

## **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative methods provide results that are usually rich and detailed, offering ideas and concepts to inform research. Qualitative methods tell you how people feel and what they think.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus Groups are an example of a technique imported into social research from market research and consists of a number of individuals invited to discuss their views on a particular topic. Groups can be constructed in order to attempt to recreate demographics.

### **Designing the Discussion Guide**

A discussion guide will be drafted with introductions, the ground rules of the group and the questions to be asked. The topic areas will be determined by the clear objectives of the research, and questions be formatted in such a way that they are flexible (rather than have exact, pre-determined wording) and open-ended, so that the discussion has breadth, allowing for discussion amongst the group, rather than a simple question and answer session.

amt-i conduct pilot focus group to test-out operation of the discussion guide, to ensuring that prospective attendees can both understand the questions asked, but also possess the knowledge to answer.

### **Recruiting Focus Group Participants**

#### **Confirming Arrangements**

All those identified as potential participants will be sent a postal invitation informing them of the aims of the group, location and time, and this will be followed up by a courtesy telephone call a few days before the group meets, to check that they can still attend and to offer any further information they seek.

The postal invitation will include a research contract outlining:

- What the research is about, who it is being conducted for
- A formal request for permission to audio recording the discussion.
- Confirmation of the anonymity of the discussion / data.
- How the focus groups will work/ be structured.
- What topics will be discussed.
- How the data will be used.
- How participants will receive feedback on the results.
- Information about how the participant can withdraw from the research.

### **Conducting Focus Group Sessions**

The focus groups will begin with the collection of basic descriptive detail to allow for rapport to develop between the facilitator and the group, and to ensure everyone in the group has the chance to speak. A typical question may be to ask participants the frequency with which they use the bus service, or the distances they travel. The schedule will then move onto the main topics, with each 'question' augmented by a series of 'prompts.' During the sessions, the facilitator will encourage group interaction and participation, avoiding the domination of more vocal participants at the expense of others who are less confident, but no less valuable contributors. Emerging issues will be pursued, captured and developed.

The focus groups will be run with a semi-structured format, with key topics to be explored, with the facilitator merely acting as a guide, allowing for areas of interest to be fully probed and conversation and ideas to flow in relation to the participants' views and opinions. The groups will last for a maximum of ninety minutes, and will consist of between 6-12 people, but for each we will aim to get the maximum number of people. A co-facilitator will be deployed in each focus group, to make notes of the conversation, and aid to with the dissemination of any visual stimulants or activities. Although the focus groups will be audio recorded (with the permission of participants, in line with the MRS Code of Conduct) to back-up researcher notes and ensure accurate portrayal of views, participants' anonymity will be assured: no participant's identity will be made available to the client, or in any reporting.

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### **Community Consultation Events**

amt-i run community consultation events to ensure that there is widespread attendance. The events will be advertised in the local press, on community websites and posters. Key stakeholders alongside local residents ranging from school children to senior citizens will be encouraged to attend.

Based on information gathered from, a Planning for Real® methodology will be adopted. Planning for Real® is a nationally recognised process of community consultation. It begins with contacting the local community networks and reaches a conclusion with the formation of an Action Plan for taking forward the decisions made during the process.

Planning for Real® events involve suggestion cards with the ideas for prospective facilities and services to a particular location, project or initiative. All of the suggestion cards will be vetted by local authorities and AMT Board Members in terms of validity to ensure that an unattainable 'wish list' is simply developed. Attendees will then be asked to choose the services and facilities they would like to see offered. On the back of the cards they will be asked to record the reasons for choosing the card and any other pertinent information. The approach is both non confrontational and stimulates discussion. To build a socio demographic, all those who lay a card will be asked to mark their gender and age group on a pin board.

Following on from this, all the services and facilities cards placed on the model are prioritized into HIGH, MEDIUM, or LOW, again using visual hands-on techniques. A report can then be written on what the top ten services and facilities the community would like to be developed, and which of these the attendees would like to see the most.

### **Analysis**

The amt-i researcher will use the SNAP database to analyse the quantitative information and the Grounded Theory Approach to analyse the qualitative data collected.

With the SNAP software package, in depth analysis can be conducted on every question. For example, questions can be cross tabulated and analysis will be available on responses from users versus non users and businesses versus local residents. Thus, individual reports will be available on various cohort groups, alongside amalgamated findings.

### **Final Report**

Any final report will incorporate an Executive Summary, Introduction, Methodology, Key Findings and Conclusions sections. Charts and tables will be produced for each question and analysis type.

### **Presentation**

At no cost to the client, amt-i will be available to offer a presentation of the research and its findings at an event of the client's choice.



### **Face to Face Interviews**

amt-i can conduct surveys via a face to face method. Two interviewers are deployed at a relevant location to the study, and are given a quota sample; for example the study may refer to the development of a play area and the interviewees will be asked need to complete 50 surveys with those at the location. The interviewers are trained by the amt-i senior research consultant.

Face to face surveys can be particularly beneficial in terms of securing a high response rate, and offering the respondent to ask for further explanation of questions.

### **Sampling**

amt-i lay particular importance on ensuring the right people are included in any research. The sample is the selection of the wider population that will be engaged in the survey and sampling is the process of identifying who will be contacted from that population. The word population is used to describe the target group, and while this may be the national population as a whole, it may also be a smaller group, such as residents in a particular estate, or users of a particular service.

Understanding population, sample size, and response rates are important for calculating confidence levels, which are vital in determining how many people are needed to be surveyed in order to get results that reflect the target population as precisely as needed.

Thus for example, operating at a 5% error with 95% confidence the following table outlines how many completed surveys are needed.

<b>Population Size</b>	<b>No of surveys required</b>
100	80
250	152
500	217
750	254
1,000	278
2,500	333
5,000	357
10,000	370
25,000	378
50,000	381
100,000	383
1,000,000	384