Do it Yourself Marketing Research
And Data Analysis

The Knowledge Partnership

Tom Hayes
November 2016
Why Marketing Research?

• Because it’s the basis of marketing

• Because you are not your consumer (student, parent, alumni, donor)

• Things change
Why Not Marketing Research?

• We can’t afford it

★ You can’t afford not to do it
Marketing research is an investment, not a cost!

• Lifetime value of a consumer

• How many students will you need to attract to pay for the research
You Are Not Your Consumer

• How many have college degrees?

• How many years have you worked for your institution?

• How many spend more than 40 hours a week?

• How many think about work on the way in?

• How many think about work on the way home?

• How many think about work on vacation?
Things Change

The School Picture Quiz!
Brand Building

• Is a step-by-step process

• Requires knowledge and discipline

• Involves the entire institution

• Major brands spend a lot of money on brand marketing and go to enormous lengths to maintain a consistent voice across all channels
# Phases of Brand Process

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## Outcomes

- **Research: Management/Staff/Partner/Key Stakeholder Interviews**
- **Research: Market/Customer Research**
- **Research: Strategic Validation**
- **Research: Market/Focus Group Testing**
- **Research: Performance Measurement**
Research

- Helps determine market perceptions
- Helps understand perceived strengths and weaknesses
- Helps set performance benchmarks
- Helps develop effective approaches

“The great obstacle to progress is not ignorance but the illusion of knowledge.”
Outline Of A Branding Initiative

- Objective Identification
- Research
- Positioning
- Creative Concepting & Testing
- Marketing Planning
- Execution
- Evaluation

Image and Branding Study

Guiding Questions

- What makes our college different and better than the competition?
- What are our unique strengths?
- Where do we have competitive weaknesses?
- What niche do we/could we serve in the marketplace?
- What are our current brand associations?
- Are there associations we want to emphasize? Maintain? Lose?
- How should marketing dollars be allocated?
Establishing Guiding Questions

• “Guiding Questions” are the 5-8 questions you want your survey research project to answer
• They are not actual survey questions
• Imagine they could be the headers on your PowerPoint of the findings
• If you have more than 8, your study probably lacks focus
• Refer to the guiding questions throughout instrument design to avoid mission-creep
• List the guiding questions on all communications regarding the project; include them at the top of every draft of your moderator guides and survey instruments

Many studies try to gather information about too many topics rather than delving deeply into one or two pressing issues.

Identifying a focused set of guiding questions at project kick-off and getting agreement on them is key.
Managing The Research Process

• Create an internal project team
  – Assist in final decisions about project scope
  – Review moderator guides and survey instruments
  – Vet the research findings and assist with interpretation
  – Participate in devising the brand strategy based on the findings
• Beyond the research project, your project management team can easily segue into living the brand and integrated marketing issues
• Meet with campus leadership and key faculty and administrators often

Branding & Integrated Marketing Teams should extend beyond marketing and communications departments to include faculty, staff and administrators, and should be held responsible for driving tangible results across admissions, communications engagement, and development.
Qualitative Research
Qualitative Research

• Focus groups

• One on one interviews
Qualitative Research (cont.)

• Used to generate ideas

• Used to explore feelings

• Used to back up quantitative research

• Cannot be projected to a larger population
Never Ever, Ever, Ever, Ever, Ever

Use Focus Groups to Determine Marketing Strategy!!
Focus Group Basics

• 8 to 12 members of target audience gathered for an open-ended discussion about topic of interest to sponsor
• One of most frequently used market research techniques
• Typically last 1 to 1 ½ hours; no longer
• To ensure accuracy, conduct multiple groups
• ALWAYS audio or video tape
• Typical project has at least four groups
  — Same target audience, same guide, same moderator, same setting, etc.

Focus groups generate qualitative data which means the findings are presented as key themes rather than through the use of statistics, as is the case with quantitative research.
When To Use Focus Groups

• To understand:
  – Feelings, perceptions, emotions and needs
  – Motivations to have a relationship with us
• Charitable gifts and enrollments are emotionally driven:
  – Highly discretionary expenditures
  – Many spending tradeoffs
• Focus groups are used to:
  – Gather baseline info for survey
  – Gather info that is difficult to quantify - reactions, perceptions, images, feelings
  – Review creative communications, publications, ads, etc.

Focus groups are generally more effective than surveys at exploring emotional drivers.
TESC Ad Assessment

- Reactions generally critical, “corny,” “phony,” “staged,” “outdated”
- Man on left described as “sloppy” and “unprofessional”
- Suggested iPod rather than headphones or “walkman”
- Photo described as unrealistic, “Can you really listen to a lecture while walking, talking, and drinking?”
- Photo not viewed as representative of the College’s students, slightly inappropriate given the headline and copy in the ad
- Recommendation: Discontinue use of photo
**TESC Ad Assessment**

- Generated a stronger positive response than any other ad tested
- Participants in all groups were distracted by lack of helmets
- Concerns about safety aside, the ad was praised for its reassuring message that students can attend the College while still having time for a quality family life
- Typical reactions included: “I don’t have to give up my family” and “I can still have fun with my kids.”

**Recommendation:** Update photo with helmets and continue to use ad
Participants—in particular, women—responded poorly to this ad

Female subject looked too “polished,” “made up,” and “coiffed” to represent a believable portrayal of a woman doing online class work at the breakfast table

Another objection was a perception that the woman’s robe and nightgown had been deliberately arranged to reveal her legs; words like “offensive” and “sexist” were used

Recommendation: Discontinue use of photo
Great Qualitative Questions for Branding

- Complete this sentence, “I would have never fit in at [competitor A] because: _______________”
- What is it about the [college] experience you think you will remember when you are 50?
- [Projective technique] If [college] was a famous person (living or dead), who would it be? Why?
- What values or strengths do faculty in your school share with faculty in other schools?
- If you were sitting on a plane next to a stranger, how would you describe [college]?
- Complete this sentence, “People think [college] is _______________ but it’s really ______________.”

The key to great qualitative research is not letting participants get away with easy or politically correct answers to your questions.
Quantitative Research
Defining Scope Of Work And Research Plan

- Image and branding research is typically conducted every three to five years
- Could involve studying:
  - General Public
  - Business/Community Leaders
  - Faculty and Administrators of Peer Institutions
  - Parents of Prospective Students
  - Prospective Students
  - Alumni & Donors
  - Current Students
  - Faculty and Staff

Common target audiences are listed here in ascending order by likelihood to respond... descending order by cost
Sample Scope Of Work

QUALITATIVE
- Prospective parents ................................................................. 30 depth interviews
- Prospective students ............................................................... Online bulletin board
- Current students ................................................................. Online bulletin board
- Faculty, staff, and alumni ...................................................... 4 online focus groups each
- Higher education peers ......................................................... 30 depth interviews
- Business leaders ................................................................. 30 depth interviews

QUANTITATIVE
- Prospective students ............................................................... Online survey
- Prospective parents ............................................................... Online survey
- Faculty, staff, and students ..................................................... Online survey
- Alumni .................................................................................. Online survey
Sampling (1 of 2)

• Generally we are seeking to secure a “representative sample” of our target population
  • Representative sample may be a random sample or, for example, a stratified sample, depending upon the objective of sampling and the characteristics of the population
  • The degree of representativeness of the sample may be limited by cost or convenience
• All else being equal, a larger sample size $n$ leads to increased precision in estimates of various properties of the population
Sampling (2 of 2)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Size</th>
<th>Margin of Error</th>
<th>Confidence Level</th>
<th>Recommended Sample Size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>323</td>
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<tr>
<td>5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>383</td>
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</table>
Designing Survey Instruments

- Keep it focused (answer your guiding questions)
- Exclude interesting but not vital questions
- Pay extremely close attention to design, layout, and perceived ease of completion
- Avoid leading or ambiguous questions; maintain objectivity
- Open with ‘warmer’ questions - simple, interesting, frame of mind
- Progressively narrow the scope of questions
- Place difficult, sensitive, or complex questions toward the end
- Include personal information/demographics last
- Address important issues more than once
- Plan time into the research process for extensive re-writing of the instrument
- Ask the HARD questions
- Avoid instruments that take longer than 10 minutes to complete (whether phone, online or direct mail data collection)
Designing Survey Instruments (2 of 5)

• Consider the basis of comparison carefully:

  – “How helpful were the materials you received from XYZ College?”

    • Very helpful – 55%
    • Somewhat helpful – 35%
    • Not helpful – 10%

  – “On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means XYZ College’s location is very undesirable and 5 means the College’s location is very desirable, how do you rate XYZ College?”

  Compare to other colleges or compare individual pieces or tools to each other.
Designing Survey Instruments  (4 of 5)

WHAT’S WRONG HERE?

How far is Example University from your home?

- Less than 50 miles
- 50-100 miles
- 100-150 miles
- 150-200 miles
- More than 200 miles

Problem
- Response options are not mutually exclusive
- Respondent can’t answer question
- Better ways to get information

Solution
Measure distance by home zip code
Developing Possible Positioning Strategies To Test

- Use internal assessment, competitive analysis, review of strategic plans and existing data and qualitative research to develop possible positioning strategies to test in the quantitative research.
- Example for small liberal arts college:
  - Work while in school
  - Exceptional, innovative teaching
  - Leadership development
  - Personal Attention (ugh!)
  - Reading and speaking skills
- Brand positionings should be discussed with campus leadership.
- The baseline image and branding research is ultimately structured to test concepts related to these positioning strategies.

“...A brand is a living entity - and it is enriched or undermined cumulatively over time, the product of a thousand small gestures”

Michael Eisner, CEO Disney
‘Typical’ Branding Survey Content

• Aided and unaided awareness and other benchmarks that support measurement of brand ROI over time
• Assess your current brand associations/image
• Assess competitor’s awareness/image/reputation & strengths/weaknesses
• Test around possible brand positionings
  • Relevance/meaningful/appeal, credible, differentiating
  • Given the option to attend University A, B, C, which one would you choose?
• Assess your strengths and weaknesses
  • These should be aligned with what is necessary to support various brand positionings
• Test appeal of messages that could support the positionings
• Demographics necessary for analysis
Stimulating Participation In Your Survey

- Sell value of research
- Guarantee confidentiality, but not anonymity
  - Utilize backend data as much as possible
- Avoid non-vital questions; long questionnaires
- Use an attractive design and layout
- Use preliminary notification
- Use callbacks/reminder emails
- Use incentives; cash is the universal ‘incentivizer’
  - iPads are no longer good incentives
  - Amazon.com gift certificates work great

Incentives are a critical consideration when working to generate survey response; offer an incentive that your target audience values and be creative.
Response Rates

• Response rate will be directly linked to your target audience’s interest in you and your topic; higher interest level….high response

• Typical response rates to an online survey
  — Purchased list of college-bound students – 2% to 3%
  — Your own prospects – 7% to 12%
  — Your current students – 25% to 35%
  — Your alumni – 15% to 25%
  — Your faculty – 30% to 45%

When you click on a link to complete an online survey, you carry through an ID code which allows the sponsor to link your responses back to all of your customer data.
Reporting the Data

A Picture is Worth A Thousand Words
## Importance and Performance Overall Comparison

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<th>Importance</th>
<th>Xavier</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Academic Facilities Such As Libraries and Classrooms</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>3.51</td>
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<td>3.69</td>
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<td>Broad Range and Variety of Courses and Majors</td>
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<td>3.46</td>
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<td>3.33</td>
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<td>3.58</td>
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<td>3.68</td>
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<td>Broad Range of Opportunities to Develop as a Leader</td>
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</table>
Importance and Performance - Xavier University

- High Importance & Low Performance
  - Financial Aid Available
  - Personal/Individual Attention
  - Range of Student Social Opps
  - Quality Dorm & Housing Facilities
  - Range of Courses/Majors
  - Safe/Secure Campus
  - Quality Faculty
  - Access to Technology on Campus
  - Opps to Connect/Be Involved in Campus Community

- Low Importance & Low Performance
  - Quality Web Site

- Low Importance & High Performance
  - Recommended by Parents

- High Importance & High Performance
  - Quality Academic Facilities: Libraries & Classrooms
  - Range of Opps to Develop as a Leader
  - Emphasize Ethics/Personal Values in Teaching
  - Opps to Connect/Be Involved in Campus Community
  - Quality Literature about College
  - Range of Community Service Opps
  - Recommended by Parents
Performance Gap Between Xavier and College A

- Quality Varsity Athletic Programs
- National Reputation
- Provide Quality Literature about College
- Opportunities for International Exposure/Experience
- Diverse Student Body
- Recommended by Parents
- Broad Range and Variety of Courses and Majors
- Opportunities to Connect with and Become Involved in the Campus Community
- Quality Web Site
- Quality Academic Facilities Such As Libraries and Classrooms
- Access to Technology on Campus
- Financial Aid Available
- Quality Dorm and Housing Facilities
- Broad Range of Opportunities to Develop as a Leader
- Broad Range of Student Social Opportunities
- Strict Entrance Requirements
- Reasonable Tuition and Board Fees
- Broad Range of Community Service Opportunities
- Safe and Secure Campus
- Quality Faculty
- Emphasize Ethics and Personal Values in Teaching
- Personal and Individual Attention
- Small Average Class Size
Excellent Schools in Michigan: Albion was identified (unaided) by 12% of student inquirers, 1% of student suspects, 13% of inquirer parents and 3% of suspect parents. Alumni identified (aided) Albion as much as UM.

All respondents

Don’t Know Responses
4% of Student Inquirers, 10% of Student Suspects, 7% of Parents of Inquirers, and 6% of Parents of Suspects said “don’t know”.

Open ended for all audiences except alumni. Chart shows mentions >20% for at least one audience. Sponsor not revealed for prospects/parents.

Question Wording: (All Audiences Except Alumni) When you think of excellent colleges and universities in Michigan, which six come to mind first? / (Alumni) When you think of excellent colleges and universities in Michigan, which SIX of the following come to mind FIRST? (select up to 6).
Excellent Private Schools in Michigan: Albion was identified (unaided) by 13% of student inquirers, 4% of student suspects, 26% of inquirer parents and 16% of suspect parents.

Don’t Know Responses
14% of Student Inquirers, 63% of Student Suspects, 11% of Parents of Inquirers, and 46% of Parents of Suspects said “don’t know”.

Open ended for all audiences except alumni. Chart shows mentions >20% for at least one audience. Sponsor not revealed for prospects/parents.
Question Wording: (All Audiences Except Alumni) When you think just of excellent private colleges and universities in Michigan, which six come to mind first? / (Alumni) When you think just of excellent private colleges and universities in Michigan, which SIX of the following come to mind FIRST? (select up to 6).
How Much Will It Cost?

• Cost influenced by:
  – Objectives and intended use of data
  – Number of audiences you choose to study
  – Method of data collection
  – How much qualitative and quantitative research is done
  – Amount of work you are able to do internally
• In-house vs. Outsourcing
  – Need for credibility/buy-in?
  – What expertise exists internally?
  – Can internal provider be objective?
  – Can internal provider meet ambitious deadlines?

Simple survey development and analysis costs between $20,000-$35,000, depending on sampling frame and research method.

A comprehensive image and branding initiative can cost $100,000 to $300,000 for research and strategy development.
Why Marketing Research?

- Because on the whole......knowing is better than not knowing!
Thank you!

hayes@xavier.edu