

## Professor Corner

**October 2020 Faculty Highlight:** Sheri Lambert, Assistant Professor of Practice, Managing Director, Fox Center for Executive Education, Academic Director, MS - Market Research and Insights

**Department:** Marketing and Supply Chain Management



**Sheri Lambert – Online Engagement Tools - MKTG 4501**

### Sheri's Tools for Online Engagement

Adapting techniques typically used for in-person classes, Sheri has incorporated these engagement tools to the new online arena for administering projective exercises.

- Jigsaw Discussion
- Projective Techniques: Brand Collage / Persona Mapping / Picture Interpretation Exercises
- Other Projective Techniques to Use in Online Class Activities
- Eulogy & Birth Announcement
- Perception Mapping
- Personification & Objectification

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

### Jigsaw Discussion

In this activity, a general topic is divided into smaller, interrelated pieces (e.g., a puzzle is divided into pieces). Each member of a team is assigned to read and become an expert on a different topic. After each person has become an expert on their piece of the puzzle, they teach the other team members about that puzzle piece. Finally, after each person has finished teaching, the puzzle has been reassembled, and everyone on the team knows something important about every piece of the puzzle.

In analyzing the brand for the semester long project, each team member was assigned a particular topic area (i.e., tactic or “go-to-market-strategy”) of the company’s marketing strategy.

- Brand awareness, image & activation
- Competitive assessment
- Target areas (niche or mass)
- Global strategy
- Digital strategy

### Projective Techniques: Brand Collage / Persona Mapping / Picture Interpretation Exercises

The ease with which multimedia stimuli can now be shared online makes web-based qualitative research platforms excellent places to include these types of techniques.

Students can be shown single pictures or a series of pictures and asked to tell a story relating to the brand. Other times, students are asked to choose among an array of photos to tell their story, or participants might be asked to find and upload an image themselves that best represents the feelings and emotions that are conjured up by a certain brand.

In class, Summer I, I had students come to their desk or computer (at class time) with the following items:

- Magazine (that they did not care if they ruined it)
- Paper
- Scissors
- Tape or Glue

I gave them time to work in class (while playing music), to produce a collage of what a particular brand meant to them. They had to cut and paste (literally) the photos from the magazine that represented the brand. They then had to do a 1-page ppt and share their results to the rest of the class. (Including screen shots of their collages).

### Other Projective Techniques to use in Online Class Activities

Generally projective techniques have only been available for in-person activities. However, Zoom creates a fantastic new arena for administering projective exercises via online methods.

For decades, projective techniques have been widely used within qualitative research studies as a means of unearthing some of the underlying thoughts, needs, attitudes and emotions that research participants often have difficulty articulating. Traditionally, such methods have only been available for in-person classes and have in many cases been logistically difficult to pull off.

Some projective teaching exercises translate well into online methods. Students love these types of exercises, because they are given an opportunity to be creative and have some fun with their responses, and marketers (aka me!) love them, because of the emotional connections and clues into appropriate product/brand positioning that they can offer. So that said, these exercises are great when you are teaching in Consumer Buyer Behavior or Marketing Strategy ... or really anywhere that you are talking about “brands.”

The following are some favorite projective techniques that I have used in the past with qualitative market research and all could easily be adapted on-live with students.

#### **EULOGY & BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT**

Depending on the nature of your class, asking students to write a eulogy or birth announcement for a brand, product, or campaign can provide an insightful window into the perception of the brand. These are simple, familiar concepts to students, and they can easily wrap their minds around imagining that the brand you are studying has either passed away or is a newborn.

The **Eulogy** technique is a great way to assess loyalty toward an established brand. Asking students to imagine what their lives would be like if the brand suddenly “passed away” reveals the depth of customers’ loyalty toward that brand (i.e., would they be missed, easily replaced, or would the customers’ quality of life even be threatened by the loss of this brand).

This can be done in breakout sessions or you can assign pre-work for the students ahead of time. You can share an example quote brand work done in the past:

*“We are gathered here today to say farewell to a great company. A company that has put a lot of dealers on the map. A company that has altered the way some of us do business and win business. A company that has been a cornerstone in allowing our company to grow and one that will be sorely missed.*

*What can I say about [BRAND] other than thank you. Thank you for the good times. Thank you for making our company a better one by allowing us to offer tremendous products at competitive prices, with margins that are incomparable to the competition. What will we do, where will we buy, how will we survive without this amazing group? Well, that remains to be seen. What I can say is that no one will forget how they came in and became the supplier for our company.*

*We will be hard pressed to find another company that I can be as loyal to, but they would want us to continue to strive and grow our company even if they aren't with us to help us get there. They would want us to move on, so we shall.*

*Thank you [BRAND], thank you for all that you have done for me and other students. You will be missed."*

The **Birth Announcement** is a cousin of the eulogy exercise that is often more appropriate for innovation research or new product development. In this technique, it can be insightful to not only ask students to "introduce" a new product, concept, or campaign to the world, but also to instruct them to take it a step further and describe its life story as they envision it unfolding. Here is an example a big box retailer brand who was testing a new loyalty program.

*"Please share our joy in welcoming the new [BRAND] loyalty program*

*Parents: [COMPANY]*

*[PRODUCT] is named for the valued customers of [BRAND] stores, whom it is designed so serve. [PRODUCT] indicates that it shall belong to the customer to serve and enhance their shopping experience.*

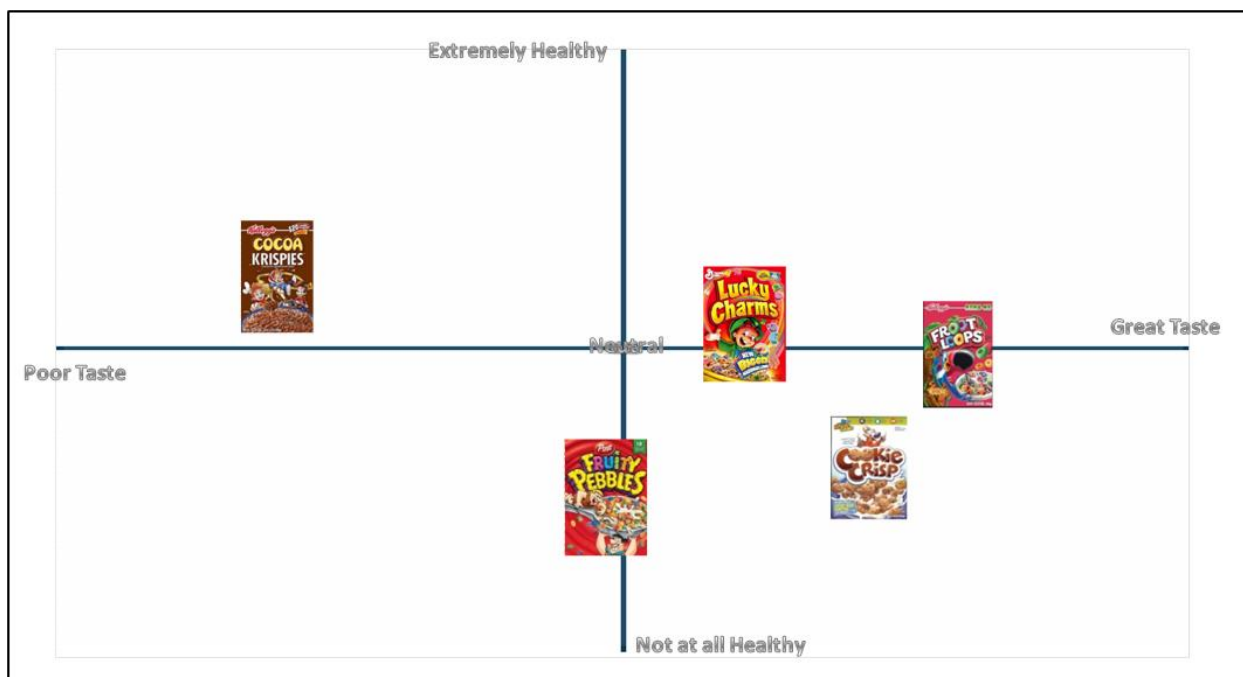
*[PRODUCT] begins life with a swipe at the cash register enabling it to record the purchase. Its potential becomes unfettered when the cardholder registers at the [BRAND] website where its boundless attributes are revealed.*

*Discerning [BRAND] customers who carry the new card and swipe at every purchase are treated to a unique shopping experience not available at any other store."*

## PERCEPTION MAPPING

When your objectives are to understand the competitive landscape in a given industry or to literally reveal the "white space" that exists among target customers, then perception mapping can be a very useful exercise to give students. In essence, the professor creates a map comprised of two axes, each axis representing a specific attribute of the product/brand/category you are studying (e.g., price vs. quality). The poles of each axis are labeled at the extremes, creating a quadrant where students are asked to place a certain number of brands, products, slogans, etc.

In the in-person classroom, you would have the students get up and move around while using white boards, paper-and-pencil, or easel pads to compile the results. However, administering perception mapping online via drag-and-drop exercises is quite easy to set up, engaging for participants (tapping into the hot topic of research gamification), and allows the class to view aggregated results.



## PERSONIFICATION & OBJECTIFICATION

Asking students to describe a product, brand, or campaign as a person or a seemingly unrelated object can be a very effective glimpse into what they really think/feel about the subject you are studying. The great thing about using online methods for collecting this information is that you can require participants to not only use text to describe what/who best represents the brand you are studying, but you can also allow your participants to upload accompanying photos to further drive home their points. (The collage activity again ... either “old school” with scissors and glue/tape, or electronically seek (google search), cut and paste to a ppt).

There are lots of different variants of these exercises. Examples are:

- Asking students to describe which celebrity is most like a certain brand, or
- If your brand were an automobile, what make/model/style would it be

Here are examples from students when asked to imagine that two competitive brands of cars (I used the BMW 5 Series vs the Toyota Prius) were people and to compare their physical attributes, personalities, etc.:

*“[BMW] is a male, a little rugged looking but good looking, well dressed in casual clothes. He is smart and well organized and fun. He is up on the latest trends and technology. He is a leader. He is a big outdoorsman, likes to work with his hands.*

*[Prius] is very similar to [BMW]. Again, he is male, good looking and dressed well but not quite as sharp as [BMW]. He tends to be a follower rather than a leader. Still fun to hang out*

*with. Still loves the outdoors and working with his hands. He is fairly smart but is a little more disorganized.*

*Of the two, I would like to hang around [BMW], he attracts attention. However, I would also hang around with [Prius]"*

*[Prius] is a granola lover and is definitely a woman in her late 30s. And she has a COEXIST bumper sticker."*

Another online activity for a brand is whereby students are to describe a brand, along with a couple of competitive brands, as celebrities and to upload photos of each conducted for a new line of beauty care products. What emerged in the analysis was a clear perception of the brand as being associated with glamorous "A-Listers," while the competitive brand was more often associated with lesser-known stars. The collages of brand celebrity associations were based on student-provided photos. The students can then be asked to share with the rest of the class.



*"[Brand] reminds me of Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen twins. Their style is so outdated and they need wardrobe change. Even though they have class they need to change their whole wardrobe. Even though [Brand] has quality the package needs a makeover."*