

# Usage and attitude studies

## ● *Status*

"Usage and Attitude" studies are designed to enrich the knowledge of marketing teams on consumer behaviour and the underlying attitudes, to highlight demands that are satisfied and unsatisfied. This data and its evolution over time is capital since it guides any marketing strategy, from Research & Development to communications.

Unfortunately, the information provided by "Usage and Attitudes" studies has evolved very little over the past 20 years. They are often presented in the form of a litany of conventional questions, of very variable value, requiring long and not very involving interviews; and, as a result, lead to results that are imprecise, unreliable, and therefore of very relative interest.

If "Usage and Attitudes" studies do not meet their objectives, it is because the methodologies implemented are not optimal. This imperfection has three major causes :

- the questionnaires reflect the issues of concern to the Product Manager rather than those of interest to the consumer ;
- the data collection procedures do not allow the consumer to answer with precision and exactness ;
- the analysis of the data collected is superficial and incomplete.

## ● *Proposed methodology*

This methodology has been designed to eliminate or at least reduce the deficiencies listed above:

### 1. **C1. How do you write a questionnaire that really corresponds to consumers' "Usage and Attitudes" issues ?**

Most of the products studied in "Usage and Attitudes" studies are products of average, or even minimal, involvement.

Their consumers therefore only have a clear perception of them when using them. It is at that time, and at that time only, that they can relate their satisfied and unsatisfied demands; that they can be clearly aware of their behaviours and, even more, the reasons that motivate them. What is more, the important thing is not only the idea that consumers have of products, but also and above all, the idea that they have of their usage.

**In order to write the optimal questionnaire, you have to know and understand the relationship between the products and their consumers. In order to know and understand this relationship, you have to spend the required time with consumers, in the place where they use the products and at the time when they use them.**

Psycho-sociologists with extensive experience in the very specific exercise of "participatory observation" produce a full report on the acquisition, storage, implementation and consumption of products.

Most of the products studied allow for very little fantasy as regards the various steps in this "usage itinerary" and meet homogeneous demands. It is therefore not necessary to produce a large number of "reports" to take stock of behaviours and attitudes; on the other hand these observations do need to be further developed.

## 2. How do you collect data in such a way as to guarantee its reliability and accuracy?

Observations concerning the procedure of writing the questionnaire are obviously valid for data collection.

### Interviews must be "contextualised".

If the respondents are not placed in the concrete situation that they have to describe (behaviours) and explain (attitudes), they cannot answer the questions asked precisely. Their habits are automated to a large extent and are therefore practically unconscious. How could they recall precisely what they do, why they do it and the satisfaction or dissatisfaction it brings them? The exercise they are being asked to perform is difficult enough without adding to it the obstacle of distance. They cannot give a faithful account of their habits unless the questionnaire and its completion favour the crucial element of involvement. Without these precautions, the all too famous principle of "mental economy" inevitably leads them to answer haphazardly or at least to produce "expected" answers. The almost always lazy answers given to open-ended questions demonstrate the reality of this observation.

### The fieldwork for "Usage and Attitude" studies must therefore imperatively be conducted face-to-face, at the respondent's home, and should begin with an observation of the products present.

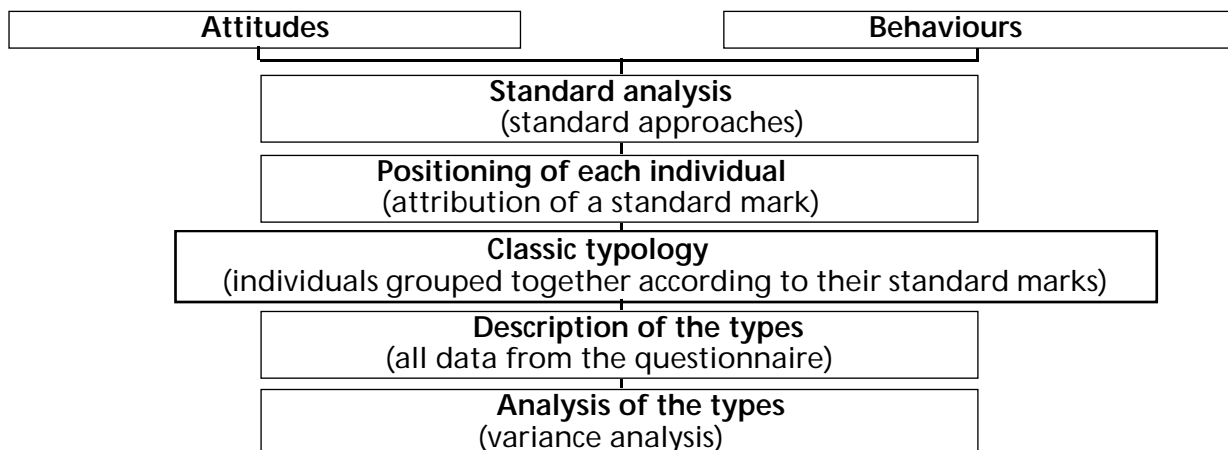
When the timeline allows and the consumption frequency justifies this, it may be useful to provide respondents with a "habit notebook" during a prior interview.

This procedure is obviously more reliable than relating behaviour "from memory". What is more, reading this notebook at the time of the interview encourages a clear awareness of the respondent's real attitudes and expectations.

## 3. How can the data collected be fully exploited ?

Data processing should not be limited to its direct interpretation: basic sorting and cross-sorting. Marketing executives need to know how the consumer population is structured. In general, they must be content with behaviour typologies (heavy, average and light consumers, loyal and non-loyal consumers=) and attitude typologies. But what is most useful is information that develops the types while simultaneously taking attitudes and behaviours into account.

The solution consists in producing a "standard typology".



Other multivariate analyses are conducted to provide answers to the specific questions of the client company: analysis of similarities to ascertain the perceived structuring of the product, factorial analysis to ascertain the axes of product perception...