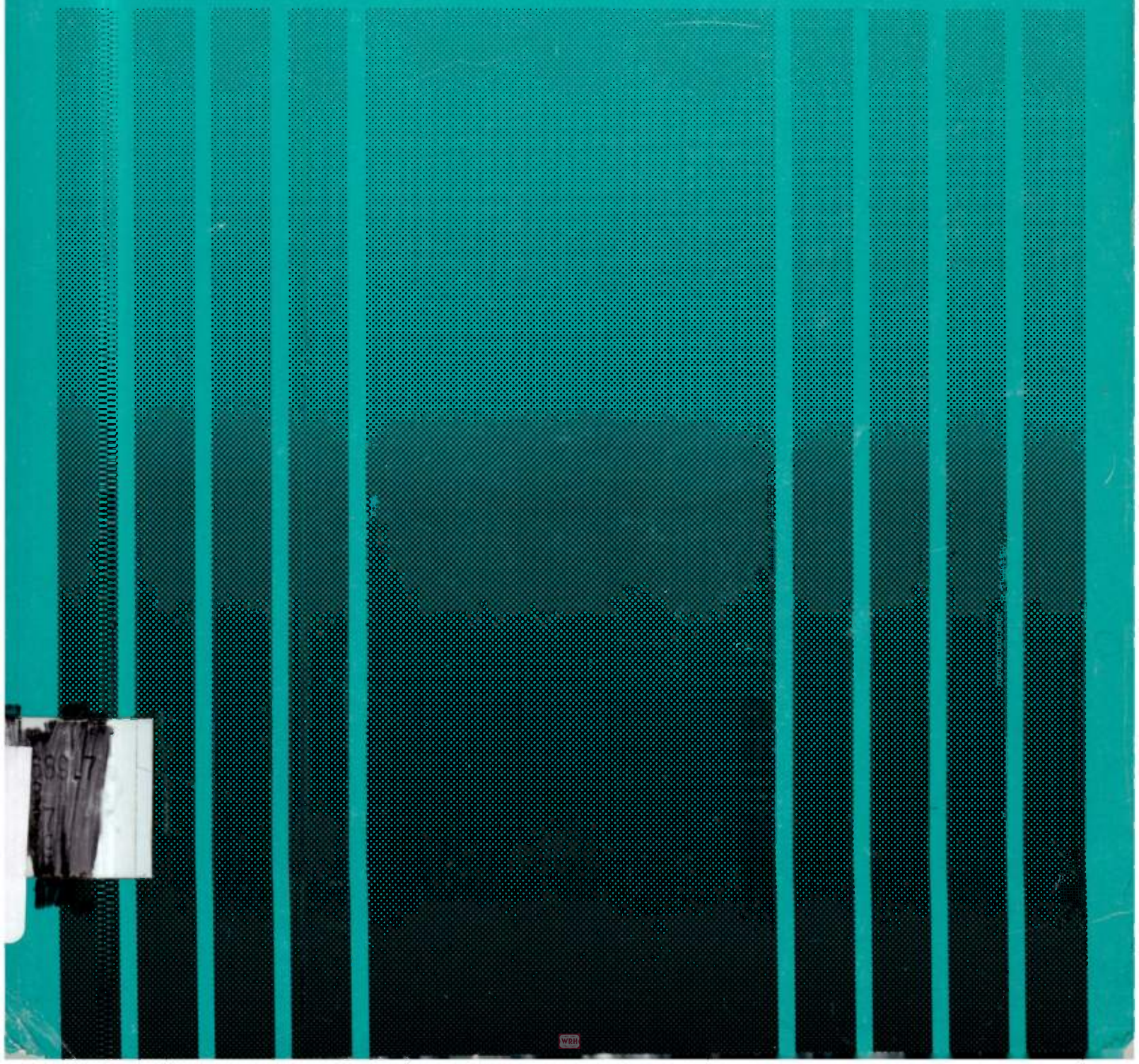
National Association of
NAB®
BROADCASTERS

AUDIENCE RESEARCH
SOURCEBOOK



Audience Research Sourcebook

Gerald G. Hartshorn
Editor

ISBN 0-89324-113-X

Acknowledgements

The *Audience Research Sourcebook* is an outgrowth of the highly popular "How-to-do-your-own Audience Research" series that has appeared in *RadioWeek* over the past year. It is the latest text in NAB's how-to-do audience research series. The editor would like to recognize the contribution of the previous authors, including: James Wesbster, *Audience Research*; Judith Saxton, *Audience Research Workbook*; and Judy and Steve Elliot, *Why Do Research?* for their contribution to literature and the direction provided for this book.

The editor would also like to thank the contributing authors for sharing their expertise, insight and knowledge with all broadcasters, so that we all might become better researchers and benefit from their experiences. Working under very tight deadlines, these professionals took time from their own businesses to provide the NAB membership with their chapters at little or no compensation.

Lastly, this book could not have been completed without the support and contributions of the NAB Research & Planning staff. In particular, the editor would like to thank Research Analyst, Austin McLean, for checking sources and assisting with the references . . . and recognize the dedication and support of Projects Assistant, Terry Ottina, for creating the text you are reading.

Gerry Hartshorn
NAB Research & Planning
April 1991

Table of Contents

List of Figures

I. The Value of Broadcast Research

II. Broadcast Research Concepts

III. Station Image, Positioning & Talent

IV: Music Research

V: Format Research

VI: Sales Research

How to Use this Book

The demands of today's increasingly competitive marketplace place a growing need on every broadcaster to have at least a working knowledge of broadcast research methods. The ***Audience Research Sourcebook*** is your source for broadcast research help *and* ideas.

It is designed to provide general managers, sales managers, programmers and researchers with an overview of the broadcast research options available today. It provides you with descriptions of the major research choices you have, their strengths and weaknesses, and the costs you will encounter as you either conduct your own in-house research or contract for it. In short, it is intended to help you "get smart" on the research tools you or your competitor will need to use to become and remain successful in today's highly competitive broadcast business.

This book is intended to be a reader and as such contains some overlap and duplication. It draws on the knowledge and experience of six research professionals who together represent more than 100 years of practical experience. While there are fundamental concepts which will produce quality research, there is no one *right way* to implement them. Each author has shared the benefit of his or her experience and their insight so that you, the reader, will benefit from the occasional differing opinions as you choose how to implement your own research program.

We trust that our experience will contribute to your knowledge and our trials will keep you from committing your own.

Gerry Hartshorn
April 1991

I. The Value of Broadcast Research

Susan Korbel
Korbel Marketing
San Antonio, Texas

Research is at the core of our business because it estimates the value (or popularity) of our product in a business that is so abstract as to define itself in terms of "air" and "time."

Today broadcasters are bombarded by agencies and advertisers questioning the value of their air time and the wisdom of network and station programming choices. Without cash registers that ring in response to each customer purchase, broadcasters are left with research as a measure of success. Further, until *all* audience choices are registered, broadcasters are going to continue to have to rely on sampling techniques and survey methods.

The needs of buyers and sellers of advertising to define the broadcast audience has produced a wide range of research needs. Advertisers desire to reach those persons with the resources and the inclination to buy their product or service, and broadcasters need to differentiate their audiences from that of their competitors', showing that their station's audience is the one that is most likely to buy the advertisers' products or services.

Even as the need for research becomes more critical for broadcasters' selling needs, our budgets are being further strained. Choosing which data may be researched often hinges on financial constraints.

The purpose of this book is to provide you with the background needed to decide which research is best suited for your needs, and to determine the financial benefits of the research you choose.

What is Research?

Broadcast research gathers information about audiences. This includes collecting data and reporting conclusions about the people who listen to/watch our stations and the market in which they live.

Primary and secondary research are the two terms that describe the key ways data is collected. Primary research includes data collected directly from the audience, while secondary research makes use of information already available from other sources.

Common Research Approaches

There are guidelines for conducting primary research so that the results obtained are reliable. Typically, audience behavior is collected in one of four ways: in person, by phone, in writing or by use of electronic devices; sometimes a combination of two or more is used.

Methods for collecting the data depend on the intended purpose of the study. In broadcast research, we usually want to know about the audience's media use and/or attitudes. If we just want to know which people are listening to and watching each station, the data is *quantitative*. Quantitative data answers the "how many" questions.

If we also want to describe the audience, their attitudes and consumer behavior, the data becomes *qualitative*. The following chart identifies the most common research methods for each purpose.

Different research methods are best suited to answer different questions. Programming decisions often rely heavily on ratings and other quantitative methods. News, format, music and other programming decisions frequently incorporate both ratings and qualitative information that describes audience perceptions of the newscast and its personalities. A station's marketing and

Figure 1
Primary Research Methods

	Purpose of Research	
	Quantitative	**Qualitative**
Type of Contact	**Media Use**	**Attitudes and Consumer Habits**
Personal	mall intercept theatre testing	focus groups in-home interviews
Telephone	coincidental viewer response	phone survey
Written	diary	mail questionnaire and other published distribution
Electronic	meters	database analysis computer surveys

promotion activities depend on image/positioning research, which combines media use and audience attitudes about the station and the market. The sales department needs information that links media use with consumer habits.

Syndicated rating services used in many of these applications measure all stations in a market concurrently. Since rating service data are normally available to all stations and advertisers through subscription, all stations, including your competition and advertisers, have an equal opportunity to show trends and tell their own story. However, sometimes syndicated ratings are not enough.

Broadcast ratings, however, do not measure the other media. How many of your listeners are not reached by local newspapers? How is your audience better suited to an advertiser's needs than the competitions'?

Qualitative research can be a significant additional weapon in a station's arsenal, especially in a market where the quantitative numbers (ratings and shares) are very close. In radio, a station can prove that it really does reach the elusive "upscale audience." In television, qualitative research can tell an advertiser that a lower-rated show is really the best buy because it indexes highly (i.e., attracts a larger proportion of an audience segment) on a particular trait of interest to the advertiser.

Qualitative research also has applications for programming. It can help answer questions like: "Should there be a greater emphasis on sports because your news viewers follow sports closely?" Or, if the competition has just launched a major health image campaign, "Is health is very important to the news viewers in your market?" and, "Should I counter the competition's attempt to become the "health station?"

The purpose of this book is to describe all of these types of broadcast research, including those that you buy and those that you can do yourself. The rest of this chapter provides an overview of the kinds of broadcast research available. The second chapter covers the concepts common to all types of research. The subsequent four chapters describe how to do each type of research.

Typical Radio Station Research Needs

Most radio research can be conducted at any time of the year. Some stations do weekly music testing up to 36 weeks a year. Most stations have a yearly cycle similar to the following:

First Quarter

First quarter is an excellent time to conduct primary perceptual research on programming and formats. Chapter V -- Format Research describes this type of research in detail. The purpose of starting the year with a

perceptual research project is to get the results in time to prepare for a strong Spring book.

Second Quarter

When the results of the perceptual research come in, follow up auditorium or other music testing will probably begin. If the station uses weekly call-outs three weeks a month, the main purpose is to check the product and make sure it is tight and fresh. Music testing is described in Chapter IV -- Music Research.

Third Quarter

This is a good time to make summertime research assignments in sales and the financial departments to make sure you have all the secondary data sources you'll need for fall budgeting. This is often a convenient time of year to conduct an advertiser study (see Chapter VI -- Sales Research).

Fourth Quarter

This is the best time to plan for the next year's image and promotion campaigns. After determining the next direction for promotion, focus groups can be conducted to try out alternative marketing ideas. Focus groups are described in Chapters II and III.

Figure 2
Typical Research Sources at Radio Stations

Throughout the year, different types of research are valuable tools for management.		
Quarter	**Purpose**	**Description**
Q1	Programming, Sales	Arbitron & Birch Winter quarterly ratings books (ARB: January, February and March Birch: December, January, February)
Q2	Programming, Sales	Arbitron & Birch Spring books (ARB: April, May, June) (Birch: March, April, May)
Q3	Programming, Sales	Arbitron & Birch Summer books (ARB: July, August, September) (Birch: June, July, August)
	Programming, Promotion	Auditorium testing, annual audience research
	Sales, Finance	Assign research to prepare for fall budgeting
Q4	Programming, Sales	Arbitron and Birch Fall books (ARB: October, November, December) (Birch: September, October, November)
	Promotion	Focus groups to test next year's marketing themes
Throughout the year:	Programming, Sales	Music testing, listener response Micro-computer analysis (e.g. TAPSCAN, STRATA, etc.)
	Financial	quarterly audits

Typical Television Station Research Needs

Television research needs differ from radio primarily due to the seasonality of programming and the sweep measurement employed outside the metered markets. Figure 3 summarizes the types of research a television station may want to consider throughout the year. Aside from budgeting and ratings sweeps periods, the research can be done at any time of the year. The departments that will benefit directly by the research are listed next to the description of the research.

First Quarter

First quarter is usually a time to take a breather. This is actually an excellent chance to spend the extra time looking at ratings and sales opportunities.

In the first quarter, the sales department may also have some "down time" to look at research about the market. A consumer profile of the audience is appropriate now because following the holiday and January sales, consumers have keen awareness of their preferred stores and "value" of purchases.

Consumer information can be a door opener for direct contacts with advertisers, as well as providing a springboard for new account development. There are two prominent research firms that specialize in tieing consumer habits to media use. Marshall Marketing and Leigh Stowell & Company contract exclusively with one station in each market to conduct annual telephone surveys on behalf of their client station.

The first quarter may also be a good time for an advertiser study to check the pulse of your station's sales efforts as well as those of the competition. Advertisers are reviewing their previous year's results, and

are most likely to give realistic appraisals of media performance. Chapter VI describes sales and marketing research.

The February sweeps are often seen as a "tracking" book, which is appropriate. This is a good book to use for audience flow studies and special computer runs (in comparison to November), so that the promotion department can fine-tune May promotion placement and outside media buys.

Second Quarter

Things start going so quickly in the spring, that it's hard to take the time to think about a study, much less review the results. Still, this is a good time to conduct a major audience research study on news and programming. This can then be used in conjunction with the May sweeps to plan the fall station positioning for news and syndicated programming, promotion and public service. Many stations make this a yearly tracking study.

Due to the critical nature of May sweeps, take advantage of your rep's research services to process the ratings in conjunction with the syndicated research they have, such as Simmons or MRI.

If your station puts a priority on commercial production, this is a good time to find out how producers evaluate the facility, to prepare to market the facility use in the fall.

Figure 3
Typical Research Sources at Television Stations

Quarter	Purpose	Description
Q1	Programming, Sales	February sweeps
	Sales	Consumer profiles - following the holday and January sales, consumers have keen awareness of their preferred stores and "value" of purchases.
	Sales	Advertiser perceptions of media: Advertisers are reviewing previous year's results, and are most likely to give realistic appraisals of media performance.
Q2	Programming, Sales	May sweeps
	Programming, Promotion	Fall program planning; audience research on news and programming by daypart; station positioning for news, public service and programming; yearly tracking study.
	Sales, Production	Production survey - If station puts a priority on commercial production, this is a good time to find out how producers evaluate the facility, to market facility use in Q4.
Q3	Programming, Sales	July sweeps
Q4	Programming, Sales	November sweeps; flow studies
	Sales, Finance	Budgeting: economic indicators, categories of business secondary data from previous years' budget runs, national statistics (such as the NAB "Television Financial Report", TvB Quarterly summaries, RAB); political dollar forecasting.
	News	Talent contract renewal: audience survey of personalities, station news image.
Throughout the year:	Programming	Ratings in metered markets; Network research; Rep research; Syndicator research.
	Sales	Monthly BAR report; economic indicators compiled by federal, state, and local governments (retail sales, demographic updates). Rep research; monthly traffic reports on inventory, categories of sales; quarterly audits of the market (if stations share figures).
	News	Public opinion polls

Third Quarter

This is a planning time for the fall, and most of the data necessary should be available by now. As all programmers know, the July sweeps provide an excellent time for "experimentation." If you are thinking of changing your station's image based on the results of the second quarter image survey, this is a good time to test the promotional plans (positioning statements and graphics) in focus groups.

Make summertime assignments to make sure you have all the secondary data sources you'll need for fall budgeting. For example, if the following year is a political year, this is the time to request a tracking of political expenditures in the market for the past several elections, as well as set up contacts with the party headquarters and candidates' offices to learn more about media plans.

This is also a good time to review monthly retail sales by category of business, and get the "deep background" intelligence on newspaper performance. Compare the TVB reports with your local market.

Unless someone analyzes each Arbitron BAR report monthly, this is a good time to summarize last year's activity, and track the first six months of the current year.

Fourth Quarter

Stations are usually so curious about new changes in the fall schedule, that they order coincidental phone surveys in September. Sometimes this helps fine-tune the schedule or promotion plans. The sales department may wish to use some data for extra ammunition during these crucial months. Mostly, coincidentals reduce uncertainty before the November book comes out.

Sometimes talent contracts come up for renewal, or other newscast related questions emerge that were not anticipated in the spring survey. A fall audience survey may be necessary to test personalities and/or special features.

Budgeting takes center stage for the department heads, so all the secondary sources will be combed for revenue and expense rationales for the coming year. These include economic indicators from federal, state, local and private sources, demographic projections (unemployment rates), and quarterly financial audits of the market (if stations share figures).

Sources of Syndicated Research

Audience listening and viewing is reported as "ratings" for most markets by nationally syndicated services. Syndicated rating services sell research results to multiple clients in a market. In radio, Arbitron and Birch are the two principal services. Arbitron employs an individual diary methodology, while Birch uses a telephone recall methodology.

In television, Arbitron and Nielsen are the two national firms serving most markets. Both services use household diaries to measure television viewing in most markets. In the large markets, a combination of meters and diaries are employed. Arbitron has recently introduced "people meters" that produce viewing and tuning electronically.

The ratings services offer a large variety of special reports that process the media use data in custom ways. For example, county coverage studies can provide detailed listening or viewing information that is especially important to stations in hyphenated markets. Audience flow studies report daypart viewing movement by demographic group, which are especially helpful in programming and promotion.

In addition to special reports that reprocess ratings data, ratings services will conduct custom studies using either the same sample or a new sample. Coincidental telephone surveys (which select a new sample) are often used by stations to "test the waters" prior to the ratings reports in November and May. A "return-to-sample" (which recontacts the original ratings sample) is helpful to get additional data on the people who were already selected for ratings. Unfortunately, a high response rate is impossible, and so the return-to-sample can never mirror the ratings.

The ratings provided by these companies are sometimes further processed by third-parties for use by the broadcasting and advertising communities.

Other syndicated research services combine media use and consumer information. Some of the larger services which conduct product and media usage studies are: Birch/Scarborough, Mediamark Research Inc. (MRI) and Simmons. More on each of these qualitative services is found in Chapter VI -- Sales Research.

Stations find these services valuable because they link key categories of sales with both print and electronic media habits. For example, when preparing a presentation for a retail store that is planning next year's womens' sportswear advertising campaign, persuasive stories can be told that link television (or radio use) to target consumers, and compare their use of TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and direct mail.

Some of this syndicated product research is based on national surveys. It is *very* important to find out what is sampled by each vendor and to understand when national data can be helpful, and when it may not reflect the unique conditions in your market. Also, when a national study is conducted, it only measures *formats* for radio, and network programming for television (or sometimes a generic question about local news). This alone cannot give you data about your station's performance in the market.

However, these databases are often used in combination with ratings service estimates to produce some of the following products: Product Target AID, NSI/ClusterPLUS℠, Claritas PRIZM™, and TV Conquest.

Sources of Secondary Research

Secondary research is the first step most people take to answer questions. Many may first find answers in existing data that was compiled by someone else. Think about what you do when you put your budget together -- you make revenue projections based on what other people think the economy and advertising climate is going to be, as well as historical trends for each key account.

Broadcasters have a dazzling array of data available because we are in the information business. Before going out and surveying the audience, it's always a good idea to check reference materials that may partially answer your questions. Here are three categories of secondary data:

1. Data collected and generated at the station. If your station has a newscast, you have already got a massive archive of data. Your sales department will probably have regular reports on economic conditions, including retail sales, restaurant use and auto purchases.

2. Data collected and generated by industry support and trade associations. If you belong to any of these organizations, you have access to a wide range of data: NAB, INTV, TVB, RAB, and NATPE. Get directories of the research that each organization you belong to subscribes to and/or produces.[1]

[1] For example, the "NAB Member Services Catalog" and the "INTV Guide to Television Research Providers and Products" are very helpful.

The sales department also has access to national information through your rep firm's research department. Each rep has access to many sources at it's disposal. The following are examples of what is typically available:

- Arbitron and Nielsen syndicated TV audience measurement for local markets and NTI
- Survey of Buying Power Data Service
- Media Solutions SNAP multi-market analysis system
- Arbitron's PC AID or Nielsen's Micro-Node
- Claritas' COMPASS database marketing system, which has access to Simmons and Retail Sales Potential Estimates.

If your station is affiliated with a network, you also have access to their research. If you don't already have a file on available sources, get a directory of research that the rep firm and network purchase or produce.

3. Data collected and generated by external organizations. The U.S. Census is the primary source for information about Americans. It is a massive database that has just been updated in 1990.[2] There are numerous computer packages that stations can purchase that use census information to provide geodemographic (demos based on geography) market descriptions. There are also programs that combine media use information with census based data.

Here is an example of how secondary sources provide valuable research. Your market is hyphenated, thereby including several cities with different characteristics. Your station's hometown is not the largest, but has a solid young consumer base (due to the local university). Census information, coupled with

[2] The census admits a 3-6% error in counting low income (predominantly minority) citizens. This is particularly important to the broadcasting business because minorities and low income households tend to be heavy media users. Check with your state Bureau of the Census office to determine if an adjustment formula has been set (or whether an actual adjustment was made).

media use data, can provide convincing sales arguments for target markets. Now, hope your station's programming attracts 18-24 year olds!

Primary Research

Syndicated research and secondary data are helpful, but can't tell you much about your station and market beyond basic demographics. Also, the data may not be as current as you desire. These are the two key reasons for conducting primary research:

- to discover qualitative information about your station and the market, and
- to get answers to your questions *now*!

This chapter describes the most common methods of primary research: surveys and focus groups. Other methods, including viewer response and experiments, will be briefly described. Chapter II -- Research Concepts describes the methodologies in detail.

Surveys

Survey firms ask people questions in person, on the phone, or on paper. Standard survey practices include scientific sample selection and questionnaires written in unbiased and clear language, which are administered in a systematic way to all respondents.

Face-to-Face Surveys

Face-to-face or personal interviews can be conducted in someone's home, where they work, or in a public site, such as a mall. There are several reasons to choose this method:

- Personal surveys are more flexible.

  When interviewing someone in person, you can use visual aids and tapes. This is useful if you want to help people recall personalities or graphic presentations. In a personal situation, you can demonstrate products, such as "taste tests" and get reactions to different musical or visual themes.

- Personal surveys can be extensive.

  People are more likely to spend more time answering questions in person. In a face-to-face situation, the interviewer can allow for extemporaneous comments and probe fully into open-ended questions. This is very helpful when the research is exploratory, and you want to see "what's out there."

- Personal surveys can be representative.

  When interviewers are selecting respondents in person, they can exercise more care in selecting the correct sample of the population. When people are on the phone or returning questionnaires in the mail, you can never be sure who answered the questions. Also, researchers know that it is more difficult to get certain groups to participate in surveys, such as young men, and personal surveys can be more successful at completing interviews with select groups.

There are also several drawbacks to personal interviews, among them:

- Interviewers must be skilled and consistent.

  Personalities of interviewers can affect the results of an interview. Since few personal surveys are conducted by one interviewer, precautions must be taken to assure that each respondent is asked all questions in the same manner.

- Representative samples are difficult to achieve.

  Reliable personal interviews must represent the entire audience. Where can you find these people? It may be impossible to find any location where you will have an equal chance of choosing any member of the audience. While everybody needs to eat, we know that not all people go to grocery stores (you are less likely to find men and older people). By contrast, a mall only attracts people who have a desire to visit the stores or socialize there.

  The only way to make sure everyone gets an equal chance of being included in your survey is to reach them at home.[3] It is essential to pick residences randomly, based on an accurate list of all residences in the market, and a sampling plan that doesn't overrepresent any one area.

- Personal surveys are costly.

  Costs add up with personnel as well as the extra time it takes to find the respondent and conduct the interview. Also, if an interviewer is going door-to-door, there is a great deal of wasted transportation time. And, skilled interviewers are not usually willing to work for minimum wage.

[3] This, of course, leaves out homeless people and those in group quarters. However, since ratings services also exclude these groups, as well as those without telephones, these omissions are less critical than in other studies, such as the Census.

- It takes longer to get results.

  Due to the time it takes to select a sample and train interviewers, data may take up to twice as long to collect.

Telephone Surveys

Telephones provide immediate, direct contact with respondents, and are the most popular form of audience research. Whether the goal is simply to determine media use or attitudes and consumer behavior, this is the preferred method of data collection for these reasons:

- Telephone survey costs are reasonable.

  Phone surveys are less expensive than face-to-face interviews. There are still interviewer, facility, sample and toll costs, but these are far less than travel and interviewer time going door-to-door. Since most phone surveys are conducted from a central location, interviewer briefings and administration of the survey are fairly simple.

- Sample selection is not difficult.

  Telephone directories are often used in surveys (although this excludes unlisted numbers). The random selection technique is described in Chapter II -- Research Concepts. Also, telephone lists (including listed and unlisted phones) that are randomly generated may be purchased from several national vendors for any market at a reasonable cost.

- Interviewing can be carefully monitored.

  Telephone calls are often conducted from a central location. This means that the researcher can supervise the interviewers, to assure that all questions are asked the same way by each person.

- Phone calls are fast.

  As soon as the call is completed, data can be available. This is particularly true when answers are entered directly on a computer during the telephone call (known as CATI, computer assisted telephone interviewing).

There are some disadvantages to telephone research:

- Interviews must be short.

  Most people won't talk on the phone more than 15-20 minutes. Those who do, aren't necessarily representative of the audience.

- Some topics and questions can't be asked on the phone.

  Visual aids cannot be used. Some topics are sensitive, and respondents may be hesitant to answer for security or personal reasons. For example, it is difficult to ask people about buying habits for jewelry or other luxury items because people are not sure about the interviewer's motives. Answering questions about sex, substance abuse and other personal issues is also difficult -- we don't know who else is in the room on the respondents' side, and some people can't be assured that the data will be confidential.

- Not everyone can be reached by phone.

  Some people do not have phones, or a home for that matter. When you are conducting research to determine how to improve ratings, this issue is not relevant because the rating services only interview people who can be contacted by telephone.

Printed Questionnaires

For some purposes, a written questionnaire is appropriate, these include:

- They are cheap and easy.

  Interviewers are not necessary, which eliminates payroll costs, as well as training cost and supervisory time. Aside from questionnaire design and sample selection, most of the research involves clerical functions of duplicating, addressing, posting and data processing the questionnaire.

- Distribution options are abundant.

  There are scores of direct mail houses that provide lists with labels. Questionnaires can also be inserted into direct mail projects or newspapers. If companies just want to hear from their clients, they can include questionnaires in monthly statements, on table tops, at cashier check-out counters, or hand them out in the stores.[4]

[4] If one of your advertisers has done research this way (and shows vast differences in the media habits of his/her clientele from the ratings), remember that this method is unable to produce a random sample, and can *only* represent willing customers, not prospects or customers unwilling to complete the form!

- There are few geographic barriers.

  With personal interviews, the interviewer has to be able to get to the site (safely), plus travel can be expensive. Phone interviews rack up toll charges, and are limited to people with phones. Mailed surveys can reach anyone with a fixed address (with a good mailing list).

- There is no interviewer bias.

- Responses can be thoughtful.

  Some people prefer to take their time to think about an answer. If media or product usage is involved, it may be helpful for people to have the questions available through the course of a week to faithfully record purchases, rather than a top-of-mind awareness. This is one major reason why diaries continue to be a standard source of radio and television ratings information.

Whether the questionnaires are given to respondents or sent in the mail, here are the major reasons that most researchers find this method alone less desirable than personal and telephone surveys:

- It is very difficult to get a representative sample.

  Mailed questionnaires must rely on available mailing lists, delivery of the questionnaire, and the willingness of the recipient to respond.

- Print questionnaires usually have a low rate of return.

  Consider yourself very lucky if you get a 25% response to a questionnaire. Who are the 75% who did not respond? The results are seldom viewed as "representative" because there is no way to control who completes the survey. Indeed, the profile of the

respondents can be totally skewed toward positive or negative opinions, depending on the situation.

- Print questionnaires exclude certain people.

  You have to be able to read and write to fill out a questionnaire. In some communities, literacy is a serious issue. Also, the language used in the questionnaire may not be the recipients mother tongue.

- Questionnaire length should be short.

  People, generally, aren't likely to complete more than a page or two of questions without substantial incentives.

- Questions must be simple.

  There is no way to follow-up an answer, so it is particularly important that the questions be very clear, emphasizing short answers.

- The "flow" cannot be assured.

  People often look through a questionnaire like skimming a book -- to see what it's about. For example, you may wish to know what stations people listen to, then ask them to pick a "favorite." There is no assurance that people will describe their listening habits *before* they select their favorite station. After they have declared which station is their favorite, it is less likely that they will be as objective in recording their listening habits.

- There is no way to know who filled out the questionnaire.

  You may address a questionnaire to a specific person, but anybody who is in the family or a friend may actually respond. It is also more

likely that the respondent will provide fictitious answers to a mail questionnaire.

- It takes longer to get results.

  Sending questionnaires out takes time, and people take time to fill them out and return them. Often more than one mailing is used to encourage response. It's not uncommon to get responses more than a few weeks after the mail date.

Focus Groups

The big disadvantage with all survey research is TIME. Sometimes it's helpful to let people talk in a relatively relaxed environment. Focus groups allow in-depth conversations about a few topics. People can respond to tapes and other visual aids, so focus groups are often used to get reactions to promotion and marketing campaigns, station image, formats and programming elements.

Usually, the group is recruited by a research facility according to certain demos that are important to the project (e.g., 25-54 year-old women to discuss easy listening radio). Focus groups usually last from 60 - 90 minutes. A moderator guides the discussion to assure that each topic is covered, and all group members have a chance to speak.

Focus groups are quite popular, because they "put a face" on the attitudes that ratings reflect. Here are some of the advantages of focus groups:

- You can be involved in the research.

  Sessions can be observed through one-way mirrors, or you can review transcripts or tapes of the sessions at a later time. Some people like hearing the personal reactions that survey statistics represent.

- Results are immediate.

- Groups are relatively inexpensive to run.

  Groups are comprised of eight to twelve people, and usually four to six groups are conducted. Participants should be recruited in a fairly systematic way, which takes some time. It is best to arrange the groups at a neutral site, with some way to record all conversation. Participants are usually paid a gratuity, and some refreshments are usually provided.

- Groups are flexible.

  Often, the goal of research is to explore people's attitudes that cannot be anticipated. The group moderator can help elicit creative suggestions and new directions that people at the station are too close to see.

There are also many disadvantages to focus groups.

- The results do not necessarily represent the audience.

  Groups are based on small, non-random samples which do not scientifically represent all people in the market. Often, the personal interaction is powerful, and researchers may distort the value of the data.

- Focus group participants react to each other.

  In every group, some people are more outspoken than others. Not all opinions are equally represented because people are influenced by other group members.

- The success of a focus group is dependent upon the moderator.

  All moderators are individuals, and results of each group will vary greatly according to the leader's skills. Group members can have personality clashes, or moderators can simply be less effective leaders than others.

Other Primary Research

In addition to surveys and focus groups, there are several other types of primary research that you should consider.

Viewer Response

Do you presently collect information from your callers? Some stations compile an ongoing database of audience contacts -- ranging from contest participants to complainers. Each time someone calls, the station gets some standard information, such as address, phone number, birthday and sex. This data is put into a database, which can be used for direct mail prior to special promotions, as well as to establish audience profiles.

It may seem cumbersome to collect these data, and pay for the computer input, but the power of being able to show advertisers a profile of your loyal audience is substantial. Sometimes a geographic breakout by zipcode, with accompanying census information could be helpful. Perhaps a demographic summary of people who respond to different types of contests would be helpful.

Retailers are already far more sophisticated about database use than we are in the media. By aggregating our "customer" lists, we can speak the same language, and perhaps build a new foundation for future sales.

This information is also helpful to promotion and programming. It can also put into perspective who the complainers are, because you can compare profiles to others who respond to other station activities.

These data can never be seen as truly representative, and cannot be substituted for ratings. However, it provides a look at "active viewers" who are likely to respond to the station's promotional and commercial messages.

Experiments

All of the primary research discussed is "descriptive," meaning that it describes who the audience is and what they are like. It's always tempting to go further and try to pinpoint **how** stations influence the audience. Proving cause and effect is very difficult because people are so complex and are exposed to so many other influences. These "variables" of personality and environment make it hard to answer questions such as "Does watching violence on TV **cause** people to be more aggressive?" or "Do beer and wine commercials **cause** people to drink?"

Experiments try to isolate a few variables, and try out different situations on groups of similar people. Experiments must take place under "controlled" conditions, which are seldom like the real world. It's better to leave causal research experiments to those who have the expertise, time and inclination.

Combined Methods

Syndicated services contact people in many ways to assure high response rates and retrieve the most accurate data. In the administration of diaries, ratings services begin with telephone calls to identify respondents. Then they send letters to notify people that the diaries will be coming, and brief them on their responsibilities. After the diary arrives, follow-up contact is also made.

Sometimes researchers do not have time during a telephone call to ask all the questions, and they send additional questions to the phone respondents. There are problems with this hybrid strategy for the same reasons that there are problems with mailed questionnaires. Substantial effort must be made to assure that the respondents return the written questionnaire.

Guidelines for All Research

Research should always present the truth, whether or not it benefits the researcher. It is often difficult to be unbiased when you are doing your own research. If you plan to use the contact with respondents to get them to tune to your station, don't call it research, call it *promotion*! Here are some rules that researchers have developed:[5]

- DO NOT require payment or solicit contributions from members of the public as part of a research process (this includes diary entries)!
- DO NOT offer products or services for sale, or use participant contacts as a means of generating sales leads!
- DO NOT reveal the identity of individual respondents to a survey or of participants in a research process without their permission.
- DO NOT ask questions that distort the data in your favor. If the results are used for sales, the advertiser can simply check reliability with another study, and your legitimacy will be questioned.

[5] The Research Industry Coalition published the first three of these themes in the Marketing Research Association, Inc.'s February 1, 1991, Newsletter "Alert".

Planning a Research Program

The first consideration you probably have is how much a research program is going to cost your station. This section describes typical radio and television station needs, and estimates costs for radio markets between rank 20-25, as well as television markets 50-65. Using this information, you can decide whether to plan for in-house research or employ outside consultants.

We can estimate the costs of research in two ways: if the projects are handled in-house by the station, or if research is undertaken by outside firms. Obviously each station will fall somewhere in between, and the cost estimates will differ based on market size, the nature of each project and the outside firms bidding for the contracts. These costs are based on the examples described in Figure 4 (Radio Research Budget) for stations in the market ranks 20-25, and in Figure 5 (Television Research Budget) for stations in the market ranks 50-65.

The first consideration when setting up a research program is always personnel. Due to the sensitive nature of some research that you will want to do, probably the best person at the station to coordinate research is the General Manager. For example, a news and personality study would seem to be the purview of the News Director, but aside from being busy, the News Director is *also* being evaluated by respondents.

The General Manager, however, does not have time to be involved in collection and analysis of all data. Therefore, it is helpful to have at least one other staffer who is conversant about research, who can conduct internal research, maintain a library of resources, and help decide when outside research support is necessary.

Adding staff is a laughable proposition at this point for most stations. It may be a luxury for a station to hire a professional who can coordinate all data collection, but given the sensitive nature of much of the research, this is **not** a clerical job.

Figure 4
Radio Research Budget

	Internal	External
Personnel (payroll and overhead)	$35,000	
computer support	$7,000	
Other Syndicated Research		
Scarborough	$10,000 - 20,000	$10,000 - $20,000
Media Audit (2 times/year)	$6,000 - 12,000	$8,000 - 12,000
Perceptual/Image/Programming research Q1	$9,000	$25,000
Focus Groups	$6,000	$15,000
Music Research	$10,000	$30,000
weekly (36 week call-outs)		
auditorium test (1 time)	$8,000	$25,000
Sales Research	*	
Advertiser (mail) study	$4,000	
Advertiser (phone)		$6,000 - 25,000
Secondary Data		
publications	$2,000	$2,000
Totals (low)	$97,000	$121,000
(high)	$113,000	$154,000

*It is not advisable to conduct consumer research for use in sales presentations in-house because of the difficulty that stations have convincing the advertisers that the data is unbiased. Also, the cost is so high to interview a minimum of 1,000 people (for consumer break-outs by station) that the project is seldom seen as paying for itself.

Figure 5
Television Research Budget

	Internal	External
Personnel (payroll and overhead)	$50,000	
Computer hardware and software	$12,000	
Syndicated Research	$1,500	$1,500
Ratings service special reports, flow studies in Q1		
BAR	$12,000	$12,000
Primary Research	$30,000	$70,000
Consumer profile in Q1		
Advertiser perceptions in Q1	$5,000	$30,000
Image study in Q2	$15,000	$50,000
Personality study in Q4	$10,000	$40,000
Production study in Q2	$4,000	$25,000
Focus groups in Q3	$6,000	$15,000
Secondary Research	$6,000	$6,000
quarterly audit		
publications	$3,000	$3,000
Total	$154,500	$252,500

Is there someone on your staff who is presently seen as the "numbers guru?" When the rating books come in, is there someone who squirrels away for a few days and prepares extensive reports and breakouts of the results? Some stations rely on someone in programming or finance to prepare and analyze these data.

Any new sales tool, especially a new form of research, can add headaches. Putting new research out on-the-street requires that the sales force fully understands the numbers. They will also need the print and video materials that support their data. A commitment to purchase qualitative research should include staff training in its use. If they lack the knowledge or motivation to take advantage of all the data, qualitative research can be an expensive mistake.

There should be one place at the station where a research library is located. The library needs to be accessible to department heads, but also have a locked cabinet where copies of all research can be kept. The library also needs to include the computer that can process the sales data and other sources of information. Probably the library is near your office, the finance, programming or the sales department. Someone should be designated as the librarian, who can keep the files updated.

The checklist in Figure 6 is a starting point for planning your research program.

When Do You Call the Doctor?

We've all been faced with the dilemma at home . . . when can we take care of a problem and when do we call the professional. Whether it's a doctor, lawyer, or plumber, we usually consider two issues:

- am *I qualified* to do the job, and
- can I afford the professional (as well as the corollary: *can I afford not to* call someone)?

Figure 6
Checklist for a Research Program

1. The people responsible for coordinating research are:_____

2. A research library has been set up which includes the following materials (check all that apply):
   Current ratings service:
   - _ ratings books (5 year set) and reference supplement
   - _ any custom research (flow studies, AID runs) conducted by the service
   - _ brochures that describe various services
   - _ contracts

   NAB materials
   - _ NAB/BCFM Financial Report
   - _ NAB Member Services Catalog

   TvB materials:
   - _ Index
   - _ Videotapes
   - _ Periodic reports

   RAB materials:
   - _ Radio Facts

   _ Sales and Marketing Management *Survey of Buying Power Data Service*
   _ *Broadcasting/Cablecasting Yearbook*
   _ TV/Cable Factbook
   _ Rep Firm Research and Directory of Services

   _ Network Research

   National Publications:
   _ U.S. Government census materials
   _ SRDS
   - _ Spot Television Rates & Data
   - _ Spot Radio Rates & Data

   State Publications:
   - _ Monthly retail sales reports (call the State Comptroller)
   - _ Monthly employment reports (State Employment Agency)
   - _ Monthly auto and truck purchases

   Local Publications:
   - _ Chamber of Commerce

   Research Company Files
   - _ Include brochures, list of clients; references from colleagues, sample reports

3. Computer databases (and person responsible for contact):
   - _ NATPE*Net:_____
   - _ Wire Services:_____
   - _ Corporate:_____

As we all know, broadcasting is not brain surgery. Still, there are several reasons why broadcast research firms stay in business. Here are some questions to ask yourself to see if you need to call a professional:

1. Do you have time to wait for the results?

Sometimes you have to make decisions immediately, and cannot wait for the results of research. For example, a war breaks out and you need to decide whether or not to continue with constant news coverage, or return to programming (and advertising). There's no time to conduct a study to see how the audience would respond. If it's a unique situation, it's hard to know if an audience would be able to answer the research questions anyway.

2. Do you know how to get the information you need yourself?

In broadcasting, there are a wide range of very talented people all around us. Let's say you're trying to decide whether or not to buy a syndicated program that is presently on the air around the country. Most people look at ratings information from other similar markets, which is available from their rep. The problem, however, is trickier with first run product. The syndicator will provide research from tests the producer has done -- but how do you know if it will work in *your* market? A research firm might conduct focus groups in your market.

3. Can you afford to hire a research company?

If you plan to do at least two research projects a year, it may be worth hiring someone on staff to conduct the projects. However, start up costs are a serious consideration, and it may be worth using an outside consultant.

4. Can you conduct objective and credible research?

If your station has locally produced programming with on-air talent, you likely have someone who is a "squeaky wheel." Is this person worth the aggravation because of audience popularity, or does the audience *also* think this person is annoying? Can you afford to rely on feedback that you personally gather? If

you personally ask people, you may unintentionally bias the answers by the way you ask the questions. If you bring in others at the station, you may tip your hand and word will get back to the anchor or DJ. If you conduct the research, would the methodology be credible with advertisers or stand up in court?

5. Can you measure advertising effectiveness?

One of your account executives comes back from calling on a prospect that she has been trying to get on the air for years. The advertiser agrees to run a schedule, *only if* the station can prove that it worked using a pre-post advertising awareness study. Remember the flashing warnings on this: DO NOT TRY THIS IN YOUR OWN HOME! This request is unreasonable except for the most important target accounts. Only if the potential billing is big enough should an outside firm (which the advertiser agrees will be unbiased), be hired to conduct the study. There are also numerous pitfalls in this request including the time of year, the product, as well as the size and placement of the schedule. Make sure the research firm you hire is familiar with this type of research.

6. Can we conduct motivation research?

Since we hear from the public daily, it often seems that we hear *enough* about what they think (particularly if a daytime soap is dropped for a Congressional hearing). However, we also know that callers are often not representative of our total audience. We can ask people their reasons for doing things, but the answers won't be simple. Many researchers have developed psychological models to describe audience motivation, as well as efficient ways of analyzing "open ended" responses that come from asking "why" questions. Don't bother re-inventing the wheel.

7. Can we track audience changes?

Advertisers always seem to find the demos in the ratings that "went down" from last year. Proving trends is a negotiating tool familiar to most sales people.

It is tempting to want to disprove a negative trend with other research -- but it's hard to win when you pit in-house research against the ratings services. "Longitudinal studies" are best conducted by researchers who will be sure to keep the methods and sample consistent.

8. Can we do our own ratings estimates?

Can you find advertisers who would be willing to post their buys on your station's own ratings estimates? If you didn't laugh at this question, contact the EMRC (Electronic Media Rating Council), which certifies audience measurements, to learn more about industry ratings standards.

How to Choose a Research Firm

As with so much of our business, most managers find research firms through personal referrals. A few calls to other GMs, as well as the research managers at the networks and rep firms, give most people more than enough names to contact.

There are over 100 firms listed in the *Broadcasting Yearbook* or the *TV/Cable Factbook*. A brief list of firms active in broadcast research is provided in this book.

Many universities have departments or schools teaching marketing and RTF (radio, television and film) courses. Some faculty members in either RTF or Advertising/Marketing departments welcome the opportunity to work with stations, particularly if their students can become involved in a study. Many studies, including those about personalities, are not usually conducted by students due to the sensitive nature of the study.

Selecting a research firm is as complicated as screening any other professional. Here is one process that seems to work:

1. State the problems that you would like to solve, or your goals for the research. For example, "Three of our top anchors' contracts are up for renewal in the next six months. We need to know how popular they are in the market." Or, "No matter what news promotion we do, our ratings stay the same. We want to know what our news image is in the market compared to the other stations, and how we can reinforce our strengths and get rid of our weaknesses."

2. Put together a list of firms that seem to do the type of research you want to conduct.

3. Obtain written descriptions of the firm, references and client lists. If possible, request copies of non-confidential reports.

4. Ask questions! Be sure to ask each firm about:

   - market definition and sample size
   - respondents and the interview
   - factors that determine the cost

5. Insist an a written research proposal, including a statement of the problem, or goals of the research (to make sure they understand your needs), research objectives (specific ways to accomplish the goals), sampling procedures, research methods, what you will receive, cost quotations and time estimates.

6. Share the proposals with those managers who will be using the results of the study so that they buy into the selection of the research firm (and the firm's results).

II. Broadcast Research Concepts

Gerry Hartshorn
National Association of Broadcasters
Washington, D.C.

Quality broadcast research is no accident. Nor, does it necessarily mean spending huge amounts of money to learn the answers to simple questions. Worthwhile research, however, does mean investing in proven techniques to address specific needs or questions. The value of research comes in producing actionable information to guide you in your decision-making process. This chapter will show you how to plan for and develop a high-quality research project and introduce some of the concepts you will need to become familiar with.

Whether you contract with a research firm, hire a consultant or go it alone, the steps in planning a valuable and productive research project or program are pretty much the same:

- First, develop a clearly defined goal (or objective) . . . this is your starting point and end point. (Yes, you will use the goal to evaluate the success of the research.)
- Next, refine the goal into specific questions.
- Then, develop a means of answering those questions.
- Then, analyze the results in terms of your business needs.
- Finally, evaluate the value of the research and begin planning the next project.

The balance of this chapter will describe for you the steps in deciding what to research, how to develop the research questions, what to consider in choosing your sample and what makes a good questionnaire. Feel free to return to this section frequently. No matter what kind of research you decide to do, the same concepts will ensure your success.

Value of Creating a Research Objective

The success of any research project or program is dependent upon clearly stated goals or objectives. It is *not* enough to just say that you are going to research something. Make yourself -- force yourself, if necessary -- to simply state, in no more than a single paragraph (a single sentence is even better), what you plan to learn from the proposed research project. Consider these examples of research objectives:

> *The goal of the research project is to determine the station preferences among our target listeners.*
>
> *The objective of the research is to evaluate potential promotional themes for the new early news program.*
>
> *The purpose of the questionnaire is to assess advertiser perceptions of Ourtown radio salespersons.*

Establishing the goals of your research is important regardless of whether you intend to hire an outside researcher or do the project in-house. In either case, your objective statement will provide the framework of the research as you develop the project. You will need to determine the scope of the research before you can discuss your research needs with a vendor or prepare a budget. On the back end, you will need your objectives statement in order to assess the results when the project is complete and to evaluate its success.

It may be difficult to get it right the first time. So take your time and, if needed, consult with others in writing your objective statement. It takes discipline, but this is a critical step in ensuring successful research. Just as your business plan has a stated goal, your research plan should as well. Remember to be specific and as detailed as possible (in the following steps, even greater detail will be required). The clearer you can state your goal at this point, the more focused and successful the research will be.

Furthermore, the goal should be stated in such a manner that it implies some action. Presumably, the research will be used to support a decision of some sort (e.g., developing a new promotional campaign, adjusting a playlist, or hiring new personalities). It is critical that the results of your research are well defined and actionable. If it isn't, the research won't be valuable to you.

Determining Research Questions

Once you are satisfied with the focus and the completeness of your objectives statement, the next step is to determine the specific research questions you are trying to answer. Again, you will need to force yourself to be as specific as possible because these are the questions that either your researcher, a member of your staff, or you will use to create the question guide or questionnaire used for your research.

Think of the research questions as further defining the objectives statement and giving the objectives just a bit more detail. Each research question should be a simple extension of the primary goal. Here too, you will need to exercise discipline as you resist the temptation to broaden the focus of the research *to answer a few more questions*. However, your research will be more successful if fewer rather than more issues are investigated in each project.

Using the above objectives, Figure 1 provides several examples of research questions and what you might include in the resulting focus group question guide or questionnaire.

Figure 1
Examples of Research Questions

Objective Statement	Research Questions
The goal of the research project is to determine the station preferences among our target listeners.	**For a 10-minute telephone questionnaire of target demo listeners:**
	1. What is the favorite station of the target demo? 2. What stations do listeners remember? 3. What station does the target demo listen to most? 4. What stations has the target demo listened to in the past 24 hours? 5. What promotions/slogan/tags do listeners remember?
The objective of the research is to evaluate potential promotional themes for the new early news program.	**For a 75 minute focus group of television news viewers, who are normally home by 4:30 PM:**
	1. What are the elements in television newscast which early news viewers feel are most important? 2. What are least important? 3. What kinds of stories are early news viewers interested in? 4. What recent television news stories do they recall or remember seeing? 5. What would they look for in an earlier news program?
The purpose of the questionnaire is to assess advertiser perceptions of Ourtown radio salesperson.	**For a self-completed, mail questionnaire:**
	1. What are the overall advertiser perceptions of the local radio salespersons? 2. Are there perceived differences from one station to another? 3. What are the best qualities? 4. What improvements are needed?

It often becomes a test of need versus budget in determining what is actually researched. You have limited funds and many, often unrelated, issues that you would like to have researched. Try to prioritize those issues which you **must research** from those you would like to. It is better to not test a subject than to either inadequately address it or to try to cover so many issues that none are properly researched. If you have more needs than can be covered in one research project, you might need more than one project to provide the direction you are seeking. Two or even three smaller projects are a better investment than one poor quality research project.

Determining the Best Research Approach

Each commonly used research technique (focus groups, telephone questionnaire, mail questionnaire, etc.) has its associated strengths and limitations. For example, focus groups can provide many insights but have limited projectability; by contrast, questionnaires provide quantified results, but, are limited to the topics included on your questionnaire. Your decision is determined by the nature and the scope of the material covered in your research project and dictated to some degree by the ability of the technique to handle your needs.

The nature and scope of broadcast research can be divided into two primary types of research: **qualitative** and **quantitative**. Basically, qualitative research assess how the audience feels about something while quantitative research answers the basic question: "How many?" Once you have determined which approach covers your research questions, you can make the decision as to what technique will provide you the information.

Focus groups, one-on-ones (or in-depth interviews), and case studies are the primary methods of collecting **qualitative** research. Each provides an opportunity to learn much about your research questions and provides the opportunity of the additional benefit of discovering and exploring additional questions you had previously considered. However, each qualitative approach lacks the ability to quantify how the **entire** audience feels or behaves. On the

surface, running a focus group appears to be a simple task that you can successfully tackle; but, in fact, it requires substantial skill to provide useful data (Chapter III includes a complete discussion of Focus Groups, see page 61).

Most **qualitative** research involves a questionnaire as the basic data collection tool. The questionnaire can be administered in a telephone call, mailed to a recipient, or delivered in-person. While each delivery method has its own cost and reliability issues to weigh in deciding which to pursue, each will produce data that is projectable to the complete audience. The value of qualitative research is that by scientifically sampling the audience, you can produce actionable management information that reflects the true feelings and behavior of the complete audience.

In many cases, you will want to combine qualitative research techniques with a questionnaire. Perhaps combine a few focus groups with a telephone questionnaire to quantify the ideas raised in the focus groups. Or, assuming you have the budget to undertake a multi-step research program, you might want to begin with a series of focus groups to determine the scope of a questionnaire, follow up the focus group with a pre-test of an in-home questionnaire using a convenience sample[1], field the questionnaire, and follow up with more focus groups of survey participants. However, many projects will utilize just focus groups or a questionnaire as determined by your research questions and budget.

[1] A convenience sample is a non-probability sample used in pretests to determine the accuracy of the wording of the question only. The researcher is only interested in testing the survey instrument and is not concerned with the data collected.

Sampling Is Critical to Quality Research

The quality of the sample used for your research project may have more effect on the value of the research than any other single step in the process. Any research can be **no more** useful than the representativeness of persons interviewed. The goal of any research project should be to accurately represent the total *population* from which it is drawn; in broadcast research, this generally means the total number of listeners or viewers in your market.

If you are interested in the number of persons who consider your station to be their favorite, you could theoretically ask every person in your market. However, no matter how hard you try, you'll never be able to contact everyone--not even the Census Bureau can. A much better (and affordable) alternative is to select a representative sample of the entire population to interview and project the entire market's preference based on the sample results. This is exactly what Arbitron, Birch, Nielsen, and other syndicated research firms do and it will work for you, too.

The process is known as drawing a *probability sample*. By selecting persons to participate in a survey through scientific procedures, the degree of representativeness of the sample can be determined. This allows us to take the findings of a relatively small number of interviews and project those findings to the entire population with a known amount of confidence. No, the projections are not perfect, but the amount of variation from the "truth" can be computed (remember the ratings services tell us they are just "estimates").

The type of sample you use (or contract for) is normally determined by four factors: 1) purpose of the study, 2) cost vs. value, 3) resources available, and 4) time constraints. Ideally, you need to buy the best available (the lowest amount of error); however, budget, resources, and time will often dictate your options. Figure 2 compares the advantages and disadvantages of the commonly available sampling procedures.

Figure 2
Advantages and Disadvantages of Sampling Procedures

Sample Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Uses
Random Digit Dialing Random four-digit numbers added to known prefixes	1. Easy to implement. 2. Captures all telephone homes. 3. Very high quality sample produced from high degree of randomness of selected numbers. 4. Limited selection bias.	1. Moderately high cost for telephone samples. 2. High number of unusable numbers: unassigned, disconnects, business numbers. 3. Does not assure representative sample.	Telephone Questionnaires Recruiting Focus Groups Screening for Mail Questionnaires
Systematic Selection A randomly selected interval is determined to select from lists (generally the local telephone book) of the entire population.	1. Moderately easy to implement. 2. Captures all listed telephone homes. 3. Moderately high quality sample produced from randomly selected numbers. 4. Lowest cost of telephone samples.	1. Fails to measure unlisted and newly assigned telephone numbers. 2.Selection procedure may introduce bias.	Telephone Questionnaires Recruiting Focus Groups Screening for Mail Questionnaires
Stratified Sampling A particular sample characteristic is under consideration (e.g., women 18-24, morning zoo listeners, early news viewers, etc.)	1. Captures known characteristics. 2. Ensures representativeness of relevant variables. 3. Produces high quality sample with known sampling error level.	1. Requires a knowledge of the population. 2. Can be costly and time consuming, if random procedures are used. 3. Can be difficult to deliver sample, if incidence of desired characteristic is low.	Recruiting Focus Groups Screening for Mail Questionnaires Telephone Questionnaires
Cluster Sampling A particular geographic characteristic is under consideration such as purchasing behavior at a local retailer.	1. Tight geography is desired. 2. Moderate cost for detailed geographic data.	1. Comparatively, the most expensive. 2. Hard to manage, normally requires physically visiting the test market. 3. Sampling error is likely, even if random procedures are used clusters may not be representative.	In-home Questionnaires Product Purchase Questionnaires

As mentioned earlier, the sampling technique you will use is greatly dependent on the needs of your research questions and your budget. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses. For example, random digit dialing produces a high quality sample, but is more expensive than a systematic approach; however, a systematic approach misses homes with unlisted telephones and recently assigned homes (both can be sources of erroneous results). One approach that provides high quality research at moderate cost is to combine a telephone book systematic sample with a supplemental random digit sample. This gives you the best of two procedures. For a complete explanation of the approach, see page 103.

How Much Sample Is Enough?

Often, the most controversial part of any research project is the sample size; or simply, "How much do I have to spend to get good research?" Frankly, there is no clear-cut answer. It will invariably become a test of your budget and how detailed a picture you wish the research to provide. As a rule, smaller samples will provide a picture that is subject to more *sampling error* (the degree to which persons in your sample are not a good representation of the market as a whole) than larger samples. A good example is the comparatively fuzzy pictures printed in a newspaper compared with the clearer photographs of a magazine.

There are many factors that influence the size of the sample you should consider. Among them are:

- **importance of the findings**
- **analysis procedures planned**
- **homogeneity** or the degree of similarity of persons in your market (e.g., geography, race, ethnicity, age)
- **incidence** or the frequency of encountering your target groups

- **response rate** (or return rate for mail questionnaires)

By far the most important consideration you should have is what do you plan to do with the research findings. If you are considering changing programming or talent, then by all means spend what you have to get the best picture you can; however, if you are monitoring advertisers' reactions to sales pitches, perhaps 50 mail questionnaires will be enough. In speaking with your researcher, be sure to discuss each of these areas, as well as their cost implications for your market.

Here are some very general guidelines for sample sizes for the most common research approaches:

Focus Groups. Plan for at least five separate groups (fewer than three to four sessions can be very misleading) with 8-12 participants in each.

Telephone Questionnaire. Plan for at least 400 completed interviews in medium markets and no less than 300 in small markets. In large markets 500 should really be the minimum in-tab sample. Telephone surveys typically get about a 60% response rate, so your predesignated (or starting) sample should be in the 650 to 700 range.

Mailed Questionnaire. Expect no greater than a 25% return rate, so plan for a predesignated sample of 1600.

Multivariate Analysis. If your researcher plans any of these sophisticated computer analysis procedures, you will need a minimum of 50% more sample in order to produce meaningful cell sizes. Multivariate analyses refer to procedures that take into account three or more variables simultaneously, rather than in pairs.

Sampling Error

All survey research involves some degree of error. The error that results from sampling using a scientific random selection process is known and calculable; this error is called *sampling error*. Sampling error estimates the difference in the representativeness between the research based on the sample and the entire population.

The amount of sampling error is quantified as standard error and is related to the size of the sample and the magnitude of the research estimate. In general, larger sample sizes have less error, but in decreasing units as sample size increases. There is an inverse square relationship between the size of the sample and the error; this means that to reduce the error by half, the sample size must increase by four times.

Standard error for an estimate can be computed using the following formula:

$$SE\ (p) = \frac{\sqrt{p\ (100 - p)}}{n}$$

where p is the survey estimate and n is the size of the sample. The result is known as the confidence interval.

The concepts of *confidence level* and *confidence interval* are closely related to standard error. At a confidence level of 95%, you know that 95 times out of 100, the result will occur. The confidence interval tells you how much the result will differ from the "true" value. For example, if the result is 20 (i.e., 20% name your station as their favorite) and the confidence interval is ±1.0, then the "true" estimate is between 19.0 and 21.0, 95% of the time.

Figure 3
Standard Errors For Percentages Estimated From a Simple Random Sample

Survey Result		1% or 99%	5% or 95%	10% or 90%	15% or 85%	20% or 80%	25% or 75%	30% or 70%	35% or 65%	40% or 60%	45% or 55%	50%
Sample of:	25	2.0	4.4	6.0	7.1	8.0	8.7	9.2	9.5	9.8	9.9	10.0
	50	1.4	3.1	4.2	5.0	5.7	6.1	6.5	6.7	6.9	7.0	7.1
	75	1.1	2.5	3.5	4.1	4.6	5.0	5.3	5.5	5.7	5.7	5.8
	100	1.0	2.2	3.0	3.6	4.0	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.0
	150	.8	1.8	2.4	2.9	3.3	3.5	3.7	3.9	4.0	4.1	4.1
	200	.7	1.5	2.1	2.5	2.8	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5
	250	.6	1.4	1.9	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.2
	300	.6	1.3	1.7	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9
	400	.5	1.1	1.5	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.5
	500	.4	1.0	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2
	600	.4	.9	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0
	800	.4	.8	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8
	1,000	.3	.7	.9	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6

Example: If the sample size is 500 and the survey estimate is 25%, the standard error of this estimate is 1.9%. Two standard errors is 3.8%. You can be reasonaly sure (95% confident) that the true population percentage differs from 25% by less than 3.8%, (i.e., you can be 95% confident that the true percentage is between 21.2% and 28.8% (25% ± 3.8%).

Rather than calculate the confidence interval for each result, the values on Figure 3 will give you an approximation of the error for the listed survey estimates and sample sizes.

Questionnaire Design Concerns

Using the research questions you previously created, you or you and your researcher will create the question guide your focus group moderator will use or the questionnaire you will field. The orderly design of your questionnaire is critical to the success of your project. Every question should be designed to measure something and work together with all other questions. You will have to maintain the same discipline that made your objective statement and research questions successful.

Using your research questions as a starting point, begin to create an outline that covers each of the areas you want to research. Next begin to draft questions that specifically address each point. If you are attempting to conduct your own research, this is a point in the process where you should strongly consider consulting with a professional.[2]

There are many kinds of questions that you may include in your questionnaire. These include statistical (e.g., demographics, family composition, set ownership), behavioral, recall and attitude. Each can provide important information, and when used together, can provide a clear picture of the audience in your market. The following examples will introduce you to the kinds of questions that may be used in your questionnaire; additional sample questions are included in each of the remaining chapters as well.

[2] It is suggested that a professor in the communications or marketing department of a local college or university be consulted if your budget does not permit consulting with a research firm.

Statistical Questions

Statistical questions provide necessary background on the sample respondents to enable you cross tabulate them with the other questionnaire data and to evaluate the quality of the survey. In addition to sex, race, and ethnic origin, you may ask for education, occupation, income, home ownership, family composition, set ownership, and leisure time activities. *A word of caution* . . . the more personal the question is perceived to be (e.g., education and income, in particular), the more reason the respondent may have to hang up or not return the questionnaire. For these and other reasons, the more personal questions usually are placed at the end of a questionnaire.

Examples:

1. In which of the following age groups do you belong?

   ☐ 17 years or under
   ☐ 18 years to 24 years
   ☐ 25 years to 34 years
   ☐ 35 years to 49 years
   ☐ 50 years to 54 years
   ☐ 55 years and older

2. How many television sets are there in your home?

   _____
   How many VCRs? _____

3. What is the highest level of education the you have competed?

   ☐ Attended high school
   ☐ Graduated from high school
   ☐ Some college
   ☐ Graduated from college

Behavioral Questions

Behavioral questions ask the respondent to describe their own behavior patterns or choices. These may include their daily activities as well as special situations. You can even ask a respondent to speculate on the future; however, you must carefully treat the results of "crystal ball" questions.

Examples:

1. When traveling in you car, do you normally listen to the radio, occasionally listen, or not listen to the radio?

   ☐ Normally listens
   ☐ Occasionally listens
   ☐ Doesn't listen

2. When there is important news happening in your community, what station do you tune to find out the news?

   ☐ Station A
   ☐ Station B
   ☐ Station C
   ☐ Other Station/Cable Channel List_____
   ☐ Doesn't watch television (volunteered)

Recall Questions

Recall questions test the respondent's top-of-the-mind ability to remember call letters, personalities, promotions, etc. Un-aided recall tests the respondent's familiarity with the subject or person under evaluation.

Examples:

1. WBP uses a phase or slogan to identify itself. Can you tell me what it is?

   ☐ WBP Pirate Radio 93
   ☐ Other slogan named, List_____
   ☐ No answer

2. Please name for me all the local television anchors you can recall.

   Check, if named by respondent: List others named:

   ☐ Susan Korbel _____
   ☐ Gerry Hartshorn _____
   ☐ Jhan Hiber _____
   ☐ James Fletcher _____
   ☐ Kurt Hanson _____
   ☐ Julie Heath _____

Attitude Questions

Attitudes are how listeners and viewers feel about the stations and personalities on their local stations. They ask the respondent to evaluate, rate, or give an opinion. If you are asking for more than simple preference, it is advisable to provide the respondent with a scale to use in making the evaluation. There are many ways to ask attitude questions. Here are just a few ideas.

Examples:

1. Which station plays the best music?

   ☐ Station A
   ☐ Station B
   ☐ Station C
   ☐ Station D
   ☐ No preference
   ☐ Doesn't listen to the radio

2. Below are listed several community issues. Using the scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being very unimportant and 5 being very important, please rate how important each one is to you.

Education	1	2	3	4	5	_____
Crime	1	2	3	4	5	_____
Environment	1	2	3	4	5	_____
Taxes	1	2	3	4	5	_____
City Politics	1	2	3	4	5	_____

3. Please rank each station's local news. Place a 1 in front of the station with the best local news, a 2 in front of the station with the second best local news, etc.

   _____ Station A
   _____ Station B
   _____ Station C
   _____ Station D
   _____ Doesn't watch local news

4. How would you describe WBP?

Exciting	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Dull
Current	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Dated
Soft	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Loud
Fun	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Boring
Old	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Young

5. Using the "feeling thermometer" rate each of the local newscasters. Please point to a score for each person on the list as I read them.

_____ Susan Korbel
_____ Gerry Hartshorn
_____ Jhan Hiber
_____ James Fletcher
_____ Kurt Hanson
_____ Julie Heath

Tips for Writing Questions

The primary goal of any questionnaire is to clearly state the question so that it means exactly the same thing to each respondent. You must learn to put aside your business talk and think like a "civilian." Vagueness or industry jargon can cause the respondents to entirely miss the point of a question, or worse yet, interpret it to mean something entirely different.

1. Use simple words.

Keep the wording as simple as possible. Always use simple declarative sentences. Never talk down to a respondent and don't use any more words than are absolutely necessary. Remember the goal is for each respondent to understand each question the same way.

2. Avoid jargon.

Words and phrases that you use everyday may be "Greek" to your respondents. Don't assume that "AC" or "Urban" have meaning or the *same* meanings to all respondents. Yes, the public is interested and knowledgeable about our business, but they may not have the same interest level. Find universally understood terms, or if you must use industry jargon, pre-test the questions on non-industry people.

3. Don't be vague.

Vague questions produce vague responses or multiple interpretations. When respondents can interpret questions, you've wasted an opportunity to learn from you audience. For example, "Do you think WBP is a good station?" leaves the respondent with no measure of comparison.

4. Keep your questions short.

Long questions tend to fatigue respondents and can ruin a mail questionnaire's response. If you provide too much information, you may cause the respondent to lose his or her train of thought or bias the response. If you need to convey a lot of information, maybe a two-part question with a screen and a result would be a better option. In all cases, 25 words should be your upper limit.

5. Be specific, but not too.

Be sure to provide very specific instructions, but leave the respondent room to interpret the question. Use broad categories or time periods unless absolutely necessary. Avoid very specific questions, like "Do you listen to the 8:05 AM Tuesday newscast frequently?"

6. Avoid questions beyond the respondent's knowledge base.

Don't assume the audience is as tuned in to your market as you are . . . they aren't! What might be vital to you may be of passing interest or less

to your audience. Only refer to issues that are widely known and carried by sources other than your station unless you are investigating your hardcore fans through recall questions.

7. Avoid negative questions.

Don't use **"not"** in questions. It's confusing and people are predisposed to answering questions in the affirmative. It's always best to state questions in a neutral form and let the respondent tell you how they think.

8. Avoid double questions.

Each question should ask one simple thought. There is a tendency to include more than one thought in a question; it just confuses the respondent.

9. Avoid overlapping responses.

Be careful that your response selections are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. For example, "18 to 25 years" and "25 to 54" on the same questionnaire are confusing because of overlapping responses for a 25 year old. Carefully review each to make certain there is only one response to your questions and all possible responses are covered.

10. Exercise care when asking personal questions.

Many statistical questions such as age, race, income, and education elicit personal responses from respondents. While all can be asked, they require added care on the part of the interviewer. First, leave these questions for the end of the interview -- there will have been some rapport established between the respondent and the interviewer. Second, rather than ask for a respondent's exact age or income, you will have higher cooperation if you offer broad categories and ask the respondent to classify themselves (unless you need specific data). Third, if you must ask many specific personal questions, you should consider contracting

with a highly-skilled interviewing service as they will have a much higher response rate than you may. Finally, if you don't need the personal questions, leave them out and the response rate will most likely improve.

III. Station Image, Positioning & Talent

Jhan Hiber
Jhan Hiber & Associates
Carmel, California

If you can win the hearts, minds and top-of-mind recall of your audience, then your station will win in the ratings. Easy to state, but much harder to do. This chapter will show you how research can help your station carve out a winning share of the audience.

It all begins with well-thought out, well executed, objective research. This is not the kind of "research" where a station replaces a news anchor because the general manager's wife's hairdresser doesn't like the look of the newscaster. Nor, is this the informal feedback you get during a golf outing when a buddy knocks your station's musical playlist. This chapter describes how you can take the pulse of the audience and use it to produce *actionable* and *objective* information on which management can logically make key decisions. Key decisions, such as. . .

What position should my station occupy?

For example, should your TV newscast be based on emphasizing local news and events, or is there a need for a newscast that is more comprehensive? Or in radio, is there room for a New Age station up against four incumbent Adult Contemporary (AC) outlets. Or, should a station take on a strong competitor by stressing "more music" or "your place to relax"?

Positioning is establishing how your station or programming uniquely fits into the competitive matrix in your market. It is a key question that can be addressed by well-done research.

How should my station/program be imaged?

Research can help station management to make decisions, including: whether to stress liners or imaging statements such as "We'll never talk over your favorite songs" versus "Your station for fifty minutes of music every hour." Or in the TV context, it might be such that the positioning research has shown a need for news at an earlier hour than is currently available; thus, you might want to research promotional themes such as "The station with the earliest news" or "The only 4PM news in your city".

It is important to note that after the positioning research has been done, you will need to examine imaging themes to which the public may respond.

What does the public want in terms of your key personnel?

Do your viewers want a female sports anchor and a male weatherperson -- or vice versa? For AM Drive wake-up talent, would your listeners prefer a "Morning Zoo" conclave or a low-key, but hip female DJ? By playing audio or video airchecks and asking the public to respond in an appropriate research setting, you will often get useful guidance on major personnel decisions.

This chapter will explore three research proven techniques for assessing image, positioning and personnel matters. We will offer some useful "Do's and Don'ts," plus some case studies and sample questionnaires you can use as examples.

The three research approaches included are:

- Focus Groups (an excellent way to begin your research program)
- Telephone Studies (an in-depth tool that offers quantified data)

- Mailed Questionnaires (especially useful if you are interested in *diarykeeper* payoff)

In this chapter, you will learn about the strengths and weaknesses of each research technique and get an idea of the costs and turnaround time involved. As a result you will be able to decide which research technique best fits your needs and budget, and whether to conduct the research yourself or work on a more informed basis with an outside researcher or consultant.

Focus Groups: "Tip of the Iceberg" Research

"Focus groups" as a term is so often used and misused that its definition has become awfully cloudy these days. It is probably easiest to think of focus groups as means of conducting *exploratory* research -- a good first step in creating a competitive "edge." Focus group research once simply meant a group of 10 to 12 audience members brought together at one time to discuss topics of interest to the sponsoring station. In the balance of this chapter we expand on this definition and introduce another related approach, the "one-on-one."

At NAB conventions and other gatherings, focus groups have been one of the issues foremost in the minds of broadcasters. When are they needed or not needed? How are they organized? Who should set them up, moderate, and evaluate the panels? What should a good set of groups cost? Finally, what do you do with the results?

What Groups Can -- and Cannot Do

Focus groups are most valuable because of their exploratory nature. Focus groups *can* tell you *how* people feel; however, they *cannot* reliably tell a broadcaster *how many* people in their market share the feelings expressed by the group respondents. The sample (normally 40-80 people) for a group of focus groups is just too small to be representative. In most cases, a broad-based

study of the target audience with a usable sample of 400-500 is needed to validate or verify the key focus group findings.

When Focus Groups are Necessary

There are at least five circumstances where focus groups have proved to be a worthwhile investment. They include:

- A new station start up.
- A station is newly acquired.
- As a "checkup" for an established station.
- A new competitor.
- A potential air talent/syndicated program needs to be evaluated.

Timing of Focus Groups

Timing depends on which of the five situations outlined best describes your situation. When should you commission a focus group project? In the case of a new station, three to six months in advance of your intended sign-on date is best; the earlier the better. In one case, a focus group project occurred in April for a September sign-on. That was a relatively tight squeeze, given that follow-up research was necessary, and strategic plans needed to be devised and implemented prior to sign-on.

For an existing station the lead time does not have to be as great; however, much depends on the health of the station being acquired. If the ratings and sales seem adequate, you might even do the research after you've taken over. At that time, market research results could help you make evolutional changes without upsetting current listeners and advertisers.

But, if your purchase is a "fixer-upper," as is often the case, then tomorrow is not too soon to tap into the consciousness of the public. If, for example, you were closing the deal in September, with a hoped-for takeover in December, you may want to commission the focus group project in October in order to provide data by takeover.

If you are in a status quo position, and wonder when to engage in a research "checkup" to see if all is being perceived by the public as well as you hope, the timing can be flexible. One item you may want to take into account is the syndicated ratings schedule of your market (assuming you have a ratings taken in your area) and schedule your focus groups to be concurrent with your market's ratings. Ideally, you will want to track perceptions with several sets of focus groups conducted annually.

As for the station under fire from a new competitor, there are two options. Some feel that immediate action is required and would, perhaps after just a few weeks of competitive pressure, grasp for a research study. Others prefer to keep the incumbent station on a steady course for three to six months, while the competitor takes a shot at creating a more fragmented market. After the initial blitz by the newcomer, the first station could then conduct focus groups to see what effect, if any, the other station has had.

How are respondents recruited?

Once you have established topics to be discussed in a focus group series and determined what types of persons should be included, how does a station or research consultant go about recruiting them? To play on the old joke, *v-er-r-r-y carefully*. The quality, or lack of it, in the recruiting effort is critical to the success of the focus group research.

The following steps are recommended to ensure effective recruiting:

Recruiting Dos

- **Do** use a local research firm (or local college or university communications or marketing department) to recruit respondents. This allows you to monitor the recruiting process.

- **Do** draw up a screening questionnaire (see Figure 1) for the recruiting facility to use. Make sure the screening questionnaire relates to the kind of person desired in the groups.

- **Do** insist that the recruiting be done through randomly placed phone calls to the target geographic area (e.g., urban only, suburban counties, or entire metro). It is important that, if at all possible, persons with unlisted phones have a chance to participate in the groups. This means that random digit dialing should be used to screen potential focus group participants; while adding to costs, it should be an important consideration.

- **Do** conduct the initial recruiting approximately 10 days prior to the date of the actual group.

- **Do** mention in the recruiting and screening dialogue with a potential respondent that a monetary premium or incentive will be given to those qualified respondents who show at the appointed time and place. How far a person might have to travel to the focus group facility, for example may determine the premium required. Premiums usually fall between $25 and $50 per person.

- **Do** be sure to overrecruit. If you want 10 participants per group (the ideal number), you will actually need to line up 12 to 15 who will commit to attend each session to cover for no-shows. The recruiting facility will advise the research consultant handling your project (or station employee, if the effort is being handled in-house) what their experience

has been with the target group specified and how other variables (time of the groups, location of the actual facility) may affect the number needed to be recruited for each panel.

- **Do** ask the recruitment firm to reconfirm each respondent, usually by phone on the day the group is scheduled (or at least the night before). This effort, combined with overrecruiting, helps assure that the moderator won't be talking to an empty room when the appointed time for the focus group arrives. Most moderators prefer not to hold groups with fewer than eight participants. Overrecruiting and reconfirmation help assure that minimum.

- **Do** pay every recruit who shows on time the agreed-upon incentive, even if you want only 10 respondents and 12 show up. After the moderator randomly selects those who will be used, the participants not needed can then be paid for at least for showing up, as a way of saying thanks and compensating them for not actually being included in the discussion phase. Those who are actually used in the group receive their incentive at the completion of the focus group session.

Recruiting Don'ts

- **Don't** ever mention the station sponsoring the study.

- **Don't** use station contest winners or other such biased groups, *unless* you want feedback from just a limited sample and recognize the problems inherent in talking to such a small portion of the radio universe.

- **Don't** include anyone with a media or advertising background or relationship. A screening questionnaire should be used to address this potentially damaging issue. See Figure 1.

Figure 1
Sample Screening Questionnaire

Any City Focus Group Recruiting Screener

The intro can be changed to suit, but radio listening is the key.

Hello, we want to talk with people in the_____City area about radio listening and we would like you to participate in a discussion group where you will be paid to give us your opinions about local radio stations. Let me read a few questions to you to see if you qualify to attend one of the groups.

1. I am going to read a list of age groups. Please stop me when I read the group that includes your age.

   ___Under 18 ___18-34 ___35-44 ___Over 44

   ___Female ___Male

If under 18 or over 44, TERMINATE

2. I am going to read a list of ethnic categories. Please stop me when I read the group that best describes you.

   ___White ___Black ___Hispanic ___Other

No more than two ethnics per group. Must have at least one per group.

3. Do you or any member of your family have any connection with a local radio or TV station, newspaper, or advertising agency?

   ___Yes ___No

If yes, TERMINATE

4. Have you ever participated in a panel discussion or focus group?

   ___Yes ___No

If yes, TERMINATE

5. Do you listen to radio for at least 30 minutes per day?

   ___Yes ___No

If no, TERMINATE

Figure 1
(continued)

6. What radio stations have you listened to for 30 minutes or more in the last 48 hours?

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Must mention one of the key stations listed below. Proceed to 7 if not mentioned.

7. Have you listened to any of the following stations in the past 2 days?

Station A____ Station B____

Station C ____ Station D____

Station F____

Must listen to one of these stations or TERMINATE

8. Which of the radio stations you have listened to for 30 minutes or more in the last 48 hours is your favorite?

_____

9. Which radio station is your second favorite?

_____

- **Don't** let station personnel get involved in the actual screening or recruiting process. Station employees should not be allowed to suggest individual respondents whom they feel would be "helpful" in the focus group discussion. The sample selection must be as random as possible in order to avoid biases.

- **Don't** settle for recruiting shortcuts. Some recruiting firms (usually the same folks hosting the focus groups on-site) may try to cut costs by asking those who frequent a certain high-traffic area (a shopping mall, for example), if they'd like to participate in the groups. By selecting a sample exclusively from one mall or even several through intercept interviews, recruitment cost is reduced -- but so is the quality of the focus group make-up.

- **Don't** allow "habitual" focus group respondents to be used for your station's project. Some folks really enjoy being involved in focus groups covering a range of products and issues, and recruiters often recycle those respondents from project to project. Your project will get fresher, more objective responses from those not wise to the ways of focus groups. So specify that respondents have not been in a focus group in the last two years (and never in a media-related discussion).

- **Don't** cut corners cost-wise. If the screening criteria for your project are very specific (certain geographic, demographic, psychographic, or listening-habit guidelines that the station and researcher have agreed are necessary), then naturally it will be tougher to find and recruit qualified respondents. The narrower and more specific the screening criteria, the higher the cost of recruiting. If the station management team feels strong about listening, through the groups, to just a certain type of listeners then it's important for the researcher to see that the recruiting is done accordingly. The station should, of course, be willing to pay the premium for narrowly targeting recruiting. Cutting economic corners here could undermine the quality of the entire project.

Recruiting properly for focus groups is a detail-oriented, time, and money-consuming step in the project. Done well, though, a cross-section of well-qualified respondents makes it much easier for the focus moderator to elicit useful information.

The Moderator

A good moderator of the discussion must really be a combination of several people. The moderator should have the folksiness of an Andy Griffith, the finesse of a tight-rope walker, the command presence of a drill sergeant, the interviewing prowess of a Perry Mason, and the mental abilities of a clairvoyant. As you might imagine, good moderators don't grow on trees. Once the recruits have shown up for the discussion, for successful focus groups it's vital for the moderator to elicit the most from them. The following do's and don'ts will give you a better idea of the moderator's role.

Moderator Dos

Insist that your moderator follow these guidelines:

- **Do** play "dumb." Act as though you know nothing about the local broadcast market; this helps draw people out and keeps them from possibly being threatened by the moderator as an authority figure.

- **Do** dress informally. Three-piece suits and designer dresses may win points with the executive committee but they carry with them authoritarian implications that may cause some respondents to clam up. Be neat, but leave the tie and designer labels at home.

- **Do** probe to find out how people feel and why they feel that way *without* "leading the witness."

- **Do** explain clearly what types of responses are acceptable on the questionnaires you will pass out.

- **Do** stress that there are *no wrong answers* or statements, and that everyone's opinion is equally important.

- **Do** promote a relaxed atmosphere without letting one or two respondents hog the session.

- **Do** approach each key issue twice during the discussions to see if there is consistency or confusion in the respondents' minds.

- **Do** be specific in announcing results of votes on how the group feels. Remember that the session will probably be audiotaped (videotaping is an option also, at extra cost) and that when the tape is reviewed, it will be helpful to hear such things as "Seven group members feel that station WBP plays too many commercials, two feel differently and one person has no definite opinion."

- **Do** try to adhere to your agenda outline (see Figures 2 and 3 for examples). Keep in mind that if you do trip across a land mine you may need to alter your game plan. Be punctual and be sure to end on time, especially if you have one group ending at 7:30 PM and another scheduled to start at 8 PM. You will need time for the moderator and station personnel to confer to perhaps fine tune the agenda for the next panel.

Moderator Don'ts

Moderators shouldn't do any of the following:

- **Don't** try to dominate the conversation. You are there to facilitate, *not originate*, ideas.

- **Don't** volunteer your own opinions or ask leading questions.

- **Don't** hesitate to follow up. A meekly voiced comment, when probed more fully, can uncover a lode of valuable perceptions.

- **Don't** badger or put down a respondent.

- **Don't** try to dig into more than eight key issues -- fewer, if audio or video airchecks or TV commercials are to be tested. Trying to do more will be counterproductive, with not enough time spent on any one topic to gather really insightful comments.

- **Don't** try to moderate more than two or three panels a day. Running focus groups properly is an extremely taxing task, mentally. A tired moderator may mean lower quality results.

Once a group is over, the moderator should check with the client observers to see if they can suggest any new areas to be examined, or have any general comments about how the group was conducted.

At the conclusion of each day's worth of groups, the moderator should secure any audio tapes to be used later when the overview is written.

The moderator should, if possible, also write or collaborate on the final overview, since impressions of nonverbal communications evidenced during the groups my be germane to the report. Once the summary report covering questionnaire responses as well as discussion comments, have been received by the client station, the moderator should be available to conduct a follow-up consultation session; this can put into perspective the session results and point out which findings are actionable and which may need verification through a broad-based, statistically reliable quantitative survey.

Figure 2
Sample Format for Radio Focus Groups

Radio Focus Group Agenda
90 Minute Sequence

00 - 15 **Intro, Purpose of Groups, Fill in Questionnaires**

15 - 40 **Start Discussions**
1. Favorites - Why?
2. Musical/Image Differences, Review Positioning Hooks
3. Getting Better/Worse Lately
4. Too Many Commercials Perception?

40 - 50 **DJs**
1. Unaided Recall, Station Association?
2. Perceptions of each key DJ - pros, cons of each
3. Importance on FM

50 - 70 **Music**
1. Variety Leader?
2. Role of "NEW" Music, Reaction to it
3. Association of Music Images to stations - Correct or Off-base
4. Notice any stations changing musically lately?

70 - 80 **Contests/Promotions**
1. Role on FM & AM - Wanted or Not?
2. Familiarity with/Reaction to various station events

80 - 90 **Advertising/TV Spots**
1. Discuss Unaided Advertising
2. Review Assorted TV Spots - Gauge Reactions

Conclude

Figure 3
Sample Format for Television Focus Groups

TV Focus Group Agenda
90 Minute Sequence

00 - 15 **Intro, Purpose of Groups, Fill in Questionnaires**

15 - 30 **Favorite News/Anchors - Why?**

30 - 50 **Play Newscast Videos, Respondents Fill in Questionnaires, then Discussion**

50 - 70 **Opinions on Early Fringe Programs - Want Strips or Different Each Night?**

70 - 90 **Show Video Storyboards of Possible New Promo Campaigns - Get Written/Verbal Feedback**

Conclude

Acting properly then, the moderator can be the catalyst for the focus group project. Probably more than any other factor, the ability of the moderator to "make good things happen" during the discussion phase of the project is critical to the success of any focus group effort.

How Do You Handle the Results?

Once the moderator has conducted all the discussions and the questionnaires are tallied, where do you go next? You try to understand what was or was not learned and what needs to be evaluated further in a large-scale research project.

Research Evaluation Dos

- **Do** keep an open mind regarding what you think was discovered during the groups. Wait until you receive the objective summary report before acting on what you think you heard during the groups. The professional researcher (who may also have been the moderator) will review the audio tapes, tally the questionnaire responses, then meld all the comments and replies into an objective overview. Only when that overview report is received and discussed thoroughly with the researcher should you proceed. Remember: as a station employee, your attitude about what may have been heard during the groups is subconsciously biased. The researcher's job is to present you with all the data in an unbiased fashion. If there is something you do not understand, ask the researcher what it means, and make sure it is explained to your satisfaction. You are the customer!

  A note on the final report: Above all, it should be **readable** and **actionable**. Can the general manager read it in half an hour and understand the implications? Does it spell out what findings seem solid and what ones need to be researched more fully? If those two questions

cannot be answered affirmatively, the researcher has not completed the job.

- **Do** expect broad results, not necessarily specifics. Since the sample size of a focus group series is relatively small (normally, 40 to 80 persons) the universe for the researcher's results may be too small for detailed analysis. You will find statements like, "There seemed to be ample feeling in the groups that station X is still a Rock station," instead of, "Fifteen thought station X was Rock while 7 said they thought it was Country." You may find statistics in the results, but keep in mind what the real payoff is: broad-stroke feedback on how people feel about local radio.

- **Do** look for guidance regarding audio or video airchecks or TV commercials that may have been tested. If tapes were played and if a questionnaire inquired about reactions, the combined tallied feedback should be actionable. Testing reactions to airchecks or TV commercials is one of the things focus groups can do best.

  In one project, one woman in a group raved about a TV spot for Station A that she just loved, but when the tapes were played later and the spot in question came up, it turned out to be for Station B, a close competitor. Probing determined that other respondents were similarly confused. Clearly, the spot for Station B did not do a good job of getting across the call letters. This is just one result seen in focus tests of TV creative.

- **Do** ask for recommendations. What do the results mean, and what action items, if any, stand out? Conclusions or implications should be applied to each of the eight or so key areas the station wanted researched. Some of the recommendations may be for action based on the groups, while others -- and usually the overall tone of the results -- may suggest that further research is needed.

Figure 4
Sample Focus Group Questionnaire

TV Commercial Response Sheet

As you see each of the commercials, please record your reactions.

Have you seen this commercial before? Yes____ No____

If you've seen it before, approximately how many times?

1-5____ 5-10____ 10+____

What do you remember most (good or bad) about the commercial?

_____

_____

Do you feel the commercial accurately portrays what you hear when you listen to the radio station? Yes____ No____

Which of the following responses would best sum up how you reacted to this commercial? (Check one)

____ It did/would interest me in trying the radio station
____ I like the commercial but wouldn't try the radio station
____ I already listen to the station and the commercial made me feel good about that
____ I didn't like the commercial but would still listen to the station advertised
____ I didn't like the commercial and wouldn't try the station advertised.

Any additional comments you'd like to make regarding the commercial you just saw? _____

_____

_____

Research Evaluation Don'ts

- **Don't** overreact to comments uttered during a focus group. Once, a general manager heard one person say the client station's commercial load was *not* too heavy. This remark stuck with the station manager, so much so that although the comments in other groups brought up the perception that the station was indeed *too commercialized* (compared to a competitor), he could not be dissuaded from what he'd heard that one respondent say. Program Directors often overreact as well, some even rushing out of the client viewing room to call the station and make on-the-spot playlist changes or drop a news anchor. *Try to keep perspective.*

- **Don't** expect much guidance regarding specific music choices. Focus groups are not the best research tool to help build a radio station's playlist. You may be able to unearth perceived differences between the overall music your station plays versus the competition's, but the public will have difficulty giving you specifics on which artists they feel comprise the difference between the station's sounds.

  Focus groups are better at general perceptual topics ("How do you feel about the stations that run contests?" for example) than specific playlist questions ("Do you think station X should play Madonna more at night than during the day?").

- **Don't** expect all hard-and-fast conclusions. Clients sometimes complain that researchers use a lot of "hedge" words -- "It seems that," "Possibly this means," "The data appear to show" -- but you'd hedge too, if you were trying to guide a multimillion-dollar business with information based on the comments of just 40 respondents.

  Here's where an experienced and objective researcher comes to the fore. The researcher's judgement and experience in other markets influences the final report and cause the results to be as meaningful as possible.

That includes hedging if the results are confused or based on too few responses. It also means not being shy about making specific recommendations where the data warrant it. Unfortunately, some researchers have neglected this step, allowing client stations to take the results and drift off into ratings oblivion. Remember that research is a compromise of art and science. Ideally, researchers would like to conduct 40 focus groups for each project, but that's economically impossible. Since small databases are an inherent part of focus group methodology, keep in mind that the results may be somewhat equivocal.

- **Don't** sell (or buy) the farm solely on the basis of focus groups. Given that many radio and TV stations are big-ticket operations, it just isn't sensible to make drastic decisions based on findings from focus groups alone. Never change format or replace a DJ or newscaster, for example, using only the comments from several folks in a focus group as your guide.

To sum up, a broadcaster should expect (and require) results to be written understandably, with qualifiers where necessary and recommendations where possible. The station should also expect guidance from the research, to flesh out the summary report's meanings and especially to advise if another research step is needed.

Timetable

From initial agreement between station and researcher on the project to the delivery of the final results and summary report should take no more than six weeks. If your project drags on beyond that, the research begins to lose timeliness and key decisions may be fatally delayed.

An in-house project might be able to trim a few days from the overall timetable, but don't rush. Hastily done research is often expensive research, since the quality of the results may suffer and end up costing you more in the long run.

Costs

Research costs are usually a sensitive area for station management. Some general managers feel that, while Arbitron's, Birch's or Nielsen's rates are too high, and that focus group or phone survey costs are astronomical. Some firms may seemingly demand your first-born male child in payment for focus research, while others are more reasonable. Here are some realistic guidelines:

Generally speaking, a station should reasonably expect to pay up to $3,500 per focus panel. Thus, if your station were to authorize a series of four panels, you would expect to pay at least $15,000 *all inclusive* (including the cash incentives for the public).

If your station hires an outside firm and pays more than $3,500 per group, you may be paying for someone's expensive overhead (however, if extremely narrow screening criteria are requested, this will push up the recruiting costs). Assuming you're not looking just for left-handed yak herders who like Punk-Disco-Oldies, the recruiting expenses shouldn't be out of sight.

On the other hand, if an outside company claims to be able to do top-notch focus groups for $1,000 per panel, watch out! Something could be rotten and it might be the feeling in your stomach as your research investment is wasted on a poorly-managed set of groups.

Of course, if the project is done entirely in-house, costs will be reduced. The station doesn't have consultancy overhead or travel expenses to cover. But that overhead allows the researcher to offer expertise that is probably not available at your station. Further, you must also weigh whether the cost savings will compensate for the loss of *objectivity*, which is a given when done "in-house."

Focus Groups Summary

Now you know everything you could have ever possibly wanted to know about focus groups. Well, maybe not *everything* -- entire books have been written about focus groups. You have been provided an introduction to focus groups and answers to some of the key questions you might have had relative to this delicate but useful research method. A focus project is not a research be-all and end-all, but it can and should be a regular part of a successful (or potentially successful) station's strategy for winning. Use the following summary of dos and don'ts as an overall guide.

Focus Groups Dos and Don'ts

- **Do** hire an outside moderator (definitely don't use someone who works at the station). Objectivity is crucial.

- **Do** have the moderator administer an introductory questionnaire early on as well as rely on vocal comments. This not only counters the "herd instinct" but provides a cross-check against the verbal comments as well.

- **Do** keep men and women in separate groups (usually no more than 10 per group for 90 minutes or so). Experience shows that freer discussions will result.

- **Do** remember, you will learn how a *small* portion of your target audience feels -- not how many in the market share those same feelings on key issues. The results are not statistically projectable.

- **Do** use follow-up research (preferably an in-depth survey of 400-500 usable responses) whenever possible. This will provide a handle regarding *how many* share the key perceptions discovered in the focus groups.

- **Do** conduct at least one such project annually. The broadcast industry is full of stories about top stations that failed to take the pulse of their markets on a regular basis -- and are no longer leaders. A research budget is an investment, much like new equipment, a news anchor or a top-rated DJ.

- **Don't** hold the groups at your station, or in any way disclose who is sponsoring the research.

- **Don't** use just station loyalists in the composition of each group. Be sure to talk to noncumers or light samplers of your station, as well as the faithful.

- **Don't** let the moderator sway the group or inject personal opinions. If this happens, mention it to the moderator and monitor the next group for improvement.

- **Don't** try to cram too many issues into a focus discussion. Six to eight topics are about as many as can be properly handled on a 90-minute session.

- **Don't** overreact to the respondents' comments. While it's easy to take their slams or kudos personally, don't.

- **Don't** make dramatic changes (such as a format switch or hiring decision) based solely on focus groups.

One-on-One In-depth Interviews

A new variation on focus group research is the in-depth "one-on-one" interview. The figure below compares focus groups to one-on-ones.

Figure 5
Comparison of Focus Groups to One-on-Ones

	Strengths	*Weaknesses*
Focus Groups	■ Group atmosphere (interaction among ten people, moderator) allows for spontaneous discovery of opinions, insights. ■ Done well, a useful exploratory research tool. ■ Station observers can view the audience through one-way mirror.	■ Limited sample size means limited projectability to audience at large. ■ Some quieter individuals may not be able to fully express their opinions or thoughts. ■ Station management can overreact to findings. ■ Much depends on quality moderator; poor moderators can really hurt quality of your research.
One-on-Ones	■ Supreme individual attention since there's *only one person* conversing with the moderator/interviewer for 60-90 minutes. ■ Allows for follow-up probing of key statements. ■ Gives every participant an equal amount of time to express their opinion.	■ Takes longer. Typical focus sample of 40 persons would require four days for one moderator versus a number of evenings in a normal setting. ■ Costs more. Due to longer time frame, either an additional moderator might be needed (to avoid moderator fatigue) or the research facility rental might be higher. ■ Lack of client viewing. Few station execs can spend 8-10 hours daily for four to six days watching each and every individual interview. ■ Lack of group interaction. The chemistry in a group often produces an outburst of ideas and reactions. The spontaneity helps unlock peoples's thoughts. Harder to develop that chemistry and excitement one-on-one.

Answer, Yes; Salvation, No

One-on-one in-depth research is a mixed blessing. Yes, one-on-ones address some of the questions or problems posed regarding focus groups. But, every research tool has a downside too. The key point is that if you are considering *exploratory* research, consider one-on-ones. It may not be right for every station -- but maybe they'll help make **your** station a winner.

Telephone Studies: An In-Depth Research Tool

When it comes to market research, the emphasis should be on the "search." Done properly, telephone surveys offer one statistically reliable method for uncovering the attitudes and perceptions of the target audience, thereby helping to widen the station's "search" for a successful marketing/programming strategy. Phone surveys, after all, can generate 300 to 500 usable interviews compared with feedback from perhaps 40 - 80 persons in a focus group series. In addition, stations can place a much higher degree of confidence in results from a large-scale, randomly-selected sample.

This section will address the following questions:

- When is it advisable to undertake telephone surveys?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
- Who should conduct the research and how is it organized?
- How should the questionnaire be designed? (We will provide an actual example.)
- What should it cost and what timetable is reasonable?

- What should you get for your money?

When can telephone surveys be useful?

Three situations immediately come to mind: 1) when a station wishes to confirm the results from focus groups; 2) when a station is looking for a one-step research solution; and 3) when a station needs to research only one or two key issues.

Telephone surveys, which should typically average 400-500 completed interviews in your target audience, do an excellent job of telling you how many people in the market share key attitudes or perceptions about your station. Most managers would rather base their critical decisions on a statistically reliable survey than 40 qualitative responses from focus groups; in this instance, a telephone survey serves as validation for the station decisionmaker(s).

Another case may be when a station is looking for a one-step research solution. For instance, if the general manager doesn't have the budget for both focus groups and a phone survey. If both focus groups and phone surveys are under consideration, go for the phone survey when making decisions. It may not have the sex-appeal or mystique of a focus group (after all, you can not observe phone respondents from the other side of a one-way mirror the way you can focus groups), but the findings will be considerably more credible and actionable.

A final case may be when only one or two key issues are to be researched. Station management has already zeroed in on the vital questions and does not need the screening process of focus groups to develop phone survey questions.

Strengths/weaknesses of phone research

There are two major types of broad-based market or attitude research we will review: phone surveys and mailed questionnaires. Figure 6 gives you an overview of the pros/cons of each of these approaches.

Telephone interviewing is ideally adapted to the selection of a random sample. Through the use of one of many "random-digit" techniques in an effort to try and reach those not in the phone books (a sizable percentage in many markets), the phone approach does offer excellent randomness. Note: The more random the selection of respondents, the better your survey tends to be.

Telephone surveys are by far the fastest of the broad perceptual research techniques available. If the questionnaires are short, as many as 20 calls per hour can be made by each interviewer. This hourly volume is necessary, since not everyone reached will count as a completed interview -- either the person reached does not qualify to participate in the survey, or for some reason must terminate the conversation before the interviewer has asked all the questions.

Given that a number of people may have to be called before a single interview is completed, it is a plus that phone interviews are relatively brief. It is not unusual to call 10 numbers before one interview is completed. This means that for a survey with a goal of about 400 usable interviews, 4,000 numbers may have to be called.

Based on that fact, phone interviews should not run more than 10- to 12-minutes. In this relatively short time, a significant amount of useful information can be gathered before "respondent fatigue" sets in and the respondent starts giving sloppy answers or simply hangs up.

Figure 6
Comparison of Broad-based Survey Methods

	Mail	*Telephone*
Speed of Execution	Moderate	Fast
Cost	Moderate	Moderate
Response Rate	Low/Moderate	High
Accuracy	High	High
Possibility of Interviewer Bias	None	Moderate
Length of Interview	Long	Short
Difficulty of Executing	Moderate	Moderate
Success with Screening Questions	Moderate	High
Success with Open-End Questions	Low	High
Major Advantage	Relationship to Diary ratings surveys; Can explore many more questions-areas of interest than phone	Speed; Ability to interact with respondent (Probe)
Major Disadvantage	Inability to probe respondent	Limited length of interview, fewer questions can be explored

With a 10- to 12-minute interview and a normal rate of completions, a telephone survey should be properly conducted in five to six days, barring unforeseen obstacles. The succinct nature of the questionnaire combined with the potential of completing two calls per hour/per interviewer makes telephone methodology a timely way for broadcasters to reliably take the pulse of a cross-section of their market.

Conducting telephone research

Once a station has decided it needs a broad-based market research study and feels that telephone survey is the best methodology, then the question of deciding who should conduct the research arises. As in any research project, there are three options:

1) In-house staff, supervised by station personnel.

2) A local educator with market research experience

3) An outside research company with a recognized track record.

Since telephone methodology is more thorough and complex than that of the focus group, it is not normally likely that stations would have in-house staff expert and objective enough to design, implement and evaluate a useful project. This narrows it down to one of the two outside sources, depending on track record and budget. As with any research, you should select the best approach you can afford.

The major steps involved in organizing an effective telephone survey include:

- Consultation conference between the researcher and the station management team. This discussion should establish whether the survey is a follow-up to focus groups or a stand-alone project. Also, station

personnel should determine the content of the phone survey, as well as the key matters to be explored, given the goals of the effort.

- Sample design. Once the goals of the study have been determined and the major concerns pinpointed, then the parameters have to be established for the survey sample. Items to be covered between the broadcaster and the researcher include:

  - **Target demos** The real target, not necessarily those demo cells reported in syndicated ratings books.

  - **Qualifications of respondents** None should have media affiliations. What about listening habits or other sampled stations? Must they watch or listen to your station?

  - **Geographic targeting** Do you want proportional representation from across the market or is there one county of primary importance? Key zip codes?

  - **Sample size** Given your target demo, other screening criteria and your budget, how many usable interviews are to be sought? Station phone-survey projects may have in-tab (usable) sample goals from less than 350 in a small market to more than 500 in a major market.

- Questionnaire design. Because the questionnaire is the most crucial ingredient in the phone survey, it must be carefully designed by the researcher, then approved by the station. Included in this section is an example of an actual phone questionnaire.

- An interviewing staff must be hired, trained and supervised. Usually, in medium and large markets, qualified phone research facilities are available. Some feature centrally controlled on-site operations where a large number of interviewers can be working simultaneously, making calls regarding your project.

Other situations exist where the interviewers work out of their homes and report daily to the research firm's central office. In smaller markets, where a firm may not exist that has conducted telephone surveys or market research, improvisation is sometimes necessary. Temporaries can be hired, trained and supervised by the researcher or the calls can be made from outside the market using WATS facilities.

- Training and supervision of interviewers are *vital*. GIGO: garbage in, garbage out. That familiar bit of computerese brings home the importance of the interviewing staff and their training and supervision. Your questionnaire may be the greatest ever, but if it is sloppily administered or misunderstood by the interviewers, you will end up with garbage instead of useful results from your research investment. What goes into (and comes out of) the computer that is used to tally the research findings can be drastically undermined by poor or casual fieldwork.

To protect your investment, make sure your own researchers take the following field operations steps:

- Pretest the agreed-upon questionnaire to see if there are any "bugs," such as poor phrasing or structure or missing response options.

- Send a staffer to the market to train the interviewers (if the researcher does not have a WATS center available). This training session should be held at a central location to make sure everyone is on the same wavelength. Backup and relief personnel should be included in addition to the primary interviewers. The session should give an overview of the survey's goals and timetable. Then each interviewer should be asked to read through the questionnaire, and take turns role playing through an actual interview.

- Finally, callers should be observed making at least two or three test calls to see how they handle the questionnaire and possible responses during a live interview. A growing number of research companies provide

clients with the ability to dial a special number that allows them to monitor live interviews.

Many research firms simply locate a qualified facility in the area and then subcontract everything to a local firm. This is not preferred, but may be acceptable as long as the station is aware it may not be getting the highest measure of field operations quality control. If the research firm does not provide the critical quality control recommended here, its services should not be as expensive as those that do. The broadcaster has to decide if the additional quality controls, and their accompanying price differential, will make the research that much more credible. In most cases, it will. Again, you are advised to go for the most you can afford.

- Perform analysis and generate report recommendations. The researcher has the unenviable task of sifting through mounds of data, looking for the real insights hidden in that monumental mass and then, creating a cogent, readable and actionable report and delivering it in a timely fashion to the client station.

Timetable and cost guidelines

Given the steps noted previously, a quality telephone survey should cover *at least six weeks* from initial consultation to delivery of the final report. Some broadcasters have grumbled that they've had to wait months to get the final report and accompanying recommendations. They are being done a terrible injustice, since a fast-moving business such as broadcasting requires research that is timely in order to be used effectively.

The broadcaster should expect their research investment (using a top quality outside researcher) to equal approximately $50 to $75 per completed interview. If your survey goal is 400 usable interviews, then $20,000 to $30,000 would be a reasonable minimum ballpark figure for such an effort. Expect to

pay even less if the on-site training and survey quality control discussed earlier was not being done by the outside researcher.

Keep in mind that costs are relative. Be sure to ask for and check references of others who have used the same researcher. A poorly done survey, even at a bargain-basement price, can really end up costing your station more in the long run. On the other hand, before paying more than the $50 to $75 per completed interview guideline mentioned here, you should feel additional dollars are justified.

The Value of the End Result?

There are several major ingredients a broadcaster should feel are/were present during and after the telephone research project was conducted. They include:

- A feeling that the researcher sought their advice and input and was open and responsive to suggestions.

- An explanation, in plain language, if the researcher rejected the client's ideas during the formative and questionnaire development stages. There may be -- and frequently are -- legitimate reasons for a consultant to question some client input. The important part, for the client, is to understand and accept the reasoning behind these actions.

- The research project should result in a **readable** and **actionable** final report. Some phone study summaries are so heavy they need to be delivered by moving van. Other companies do not charge by the pound and produce a more concise report (with reams of data backup available, if requested). Whichever your station receives, the information should be organized into easily understood sections with accompanying explanations of what the data mean. Above all, there should be an overview and several action options or recommendations.

The most important thing is that you get useful management guidance from the project results. Many broadcasters have commented that all they got was a thick report and a bill to match; there was little guidance provided and virtually no follow-up.

Research Case Study

Here's an example of an actual telephone perceptual study illustrating much of what has been laid out in this section.

Case Study: **Philadelphia:**

> An ownership change in 1987 prompted a format search. Time was of the essence. The new owners wanted a quick reading on how they could improve on the weak performance of the station under its former ownership.

A phone study investigated a dozen format options -- some standard, some hybrid -- to properly examine potential format holes. The data showed that while the station being purchased was soft, so was the leader in that contemporary format category.

By repackaging the station after takeover, the new owners were able to double the station's numbers in its first book -- at the expense of the "format leader". The next book, the new challenger became number one in its format. The phone project took one month from conception to delivery of results and recommendations.

You now have an overview of broad-based perceptual research conducted though telephone studies. In this section you have gone from start to finish -- and through implementation of results -- so that you can better understand the workings and costs of a well done phone survey. Above all,

remember that if you need research to help make a major decision about your station's future, consider a large-sample survey, as discussed here. Consider the phone version (or the "diary" questionnaire as outlined in the next section). Keep in mind that successful stations should do at least one large study annually; stations that *aspire* to success should do their research homework even more often.

IV. Music Research

James E. Fletcher, Ph.D.
The University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia

Listening to music has come to play an important role in the lives of many Americans -- a role music could not have served in earlier times. Before the development of the **entertainment technologies** -- recordings, motion pictures, radio, television, cable -- a potential listener had to invest shoe leather and money to hear the music of others. The miracle wrought upon music listening has come as a result of special capabilities of these technologies:

1. Electronic technologies can reproduce a musical performance almost without limit.

2. They develop large audiences often separated in time and space from one another and from the performers.

Consider the promotion by P. T. Barnum of a singer, *The Swedish Nightingale*, Jenny Lind. Ms. Lind had to travel by ship around the horn of South America to arrive for her triumphant tour of the U.S. West Coast. Many in her audiences had also travelled far to hear her. Today millions of listeners can witness performances of the Metropolitan Opera from New York via radio, television and recordings.

Today musical performances are far more common in the lives of Americans. Selections of music are delivered to our homes in great numbers. Music has become a familiar companion in almost every place at all hours and in every season. Music listening has acquired most of the characteristics of habit. And, perhaps more importantly, music has become a *modulator of moods*. Music is used by listeners to produce relaxation from tension, alertness from stupor, cheer from boredom, well-being from loneliness.

Possibly related to the role of music as modulator of moods are physiological benefits of listening. Both *heart and respiration rates* are affected by listening. The beat of various forms of popular music has remained basically the same in spite of decades of change in style. The beat of popular music is basically that of the heart -- 60 to 130 beats per minute. There is some evidence to indicate that the heart becomes synchronized relatively quickly to the beat of favorite music. If a listener has an elevated heart rate due to anxiety or emotion, listening to music with a somewhat slower and regular beat will result in a slower heart rate. When the heart beat is low relative to music that has a faster beat, listening will speed the heart. Many listeners use music to raise the heart beat in the morning and to decrease it at night.

Respiration is one of the easiest physiological cycles to synchronize to rhythms in the environment. Consider the front porch rocker. A speaker rocking easily soon comes to speak in the rhythm of the rocking as the stressed beats of music come to set the listener's pace of breathing.

When regular breathing and heart rates are produced by the music, the blood circulates as it should, resulting in a sense of well-being.

Music is a social phenomenon as well. Preference for musical styles is acquired, taught powerfully by peers during pre-teen and teen years. The fact that an individual likes a particular style of music provides a sense that he or she is a part of a larger group that has devotion to this style in common. Even though he or she may know no one by name in this group of music fans, there is a sense that they are "out there" and ready to endorse the listener's tastes.

It is this social dimension of music which accounts for the continuing search by listeners for familiar music. If a performer or band changes its style greatly in a new recording, the change is typically met with resistance and hostility by fans; fans search for familiarity. There is a general sense among fans that performers have an obligation to adhere to and promote the musical style which has rewarded them with popularity.

Elsewhere[1], the facts of popular music consumption have been listed:

- Most of the music consumed in recordings and broadcasting is very, very familiar to listeners. It contains a minimum of new information.
- Music listeners report their listening as pleasurable, relaxing or diverting.
- The unique acoustic patterns of popular music are not as important in stimulating music consumption as is the familiarity of the music.
- Song lyrics seem to serve as auxiliaries to the music of popular songs rather than vice versa.
- The personal loyalties of popular music listeners to their favorite music and to the subculture it represents are strong enough to displace or modify relationships with other longtime associates.

Music Research -- Appropriate Questions

The research questions addressed by contemporary music research can be summarized as:

- What feelings can this piece of music stimulate or reinforce?
- Does this piece of music belong in the set of music which listeners/viewers have come to expect from a program or station? Is it compatible with the music which has produced the greatest loyalty?
- Which set of musical selections should be played together in order to: a) continue to attract the core audience of the program or station, b)

[1] For further discussion see J. E. Fletcher. (1989). *Profiting from Radio Ratings: A Manual for Radio Managers, Sales Managers and Programmers.* Washington, D.C.: National Association of Broadcasters. p. 85.

persuade listeners/viewers to listen/view for longer periods of time, c) attract listeners/viewers now unfamiliar with the offerings of the program or station?

- Which musical selections have been presented too often to retain their appeal to the audience?

- Which music is best suited to serve as a theme, jingle or musical identification for a program or station?

What Feelings Stimulate or Reinforce?

Understanding the feelings generated or made stronger by various musical selections is important in selecting program theme music, mood music for dramas, or commercials and jingles. In these types of research studies, participants are chosen to be typical of the intended audiences for the production in which the music is to be presented. The feelings reported by the participants are thought to be transferred to the program or message with which the music is associated.

Does the Music Belong to a Set that Has Produced Loyalty?

In the radio business this is referred to as playlist development. But a similar research problem is presented in developing television programs based on music videos. The loyalty which repetitive musical programming engenders for the broadcaster in a core audience, and the importance of deciding which music produces this loyalty on a continuing basis, is a high priority issue for the music programmer.

How Can Music Build Audience?

In general, systematic efforts to increase audience proceed with three priorities:

- **Priority 1** - *Keep the core audience and increase the time they spend* tuned in. In the case of radio stations, this means maintaining and increasing *Time Spent Listening* of *Exclusive Audiences*. This is the first priority since it does not require extensive audience promotion expenditures to accomplish. The principal medium to be used is on-air promotion.

- **Priority 2** - *Increase time spent listening or viewing* with the station *by those who divide their media time* between this station or program and its competitors. In the case of radio, these listeners are in the *Shared Cume* of the station. On-air promotion and adjustments to program format lead these listeners to increase their Time Spent Listening to the station until they join the ranks of exclusive listeners.

- **Priority 3** - Recruit into the station or program audience *those who have not yet been exposed*. This is the third priority since it requires large expenditures in other media.

What Selections Have Been Presented Too Often?

This is the potential problem of *audience burnout from repeated presentation of the same music selection*. Not every selection reaches burnout, but as burnout begins to characterize audience reaction to a particular musical selection, it stops functioning as an asset to the program or station format and becomes a deficit.

Sampling

All of the recommended methods for conducting music research begin with samples of telephone households. Relatively few households in the U.S. do not have telephones. Some of these are *unlisted households* -- not listed in directories. And directories become progressively more out of date each day and month after issue.

When a sample drawn from telephone households is *random*, then the probability that the sample will resemble all telephone households is maximized. But a random sample of telephone households will include many households that are not important to the objectives of the particular research project. As a result, the researcher must go through a process of selection from the sample for those households and individuals who are *qualified to participate* in the study. This is accomplished by a series of questions, called *qualifiers*, asked by the interviewer when the sampled households answer the researcher's call.

A recommended system for sampling telephone households is a two-stage sample with the first stage representing a sample of the telephone directory, and the second stage representing a series of random permutations on the working telephone numbers contacted from the directory sample. These terms will become clearer as the steps in developing the sample are described. But first the researcher must decide upon an adequate sample size.

Sample Size

In general the standard for sample size is that the sample should produce answers which are -- in 95 out of 100 cases -- accurate within some specified range. Typically the range in which answers must be accurate is plus or minus five percentage points. The table below presents the minimum sample size to achieve several ranges of accuracy:

Minimum Sample Size	*Accuracy* [+/-]
400	.05
600	.04
1066	.03
2400	.02
9600	.01

The minimum sample sizes above represent the number of study participants from whom data must be collected. That is, a minimum sample size of 600 means that 600 interviews are completed, not that 600 households are contacted. In order that this minimum number of households be included with the interviewed sample, the number of households in the sample to be contacted must be much larger, due to problems of *incidence* and *sample attrition*.

Incidence. Incidence is the percentage of the population being surveyed for the study who meet the qualifications for participation in the study. For example, if a study is to investigate the listening preferences of teenagers who tune primarily to country music radio stations, many households will have to be contacted in order to locate teens and even more households to locate teens who listen to country music. If teens live in 11% of telephone households in the city where this research is being conducted, then the *incidence for teens* is 11%. If 30% of teens in this community listen to country music radio stations then the incidence for such teens in this community is 30% of 11%, or 3.3%. An incidence of 3.3% for teens who listen to country music radio implies that thirty households will have to be contacted to locate just one teen country fan who can participate in the study. If the accuracy table above requires the study to complete 400 interviews, 12,000 households (30 X 400) will have to be contacted in the research.

A first-time researcher reading this may conclude that good research is very costly in terms of researcher time or money. This is true. At the same time, it emphasizes that unwisely designating audience segments can inflate research costs. To illustrate, in this example the cost of research is greater when we insist that we are interested only in *teen country fans*. If all teens were considered qualified to participate in the study, the incidence would be 11%. This means that the researcher would have to call nine homes to locate one in which a study participant resided. Given the same required level of accuracy, the total number of homes that would have to be contacted would be only 3,600 homes.

Sample Attrition. Not every home dialed by the researcher will result in a completed interview. The difference between the total number of telephone numbers dialed and the number which provide interviews can be described as *sample attrition*. Typical causes of sample attrition include:

- Phone disconnected or out of order. Errors in telephone directories accumulate from the date of publication of the directories. While the figures vary from market to market (depending on mobility), use a minimum of 2% per month since date of issue. That is, if three months have passed since a directory is issued, 6% of the listings may be estimated to be in error.

- No one answers a connected telephone. Residents may be away from home or unavailable to answer the call. Depending on time of day, time of week and location, the proportion of research phone calls which are answered will vary. But a guesstimate would be that only half are answered.

- The person answering the phone refuses to cooperate with the researcher. Most market researchers are concerned about cooperation rates. To some extent the proportion of those answering telephones who will cooperate with research depends upon the subject of the research and the skills of the interviewer. For your purposes, don't expect more than 50% cooperation.

Each source of sample attrition requires the researcher to dial more telephone households to obtain data from the target number of study participants. The mathematical adjustment to sample size is the reciprocal of the percent of households estimated to remain in the sample as a result of each cause of attrition. So if 50% of households answer the researcher's call, the attrition rate from "failure to answer the call" is 50%, then twice the number of households must be dialed for this reason alone.

Sample Goals

The sample goal is the number of households which must be dialed in order to obtain necessary data from the minimum required number of study participants. Sample goals can be estimated by using the following formula:

$$\textit{Sample Goal} = \frac{1}{\textit{incidence}} \times \frac{1}{\textit{attrition}} \times \textit{minimum sample}$$

Note: Additional sources of attrition can be included in this formula as multipliers equal to the reciprocal of rate of attrition for the source involved.

Telephone Directory Sample

Figure 1 represents a Table of Random Numbers used to make random selections from any list. In the case of samples from telephone directories, a worksheet like that of Figure 2 may be of use in drawing the sample. For the Telephone Directory Sample, it is recommended that one tenth of the total number of listings required for the sample come from the directory. Thus, if 2,000 telephone numbers were required, 200 would come from the directory sample.

The first step in drawing a directory sample using the worksheet is to provide the information required at the top -- directory name, page numbers, number of columns and column length in millimeters. The directory name is required since the same research project may involve samples from more than one telephone directory. If so, a worksheet should be used for each of the directories involved.

Figure 1
Table of Random Numbers

67373	44963	48241	22828	07406	47865	92474	86245
92830	34520	78174	24113	73255	26149	17263	57405
98823	93320	95093	24711	41282	17872	76142	70430
07094	96941	45338	99424	68069	41469	58743	15028
72853	06133	70070	32286	59533	66005	62935	63990
60810	45690	15620	48014	77336	09914	63114	96479
18757	53319	23172	84899	14113	45778	96993	28254
11402	53813	70683	18652	64728	44374	39360	31055
40513	84880	70415	47094	21817	47426	27927	20642
56651	71312	22613	38659	80245	25710	37481	68756
37365	50816	39533	15930	37725	20949	05735	80609
73816	47014	21418	99683	78540	03920	07477	70910
93983	46831	80525	81641	68310	16347	65184	37450
60121	50841	17099	82581	35165	32522	93489	94939
22475	45970	75034	94226	12733	46511	15258	41167
43301	32793	25669	37354	18650	01748	29891	80296
72843	97063	35167	03687	72781	95815	00098	53087
73356	88573	06506	17518	92761	24490	25668	56279
95086	70030	76941	22913	98454	54495	86400	30631
31927	91228	71717	13306	12575	81607	37816	72886
05219	14873	28090	32764	41705	10642	82787	13254
31123	85986	98355	74720	41763	83365	87533	91446
30977	27293	78267	86756	19332	45999	87367	30252
20943	53569	92778	14649	30327	45285	30003	69381
54001	80339	11753	75123	81333	61434	47024	31625
98502	68603	75529	69068	61931	03908	81240	52514
64221	02682	43592	11741	79604	11815	06725	40499
78557	76214	57749	57657	21104	75190	19348	31867
17405	33177	07904	13954	28266	84158	56692	11466

Figure 2
Telephone Directory Sample Worksheet

Directory Used: _____
Number of First Page of Residential Listings: __
Number of Last Page of Residential Listings: __
Number of Columns per Page: _____
Height of a Full Column of Listings in Millimeters: _____

Page #	Column #	Mm from Top of Column	Listing

The Table of Random Numbers is used to designate at random the page from which each telephone listing will eventually be selected. The listings desired are those on the white pages of the directory -- where residential listings appear.

Suppose for purposes of illustration that our market -- NABVILLE -- is represented by a directory, the first residential listing of which appears on page 5, the last on page 153. For the first column of the worksheet you will draw and record page numbers between 005 and 153. To do this, place the tip of a pencil on any location of the table of random numbers. If the three digit number at that location falls between 005 and 153, record it on the first row of the worksheet under "Page #." If the number does not fall within the desired range, go to the three digit number just beneath it, and so on, entering into the worksheet only those numbers which fall within the desired range. A section of a table of random numbers below illustrates.

25710	Out of Range	The numbers in boldface represent the three digit column from which page number selections will be made.
20949	Out of Range	
03920	Page "39"	
16347	Out of Range	
32522	Out of Range	From this set of numbers only two -- "39" and "17" are entered under "Page #" on the worksheet.
46511	Out of Range	
01748	Page "17"	

Page numbers continue to be drawn at random according to this procedure until page numbers have been drawn for the number of listings required by the sample.

After page numbers have been drawn from the Table of Random Numbers and entered into the worksheet, column numbers are drawn. If there

are three columns of listings per page then the researcher goes down single-digit columns of the table until a "1," "2," or "3" has been drawn for each page number appearing in the worksheet.

Finally column locations are drawn. If the length of a column of listings in the directory is 215 millimeters [you will have to determine this with a ruler marked in millimeters], draw from the Table of Random Numbers numbers between 001 and 215. Following the same procedure as above, go down a three-digit column of the table until a listing location has been drawn for each page number already entered in the worksheet.

The entries in the worksheet represent the location in the telephone directory of the telephones which should be called for this study. Imagine that the first line of the worksheet indicates that the first number of the sample is to be found on page 39, second column, 21 mm from the top of the column. Turn to that page of the directory, go to the second column and measure down that column 21 millimeters. There, find the telephone listing for the Brown family with the telephone number 543-7777. Enter this number into the worksheet on the first line under "Listing." If at the column location selected there is a business telephone listing or a blank line, move down the column to the next residential listing and enter the associated telephone number on the worksheet. When the required number of listings has been produced by this method, the directory sample is complete.

Random Digit Add-On Sample

Unlisted telephones in the U.S. overall stands at just over 30%; however, this figure varies widely by market (for example, over half of the residential phones in Las Vegas are unlisted). Not quite one out of three telephones will not appear in the directory. The researcher must overcome this problem if a useful telephone sample is to supply study participants. The solution generally used today is a system of adding random numbers to working telephone numbers identified in calling the residences from a telephone directory sample.

Random digit telephone samples are based on the observation that for any telephone exchange represented by the prefix, 543-, the full range of possible telephone numbers falls within the range, 543-0000 to 543-9999. A random sample of this range of numbers would include listed numbers, unlisted numbers and unconnected numbers. The proportion of unconnected numbers in most exchanges in the United States is relatively high. The random digit add-on sample is a variation of the random digit sample in which the proportion of unconnected numbers is smaller.

The random digit add-on sample begins with working telephone numbers -- known to be working, since they produce answered calls in the telephone directory sample. The working number is called a "seed." A series of two-digit random numbers are drawn from the Table of Random Numbers and added to each of the "seed" numbers -- yielding a set of new numbers that will include unlisted and some unconnected telephones. This process is illustrated below:

71717	Numbers in boldface are two-digit random numbers which will be added to the "seed" number, 543-7777.	RESULTS:	543-7848 543-7794
28090			543-7805 543-7867
98355			543-7875 543-7832
78267			543-7855 543-7844
92778			543-7869 ~~543-7855~~
11758			543-7788 543-7835
07904			543-7784 543-7781
37816			543-7814 543-7793

If -- as in this illustration -- a number is generated more than once, it will eventually be called only once.

No more than 90% of the telephone numbers required in a study should be generated by this method.

Recruiting Study Participants

Whether study participants are to be interviewed by telephone or not, the procedure for contacting and securing their cooperation is referred to as *recruiting*. Figure 3 provides an example of a recruiting dialogue which can be used by an interviewer to secure the cooperation of a study participant.

If the incidence for a study involving interviews by telephone is low, then it is advisable for the researcher to pre-interview. Pre-interviewing consists of short interviews like those outlined in Figure 3 to identify potential study participants who meet the qualifications for participation in the study. Those who are qualified are then called at a later time for interview. Using this two-step procedure, the interviews of the study can be completed in a shorter span of time. This will reduce the inaccuracies introduced into a study when the first participants interviewed are responding to the music environment many days or weeks before those last interviewed in the study.

Callbacks

Callbacks provide insurance that every number appearing in the sample will have the chance to participate. If numbers are to be dialed at least five times, each time in a different daypart than previous attempts, it is called *five callbacks*. In most cases a policy of *three callbacks* should be considered the minimum number of satisfactory callbacks. Callbacks should also be planned for those who answer the telephone but indicate that another time would be better for them to talk to the researcher. In such cases, the call record in Figure 3 should note the reason for the requested re-contact. If there is a pattern to such requests, the researcher may wish to arrange different hours for contacting or a different dialogue for interviewers.

Figure 3
Call Record and Recruiting Dialogue

CALL RECORD: Number Called:_____

Call Attempt	1	2	3	4	5
Date/Time of Call					
No Answer to Call					
No Adult at Home					
Answering Machine					
Time for Callback					

INTERVIEWER:_____

Hello. This is Sun Valley research, and we are conducting some important research on radio listening in this area. May I ask you a few short questions? I'm not selling anything, and no one will call on you.

If NO -- Thanks and Good Bye. If YES -- CONTINUE.

*Reason given for refusal:*_____

QUALIFIER 1: Is there someone in your house who listens to country music on the radio?

If NO -- Thanks and Good Bye. If YES -- CONTINUE.

Figure 3
(continued)

QUALIFIER 2: Can you tell me what stations they listen to for country music?
Probe for call letters or dial position.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

QUALIFIER 3: Can you tell me how many high school age teens live at your house?_____

If NO -- Thanks and Good Bye. If YES -- CONTINUE.

INTERVIEWER: May I speak to the oldest (youngest) of these teens?

If NO -- Ask for convenient time for callback. Thanks and Good Bye.

AFTER TEEN ANSWERS...QUALIFIER 4a (for mail questionnaire):

I'm from Sun Valley Research, and we are conducting some important research about radio music in this area. Would you be willing to complete a short questionnaire which I can send you? It will take only a few minutes, and I think you will find it fun.

If NO -- Thanks and Good Bye.
If YES -- Probe for Mailing Address:

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

Figure 3
(continued)

AFTER TEEN ANSWERS. . .QUALIFIER 4b (to come to auditorium or facility):

I'm from Sun Valley Research, and we are conducting some important research on music for the radio. Could you come to join a group listening to some new recordings? We'll treat you well, and we are selling nothing.

If NO -- Thanks and Good Bye.
If YES -- Probe for Appointment Time and Mailing Address for reminder cards.

DATE: _____
TIME: _____
NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

AFTER TEEN ANSWERS. . .QUALIFIER 4c (for telephone interview):

I'm from Sun Valley Research, and we are conducting research in this area about new country music. Can I play some over the phone for you in the next five minutes?

If NO -- Ask for convenient time for callback. Thanks and Good Bye.
If YES -- CONTINUE.

INTERVIEWER AT END:

Thanks so much for your help and happy listening to your radio!

Interviewer's Remarks:

Answering Machines

It is likely that some numbers dialed will be answered by machines. The researcher should be prepared to leave a message something like this:

> This is _____ of Sun Valley Research. Your household was selected as being representative of those who care about radio and radio music. We would like the opportunity to speak to you briefly in connection with research we currently have underway. We are not selling anything. Can you give us a call at 555-6766? Thanks very much.

Training of Interviewers

No matter their level of experience, it is always prudent to train interviewers before a new telephone project. The objective of such training is to ensure that the interviewers understand how to help the project achieve its research objectives. Interviewer instruction may bear upon these issues:

- *Security Concerns.* Every researcher has an obligation to avoid behaving in a way that will cause members of the community to feel less secure in their homes. Crime prevention speakers in many communities have told householders that burglars and other criminals sometimes gain information about residents and their habits by posing as telephone interviewers. In such communities it is likely that there will be some residual fear on the part of residents that telephone interviewers have criminal intentions. This fear can be assuaged to some extent if the interviewer confidently and without hesitation identifies the sponsor of the research. Interviewers should be provided with the name and telephone number of a supervisor who is willing to speak to potential study participants to answer questions and offer assurances.

- *Open-Ended Responses.* Interviewers must record the answers given to open-ended questions in the participant's own words (not theirs). If

necessary, interviewers should ask participants to repeat their answers to facilitate accurate entries.

- *Anticipated Answers*. When the researcher has been able to anticipate the nature of responses to each question, the anticipated responses should be shared with the interviewers. Probably the best training in anticipated responses takes place when the researcher assumes the role of potential study participant and responds to an interviewer who uses the interview schedule for the project.

- *Explaining Questions to Respondents*. When a study participant does not understand a question, the interviewer should: a) first, repeat the question in its original form to ensure that it has been heard correctly and b) then, if necessary, repeat the question using parallel wordings which have been discussed with the researcher during the training session. Interviewers must never "prime" or suggest answers to clarify a question.

- *Interview Validation*. Interviewers should understand that their work will be checked for accuracy. This process of checking is referred to as *validation*. A typical validation arrangement is that a supervisor will call one out of each ten households where interviewers have reported completing an interview. In addition, one out of ten households re-contacted for validation will be re-interviewed in order to evaluate the quality of data recorded by the interviewer.

Approaches for Music Research

The approach used in music research deserves special attention, for the method of presentation of music often impacts the nature of response received.

Hooks versus Full Presentation

A hook is a short excerpt of a musical selection which is used to represent the full selection in research. The reason hooks and other excerpts are used rather than entire selections is to make it possible for the study participant to provide data on more musical selections within the same session. Hooks are commonly used, for example, to evaluate recent releases for their inclusion in a radio station playlist. These hooks are typically less than ten seconds in duration, permitting a single study participant to respond to several dozen musical selections within the confines of a relatively short interview.

Selecting a hook is an art: how well the hook represents the full selection determines the validity of the research data developed from presentation of the hook. The typical hook is made up of the first bar of the song and first bar of the chorus. Ideally the hook features the same mix of instruments and voices which characterize the selection as whole. Ideally the same hook will be used each time the selection from which it is drawn is to be represented in a study. Otherwise, it may be difficult to compare the results achieved from one study to another.

Music videos may be represented in a music research study by excerpts, and these excerpts may be audio only or videotape segments. Those who feel that audio "hooks" are fair representations of music videos point to the fact that audio cues function to draw the attention of the viewer to the images on the screen. Many have observed that music video programming is often characterized by "viewers" who are in other rooms while such programming is presented -- returning to watch the set when the audio channel of the program announces a video they particularly want to see.

Full presentation of musical selections is the rule when jingles and musical themes are being tested, because there may be some musical feature in such selections which can be built up or played down in revisions. For example, when the object of the study is to evaluate alternative theme music for a television news show, full presentation of the selections may be desirable since the mix of instruments, pace or volume may be different from one point of the

selection to another, and research may point to these sections as particularly effective or ineffective.

Order of Presentation

The problem of presentation order has been discussed extensively in the literature of social science. The argument runs that musical selections in the first and last position, as well as certain sequences of selections, produce results that they would not if presented in other orders. The academic solution to this problem is to present the selections in all possible orders across subjects. But when the number of hooks or selections is large, the number of possible orders becomes unmanageable.

Two compromises are common. One is the *spoiler stimulus*. The spoiler is a musical selection which is not actually under study and which is presented first in the sequence of stimuli. This stimulus robs whatever advantage the first position has from all of the other selections to be presented.

The other compromise is to present each stimulus in the orders of presentation in which it appears first or last. This will be feasible only when the number of musical selections to be studied is relatively small with respect to the number of study participants.

Medium of Presentation

The general rule is that the medium of presentation permit the highest quality of reproduction possible. When the study involves playing the selections down a telephone line to study participants the quality of presentation is limited by the phone line. But when the study permits a face-to-face presentation of stimuli, as in auditorium testing or shopping mall presentations, then relatively high quality reproduction equipment can be used.

Some Terminology

When presenting radio music, music videos and recent recordings, it is common practice to plan separate research projects for currents, recurrents, standards and oldies.

A *current* is a recently released musical selection which is currently popular with the target listeners of the broadcaster.

A *recurrent* is a current which remains very popular even though it is not a recent release. The dividing line between current and recurrent is arbitrary and usually designated by the Music Director or programmer involved. Thus a current may become a recurrent after six weeks or six months following release or first air play.

An *oldie* is a musical selection which continues its popularity well past the early period of its availability to the public.

A *standard* is a musical selection which achieves or attains a level of popularity after being recorded by another artist or by many other artists. Some performers and recording groups specialize in recording standards.

Music Call-Out Studies

In a *call-out* music study, the researcher telephones members of a pool of pre-qualified study participants, plays one hook at a time over the telephone, and solicits reactions to the hooks. A common purpose in conducting call-out music studies is to determine which musical selections should be added to, deleted from, or maintained in a radio station playlist. The call-out studies for this purpose are often conducted on a regular basis -- weekly, semi-weekly, monthly. To conserve on the effort required to produce large samples, studies may be analyzed in aggregate. That is, studies of the first and second weeks of the month may be added together to issue a report at the end of the second week;

then the second and third weeks may be aggregated for the report at the end of the third week; and so on.

Some programmers and researchers complain about the audio quality of call-out studies, maintaining that a higher quality of musical reproduction is required to obtain a "true" reaction from study participants. On the other hand, one may also argue that the function of the hook is merely to remind the participants of the experience of listening to the selection on whatever receiver or playback apparatus they use in car or home. If such is the call-out, reproduction is probably good enough to remind the participants of listening experiences with the music being presented.

Figures 4 and 5 represent two scales used to measure audience reaction to music presented in call-out studies. For a number of reasons enumerated elsewhere, the Figure 5 instrument is recommended.

The key to understanding the results produced by these measures is to note that liking, interest and excitement must be interpreted in light of familiarity. At some point familiarity will level off: the selection is as familiar as it will get. In spite of leveling familiarity, however, the most popular musical selections will increase in liking, interest and excitement to some extent.

It should be clear from the foregoing that call-out music research for playlist evaluation is made up of a continuing series of studies. It is only from a series of studies that trends in music popularity will be evident.

Figure 4

Interviewer Administered
"Choose One" Scale for Music Call-Out Studies[2]

Interviewer:

Think about the music you have just heard. Which of these phrases best describes your reaction to the music? ▭

1 -- My favorite

2 -- Not my favorite but like it a lot

3 -- It's okay

4 -- Not hate but don't like it

5 -- Really hate it

6 -- Can't decide/didn't hear it/too new

Would you like me to read the list again?

[2] Based on E. Routt & F.A. Weiss. (1978). *The Radio Format Conundrum.* New York: Hastings House.

Figure 5

Popularity Scale for Call-Out Music Studies[3]

Interviewer: Think about the music you have just heard.

1. **On a scale of one to ten with one equal to dislike and ten to like, how do you feel about this music?** ☐
2. **On a scale of one to ten with one equal to unfamiliar and ten to familiar, how familiar to you is this music?** ☐
3. **On a scale of one to ten with one equal to dislike and ten to like, how do you feel about this type of music?** ☐
4. **On a scale of one to ten with one equal to unfamiliar and ten to familiar, how familiar is this type of music?** ☐
5. **On a scale of one to ten with one equal to uninteresting and ten to interesting, how interesting was this music to you?** ☐
6. **On a scale of one to ten with one equal to lacking energy and ten to energetic, how energetic was this music to you?** ☐
7. **On a scale of one to ten with one equal to uninteresting and ten to interesting, how interesting do you think this music would be to most people?** ☐
8. **On a scale of one to ten with one equal to lacking energy and ten to energetic, how energetic would this music be to most people?** ☐

For familiarity index add 2 and 4 ☐
For liking index add 1 and 3 ☐
For interest score add 5 and 7 ☐
For excitement index add 6 and 8 ☐

[3] Based on J.E. Fletcher. (1987). *Music & Program Research.* Washington, D.C.: National Association of Broadcasters.

Music Call-In Studies

In a *music call-in study* the researcher contacts study participants by telephone, then sends them a letter and self-administered questionnaire. A telephone number is provided which the participant calls when convenient. A telephone message machine then presents the hooks of the study, as the participant completes entries in the self-administered questionnaire. Then the participant either returns the questionnaire in a stamped addressed envelope provided by the researcher, or the participant may call a second telephone number to read responses into a second telephone answering machine.

The great disadvantage of music call-in studies is that there are more opportunities for the participant to be lost from the study because the letter and questionnaire may be misaddressed, lost in the mail or lost in the household clutter of the study participant.

The great advantage of music call-in is that a single researcher may be able to collect data from more study participants by this means. If the researcher is conducting a call-out study of 20 hooks, he or she may be able to collect data from only seven or eight participants per hour. But with the same hour in a call-in study one researcher may be able to collect data from as many as twenty participants. In addition, some participants may be willing to participate in a music study when they can have control over the time of their participation -- as they will in a call-in study.

An sample questionnaire which could be used in a music call-in study along with a suitable cover letter appear as Figures 6 and 7.

Theater/Auditorium/Mall Studies

Music research conducted in auditoriums or theaters and in shopping malls offers several advantages:

- The data may be collected in a relatively short span of time.
- Musical selections may be presented with state-of-the-art audio reproduction equipment.

Auditorium testing requires a relatively intensive effort to recruit study participants since getting a person to keep an appointment at a theater is somewhat more difficult than gaining their willingness to accept a questionnaire in the mail. When telephoning potential study participants, the researcher will make an appointment for the cooperating study participants to meet at a theater session. In the next mail, the researcher sends a letter or postcard thanking the study participants for agreeing to participate and reminding them of the time and place of appointment. Then within the 24 hours preceding the theater session, the researcher should recontact the participants to remind them of the session and to assure that they are planning to attend.

In addition to this extra communication from the researcher, an *incentive* should be offered to the participants. An incentive is something of value offered by the researcher as an inducement for the participants to appear at the proper time and place. Incentives may include cash (going rates for participation currently vary in the range of $20 to $ 35), theater or concert tickets, gift certificates, coupons for reduced prices on recorded music, and entries into raffles for appliances or vacations. The rule is that the incentive is attractive enough to secure the desired level of cooperation but not more costly than necessary to achieve this end. If the desired number of study participants appear without incentives, then incentives are not a good idea.

Figure 6
Cover Letter to Participant in a Music Call-In Study

Tinytown Research
121 Center Boulevard
Yourtown, U. S. A.

Dear Mr. Green;

I enjoyed very much meeting you by telephone this evening. I am pleased that you will be helping us with our study of radio music.

As I explained, your phone number was selected as part of a group of people scientifically designed to represent Yourtown. This means that your answers will be taken to represent a whole group of listeners like you. Without your participation our picture of the listeners here will not be complete.

Here's what we would like you to do:

- Telephone our recording at 778-9999. You can call at any hour. You will hear some short excerpts of popular music, each identified by a number.

- On the enclosed questionnaire you will find questions for each numbered musical selection.

- Try to finish before Thursday evening. I will call you then to get the answers you have written into the questionnaire.

If any of the above is not clear, please give me a call at my office at 778-5656. If you should miss me, please leave a message. I will get right back to you.

Again I really appreciate your help in making life in Yourtown a little more musical.

Sincerely,

Susan Suzanne
Research Coordinator

Figure 7
Self-Administered Questionnaire for Music Call-In Studies

First dial 778-999 to hear our telephone recording of short musical selections. As you listen fill in the questionnaire below: there are eight questions to answer for each musical selection.

	# 1	# 2	# 3	# 4	# 5	# 6	# 7	# 8	# 9	# 10	# 11	# 12	# 13	# 14
This Piece of Music: Dislike/Like 1 2 3 4 5														
Unfamiliar/ Familiar 1 2 3 4 5														
This Type of Music: Dislike/Like 1 2 3 4 5														
Unfamiliar/ Familiar 1 2 3 4 5														
This Music for Me: Uninteresting /Interesting 1 2 3 4 5														
Lacks Energy/ Energetic 1 2 3 4 5														
For Most People: Uninteresting /Interesting 1 2 3 4 5														
Lacks Energy/ Energetic 1 2 3 4 5														

A few more questions on the next page, please.

Figure 7
(continued)

1. To which of the following age categories do you belong? (Mark One)
   ☐ 12-17, ☐ 18-34, ☐ 35-49, ☐ 50-64, ☐ 65 +

2. At which of the following times are you most likely to be listening to the radio? (Mark All that Apply)
   ☐ weekdays 6-10 am, ☐ weekdays 10 am-3 pm, ☐ weekdays 3-7 pm, ☐ weeknights 7 pm-midnight.

3. Which of the following are your favorites for listening to music?
   ☐ 94 Q, ☐ Warm 100, ☐ Z 103, ☐ Rock 101, ☐ Y 99
   ☐ Other_____

Thanks for Your Help!!!

In organizing a theater test, the researcher is concerned also about amenities -- those things required for the comfort of participants such as rest rooms and refreshments -- and with the relative ease with which a participant will find the facility and parking. The size of groups for this kind of testing will vary with the purpose of the research, the budget and the number of persons available to help participants through the research. Typical theater studies include audiences from 30 to 100.

Mall studies provide still another environment for studies in which participants are invited to a central facility. Mall facilities typically accommodate smaller groups and can provide research workers to recruit participants and to handle them as they arrive for the study. Mall facilities can accommodate up to 20 or more participants in group or individual rooms.

Studies of Feelings

Measures of feelings about music can be added to any study, but there are circumstances in which the nature and strength of feelings is the central issue to be studied. This is particularly true in studies of mood music, theme music and jingles.

Studies of feelings have become increasingly important in the evaluation of advertising and marketing programs. A non-profit foundation -- the Marketing Science Institute[4] -- has recently funded research on this topic. They were able to develop four scales of feelings relevant to marketing and advertising -- *upbeat feelings, warm feelings, skeptical feelings* and *uneasy feelings*. These measures should be serviceable to researchers of music. Model instruments based on this research are included in Figure 8.

[4] For further discussion see R.C. Goodstein, J.A. Edell & M.C. Moore. (1989). "When are feelings generated? Assessing the reliability of feelings based on storyboards and animatics." Manuscript, Fuqua School of Business, Duke University.

Consider an illustration of the use of these scales. Suppose that a local television news program needs a new musical theme. The researcher asks the news staff to produce two mock newscasts of roughly five minutes duration, one incorporating the old theme, the other with a specially composed new theme. After each program is presented to a group of study participants, they evaluate the music they heard with the scales from Figure 8. The music from the mock news program which receives higher scores in upbeat feelings and lower scores in skeptical feelings would be the better of the two news themes.

Figure 8

Instruments for Measuring Four Dimensions of Feeling[5]

For Self-Administered Questionnaires:

How much do you agree that each of the following terms describes your feelings about the music you have just heard? [Circle a number for each term.]

Upbeat Feelings

Amused

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Carefree

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Cheerful

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Happy

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Playful

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Silly

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

[5] Based on R. C. Goodstein, J.A. Edell & M.C. Moore. (1989). "When are feelings generated? Assessing the presence and reliability of feelings based on storyboards and animatics." Manuscript, Fuqua School of Business, Duke University.

Figure 8
(continued)

Warm Feelings

Affectionate
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Hopeful
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Kind
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Peaceful
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Warm
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Skeptical Feelings

Critical
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Disinterested
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Offended
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Suspicious
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Skeptical
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Figure 8
(continued)

Uneasy Feelings

Sad
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Uneasy
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Lonely
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Anxious
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Regretful
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Concerned
Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Automated Measurement

Another innovation in music research under development by Dr. Scott Shamp of the University of Georgia is automated music measurement. In this form of measurement a computer operates a video or audio tape recorder and presents questions to be answered about it. The study participant provides answers directly through the keyboard, coached by the computer.

The implication of this form of automated measurement is that large numbers of study participants can report to the station or to a market research facility, somewhat after the fashion of an auditorium or mall study. But, since the computer is conducting the study, an experienced research professional does not need to be present. And because computers are relatively inexpensive, many units can be present at the research site, permitting participants to come in at their convenience and in groups the size of a car pool.

V. Format Research

Kurt Hanson
Strategic Radio Research
Chicago, Illinois

The most cost-efficient way to get more listeners is to improve your product. That's just what this chapter is about: Making sure you are in a format that will allow you to achieve your personal and business goals. To accomplish that, you'll have to design the specifics of your format to achieve optimal performance. Here are four kinds of studies that can help you decide on a format and track the listeners' response to it:

- If you're not sure you are presently in the most profitable format, a **format search** can give you a reading on the potential success of several formats of your choice.

- A **perceptual market study** can provide you with a thorough understanding of what your target audience perceives as the strengths and weaknesses of your radio station, as well as those of your competitors.

- **Auditorium music testing** can give a reading on the audience's reaction to your entire music library in one fell swoop.

- But, the ideal research program for any committed station that has the budget to support it is an **on-going research program.** That keeps you in touch with your target audience all year long.

This chapter describes three of the four, while Chapter IV was devoted to Music Research alone.

Know Your Possible Format Options

The common perception among many PDs and GMs in the United States is that there are about ten different radio formats. That common perception, however, is wrong by a factor of about 300% to 400%. Most American radio managers and programmers, following the lead of trade publications, might identify the following ten distinct formats:

Music-based formats:

Beautiful Music (a.k.a Easy Listening)
Classical
Jazz/New Age
Big Band/Nostalgia
Adult Contemporary
Country
Urban
Contemporary Hit Radio (a.k.a Top 40)
Album-Oriented Rock

Plus, outside of the music continuum:

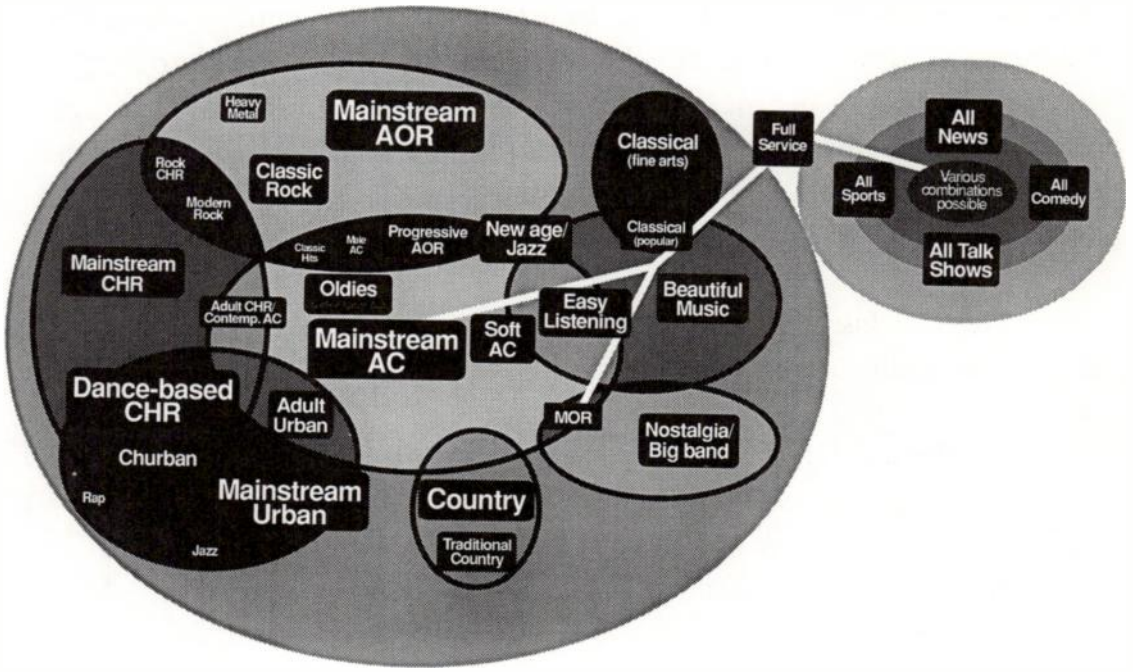
News/Talk

However, in the past decade or so, a combination of factors, including new signals moving into many markets, changing consumer tastes, increasingly creative programmers, and other market forces, have combined to create an environment where fragmentation and differentiation of audience and format have flourished. As a result, there are now *dozens* of distinct radio formats available to American consumers. (Admittedly, of course, not all formats are available in all markets.)

Two and a half years ago, at the NAB's Radio 1989 convention in Anaheim, California, Strategic Radio Research introduced a new way of looking at radio formats and how they relate to one another. This perspective was expressed in the form of a diagram that has come to be called the "Hanson

Format Map" (shown in Figure 1). It illustrates the number of different formats that exist and how they interact.

Figure 1
Hanson Format Map



It shows radio formats as a *continuum.* Stations can be positioned anywhere on it, and wherever you see two formats adjacent to one another, in fact, a new station could be probably designed to fit in between them. So, keeping in mind that dozens of in-between formats could also be added to the chart; there are forty or so distinctly different formats that can be defined on music and positioning.

From these alternatives, this chapter will describe how to select the format most approporiate for *your* station.

How to Research the Right Format

What's the key to any new business success? Customers, of course. But, how do you attract customers (or, in our case, listeners) to a new business? Radio station owners are not the first business people in the world who've needed to find the answer to that question. In Michael Beouf's book, *How to Win Customers & Keep Them for Life*, he describes how to win new customers by asking what he calls *the golden question*: **"What's the unmet want?"** It is his notion that the surest path to new customers is "to provide rewards that no one else is providing." Stated differently, you will be successful by providing an *unmet want*.

Here are just a two examples of entrepreneurs who have been successful at providing *unmet wants*:

- Federal Express providing business people with the confidence that their parcel would positively get there overnight, and
- ESPN providing sports junkies with 24-hour sports on cable TV.

How The "Unmet Want" Principle Applies To Radio

Imagine you're considering buying a radio station in your market. You want to make some estimates of your revenue potential. Well, your revenues are going to vary with the type of programming you broadcast. But, those projected revenues will, more than anything else, correlate with your audience size -- with the number of customers your format attracts. One path to attracting new customers is to conduct a **format search** and you'll find the unmet want.

There are some rare cases in which the unmet want is immediately obvious. Birmingham, for example, for most of the late '80s did not have a rock station. It didn't necessarily take a genius to figure that a rock station in Birmingham could provide rewards that no one else was providing. But in

general, you can't open up Duncan's *American Radio* and determine what the *unmet want* is. You've actually got to get into the market somehow and actually talk with consumers, and ask the golden question.

Talking with consumers, in an organized and systematic manner so that the findings you obtain are reliable and projectable to the market as a whole, is what we are referring to as **format search.**

There is always a format hole (i.e., some unmet want.). The trick is to find the biggest hole, the most attractive niche, the format that will attract the largest number of advertiser-desired listeners. The best technique to help you determine the most profitable format for your station is to conduct a multi-phase research program that then gives you background information that will help you best execute it.

Format Search

Before you actually begin your format search, you will want to get an idea of the options you will want to research. The following are a couple of suggestions:

Preliminary Exploration: Focus Groups

The first place to begin might be focus groups. As described earlier in this book, focus groups are "focussed discussions" of approximately ten members of your target audience, led by an experienced focus group moderator. Each discussion usually lasts about 90 minutes, as you and other members of your management team observe from behind a one-way mirror. Focus groups are usually commissioned in sets of four or six groups, with either two sessions per night or one afternoon and two nighttime sessions per day.

During your focus group, your skilled moderator will perhaps play tapes of your format and will attempt to engage the group in a discussion of how they might describe the format to their friends. You might hear comments like:

- *I don't know, it's a bunch of good songs.*
- *It's, like, all that same stuff you hear on all the other stations.*
- *My girlfriend's musical tastes goes from like maybe Michael Jackson to maybe Taylor What's-Her-Name and Miami Sound Machine or something. It's really narrow. She doesn't like any blues, or any rock from the Sixties, or anything. She would like the kind of mix you just played. It's all, like, semi-contemporary, mediocre, popular, Top 50 type songs.*

Preliminary Exploration: Secondary Research

Another excellent source of brainstorming potential descriptors of your radio station is to do what's known in the academic field as *secondary research*. Instead of researching consumers directly, you do research on who has done research. (In other words, who else is doing what?)

For example, you might ask, "When there's an established classic rock station in a market, can an oldies station be successful?" The answer is undeniably "yes." All you have to do is look, historically, at how successful the introduction of an oldies station was in markets like Boston and Milwaukee that had established classic rock stations. Or you can look at markets like New York and Nashville in which a classic rock station came in without really affecting the established oldies station.

One source of secondary research is to review back issues of *Monday Morning Replay*. This weekly publication offers a detailed "x-ray" of the programming on a successful station in each of the following formats (CHR, AOR, AC and Urban). It shows you the range of songs they play in a given day, what their rotation factor is on their most-played songs, and, most importantly for our purposes here, which positioning statements they're using. The same publication offers lots of ideas for promotions, liners, programming features, and more.

The Format Research Process

1. Narrow down the most-likely potential formats.

You will probably be able to use your existing knowledge and common sense to narrow down the most likely potential formats for your research to four or five possibilities.

The following criteria should help guide you in the "narrowing-down" process:

- **Uniqueness.** Generally speaking, it may be better to be the first and only station in a unique and moderately popular format than to be one of many stations in the same general format area.

- **Number of competitors.** If you decide to consider a mass-appeal format like CHR or AC, it is still better if there is only one competitor in the format than if there are already two or three or four.

- **High-end potential.** Given the observable experience of other stations in other markets, it may be clear what the high-end potential of a given format is. (For example, it seems impossible for an urban station to get a higher share than the market's percentage of blacks. The high-end potential of a soft AC in any market seems to be a 4 or 5 share.)

- **Sales potential.** You may be in a market where there is virtually no demand by advertisers for teens or 65+ listeners. This would influence you to be less interested in formats that only do well in these demos.

- **Corporate needs.** If ownership can be satisfied with a consistently small profit margin, more formats are open to you than if the only way to satisfy corporate needs is to hit a hugely-profitable "home run."

2. Design the structure of the study

At this point in the process, you will need to determine the overall structure of the study. For example, which geographic areas of your market should be surveyed, what is the desired age group for the survey, and what is the desired sample size for the study.

The desired geographic area will depend on such factors as the rating services' current definition of your metro, possible future changes in metro definition or your market, counties (or other areas) of specific interest to advertisers in your market, and the coverage area of your signal.

The desired age group for the survey is based on the formats you want to test. For example, if you are considering formats ranging from CHR to Easy Listening, you will want to survey an extremely wide age range. If you are only considering formats like Jazz/New Age, Oldies, and AC, you may only need to survey the 25-54 age group.

The desired sample size is a more complicated issue. In most situations, a sample size of 1,000 respondents in your target demographic for this study is recommended. There are occasions, however, in which you may wish to conduct a format search that will need a sample size of 1,500 or 2,000 respondents.

The following influences may work in the other direction and call for a larger sample size after all:

- ***Profiles of demographic appeal*** for each potential format.

- Consider the ***competitive reaction*** of other stations in your market to your move.

- Be able to convince *upper management* or a *third party* of the validity of the study's findings.

3. Design the questionnaire

Your questionnaire for a format search should consists of several components:

1. In the **Introduction,** establish the credentials of your researcher as a legitimate market research firm hired by a radio station and attempt to get a respondent on the phone who falls into your client's desired target demographic. As discussed in Chapter II, one of several different techniques should be utilized to ensure balance of respondents by age, sex and race.

2. In the **Listening behavior** section of the questionnaire, you will explore the respondent's past-week radio listening habits. You can also cover the stations that they cume on the typical day and the typical week, their overall most-listened-to station, their preferred station in two or three other specific dayparts, and their recall of their previous favorite station.

3. In the specific **Format descriptions** section of the Format Search questionnaire, you can describe a number of different potential new formats to respondents and ask them to consider whether that type of station currently exists in your market. Then ask them to estimate how likely they would be to listen to a new station of that type were it to appear in the market, and whether they believe it would be their primary or secondary choice of radio station or merely an occasional alternative.

4. Finally, the interview winds up by collecting demographic data plus certain other general information about the respondent's typical current radio listening habits.

The average interview takes about eight to ten minutes, excluding the optional "perceptual market study" portion.

The most important area of this questionnaire, is the *format descriptions* portion, in which appropriate and fair descriptions have to be written (supplemented, in some cases, by actual music samples played down the phone line) and an appropriate response scale. Here, the expertise of your research firm is critical.

4. Receive a presentation of the results

After the field work is complete, your research should be presented in person to your station's management team and/or ownership in a meeting that typically runs from two to four hours in length. The researcher should be prepared to discuss the findings of research in detail and answer all of your questions. If additional tabulations need to be run, ask -- research is expensive and only a good investment if it *works* for you.

5. Interpret the findings

The results of interviews with consumers should not comprise 100% of your decision-making process. Consumers, for example, cannot predict how competitors will react to your moves, nor how well a certain share will convert into ad dollars. But in most markets, the format search makes it fairly easy to identify the most profitable unmet needs.

Once you have selected your format, additional audience research can help you identify the weaknesses of your closest competitors, design an advertising campaign, test your library, and, once you're on the air, test your currents and track your progress on a week-by-week basis. In other words, once you have selected your format, you're only part way there. The format search only identifies which format(s) may be expected to perform well for stations that are well-designed, well-programmed and well-marketed.

Learn More About Your Target Audience

The most reliable and efficient way to learn the attitudes, needs, tastes and perceptions of your target audience in one fell swoop is to commission a **perceptual market study** from a professional radio research firm. (An alternative approach as described later in this chapter, and in some ways better, is to divide up your questions and explore them one at a time in a program of ongoing research.) This is not something you should consider doing yourself. If you could find someone with the expertise to do it, it's doubtful a staff person would be objective enough to be valuable.

Your purpose in commissioning a perceptual market study to design a new format for your radio station is to provide you with information on your target audience that will help you in the following areas:

- Learn the perceived *weaknesses* of your competitors;
- Explore the appeal of various *positioning statements;*
- Test *musical tastes* of your target audience by *genre*;
- Learn the appeal of proposed *programming features*;
- Examine the familiarity and popularity of various *air personalities*;
- Learn the perceived *information needs* of your listeners

. . . and *more.*

The steps involved in a typical study might be as follows:

Initial Conference Call

There should be a two- to four-hour in-person meeting or conference call between key members of your management team (GM, GSM, PD, group head, consultant) and the researchers that will be designing the study for you. In the meeting, you should discuss the following subjects:

- What is the **history of your format** in your market?
- What is the specific **history of your station**?
- What are your **goals** for your radio station?
- What, if anything, seems to be **keeping you** from achieving your goals?
- Who are your **primary competitors** in terms of sales?
- Who are your **primary competitors** in terms of format?
- What is the nature of your **ownership**?
- What is the nature of the ownership of your primary **competitors**?
- What is the **history** of primary competitor #1?
- What is the **history** of primary competitor #2?
- What do you believe are your station's **strengths** vis-a-vis your competitors?
- What do you believe are your station's **weaknesses** vis-a-vis your competitors?
- Who have been the important **personalities** over the years in your market?
- What have been the most effective **advertising campaigns** in your market?
- What have been the most effective **promotions** in your market?
- Details on the **history** of your station:
  - What advertising campaigns has your station used in the past?
  - What positioning statements has your station used in the past?
  - What has been the history of your morning show?
  - What promotions has your station run in the past?
  - What personalities have been significant on your station in the past?

- Details on the **history** of primary competitor #1:
  [Repeat the above list]
- Details on the **history** on primary competitor #2:
  [Repeat the above list]
- What are the most hotly-debated **issues** within your radio station nowadays?
  (In other words, **what don't you know** that you feel you need to know?)
- Other topics ("Open forum")

At the conclusion of this meeting, you will have a much better feel for the issues that are most critical to your future success.

Reviewing The First Draft

Next ask for a first draft, which will probably be significantly longer than any real questionnaire could possibly be (by which I mean longer than any typical respondent would be willing to put up with). The production of the first draft questionnaire may take about a week or so.

Topics that might be included in that draft include the following:

Verbatims

How would members of your target audience describe WBP? And how would they describe its competitors? This section of the report will tell you how your audience describes your radio station in the exact language the respondents used. *Verbatims*, or open-ended questions, are used throughout the study. The verbatims you will receive in your report will contain content equivalent to several dozen hours worth of focus groups . . . with the added advantage that you receive a written transcript of every word spoken.

Sample verbatim descriptions:

Respondent	Description WBP
Male 24 Black	They play medium rock. The personalities are humorous. Music like Lionel Richie pop. Music for the whole family.
Male 25 White	I think of it as yuppie-ish, preppy. Music that's too trendy for me. The morning disk jockey, Rick Ducey, is good, though. He's personable. He has good people with him.
Female 26 White	Somewhat wild and crazy. It's similar to a station I used to listen to in Milwaukee -- the Milwaukee Zoo. A zany morning program. I can't remember the names of the disk jockeys.
Female 26 White	It's kind of the modern songs, light rock. It's more repetitive than WBP. There's a constant disk jockey banter.

Having a good, top-quality research report with lots of verbatims is like having the benefit of dozens and dozens of hours of focus groups but with no loudmouth influencing anyone else and a written transcript of every word said.

Image Association

In this perceptual research technique, respondents are asked to name the station that comes to mind as best fitting a given description. Possible "images" include:

- The station that plays the most music
- The station that plays the best new music

- The station that plays the best oldies
- The station that plays the widest variety of music
- The station that plays new music first
- The station that repeats songs too often
- The station that gives away the most prizes and money
- The station that offers the best prizes
- The station that has the best disk jockeys
- The most fun station to listen to
- The station that has been getting better lately (Why?)
- The station that has been going downhill lately (Why?)

. . . and many others.

This is a useful technique to use for images on which you expect your station to do well. For images where you are trying to achieve satisfactory (as opposed to exceptional) performance (e.g., "The most frequent traffic reports," for a music-intensive FM station), see the technique described on the next page.

Attribute Identification

This is a recommended research technique for many perceptual issues. Respondents are asked whether each phrase would be a "good" description of your station; then they are asked the same set of questions regarding one other station for comparative purposes.

An obvious example of when this technique would be more appropriate than an "Image Association" technique would be if you were managing an AOR station and wanted to know how your news department was perceived. If you asked, "The station with the best newscasts," the obvious intelligent answer would probably be your market's news station. That would not be a helpful answer

for your purposes. You merely want to know if you have *good* newscasts. This "attribute identification" technique would work well for your purposes.

Attributes that can be tested include:

- Plays a lot of music
- Good variety of music
- Entertaining morning show
- Reliable traffic reports
- DJs talk too much
- Repeats songs too often
- Too much slow music
- Aimed at teenagers
- Too many commercials
- Advertises a lot on TV
- Too much hard rock
- Too much new music

Two additional follow-up questions can also be asked at this point in the interview: "What do you like most about that station?" and "What do you dislike most about that station?" Responses are given in "verbatim" form.

Continuums

In this technique, respondents are asked to position various radio stations on various continuums. For example:

> "On a 10-point scale where 1 is very soft, quiet music and 10 is hard, hard rock, where would you say WBP falls? Where would you say [competition] falls? What would be the ideal radio station for your tastes, where would it fall?"

The position of the radio stations being examined can be plotted on one-dimensional or two-dimensional graphs.

Binary Choice

Sometimes the best research technique is the most straightforward one. You ask a question, you get an answer. Sample questions are shown below:

> For an AC station: If WBP played fewer new songs and more oldies, would it be better or worse, in your opinion?
>
> For a country station: Should WBP play more songs by "pop" artists like Linda Ronstadt and the Eagles, or do you think they should concentrate even more on real "country" artists?
>
> For an AOR station: Do you think that WBP's disk jockeys should be encouraged to be more entertaining or do you think they talk too much already?

Other Issues

You can also examine the appeal of specific non-music elements of the station:

- **Programming features in your perceptual study**

> Which programming features would be most appropriate to add to your radio station? Which existing programming features in the market have loyal audiences? Preferred times of day for proposed features can also be examined. ("Would you be interested in listening to that kind of 'New Age music' program on weeknights after 10 p.m.? How about on Sunday mornings?") Various types of special programming can be examined (including lunchtime, special evening and weekend programming).

- **Advertising effectiveness**

Have your past advertising efforts achieved their goals? In this section of the report, you will learn: 1) whether you spent enough on advertising, and 2) whether your advertising message was communicated properly. Select from various media: TV, billboards, direct mail, on-air contesting, etc.

- **Prize preferences**

The problem with testing prize ideas is that respondents say, "Sure, I'd like to win that. Sure, I'd like to win that, too." Instead, test pairs of prizes that are of roughly equal difficulty for you to obtain (e.g., a $500 diamond ring vs. $100 cash) and learn which prize of the pair would be more desirable.

- **Air personalities**

Respondents are asked if there are any air personalities in the market that they particularly like. Names given and any other relevant comments about disk jockeys are recorded "verbatim" by the interviewer. (Alternatively, a list of the market's key personalities is read to respondents for them to rate on an appropriate scale.)

- **Positioning statements**

What would be the most effective positioning statement for your radio station? Which would be the most effective "liners" to use on the air to support that position? This section of the report will tell you. (Examples: "The best new music first," "Ten songs in a row every hour," "40 minutes of music every hour," "Continuous fresh hit music," "Philadelphia's home of all-time rock & roll," "Sacramento's new music authority.") For each statement, respondents are asked to tell us how likely they might be to try listening to a radio station that used that statement.

- **Custom topics**

  Before you put your study into the field, compare the proposed questionnaire against your mutually developed analysis of the key strategic issues facing your station's management team. If your standard questions do not address all of your key issues, write and pretest custom questions for your study.

Typical Format

The typical design for a Perceptual Market Study is one that will allow you to explore a large number of different topics regarding the performance of your radio station. The topics are often chosen from a list of 15 to 20 possibilities, and the specific questions within each topic are customized for each client.

The primary constraint you deal with is interview length. As long as you are able to design an interesting (to the respondent) and fast-paced questionnaire, you can keep someone on the phone for about 15 minutes. This would allow completion of an interview that has the following outline:

- Introduction
- Radio listening behavior (also serves as screener)
- Image association questions (10 images, 2 "verbatim" follow-up questions)
- Attribute identification questions (2 stations, 8 attributes each)
- Continuums (5 stations, 3 continuums each)
- Additional programming elements (e.g., prize preferences)
- Additional programming elements (e.g., positioning statements)
- Custom topic
- Conclusion

The above outline would generate a study that would give you a clear perspective of your station's strengths, weaknesses, and potential future opportunities.

The next step in the process is one of reduction -- turning a 40-minute questionnaire into a 20-minute questionnaire by methodically examining each topic and asking the following questions:

1. Do we know the answer to this question already?
2. If not, is there an action we can take if we do learn the answer?
3. Could this issue have a bigger impact on our future than the other topics we're considering?

One excellent way to address question #2 is to hypothesize potential findings. "Suppose we learn that our competitor's midday jock is an extremely popular personality. What would we do in that instance? Suppose we learn she's very unpopular. What would be do in that instance?" If different results would not alter your future behavior, then the issue is not a critical one and can be deleted from the questionnaire.

After all parties involved double-check the questionnaire for completeness and accuracy, it is ready for what we call "pre-testing." The **pre-test** phase of a perceptual study is kind of like a shakedown cruise. A small group of interviewers is assigned to each complete one or two interviews with real respondents. They are looking for bad "skip patterns" (instructions on where to jump around in the questionnaire if a certain answer requires a certain follow-up question), confusing wordings, ambiguities, etc. This is also the first chance to see how the length of the questionnaire works out in the real world. (Although your research firm will have a rough guess of the questionnaire length, the actual real-world length depends on a number of factors, including the volubility of your target audience in your market. New Yorkers, for example, have lots of opinions and are willing to express them at length. Winnipeg residents volunteer less information; interviews go more quickly.)

Your research firm will review the completed questionnaires to make sure that each question is working as intended and seems to be eliciting appropriate responses. They may suggest new skip patterns, new questions or proposed cuts. Once you've given your final "sign-off" on the questionnaire, it goes into the field full-force.

On-Going Format Research

Let's say you've now selected your choice of format. You've put together a plan on how to introduce and execute that format. You've gotten final approval of your first-year budget, including approval of the amount of money you plan to spend on research.

After all, research (despite being only a small piece of the pie in terms of total expenses) is the item that can have the *single biggest impact* on the quality of your product. Having the right research can help ensure that you're:

- Playing the right music,
- Using the right personalities,
- Scheduling the most-desired programming features,
- Using the most-effective positioning statements, and even
- Running the most-effective advertising.

Thus, research has the biggest impact on your future audience size, which translates into the ratings you'll eventually get, which will translate into the amount of revenues your station will generate.

Even after you get your research budget approved, you still have to make the final decision about how you're going to spend it and who you're going to spend it with.

The typical medium- to large-market U.S. radio station might budget for one big perceptual study (i.e., an "annual strategic study"), one or two auditorium music tests, a set of focus groups, and possibly an in-house call-out operation.

Although such a plan is typical, *it is not in the best interest of your radio station*. If your plan includes those research products, you've probably bought into the philosophy that most research firms push. Unfortunately, those research

firms push certain products because they're the easiest for them to produce -- not necessarily because they're the most valuable to you.

Whatever your research budget for your format is, you can benefit from a program of professionally produced on-going research. Consider these thoughts:

1. **Research should be done on an ongoing basis.**

   Perceptions of radio stations change rapidly. Musical tastes can change even more rapidly. You should keep in touch with your target audience throughout the year, not just once or twice a year.

2. **Research should be done by professionals.**

   Just as you wouldn't hire a local high school band and chorus to produce your jingles, you shouldn't have local high school kids producing your research.

3. **Research should accurately track your performance.**

   One of the most critical questions you need the answer to is, "How am I doing?" Ratings can only tell you within a margin of error and when *they* choose to report it.

Why you need ongoing research

There's no such thing as an instant recipe for business success. But any recipe for long-term business success has to have this main ingredient: the goal of serving your customer. The first step toward that, of course, is knowing your customer.

Here are several reasons why your research should be ongoing:

- To track listeners' tastes in music (music preferences change constantly).
- To monitor trends in perceptions (perceptions change quickly).
- To head off the competition.
- To discover the unexpected.

VI. Sales Research

Julie Heath
Breakthrough Marketing
Arlington, Virginia

Sales Research is a group of research techniques designed to measure the consumer behavior and media habits of the audience, or assess advertiser perceptions of a broadcast station's sales staff. The first body of techniques is known as qualitative research and the latter is referred to as sales development research. Both are being used extensively now by successful stations and could be the edge you are looking for as you market your station to your audience and sell your sales staff to your advertisers.

Qualitative Research: Going Beyond Ratings and Shares

In the last five years there has been a virtual explosion in the need for qualitative research as a method of defining the consumer behavior and characteristics of radio and television station audiences. Both broadcasters *and* advertisers can no longer be content to evaluate the performance of a station based simply on quantitative audience measures such as average quarter-hour, cume, ratings, and shares as produced by Arbitron, Birch and Nielsen.

More and more frequently stations have begun using the qualities or characteristics of listeners/viewers to supplement and sometimes replace quantity measures (i.e., ratings) for two primary reasons:

■ **No Clear Market Leaders**

Because of the fierce competition among radio broadcasters and among television broadcasters for market share, we no longer have the clear ratings market leader we once had. The difference between the number one ranking station and number two is often less than one share point. The days of one full service station or one station's newscast dominating the marketplace are long gone.

We are, in part, the product of our own success thanks to niche programming, increasingly sophisticated marketing and promotion as well as the use of research and consultants. Theses changes, combined with the impact of new technologies such as cable, compact discs, VCRs, and even digital audio tape, mean that ratings alone can no longer adequately distinguish the benefits of using one station over another when placing a media buy.

■ **Tighter Targeting Means Greater Advertising Results**

Advertisers are striving for the best results for their media dollars. They are looking for the most cost-efficient, yet effective placement of their media plan. One cannot forget that advertisers, unlike broadcasters, have an effective means of measuring their success . . . sales.

Since every radio station and television program appeals to a unique consumer base, advertisers need the tools to distinguish which stations or programs will deliver the greatest results. Quite simply, advertisers want to reach the listeners and viewers (consumers) who are most likely to purchase the goods and services they produce or provide. That makes for smart use of media dollars and . . . satisfied radio and television advertisers!

Here is an illustration:

An Adult Contemporary radio station and an Oldies station both perform very well in their target demo -- Adults 25-54 -- ranking one and two, respectfully. A local car dealer wants to reach foreign car owners in order to promote his dealership's parts and service department. Without access to qualitative data, it would be impossible to determine which station better reaches the advertiser's primary consumer. However, the Oldies station, which ranks number two in the ratings, was able to show the advertiser that they reached significantly more foreign car owners than the ratings leader. Guess who got the buy?

Benefits of Using Qualitative Research

Presently, ratings and shares are the primary currency broadcasters and advertisers use to negotiate broadcast time; however, qualitative measures (the "who" behind the numbers) can be the edge you need to get new business or keep what you already have. They can also be the marketing edge needed to create new business for the medium *and* your station. Qualitative research can:

- **Generate New Revenue**

In a tight ratings battle with a close competitor, qualitative research may be the CPM tie-breaker for getting or keeping advertising dollars.

- **Customer Service**

Many of the available qualitative research services provide not only a profile of each station's audience, but also a profile of the consumers of *each product category*. Sharing this background information with prospective clients helps them to better understand their customer base. Since many local advertisers may not have access to market-specific

primary research, they will place added value on your marketing assistance.

■ **Station Marketing/Programming**

Your programming and promotions departments may also benefit from a detailed knowledge of the consumer behavior and lifestyle characteristics of your audience. By better understanding the likes and dislikes of your audience, where they live, and what they purchase your promotions can be customized to your listener's preferences.

For instance, if your audience's qualitative research shows a low incidence of Cadillac ownership, you may want to consider another make of car for your promotional giveaway. Or, if you have a high composition of dual-income parents with children, *lifestyle*-oriented contest incentives (a valued service such as maid service for a year) may be very attractive to *your listeners*.

Syndicated Qualitative Research

Before you initiate your own research project and begin drafting your own questionnaire, you should be aware of the many qualitative resources that are currently available. There are several firms that provide local market product and media usage data for specific markets, as well as nationally based samples. In fact, over the last several years, several research vendors have expanded their coverage to include markets ranked beyond the top 25.

The following services provide local market-specific product and service usage information based on local interviewing:

Scarborough

Scarborough is produced and published annually in the top eleven markets and 27 additional selected markets. The published reports include data on a broad range of shopping behavior services and product usage; radio, television, newspaper, and other media usage; and lifestyle and demographic characteristics. This research is published in several bound volumes and is available in computer form for analysis on third-party ratings processor systems (e.g., Tapscan, Strata, IMS, etc.).

A telephone interview is used to collect audience data on radio listening, as well as daily and Sunday newspaper readership. Questions concerning weekly newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, leisure time activities, stores and shopping centers, automotive ownership/equipment, travel, and household expenditures are included in a self-completed mail questionnaire (the mail questionnaire also captures seven days of television viewing).

Media Audit

The Media Audit is a telephone interview study conducted once or twice a year, depending on market size and client demand. This is a multi-media survey containing information about the audience levels and audience demographic characteristics of radio stations, evening television news programs and newspapers and the audience's product and services usage and lifestyles.

This research is produced in approximately 40 markets and published in printed form in one bound volume and is available on computer diskette.

The Arbitron Company

Although the Arbitron diary does not capture consumer purchasing behavior and lifestyle characteristics, Arbitron does provide several services, chiefly through its Radio and Television PC AID (Arbitron Information on Demand) products, which will enhance your understanding of the qualitative characteristics of your audience. Specifically, the Target AID ClusterPLUS℠ and PRIZM™ systems are available as a separate option of PC AID. These systems permit you to analyze your audience based on the socio-economic and consumer purchasing of the zip codes in which they live.

For example, with the PC AID system, you can find out how many people your station reaches who are classified as "Well-Educated, Affluent, Suburban Professionals" -- ClusterPLUS℠, or "Blue Blood Estates" -- PRIZM™. Both services use over 40 clusters to segment the marketplace into discreet lifestyle categories using Census-based, geo-demographic characteristics.

NSI Plus

The NSI Plus system provides similar data by combining Nielsen local market television viewing data with the geo-demographic databases of ClusterPLUS℠ and PRIZM™.

Birch Radio

Within each quarterly radio ratings report, Birch includes a radio qualitative section that profiles the consumer characteristics of each station's audience. Household income, occupation, education, household size, banking services, airline travel, beer and soft drink usage, along with planned purchases of automobiles and furniture, are measured by Birch.

MA*RT

MA*RT is an acronym for Market Audience * Readership Traffic. The study is conducted through a self-administered questionnaire with survey participants selected from retail areas and shopping centers. Published data includes information on regular shopping patterns, store preferences, media usage, financial usage, automobile purchases, planned expenditures, and demographic and lifestyle information.

If no locally-collected data is available in your market, the following services are produced on nationally-selected samples:

MRI

MRI product data is based on some 20,000 personal interviews and a self-completed product and service questionnaire. Radio and television and usage are measured using a 24-hour recall question and newspapers are measured using a similar "read yesterday" approach. The printed questionnaire includes some 3,500 categories and 5,700 brands, as well as demographic data. Available as printed reports or a computer database, MRI interfaces with numerous segmentation systems.[1]

In addition, there are 10 large market local market reports.

[1] The MRI database is compatible with ACORN™ (A Classification of Residential Neighborhoods) available from CACI, ClusterPLUS℠ available from Donnelley Marketing Information Services, PRIZM™ available from Claritas LP, VISION available from National Decision Systems and VALS®2 (Values and Lifestyles) developed by SRI International.

Simmons

Using a nationally-drawn sample of more than 15,000 respondents, Simmons produces regionally-reported shopping, brand usage and media quantitative and qualitative usage. Radio listening is collected in a telephone interview, television viewing is captured in a one-week written diary and a mailed, self-completed questionnaire is used for product and shopping data. The data is available in printed form and magnetically for use on Arbitron's CrossTraQ and Product Target AID and Strata.

So, You Want to Do it Yourself

If local market qualitative research is not available in your area or you have specific needs that to go beyond what is available from a syndicated vendor, you may elect to conduct a custom research study to measure the qualitative characteristics of your audience. There are two directions you can go at this point, either to hire a research service to produce the report on your behalf or, you can conduct the research in-house. Both have their value. However, before you attempt qualitative research yourself, you should definitely think twice.

Words of Caution Before You Proceed

While all in-house research should adhere strictly to the highest standards, a well-designed and statistically reliable qualitative study is **critically** important if you expect to receive advertiser and agency acceptance of its results. Other studies may be designed for internal station use, but, the primary application of qualitative research should be for station's sales purposes. Remember, this is data that you'll be taking to the streets in order to sell your station and credibility is essential for acceptance.

A thorough review of Chapter II -- Research Concepts, is necessary before proceeding with your own research study. It is also recommended that while you may actively participate in the questionnaire and survey design, that you at least hire an outside company to implement the actual survey and analyze the results.

Sample Categories for Your Research Study

While you may be tempted to ask hundreds of questions ranging from aardvarks to zebras, remember not to demand too much from your survey participants. The survey, whether you are using telephone or mail to field your questionnaire, should take no longer than 10-15 minutes for each respondent to complete. In addition to age and sex and basic demographics of respondents, Figure 1 is a listing of some of the qualitative categories you may wish to explore in depth.

Here's a helpful hint to remember when selecting question categories -- keep in mind the product categories that are among the highest advertising expenditures on your station (e.g., automotive, retail, banking and so on). This will help you to narrow the focus of the questionnaire design and produce research on your most lucrative advertising categories.

Figure 1 represents a list of many of the categories that you typically find in qualitative research studies. For the most part, they reflect the key advertiser categories for radio and television stations. Use these as a "thought-starters" for your own questionnaire design. Of course, your category selection may vary from this list and is dependent upon your needs. Some questions may be expanded and you can go into more depth on any specific category, (e.g., for soft drink usage you may wish to ask an additional question on *brands* used during the past week, or under the travel category, you may need to know if your listeners rented cars for business/pleasure in the past year, etc.).

Figure 1
Suggested Product Use/Lifestyle Categories and Respondent Responses

Socio-Economic Categories

Marital Status (Married, Single, Divorced/Separated, Widowed)
Education (Less than High School Graduate, High School Graduate, Some College, College Graduate, Post Graduate Study)
Place of Residence by County
Household Income (Five income breaks should suffice. The ranges should be determined by the median household income in your market.)
Household Size (1-2 members, 3-4 members, 5+ members)
Presence of Children (None, 1 child, 2 children, 3 or more)
Employment Status (Works Full Time, Works Part Time, Not in Labor Force)
Occupation (Executive/Administrative/Managerial, Professional/ Technical, Sales/Service, Blue Collar)
Home Ownership and Value of Owned Home (Own, Rent, Other)

Lifestyle/Leisure Activities

Movie Visits in Past Three Months (0-2 times, 3-4 times, 5+ times)
Events Attended in Past Year (Rock Concerts, Symphony Concerts, Dance Performances, Live Theater, College or Professional Sports Events, Theme Parks)
Belong to Exercise or Health Club
Participated in Past Year (Boating, Team Sports, Tennis/ Racquetball, Snow Skiing, Water Sports, etc.)

Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Department Store/Shopping Centers Shopped at During Past Three Months (Provide names of specific stores and shopping centers in your area.)

Figure 1
(continued)

Apparel Purchases/Amount Spent in Past 12 Months (Under $100, $100 to 249, $250 to 499, $500 to 999, Over $1000)
Purchased Home Electronics in Past 12 Months (Television Set, Home Video Equipment, Stereo, CD Player)
Purchased Any of the Following During the Past Three Months (Videotape, CDs, Tapes, Records, Photographic Film)
Purchased a New Automobile or Truck in the Past 12 Months (If so, specify make and model of new vehicle)
Make and Model (including year) of Automobiles Currently Owned
Plan to Purchase a New Automobile/Truck/Van Within the Next 12 Months
Banking Services Used by Household (Savings Account, Checking Account, Money Market, ATM Card, Home Equity Loan, Personal Loan, IRA/Keough Plan)
Specific Bank Used by Household (List major financial institutions)
Credit Cards Owned (American Express, MasterCard, Visa, Discover, Optima, Other)
Personally-Made Business Purchase Decisions in Past 12 Months (Travel Arrangements, Office Supplies, Clerical Services/ Temporaries, Office Equipment--computers/copiers, Office Furniture, Telephone Equipment)
Personal Airline Travel in Past 12 Months (None, One, Two, 3-4, 5-9, Ten or more)
Business Airline Travel in Past 12 Months (None, One, Two, 3-4, 5-9, Ten or more)
Airlines Traveled in Past 12 Months (specify names of airlines)
Fast Food Restaurants, Number of Visits in Past 30 Days (None, One, Two, Three 4-5, 6-9, Ten or more)
Grocery Expenditures in the Past Week (Under $75, $75-125, Over $125)
Grocery Stores Shopped in the Past Week (specify names of local stores)
Light Beer Consumption in the Past Week (None, 1-2 glasses, 3-4 glasses, 5-6 glasses, 7-8 glasses, 9 or more glasses)
Regular Beer Consumption in the Past Week (None, 1-2 glasses, 3-4 glasses, 5-6 glasses, 7-8 glasses, 9 or more glasses)
Diet Soft Drink Consumption in the Past Week (None, 1-2 glasses, 3-4 glasses, 5-6 glasses, 7-8 glasses, 9 or more glasses)
Regular Soft Drink Consumption in the Past Week (None, 1-2 glasses, 3-4 glasses, 5-6 glasses, 7-8 glasses, 9 or more glasses)

Sample Questions

There are three basic formats in question design: 1) open-ended, 2) single response and 3) multiple response. Here are examples of each:

Open Ended Questions

1. Please indicate the make and model of all vehicles owned by members of your household.

	Make	Model
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____

2. Please complete the following sentences with the name of the **department store** in your area which best fits each description. Please write the names of the first department store that comes to mind. If no store fits the description, then just write "none."

   The **department store** that has...
   a. the highest quality merchandise._____
   b. the most reasonable prices. _____
   c. the most courteous salespersons._____
   d. the best selection & variety. _____

Single Response Questions

1. In the *past seven days*, how many *regular soft drinks* did you personally drink? **Please check one response.**

   ☐ None ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-4 ☐ 5-6 ☐ 7-8 ☐ 9 or More

   In the *past seven days*, how many *diet soft drinks* did you personally drink? **Please check one response.**

   ☐ None ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-4 ☐ 5-6 ☐ 7-8 ☐ 9 or More

2. How much did you personally spend on *clothing or apparel purchases* in the past 12 months? **Please check one response.**

☐ Under $100 ☐ $100-249 ☐ $250-499
☐ $500-999 ☐ Over $1000

Multiple Response Questions

1. Which of the following *leisure time activities* have you participated in *during the past 12 months*?

Activity	Participated in during the past 12 months (Check all that apply)
Tennis/Racquetball	☐
Snow Skiing	☐
Attended Live Theater	☐
Attended a Sporting Event	☐
Went Hunting/Fishing	☐
Attended a Health Club	☐
Played a Team Sport	☐
Hiking/Jogging	☐
Attended Dance Performance	☐

2. Which of the following *department stores* have you personally shopped at during the *past three months*?

Department Stores	Shopped in the past three months (Check all that apply)
[local store]	☐
[local store]	☐
Sears	☐
J. C. Penny's	☐
Montgomery Wards	☐
None	☐
Other	☐
*Specify*_____	

3. Which of the following *banking services* does your *household currently use or have*?

Banking Service	Household currently uses (Check all that apply)
Savings Account	☐
Checking Account	☐
ATM Card	☐
Money Market Account	☐
Auto Loan	☐

Contingency Questions

Often in survey research, certain questions will be clearly understood by or applicable to only a subset of the respondents. For example, in writing the question below you *would not* want to ask: "What was the purchase price of the new car, van or truck you bought during the past 12 months?" This wording would force all respondents to read the question even though it is not pertinent to many. Instead, use a *screening question*, followed by a *contingency question* to enhance the questionnaire flow.

1. In the *past 12 months*, did you purchase a new car, van or truck?

☐ No (Go to Question 4)

☐ Yes

What was the purchase price of the vehicle?_____

2. Which of the following *radio stations* did you listen to during the *past seven days*?

Radio Stations	Listened to in past seven days (Check all that apply)
Station A	☐
Station B	☐
Station C	☐
Station D	☐
Station E	☐
Station F	☐
Other	☐

*Specify*_____

Now, take another look at the above list of radio stations, which *one station do you listen to most*? _____

Researching Your Customers

Most stations research their audience, but some of the most successful stations also research their customers . . . the advertisers. This is your opportunity is find out the perceptions that your advertisers may have about your station, your account executives and those of your competitors. Advertiser research can provide you with the management information you can use to *identify and correct* selling problems.

What Advertiser Research Can Tell You

Advertiser research is directed perceptual research, which is similar to the kind of research you would do on your station and your talent. However, rather than surveying your target audience, a sample of your local advertisers and media buyers will be interviewed or mailed a questionnaire. This is your opportunity to research your rates, get a reading on customer perceptions of your stations and evaluate your sales staff. Here are some areas you might research:

- compare your station to close ratings competitor or similar format
- evaluate the value of your rates
- measure your advertiser's perception of your station's service and support
- evaluate the strengths/weaknesses of your sales department or a competitor's
- compare account executives

Advertiser research lends itself to mail questionnaire surveys. They can be done inexpensively with returns to a blind post office box. With a good, convincing cover letter, you can expect a better than average response because the respondent can see the value of the research. However, don't forget that, unless carefully carried out, mail surveys don't produce projectable data.

When to Survey Advertisers

Like any tracking research, advertiser surveys should be scheduled on a periodic basis, as well as whenever significant changes take place in the market or at your station. In addition, as your sales staff works the street, they will pick up "street talk"; research will separate the rumor from the reality.

Advertiser surveys can be fielded when:

- a new owner takes over the station, or there's a change in sales manager or general manager
- a new competitor comes into the market or makes management changes
- your station or another changes format
- there are declining revenues or missed buys
- there is a perceived bias against station, format or sales staff
- there is a desire to improve sales staff and/or station's perception.

Figure 2 provides an example of the types of questions you can ask.

Figure 2
Sample Questions from an Advertiser Survey

1. We'd like to hear your opinions about a few specific area radio stations. Let's start with WBP-FM or Eazy 100. Have you bought advertising time on WBP in the last several months?

☐ Yes, please go to question 2.
☐ No, continue

Please indicate WHY you *haven't* advertised on WBP. Be as specific as you can be.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Please rate WBP on their performance on a few different criteria. For each item, rate WBP as excellent, good, fair or poor. Circle ONE for each item.

		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
A.	Their knowledge of your needs.	E	G	F	P
B.	Their ability to return your phone calls promptly	E	G	F	P
C.	Their willingness to do problem solving with you and to provide creative marketing solutions	E	G	F	P
D.	Their desire to understand and serve the needs of their clients	E	G	F	P
E.	Their ability to make good presentations that help your planning	E	G	F	P
F.	Their ability to get results for the client	E	G	F	P

Figure 2
(continued)

G. The willingness of their station management to work with you to resolve problems/develop marketing solutions	E	G	F	P
H. The professionalism of their sales people	E	G	F	P

3. Please indicate how you feel about WBP's advertising rates. Use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" means the rates are way too low and "5" means the rates are way too high. (Circle ONE.)

Way Too Low 1 2 3 4 5 Way Too High

Radio & Television Research Suppliers

A & A Research
690 Sunset Boulevard
Kalispell, Montana 59901
(406) 752-7857

Aim Music Research
3131 E. Thunderbird, Suite 8228
Phoenix, Arizona 85032
(602) 992-0310

The Arbitron Company
142 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019
(212) 887-1300

Audience Research & Development
3700 Stemmons Fwy. N., Suite 415
Dallas, Texas 75247
(214) 630-5097

The Benchmark Company
1101 Capital of Texas Highway
Austin, Texas 78746
(512) 327-7010

BC Consultants
4550 Via Marina, Suite 105
Marnia del Rey, California 90292
(213) 578-5114

Billie Research Corporation
1370 Piccard Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850
(301) 948-2686

Birch/Scarborough Research Corp.
12350 NW 39th Street
Coral Springs, Florida 33065
(305) 753-6043

Bolton Research Corporation
250 W. Lancaster Avenue, Suite 100
Paoli, Pennsylvania 19301
(215) 640-4400

Breakthrough Marketing
3716 South 14th Street
Arlington, Virginia 22204
(703) 892-2153

Broadcast Media Consultants
316 California Avenue, Suite 700
Reno, Nevada 89509
(800) 237-3777

Burkhart/Douglas & Associates
6500 River Chase Circle East
Atlanta, Georgia 30328
(404) 955-1550

Alan Burns & Associates
11705 Sumacs Street
Oakton, Virginia 22124
(703) 648-0000

Burns Media Consultants, Inc.
3054 Dona Marta Drive
Studio City, California 91604
(213) 457-1599

Coleman Research Inc.
Box 13829
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
(919) 790-0000

Custom Audience Consultants
2918 S. Buchanan Street
Arlington, Virginia 22206
(703) 671-6303

Diary Experts
302 Ninth Avenue
Haddon Heights, New Jersey 08035
(609) 547-3939

Drake-Chenault
2000 Randolph Road, SE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106
(505) 247-3303

Fairwest Direct
6020 Cornerstone Ct. West, Ste. 100
San Diego, California 92121
(619) 552-0777

FMR Associates Inc.
6045 E. Grant Road
Tucson, Arizona 85712
(602) 886-5548

Hagen Media Research
Box 40542
Washington, D. C. 20016-0542
(703) 534-3003

Halper & Associates
304 Newbury Street, Suite 506
Boston, Massachusetts 02115
(617) 786-0666

Norman Hecht Research, Inc.
P.O. Box 698
Syosset, New York 11791
(516) 496-8866

Jhan Hiber & Associates
201 Spindrift Road
Carmel, California 93923
(408) 626-3632

Mark Kassof & Company
527 E. Liberty, Suite 201
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
(313) 662-5700

Korbel Marketing
220 Gardenview
San Antonio, Texas 78213
(512) 366-4210

The Lund Consultants
1330 Milbrae Avenue
Milbrae, California 94030
(415) 692-7777

Market & Audience Research Group
P.O. Box 1320
Germantown, Maryland 20874
(301) 428-3690

Marketron, Inc.
101 Lincoln Centre Drive
Foster City, California 94404
(415) 341-4004

Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc.
One Research Center
Marion, Iowa 52302
(319) 377-7345

McHugh & Hoffman, Inc.
8301 Greensboro Drive, Suite 490
McLean, Virginia 22102
(703) 506-8900

MJM Research Inc.
11539 W. 83rd Terrace
Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66215
(913) 888-3636

Nielsen Media Research
1290 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10104
(212) 708-7500

Paragon Research
550 South Wadsworth Blvd, Ste 401
Denver, Colorado 80226
(303) 922-5600

Pollack Media Group
984 Monument Street, Suite 105
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272
(213) 459-8556

Radio Plus
2190 S.E. 17th Street, Suite 307
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33316
(305) 760-7120

Radio Computing Services Inc.
2 Overhill Road
Scarsdale, New York 10583
(914) 723-6053

The Radio Research Company
6445 Powers Ferry Road, Suite 180
Atlanta, Georgia 30339
(404) 955-1550

RadioWare
P.O. Box 36385
Dallas, Texas 75235
(214) 350-7216

Register Data Systems
P.O. Box 980
Perry, Georgia 31069
(800) 521-5222

Research Concepts Company
P.O. Box 65117
Baltimore, Maryland 21209
(301) 484-8615

The Research Group
1100 Olive Way, Suite 1200
Seattle, Washington 98101
(206) 624-3888

Reymer & Gersin Associates, Inc.
20300 Civic Center Dr., Ste. 320
Southfield, Michigan 48076
(313) 354-4950

Small Market Radio Services
275 19th Street
Otsego, Michigan 49078
(616) 694-9357

Smith/Davis Comm. Research
Box 182
Amherst, Massachusetts 01004
(413) 256-6925

Sound Decisions
2051 Glenhill Road
Colorado Springs, CO 80906-3352
(800) 552-2545

Strata Marketing, Inc.
540 N. Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60611
(312) 222-1555

Strategic Radio Research
180 N. Wabash Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60601
(312) 726-8300

Tapscan, Inc.
3000 Riverchase Galleria
Birmingham, Alabama 35244
(800) 476-SCAN

Walrus Research
Box 185
Waldo, Wisconsin 53093
(414) 528-7062

References and Suggested Readings

Advertising Research Foundation. (1954). "Recommended Standards for Radio and Television Program Audience Size Measurements." New York: Advertising Research Foundation.

Beville, Jr., H. M. (1985). *Audience Ratings: Radio, Television, Cable* (Revised Edition). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Blankenship, A. (1979). *Professional Telephone Surveys*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Calder, B. J. (1977). "Focus Groups and the Nature of Qualitative Marketing Research." *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 14, pp. 353-364.

Champion, D. J. (1981). *Basic Statistics for Social Science*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Cochran, W. G. (1963). *Sampling Techniques* (Second Edition). New York: Wiley.

Cooper, S. L. (1964). "Random Sampling By Telephone: An Improved Method." *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 1, pp. 45-48.

Deming, W. E. (1960). *Sampling Design for Business Research*. New York: Wiley.

Dillman, D. (1978). *Mail and Telephone Surveys*. New York: Wiley.

Elliot, S. C. (1980). *Focus Group Research: A Workbook for Broadcasters.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

Ellis, D. C. & Brighthouse, G. (1952). "Effects of Music on Respiration and Heart-rate." *Journal of Psychology*, 65, pp. 39-47.

Electronic Media Rating Council. (1983). *Minimum Standards for Electronic Media Rating Research.* New York: Electronic Media Rating Council.

Electronic Media Rating Council. (1975). *Standard Errors and Effective Sample Sizes as Reported for Broadcast Audience Measurement Surveys*. New York: Electronic Media Rating Council.

Fletcher, J. E. (1987). *Music and Program Research*. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Broadcasters.

Fletcher, J. E. (1985). *Squeezing Profits Out of Ratings: A Manual For Radio Managers, Sales Manager and Programmers.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

Fletcher, J. E., & Wimmer, R. D. (1982). *Callout Research in Managing Radio Stations.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

Fletcher, J. E., & Wimmer, R. D. (1981). *Focus Group Interviews in Radio Research.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

Fletcher, J. E., et al. (1981). *Handbook of Radio and TV Broadcasting: Research Procedures in Audience, Program and Revenue*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Fowler, F. (1984). *Survey Research Methods.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Goodstein, R. C., Edell, J. A. & Moore, M. C. (1989). "When are feelings generated? Assessing the presence and reliability of feelings based on storyboards and animatics." Manuscript, Fuqua School of Business, Duke University.

Hall, R. W. (1988). *Media Math: Basic Techniques of Media Evaluation.* Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Business Books.

Hiber, J. (1987). *Winning Radio Research: Turning Research Into Ratings and Revenues*. Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

Kish, L. (1965). *Survey Sampling*. New York: Wiley.

Lavrakas, P. J. (1987). *Telephone Survey Methods: Sampling, Selection, and Supervision.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

National Association of Broadcasters. (1976). *A Broadcast Research Primer.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

National Association of Broadcasters. (1988). *Broadcast Research Definitions.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

National Association of Broadcasters. (1984). *Choosing and Using Broadcast Consultants.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

National Association of Broadcasters. (1988). *Executive Guide to Custom Radio Research.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

National Association of Broadcasters. (1969). *Recommended Standards for the Preparation of Statistical Reports in Broadcast Audience Measurement Research.* Washington, DC: National Association of Broadcasters.

Oppenheim, A. N. (1966). *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement*. New York: Basic Books.

Poltrack, D. F. (1983). *Television Marketing: Network/Local/Cable*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Raj, D. (1972). *The Design of Sample Surveys*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Reynolds, F. D., & Johnson, D. K. (1978). "Validity of Focus Group Findings," *Journal of Advertising Research,* Vol. 18, pp. 21-24.

Routt, E., McGrath, J. B. & Weiss, F. A. (1978). *The Radio Format Conundrum.* New York: Hastings House.

Singer, E., & Presser, S. (Eds.). (1989). *Survey Research Methods: A Reader.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sissors, J. Z., & Buma, L. (1989). *Advertising Media Planning* (3rd ed.). Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Business Books.

Sudman, S. (1976). *Applied Sampling.* New York: Academic Press.

Walizer, M. H., & Wienir, P. L. (1978). *Research Methods and Analysis.* New York: Harper & Row.

Weisberg, H. F., & Bowen, B. D. (1977) *An Introduction To Survey Research and Data Analysis.* New York: Free Press.

Williams, B. (1978). *A Sampler on Sampling.* New York: Wiley.

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (1991). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (3rd Edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Glossary

Aided recall See **roster recall.**

Audience The persons who listen, view or are otherwise exposed to a mass communications medium or a specific message.

Audience Research Research to determine the number and/or kind of persons in the audience of a mass communications medium.

Bias Any of a number of different types of error, other than sampling error, which may affect survey results. Among the various causes of bias are failure of some parts of the sample to answer, faulty wording of questions, incorrect answers, the way an interviewer asks a question or reports an answer, and errors in processing the data. Also called **nonsampling error.**

Call-back An additional attempt to contact a respondent drawn from a sample but not available for an interview when first called upon.

Call-out Research A type of telephone survey in which a sample of persons are questioned about music preferences. Such research often involves playing the "hook" or most important phrase of a song to trigger recall and/or reaction.

Closed-end questions A questions which allows only a limited number of answers which are specified by the researcher (e.g., Would you say that as a newscaster Bill Jones is very good, fairly good, or not too good.)

Codes Numbers or symbols used to designate replies on a questionnaire, to facilitate data analysis.

Coding The classification of responses on a questionnaire, schedule, diary according to specified rules in order to facilitate tabulation and analysis. Typically, **code** numbers or letters are assigned to categories of responses.

Coincidental measurement A measurement of behavior at the time it is taking place, thus not dependent on memory or recall. Normally, the telephone is used for coincidental measurement (e.g., Were you listening to the radio when the phone rang? If yes: What station is it tuned to?)

Convenience sample A type of non-probability sample in which respondents are selected because they happen to be readily available to the researcher. Because they are *not* randomly selected, error *cannot* be determined for convenience samples.

Crosstabulation A way to present research results by constructing a table in which the responses to one question or variable are paired with another question or variable (e.g., favorite station by demographics).

Cume see **reach.**

Depth interview An interview which goes below the surface with intensive follow up probing and discussion.

Demographics A category of variables frequently used in audience research. They include such audience characteristics as age, sex, income, education and occupation.

Diary A form or booklet in which a sample of respondents is asked to keep a record of things they do; typically, radio listening, television viewing or food purchasing.

Experiment A study in which the researcher manipulates one or more variables (called independent variables) to discover their effect on another variable (called dependent variables).

Field work The gathering of primary data from a sample of persons through interviewing or some other research technique.

Flash cards Lists or statements on a card or sheet for the interviewer to show the respondent(s) in connection with a question.

Focus group A common research technique in which a small group of persons (normally between six and twelve) have an informal, in-depth discussion of some research subject, under the guidance of a moderator.

Frequency 1) The average number of times within a specified period of time that a person or household is exposed to a particular program or message. 2) The number of people who are assigned to a particular value of each variable.

Image A pattern of attitudes and information about a station, person, product, company or institution.

Indirect questioning Questions to obtain views and/or behaviors by asking about related views or behavior.

Interval measurement A type of measurement in which the values assigned to objects are based on a scale with equal intervals and an arbitrary zero point. (For example, a Fahrenheit thermometer measures temperature in equal degree units; the zero point is arbitrary and does not indicate the absence of temperature.)

Interviewer A person who asks questions of others as part of a survey, using a questionnaire or question guide, following a predesigned plan.

Interviewer bias Any influence on the responses or data caused by the interviewer, either knowingly or otherwise.

Longitudinal study A series of comparable surveys useful in identifying trends over time. If the same or similar sample is maintained, it is called a **panel**.

Mean A statistic used for summarizing the most typical value a variable assumes. It is the simple arithmetic average.

Measurement The orderly process of assigning numbers to objects (typically persons) according to set rules of assignment.

Median A kind of average that splits a set of data into two parts such that the values of half of the items are greater than or the median and the balance is less than or equal to the median.

Meter A device that monitors television set usage and stores that information for subsequent retrieval.

Mode A kind of average defined as that value in a distribution which occurs most frequently.

Nominal measurement A level of measurement in which the numbers assigned to objects simply differentiate the categories that comprise a variable. Sex, for example, is comprised of male and female. Other nominal variables include race, occupation, county of residence, etc.

Non-probability sample A kind of sample created in such a way that not every member of the population it represents has a known chance of selection. Sampling error for non-probability samples *cannot* be computed. Also see, **convenience sample** and **quota sample**.

Normal distribution A theoretical distribution, specified by a mathematical formula. It is used exclusively in audience research to assess the accuracy of estimates. The graph of a normal distribution is the familiar symmetrical "bell-shaped" curve. This represents the approximation of the sampling distribution of most widely used statistics.

Open-ended question A question that allows the respondent complete freedom in the reply, no alternatives are specified (e.g., What makes Station A your favorite station?).

Ordinal Measurement A level of measurement in which the numbers assigned to objects reflect a ranking of the categories that comprise a variable (e.g., social class is defined by the ordinal ranks of upper, middle and lower).

Panel A group of persons or households which are surveyed over time, either continuously as in meter panels or periodically as in product usage or purchase, rather than once. See **Longitudinal study.**

Precoding Assignment of numbers or symbols to predetermined responses on a questionnaire before the **field work** is done, to facilitate **coding** and **tabulation** of responses.

Pretest A trial run of a questionnaire or other data collection instrument, an informal or formal interview, to test workability and understanding.

Primary data Data directly collected through original research, because it is not otherwise available.

Population The universe or total group under study, from which a sample is drawn to interview.

Probability sample A sample based on the principles of probability, in which every member of the population being sampled has a known, normally equal, chance of being selected. The odds, rather than judgement, rule the selection of sample respondents. The sampling units must be drawn from a frame (such as a list of names or a map of a city); selection must be mechanical, usually employing random numbers. There are many different kinds of probability samples, including: **simple random**, area probability, cluster, multi-stage, stratified and systematic.

Psychographics A category of variables which draw distinctions among persons based on their psychological characteristics.

Qualitative measurement A term used to describe a wide range of audience reactions to specific stations, programs or personalities. For example, qualitative measurement may include listener or viewer assessment of how entertaining, informative, unique or useful a program is, as opposed to the quantitative measurement (e.g., ratings or shares) that reports the size and demographic composition of its audience.

Quantitative measurement The term used is describe the range of research which answers the basic question: "How many?" This includes most available syndicated "ratings" products.

Questionnaire A form designed for the orderly asking of questions and recording of answers in an interview or by mail; also known as an *instrument* or a *schedule*.

Quota sample A type of non-probability sample in which predetermined quotas of various types of respondents are assigned to the interviewers to fill.

Random digit dialing A technique used in telephone surveys, whereby telephone numbers are generated in a random manner as opposed to being drawn from a directory. Random digit dialing is used to overcome the problem of sample bias caused by unlisted telephone numbers.

Random numbers A list of numbers that have been selected randomly, that is, each independent of the position of any other, as if "drawn from a hat." Used in sample selection, such as selecting interviewing locations or creating a list of random telephone numbers.

Random sample See **simple random sample.**

Range A simple measure of variability defined as the difference between the highest and the lowest values in a distribution.

Rating The size of a radio or television audience, usually expressed as a percentage of the total possible audience.

Rating scale A device through which respondents can express degrees of intensity of feeling, such as a line of markings (vertical or horizontal), a list of consecutive numbers or letters, or a selection of adjectives or phrases (e.g., "excellent", "good", "fair", or "poor").

Ratio measurement A level of measurement in which the numbers assigned to objects are based on a scale with equal intervals and an absolute zero point. Age, income and time spent listening or viewing are examples of variables typically measured at a ratio level.

Reach 1) The total number of persons or households estimated to be in a particular station's audience during a specified time period. 2) The total number of persons estimated to have been exposed to a message or an advertiser's commercial during a specified time period or campaign. Also known as *cumulative* or *unduplicated* audience.

Respondent The person interviewed in a survey, usually speaking for himself or herself but sometimes for others in the household.

Response error The difference between the response as actually recorded and the "true" response. This can arise from interviewer bias or from misunderstanding of the question by the respondent.

Roster recall An interviewing method in which the respondent is aided in recalling their radio or television exposure by a list or roster of stations and programs, usually by time periods; also known as *aided recall.*

Sample A relatively small group, selected so as to be representative of a population, that can be questioned or observed and thereby provide estimates of the characteristics, opinions and behavior of the entire.

Sampling distribution A table, graph or formula that shows the possible values of a sample statistic and the probability that the statistic will take each of these values (i.e., a table, graph or formula that shows the proportion of times that a sample statistic would take each of its possible values if a "very large number" of samples were drawn).

Sampling error The difference between the results from a sample survey and the result that would be obtained from a complete census conducted in the same manner as the sample survey. For probability samples, the probabilities of sampling errors of various estimates can be calculated.

Screening question A kind of question designed to identify respondents as appropriate for further questioning or inclusion in the sample.

Secondary research Analyzing existing sources of data and information collected for purposes other than the present one.

Self-administered questionnaire A form on which the respondent, not an interviewer, writes replies. Typically used in mail surveys.

Share The percentage of the radio or television audience in a given area that is in the audience of a program, station or network at a specific time. The base of the percentage is in the persons or households (whichever are being measured) using radio or television at the specific time.

Simple random sample or *random sample* A probability sample that is selected by a procedure in which every individual in the population has an equal probability of selection and every combination of individuals an equal probability of selection.

Standard deviation A measure of a probability sample's variability determined by a mathematical formula.

Standard error A universally accepted measure of the sampling error associated with a sample estimate. It can be computed from the results of a probability sample using a mathematical formula. The formula will depend on the type of probably sample that was employed.

The standard error can be used in conjunction with a table of the normal distribution to compute the probability that the sampling error of a survey estimate will fall within a specified range. The standard error

is the standard deviation of a sampling distribution.

Structured interview An interview in which the interviewer is required to follow the question wording and their order exactly.

Subsample A portion or breakdown of a sample, e.g., males 18-24, households with incomes over $50,000, etc.

Systematic random sample A kind of probability sample in which the respondents are selected by taking every Nth house of name from a list, such as every third name from a phone list.

Universe See **population**.

Unaided recall The response to a question which depends on the respondent's memory, without any aid or prompting from the interviewer.

Validation Re-interviewing a subsample of the respondents in a survey (generally between 5 and 15 percent of the sample) to verify the competence and honesty of the interviewers.

Variability The extent to which persons or things differ from one another with respect to a particular characteristic or variable. Variability can be measured by the range, variance and standard deviation.

Variable Any well-defined characteristic, trait or attribute that differs from person to person. Also see, **demographics** and **psychographics**.

Variance A measure of variability determined by a mathematical formula.

About the Authors

James E. Fletcher, PhD has been a professor of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Georgia since 1984. Dr. Fletcher is a prolific author and has made numerous contributions to the audience research literature, including authoring several publications for NAB. He is the author of *Music & Program Research* and *Profiting from Radio Ratings*. Dr. Fletcher is active on numerous academic committees, among them the Broadcast Education Association. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona and a Ph.D. from the University of Utah.

Kurt Hanson is president of Strategic Radio Research, a leading supplier of on-going audience research for radio stations in the United States and Canada. Strategic has twice been named by *Inc.* as one of the 500 fastest growing companies in America. Prior to founding Strategic in 1980, Mr. Hanson worked at several radio stations including WOKY, Milwaukee; WLS, Chicago and WLUP, Chicago. He holds a B.A. and an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago.

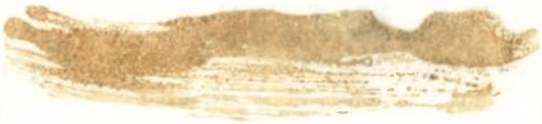
Gerry Hartshorn is NAB's Director of Audience Measurement and Policy Research. He is active in NAB's Research Committee, COLRAM and COLTAM and several industry committees. Mr. Hartshorn is Project Director for the COLTAM Personal Diary Project and Qualitative Research Summits and the author of the do-your-own research series in *RadioWeek*. Before joining NAB in March 1990, he spent nine years in the Arbitron Television Product Group, worked as a researcher, consultant and for several radio and television stations. Mr. Hartshorn holds an M.A. from the University of Maryland and a B.A. from Penn State.

Julie Heath is co-owner of Breakthrough Marketing, Vice President/Research and provides research and marketing consulting for 19 radio stations nationally. Prior to joining Breakthrough, Ms. Heath was Ratings Research Manager/Consultant with Donohue Research & Marketing and Research Manager at WLTT-FM, Washington, DC. She began her 12 year professional career with six years in Arbitron's radio and research departments. Ms. Heath holds a B.A. from the University of Maryland.

Jhan Hiber is President of Jhan Hiber Associates, a California-based international research and programming consultancy. With over 25 year of broadcasting experience in sales, news, marketing and management, Mr. Hiber is a research and ratings contributor to *The Gavin Report* in the U.S. and *Music & Media* in Europe, a frequent speaker at various broadcasting conferences and lecturer at colleges and universities. He is a former manager of Arbitron's Radio Market Reports. This is Mr. Hiber's second NAB publication; previously, authoring *Winning Radio Research*.

Susan Korbel, PhD is the principal of her own firm, Korbel Marketing. Formed in January 1990, Korbel Marketing conducts television research and consults in the areas of local programming, talent, station image and consumer behavior. Dr. Korbel was formerly the marketing director of KENS-TV and the general manager of KENS-II. She has worked for Harte-Hanks Communications in several management positions since 1984. Dr. Korbel served

on NAB's Committee on Local Television Audience Measurement (COLTAM) from 1987-90. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and a B.A. from Cornell.



National Association of
NAB
BROADCASTERS

ISBN 0-89324-113-X