consumer research is part art and part science, as the methods are grounded in the social sciences but the process of building trust and empathy with the consumer is intuitive to some degree. The following best practices can be thought of a set of guiding principles to help teams plan empathy-driven consumer research activities for effective nutrition programming:

1 Listen to what people say, but also observe what they do.

In a research setting, sometimes participants find it unappealing to be truthful – not because they wish to be untruthful but because they may face desirability bias (the desire to respond to your question in a way that is desirable to you, i.e. *saying what you want to hear*). It's important, therefore, to compare self-reported data with observable behaviour to understand how someone's attitude or beliefs align or misaligns with what they do.

Behaviour can be highly situational, and one powerful way to begin uncovering someone's behavioural drivers is by observing that behaviour in a variety of social settings.

2 Find ways to mitigate the risk associated with your own biases and assumptions as a researcher.

Prior to conducting research, it's always important to consider what risks there may be to the quality of the research. One common risk is a researcher's implicit biases based on their own sociocultural background and set of experiences.

Mitigating these biases is is an active and ongoing process, throughout the entire research process. While not all bias can be removed, recognising and employing specific strategies to reduce it is a cornerstone of empathy-driven consumer research.

3 Pay close attention to contradictions and inconsistencies.

People do not always respond truthfully when asked questions – they are often impacted by social desirability bias (the desire to answer questions in ways that will be viewed favourably by others). This type of bias is particularly impactful when topics are surrounded by social norms, stigmas and community pressure (for example: what a mother feeds her child).

For this reason, it is important to create safe spaces for people to share, listen closely to what people say, and actively work to collect additional data points.

4 Look for irrational behavioural decisions and preferences.

A consumer's behaviour does not occur in a vacuum. Instead, it is embedded within a complex social system filled with people making decisions independently of one another. The reasons why we choose to buy, do or eat one thing over another are not always immediately understood. Consumers do not conduct a thorough cost-benefit analysis every time they make a decision, and thus many of the decisions consumers make throughout the day are 'irrational', non-linear and not necessarily predictable. It's within this irrationality of human behaviour, however, that we find the richest and most interesting insights. It's important to look for these moments of irrational decision-making, because they tell us that someone's attitude is inconsistent with their behaviour – and our job is to understand *why*.

5 Maintain an adaptive approach to research, where your agenda is 'rolling.'

Given the complexity and nuance in these research settings, it is essential to be flexible and responsive to new questions are areas of exploration. While in the field, it is important that teams consistently review what they have learned and surface questions to explore that will contribute to overarching research objectives.

DELIVERY TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

Refer to the **Consumer Research Manual** for a step-by-step guide on conducting each of these research techniques.

To carry out empathy-driven consumer research, we often use a mixed methods approach which allows the researcher to pose and frame questions in a variety of ways. Doing so means we can also lead the research in a way that's adaptable and flexible enough to be suitable for diverse cohorts while remaining focused on the core lines of inquiry.

The following tools and techniques are often used:

Social group (one-to-many) ↔ Individual (one-on-one)

Immersion is core to ethnographic research, as it is only through immersion that we are able to truly explore and diverge in our thinking about what matters to consumers. Immersive may entail living with the consumer, spending the day working with them, attending a religious or cultural ceremony with them, and more. Immersion also encourages a deeper level of empathy, as we gain a deeper understanding of the practices, norms and decisions that comprise a consumer's reality.

Observation is an immersive, ethnographic research technique where the researcher seeks to understand a consumer's habits, daily routines, broader social context and more. Observation is not about interpretation or analysis, but rather it is about capturing the raw reality of someone's lived experience and distilling that into a set of learnings about where a nutrition solution might add value.

Shadowing is an observational technique where the researcher 'walks alongside' the consumer, usually through a particular process, activity or routine. While observation is strictly passive, shadowing often involves some level of contextual inquiry wherein the researcher asks questions and prompts the consumer to articulate aspects of their experience.

Focus Group Discussions are powerful techniques for understanding trends and patterns across a social group. Ideally, smaller groups (3-4 people) with people who know each other can be more effective at ensuring participants are comfortable enough to have a certain level of candour in their responses. Focus Group Discussions are effective in giving the research an impression of the breadth or scale of the problem, but techniques like interviews and diary studies can help reveal further insight into the *depth* of a problem.

Interviews & Interviewing Tools (e.g. Diary studies, PhotoVoice) Interviews are a well-understood and accepted qualitative research technique for having one-on-one, structured conversations. For empathy-driven consumer research, we recommend semi-structured conversations that may be supported by an additional set of stimuli or tools. In PhotoVoice, consumer-generated photos are used to prompt the conversation. In Diary Studies, the consumer may keep a journal or diary (e.g. of food consumption) and that may project or guide the interview.

Cultural probes are a technique where users can self-report, which means it lends itself nicely to research that's conducted virtually/remotely. Its strength is that the researcher has minimal influence over the participant's actions.

DELIVERY BESPOKE TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

When conducting empathy-driven consumer research, you may find that for certain consumer groups or for a particular research setting, it's worth developing a set of bespoke tools and techniques that are tailored to audience or context.

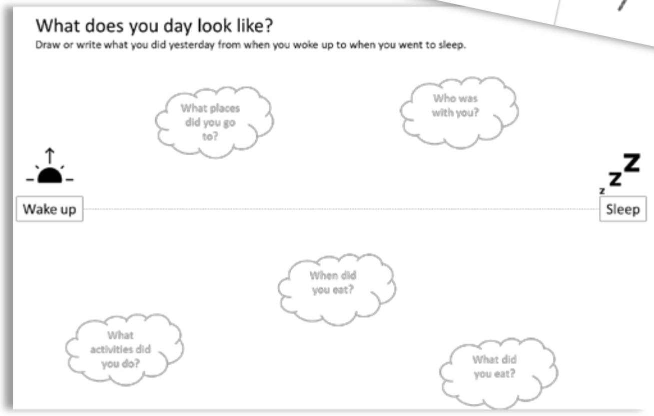
When doing so, there are a few key considerations:

- **Do no harm.** When developing a bespoke research tool or technique, it's important to balance your quest to gain insight with a conscious regard for participants' safety and well-being. Consider the risks that may be posed to the participant by your tool – risks related to privacy and confidentiality, to discomfort or distress (e.g. retelling traumatic stories or life events), and more. Having a "do no harm" principle must be core to not only how tools are designed and intended to be used, but also to your research approach as a whole.

- **These tools should be considered *in addition to* tried and true methods, not in place of.** A set of bespoke tools and techniques can be a powerful addition to your research toolkit, but they are truly an addition and should not be used in place of more established research methods. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to conduct a bespoke technique in place of a more traditional method – for example, an interactive exercise (e.g. card-matching card game, ranking exercise, prioritisation exercise) is more likely to elicit natural conversation from adolescents than a conventional interview. However, this

- **Test and validate them, like any other tool.** When developing bespoke tools, it is important to recognise that they will not be optimal from the outset. Bespoke tools should not be designed in a vacuum, and it is important to co-design them (where possible) and field-test them rigorously before research commences to ensure they yield the desired outcomes or information.

- **Be consistent with who you use them with.** While it is important to remain flexible and adaptive in research, when employing a bespoke tool or technique it needs to be applied consistently so that results can be validated and compared.



***TOP**: Participants are given 20 tokens (beans) to allocate across the cards in response to different questions such as "which is the healthiest' or "which fills you up the most". The usage of these cards and beans give a much more objective and comparative perspective than when the participant is just asked this as a question. **BELOW**: a journey mapping tool.*

SYNTHESIS AND CAPTURE

Synthesis is the process where we distil our research outputs into themes, patterns and insights which we then use to answer research questions. This involves:

- **Identifying trends** – what are we seeing and hearing repeatedly?
- **Identifying anti-trends** – what was surprising, unexpected, or unexplained? Why?
- **Forming data themes** – what are the main categories of themes that are emerging?
- **Articulating insights through inductive reasoning** – what might these themes mean for this project?

Our process for synthesis is driven by the user segments developed in the research design phase. We begin by re-examining our segments and determining if they are true to what we heard in the field, and if not how we might adapt them to better reflect our users and our research intent.

Refer to the **Consumer Research Manual** for a step-by-step guide on conducting synthesis.

When do we synthesise?

Synthesis is ongoing – it starts from the first research engagement and only ends once the research questions have been answered. In the field, we synthesise after every engagement, after every location, and at the end of every day. The research schedule is also framed with individual, research team, and project team synthesis sessions. Following field work, there is also a distinct period of synthesis, where the entire project team comes together for a range of sense-making activities.

This intensive, rolling pattern of synthesis allows us to quickly surface emerging themes, patterns and unexplored areas of understanding. Depending on our scope, we can adapt our approach to fill these gaps and ultimately leave the field with a stronger, more useful understanding to drive decision making.

The first step of synthesis is to process diverse, complex points of data. Teams do this by forming 'data walls' to help visualise what they have found

SYNTHESIS AND CAPTURE BEST PRACTICES

While exact strategies and techniques employed for synthesis depend on our research process and objectives, there are several common principles that we apply when undertaking synthesis in an empathy-driven research project:

1 Highlight nuance, not the common story.

We avoid aggregating our research findings (particularly at the start of the research process), we look for nuance in behaviour or opinion and then seek to understand why these datapoints exist. Seeking to uncover the story behind outliers helps us to uncover the truth, particularly in highly collectivist societies or those that have strong power imbalances

2 Draw on local expertise and contextual understanding.

Working with local partners, facilitators, and mobilisers helps us to not only conduct our research, but also contextualise our findings as we go.

This process ensures that we avoid making observations or creating insights about something that might be obvious to someone with local understanding. This means we create meaningful insights and outcomes, that pick up on local nuance and respond to novelty.

3 Recognise and respond to bias.

We understand that it is not possible to conduct truly unbiased research. Given that a researchers very presence in a community or situation introduces changed behaviour, and that each individual researcher also carries their own set of biases and assumptions into their research practice.

We employ a range of strategies to first recognise where bias may have impacted results, and then respond and counter-balance where possible

4 Look for irrational behavioural decisions and preferences.

A consumer’s behaviour does not occur in a vacuum. Instead, it is embedded within a complex social system filled with people making decisions independently of one another. The reasons why we choose to buy, do or eat one thing over another are not always immediately understood. Consumers do not conduct a thorough cost-benefit analysis every time they make a decision, and thus many of the decisions consumers make throughout the day are ’irrational’, non-linear and not necessarily predictable. It’s within this irrationality of human behaviour, however, that we find the richest and most interesting insights. It’s important to look for these moments of irrational decision-making, because they tell us that someone’s attitude is inconsistent with their behaviour – and our job is to understand *why*.

5 Highlight potential opportunities.

Through the synthesis process, we work to identify the barriers and pain points that customers experience. We then work to frame these challenges as opportunities for change that products, services or experiences could solve.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Research outcomes drive effective decision making to support commercial and social outcomes. Empathy-driven consumer research tends to produce a set of insights, or profound and surprising 'truths' about the lived experience of the problem.

While the outcomes of research can be stand-alone, they can also feed directly into additional activities, including:

- **Further research.** Research is a process of exploring a problem space. Should you first round of research not encompass the problem or respond directly to your lines of inquiry, consider launching further research.

- **Design work.** Some form of problem definition and sensing is usually the first step in an end-to-end design process. It helps to frame the problem from the consumer's perspective, and to ensure that solutions are likely to respond to a verifiable, documented need. The insights produced through empathy-driven consumer research generally reveal a set of opportunities for design and innovation. Because the insights are actionable, they can be an input into a rapid brainstorming (ideation) process to identify potential solutions.

- **Quantitative research.** Empathy-driven consumer research is highly immersive and ethnographic in nature, meaning it emphasises the depth of human experience. Should your program have the scope, quantitative research can be conducted complementarily to capture the *breadth* or scale of the problem across a population. In many ways, qualitative research tells us why a problem's happening and what the context for the problem is, while quantitative research tells us how the problem is articulated across a broad population – and what the trends or patterns may be which reinforce or amplify that problem.

- **Solution development.** Once the problem space has been well-defined, we can begin to explore a set of potential solutions. These solutions are evidence-based, built from the insights gathered through the research but also inspired by the expertise and experience of relevant stakeholders. Those solutions are then validated with consumers through an iterative prototyping and testing process.

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