

A Note on use of the Projective Techniques in Research

Vijaya Manerikar* and Sumeet Manerikar**

BACKGROUND

The projective techniques are a type of psychological tests which make use of ambiguous and unstructured stimuli to elicit the answers. They are different from objective tests which use specific and direct questions. Projective tests have their origins in clinical psychology. They are based on the premise that direct question leads to consciously formed and socially determined answer which may not give realistic picture. Again the advocates of projective tests stress that they tap both conscious and unconscious level.

In the context of research they are mainly used in qualitative research and analysis. They are also used widely in Social Science Research, Marketing Research and Motivation Research. The Motivation research is used in consumer behavior research, advertising Research and strategic research in marketing. They have been found useful in researching concepts like brand loyalty, new product launch etc.

TYPES OF PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES

There are number of projective techniques. A few relevant ones are mentioned below.

- a. Rorschach Ink Blot Test consists of a series of ink blot pictures which are shown to participants, who describe in detail what they see in the picture. The responses are then analysed to understand motivations, attitudes, and personality characteristics of a person. They tap both conscious and unconscious levels and are useful in research and clinical diagnosis.
- b. Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is another projective technique popularly used in research. Developed by a psychologist Murray, it consists of a series of pictures. The participants are required to construct a story for each picture. These are analysed to understand the underlying motives and personality profile of a person. David McClelland used TAT for understanding Achievement motivation (N ach).
- c. Sentence Completion test requires a person to complete a sentence which has just two or three words.

EXAMPLE

My superior is _____

My company has _____

(A note compiled using information from various published sources)

***Vijaya Manerikar**, Former Director, JBIMS and former acting Vice Chancellor University of Mumbai, India.

Email: manerikars@hotmail.com

****Sumeet Manerikar**, Associate Professor, Welingkar Research Centre, We School, Mumbai, India.

Email: sumeet.manerikar@welingkar.org

Colleagues are always_____

Based on the content of the completed sentence, the underlying feelings, motives and attitudes are analysed. These tests are used in researches conducted to understand perceptions of people regarding their work, working environment, incentive schemes etc.

- d. The word association test makes use of a single stimulus word to which people respond spontaneously through a word which they instantly remember. The analysis reveals the underlying feeling, thinking process. The word association test is used in research involving imagery, creativity etc.

The main limitation of projective techniques is that majority of them require in depth psychological and clinical training.

The projective techniques offer a wealth of qualitative information to a researcher and therefore can throw light on insights required for in depth understanding of a research problem. If used along with the quantitative analysis together they can lead to fruitful research findings.

Dr. Sharon Livingston of Livingston group has mentioned variations of projective techniques which can be effectively utilized in marketing research. The same are enumerated below. (Source: - "projective Techniques- 10 Examples: the Livingston Group")

1. Brand and user imagery consists of characterizing brand as a person and describing it as a person. E.g. toothpaste may be described as a tall, middle aged and trustworthy person.
2. Category Sculpting consist of visualizing

brand categories as a family and personifying and assigning roles to them. The cereals may be named as domineering mother, the family pet etc.

3. The looking glass is a form of guided imagery in which respondents imagine an "Alice in Wonderland" type mirror and narrate their feelings and thoughts which help in understanding consumer perceptions.
4. Tellepathy is creative group story telling session. This technique is particularly useful in understanding the common denominator in imagery and creating statements for strategy development.
5. Modified TAT's are modified TAT pictures which are shown to respondents who construct a story based on each picture.
6. Mind Walk This technique is useful in exploring new avenues of communicating product benefit. Respondents narrate their fulfilling experience along with emotions and feelings. These are used in product positioning and advertising strategies.
7. Time Scope This technique is used in new product ideation to help establishing future needs and wants by exposing them to futuristic environment.
8. Scent-Stations are the technique recommend when scent and aroma are key characteristics of the product. The respondents are asked to close their eyes and inhale the aroma of unidentified product and recount their experiences. The results can help marketers to understand a product's emotional heritage.

9. Synesthesia asks the participants to mix-up the senses :- e.g. What does the color red smell like, taste like, feel like to touch etc. it leads to better understanding of an attribute, product quality etc.
10. Market Plays is an action technique borrowed from the performing arts and psychodrama. It utilizes consumers as players who enact a scene and express. This is used for product positioning, brand selection etc.
- The basic thread running through these methods is imagining, personifying, and role playing. They help in eliciting a wealth of qualitative and insightful information.



QUOTES

Always seek to excel yourself. Put yourself in competition with yourself each day.

Each morning look back upon your work of yesterday and then try to beat it.

Charles M. Sheldon

Don't be afraid to give your best to what seemingly are small jobs.

Every time you conquer one it makes you that much stronger.

If you do the little jobs well, the big ones tend to take care of themselves.

Dale Carnegie

The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavour.

Vincent Lombardi

You can avoid reality, but you cannot avoid the consequences of avoiding reality.

Ayn Rand

All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think we become.

Buddha