

INTERVIEWS

When can the method be used?

Interviews provide insights and thus enlarge your understanding of a particular phenomenon, a specific context, a problem, certain common practices, extreme and extraordinary situations, consumer preferences, and more.

They can be used in several phases of the new product development process and for different purposes. In a preliminary phase, they can help you to obtain contextual information about product use and opinions about existing products, or to gain expert input about issues. Interviews can also be used during concept testing of products or services in order to collect detailed consumer feedback. This helps you when selecting concepts or improving them. Compared to the focus group method, interviews take more time but provide you with deeper insight, because you can probe further into the answers given by the interviewee.

Interviews are most useful for projects in which the products or services under development are not completely new to consumers. For really new products or services, other methods, such as Contextmapping and Observations, are more appropriate.

How to use the method?

Before an interview, make a topic guide to ensure that you will cover all the relevant issues. This guide can be very structured, such as a questionnaire, or un- or semi-structured, with the questions depending on the answers given. It is recommended to do a pilot interview and to practice first. The general guideline for the number of interviews is to stop when you feel that an additional interview will not yield new information. Research shows that for the assessment of consumer needs, 10 to 15 interviews will reveal about 80% of the needs.

Interviews are face-to-face consultations that can be useful for understanding consumer perceptions, opinions, motivation and behaviour concerning products or services, or to gather information from experts in the field.

Interviews can be combined with collages or sensitising tasks such as keeping a short diary, as in Contextmapping.

Possible procedure

STEP 1

Make an interview guide, including a list of topics, based on your research questions. Test this guide in a pilot interview.

STEP 2

Invite the right interviewees. Depending on your objective you may interview three to eight people.

STEP 3

Carry out the interviews. An interview typically takes about one hour and is usually voice recorded.

STEP 4

Either make transcripts of what was said or make summarising notes.

STEP 5

Analyse your transcripts and draw conclusions.

Limitations of the method

- Your interviewees can respond only to what they know consciously. Latent or tacit knowledge can be gained by observation or by using generative techniques, such as in Contextmapping, making use of images and other stimuli to evoke stories.
- The quality of the result depends on your own skills as an interviewer.
- Your interview results are qualitative and from a limited number of respondents. To collect quantitative

results from a large number of respondents, use questionnaires.

Tips & Concerns

- Perform the interview in a relaxed atmosphere without distractions and provide refreshments.
- Start with general topics such as product usage and experience, and not, for example, by presenting new concepts. In this way you sensitise your interviewees to the context.
- Distribute your interview time among your topics in advance to ensure that you will have enough time left for your final topics, which are often the most important ones.
- When using visuals, such as drawings of your concepts, the quality of the visuals is crucial. First check if your interviewees understand what you are asking from them and if they have questions.



REFERENCES & FURTHER READING: Byrne, M., 2001. *Interviewing as a data collection method*. AORN Journal, Augustus, 74(2), pp. 233-235. Creusen, M.E.H., Hultink, E.J. and Eling, K.*, 2013. *Choice of consumer research methods in the front end of new product development*. International Journal of Market Research, January, 55(1), pp. 81-104. / Griffin, A., 2005. *Obtaining customer needs for product development*. In K.B. Kahn, S.E. Kay, R.J. Slotegraaf, S. Uban (eds.), *The PDMA Handbook of New Product Development*. pp. 211-227. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. / Rubin, H. and Rubin I., 2005. *Qualitative interviewing, the art of hearing data*. Sage, CA: Thousand Oaks. / Sleeswijk Visser, F., Stappers, P.J., van der Lugt, R., & Sanders, E.B.N. (2005). *Contextmapping: experiences from practice*. *CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 1(2), 119-149.