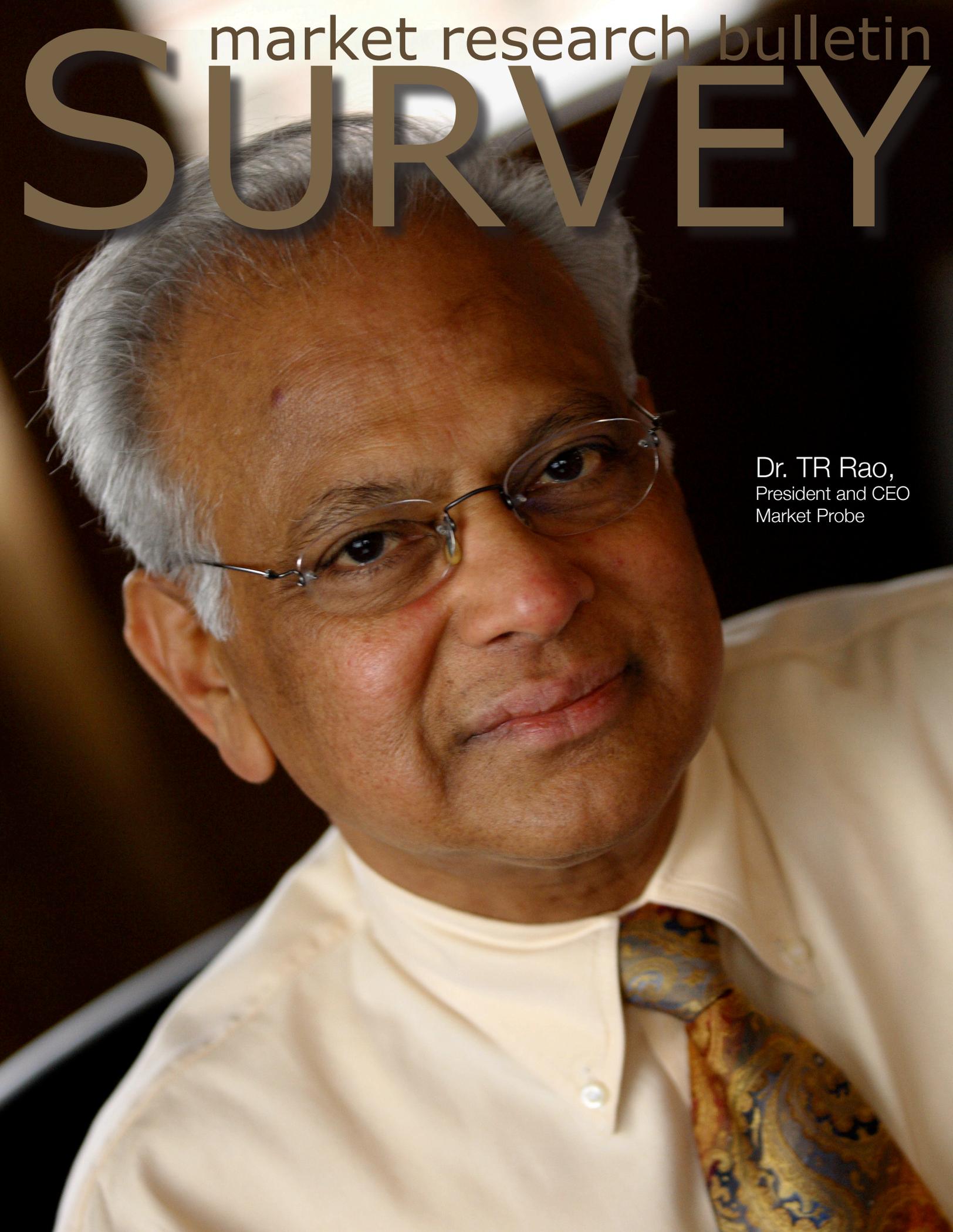


market research bulletin

SURVEY

A close-up portrait of Dr. TR Rao, an elderly man with short, graying hair, wearing glasses, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

Dr. TR Rao,
President and CEO
Market Probe

Man-on-the-Street Interviews a Versatile **Qualitative Research** Technique

Man-on-the-street interviews are a qualitative research technique often forgotten in the rush to employ more elaborate methods. Yet this quick technique is surprisingly versatile, and is especially useful for providing fast and timely insights into a client's business, brand, product, marketing, or communications issues. It lends itself well to most topics where it is useful to explore consumer or public opinion, and is great for capturing the subjects' immediate reactions.

At Clarion Research, we've been working for the past year to develop and introduce our own turn-key approach to man-on-the-street interviewing called Street SessionsSM, where we qualitatively collect 'in the moment' consumer insights and opinions on various topics. Over that time, we've tested a number of different designs and techniques, and have come up with guidelines for the process that will help maximize the effectiveness of man-on-the-street interview projects, ensuring impactful, actionable results.

Man-on-the-Street Interviews: An Evolving Approach

The technique of man-on-the-street interviewing pre-dates market research as a discipline. For generations, reporters have used such interviews to provide readers with quotes and reactions to news of the day. Later, broadcasters and videographers continued this



approach, capturing footage of quick reactions to politics, current events, or any other newsworthy issue.

Today, qualitative researchers are continuing the practice, this time armed with microphones, HD video cameras, and advanced production software. Regardless of the era, however, the beauty of man-on-the-street interviewing remains the same: there is no substitute for seeing and hearing the spontaneous, unfiltered voice of the customer firsthand.

By Steve Crane and Jamie Stenziano,
Clarion Research



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Street interviews are quickly deployed, fluid, and enable the researcher to capture a snapshot of consumer response to the subject of interest. While man-on-the-street interviewing can stand alone as an independent qualitative research methodology for executive presentations, new business pitches, or to give business leaders a sense of what people are thinking about a particular topic, results can also be used to complement and add color to quantitative surveys, tracking surveys, omnibus studies, or other qualitative efforts.

Tips for Successful Man-on-the-Street Interviews

Research Project Setup

Like all qualitative research projects, a man-on-the-street interview project needs a clear set of objectives, a defined target audience, and a well thought out question set.

To start, effective man-on-the-street interview projects require that you have a pre-determined target audience in mind. Without that clarity, it is difficult to choose an appropriate interview location, and this could set the project up for failure if the target groups in your location are not of central interest to the research or client. Knowing your target audience easily enables you to select venues where they are likely to be encountered: outside grocery stores for moms who shop, the financial district of a city for tech-using business people, the nightclub district for 20 to 30-year-olds, and so on. This maximizes your chances of getting the kind of consumer or opinion feedback you're looking for.

It is also necessary to create and memorize a question set in advance, so the interviewer is prepared with multiple questions in the dynamic moments of an interview. However, it is critical that the question set be tested before it is used. Interviewers need to be familiar with the full gamut of interview questions; further, some questions do not elicit the types of answers that are really of interest in the research, and need to be fine-tuned. Play out all of the possible response scenarios, so you're armed for any situation.



When formulating questions, be sure to keep them well thought out, concise, and limited to no more than 5 to 10 in number, plus any follow-ups. We find that interview length is determined not so much by the number of questions asked, as by the amount of time respondents are willing to stand and talk. People are in the middle of their day-to-day activities, and the typical respondent will only give you less than 10 minutes of their time. Careful pre-planning in question development allows you to maximize what can be asked in this short time period, and capture the responses you need to illuminate the client's area of interest.

“Excuse me sir, can I see your permit?”: Getting Permissions

Depending on your chosen location, it is usually necessary to secure permission to film - either because you are on private property, or because local laws dictate the rules regarding filming on public property. Before making a final choice of location, be sure you are in compliance with the law and have the necessary permits and permissions so you can film.

It is always necessary to seek permission to film on private property. This can be granted by the building owner, onsite manager, property management firm, or other responsible authority. Some locations, such as museums or historic buildings, may also charge a fee for access or film rights. Often it is easier to negotiate special arrangements with private property owners, since they are not bound by law in the same way public authorities are.

In public areas, every city or county has slightly different laws, some of which require a permit or even a fee to film in and around public property. Some larger cities have film boards or offices that manage these permissions and act as the central clearing house for videographers seeking permits. Examples are the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre & Broadcasting in New York (www.nyc.gov/film), and the government-affiliated non-profit, FilmLA, Inc, in Los Angeles (www.filmla.com). In other cities, however, there is no coordinated process for handling filming permits, and it will take some detective work to locate appropriate authorities and secure permissions. This can be a time-consuming process, but is essential to do. Not knowing these laws beforehand could shut down your project right off the bat.

Filming: Hire A Pro

We've all used a video camera at least once – filming the kids opening their gifts, or taking in the sights on vacation in the Grand Canyon. But let's be honest: most of us don't have access to an HD video camera, or have the skills to professionally film in fickle weather, various times of day, or for long periods of time. Having a professional videographer on board can make the difference between presentation-quality video, and wasted time and tape that does not convey the professional quality you desire to your client. A professional will have the technology as well as the skills to give you a top-notch video product. Just as importantly, having a pro to handle video allows you to take your mind off the filming so you can focus on your job as a researcher.

The Producer

As a researcher and an interviewer, it's your job to be able to think quickly. However, you can't interview someone on the street, direct the cameraman to the optimal shot angles, collect respondent video release signatures, and direct the flow of people in the background all at once. That's what the producer is for. Producers coordinate and manage the myriad of tasks that go into making a video shoot of street interviews. A producer is an essential piece of the project, allowing the interviewer to focus on his or her question set, in order to collect the answers needed to fulfill the research objectives.

Backup the Backups of the Backup: Contingency Plans

Your project's ready to roll. You've chosen your location, hammered out your questions, and have scheduled a day and time for interviewing. Everything seems to be running smoothly. However, there are a number of factors that can come into play that could swiftly derail your project - unless, of course, you have backup plans to counteract them.

Schedule a rain date: Always be prepared for inclement weather. If your project is outdoors, anything can happen. A few rain clouds and an hour of downpour can quickly ruin a man-on-the-street interviewing project. To ensure you'll be able to get the insights you need, plan ahead and pick both an alternate location and, if needed, an alternate date to fall back on for the interviews.





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Whatever you decide for a rain date, be sure to let your client know the alternatives and when you are using them. Being prepared with fall-back positions helps you avoid last minute scrambling and possibly soaking wet equipment, and keeps the project on track.

Extra equipment: You've been in the field for two hours, and are getting some great consumer insights. Then suddenly, in the midst of one of your last interviews, you hear the camera man say "Oh no." You've just run out of tapes, or space on your camera's memory card. To avoid this scenario, always make sure your videographer packs extras. The same goes for batteries for the camera and microphone. The basic rule is, if the shoot would fail without it, it's a good idea to have a spare or a backup for that critical item.

One At A Time: Choosing From A Group

During your time on the street, you may encounter a group of people that either ask to be interviewed, or that seem to fit the target audience you're after. The question then becomes: who in that group do you interview? If your objectives target a certain age group, gender, or appearance, this question is more easily answered. But when you're interviewing a general consumer audience, or cannot determine which one person fits your target best, look for the person most eager to talk. Chances are, this person will be outgoing, comfortable in the interviewing scenario, or most interested in your topic. Regardless, choose your respondent quickly and decisively, or you may lose control over the group and therefore your interview.



"Am I going to be on TV?" ... "How is this going to be used?": Full Disclosure

These questions, and others like them, are commonplace following a man-on-the-street interview. As with all marketing research projects, full disclosure is critical. After every Street SessionsSM interview, we tell respondents how their image and opinions will be used, and require them to sign a video release form. If they decline to sign the form, their image will not be used in the client deliverable, or in any other manner.

Back at the Office

It's important to plan for the post-production phase back at the office that will follow your interviewing, and ultimately create impactful deliverables for your clients. You will have hours of raw video at hand that can be useful in its own right, but will also have to be edited into other forms and formats in order to be presentation-ready. If you're not going to hire a professional

video editor, adhering to the following steps will make your video editing efficient and effective.

The first key post-production decision occurs prior to interviewing. Before hitting the streets, it's best to decide on a video file format and video editing software that fits your equipment and level of technical knowledge, to avoid time wasted back at the office troubleshooting. Video file formats are important not only for the software you use, but also for your method of sharing video with your clients. Clients using PC's are more likely to need an MPEG or WMV file, while those on Macs are more apt to desire an MOV file. Luckily, Microsoft PowerPoint accepts most commonly used video file formats; however, posting a video to a website could call for a Flash video file (.flv), which could require an extra converter, since some video editing programs do not support this file format.

In terms of software, the products are many, ranging in price and sophistication. Windows MovieMaker comes with Windows, and is among the more simple video editing programs. On Macs, iMovie is the default video editing software, and is a bit more flexible than MovieMaker. If you desire a more advanced piece of video editing software, Adobe's Final Cut program is a higher-end approach.

Lastly, be sure to budget time for the video editing process – it can take a while to work through hours of raw footage to find the choice segments you want to share with your client. In addition, it's useful to dedicate a video editor to cut the footage down. If there is budget for it, it may be worthwhile to consider hiring a professional editor.

Expanding Your Research to the Street

Man-on-the-street interviews can offer an unparalleled glimpse into consumer reactions, captured in the real-time dynamic of conversation with the interviewer. Utilizing this technique requires planning and attention to detail, but structurally is less involved than many other types of qualitative research. It can be rapidly deployed to get a quick hit of feedback for any topic of concern to the client, and it can be easily fine-tuned to elicit more precisely the information a client is looking for. By following the guidelines we outline here, researchers will find this technique to be an insightful addition to other qualitative approaches.

We hope the tips and strategies discussed here will aid you in your own street interviews. The scenarios we describe, and many others like them, will undoubtedly come up; handling them smoothly and quickly will help ensure that your next man-on-the-street project is a successful one. We also welcome questions on the subject of man-on-the-street interviewing. If you'd like to know more about this qualitative technique, or want to know more about Clarion Research Street SessionsSM, you can reach us for more information at 212-664-1100 or via email to Jamie Stenziano at jamie.stenziano@clarionresearch.com.

