

PSYCHOLOGY GROUP: IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The advancement of fundamental understanding of the consumer, his needs and his behaviour has been identified as the principal aim of the psychology group's work (1). In order to meet the objectives set for this research access to human subjects is necessary and it has been suggested that the establishment of a pool of local extra-mural volunteers is, for a large part of the group's work, the most appropriate means to this end (2). It is clear that the usefulness of in-house subjects is severely limited and that the alternative of large scale survey research should be properly reserved for the most appropriate applications. It has also been proposed (3) that experimental research involving external subjects should be undertaken away from G.R. & D.C. in premises more suited to the type of research envisaged and offering easier access. Such an innovation would also enable a more rapid throughput of projects since the proposal includes a nett expansion of space available to the group.

In support of these proposals, this note presents a projection of the group's activities and details the utilization of external subjects and off-site accommodation for the foreseeable future.

The Current Situation

To date, all of the group's research has been undertaken using volunteers drawn from the staff of G.R. & D.C. The series of experiments on odour and taint (4, 5) required up to thirty participants and our recent taint assessment for Project GYPSY involved a further sixteen persons each for

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thirty-two sessions. Our study of repertory grid in relation to pack design, cigarette, and smoker characteristics (6) involved thirty people each for up to two-and-a-half hours. The current experiment, investigating the attribution of personality characteristics by smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers, each of the other (7), requires forty people, each for two hours.

For the interactive research methods which we employ (grid techniques, small group interviews, etc.) rate of subject throughput is, under current arrangements, lower than we would like. It is possible to "process" only one individual, or one group, at a time although we have the manpower to run two, or even three, sessions concurrently. However long data collection takes, our faith in the generalisability of results must be diminished by an awareness of the atypical nature of our in-house subject samples. The conjoint proposals to recruit an external pool of subjects and to relocate the group in off-site accommodation are seen as attempts to improve both the quality of our data and the rate of its acquisition.

The Immediate Future

Recent discussions within G.R. & D.C. have sought to define the most appropriate research programme for the group within the outline already presented (1). It is clear that any research in which we engage will require activity at three levels: using in-house subjects for pre-test and method validation; large scale survey research to establish population norms and trends; and experimental studies requiring individual or small group methods, using well defined samples of subjects drawn from a normal population.

Specific proposals for a large scale survey are being

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prepared. Briefly, this study will be concerned with identifying modes of conflict resolution in dissonant smokers, attempting to correlate these modes with the smoker's general psychological profile, and relating the whole to the dimension of health concern. This will be a first attempt at segmentation of the market in terms of conflict, health and desired product attributes. In addition the feasibility of developing a covert index of concern for health will be investigated. It will be our intention to support such a quantitative study with local qualitative research, using people drawn from a local pool of subjects. In support of this programme we would also seek to repeat our studies of image concepts and personality attribution with a more representative sample. In these examples, in-house subjects have already served their useful purpose.

Thus, we can expect to employ an external sample of subjects immediately on three occasions: one qualitative study, supporting a quantitative survey, and on two occasions using already pre-tested procedures. In respect of the qualitative support exercise we would expect to interview fifty subjects for up to one hour; each replication of the repertory grid would require one hundred subject-hours. We can therefore identify an immediate requirement for 250 subject-hours of data collection. At ten interactions per week this translates into 25 man-weeks of staff involvement. Doubling the number of rooms available would reduce this to nearer 15 weeks - a much more reasonable annual target in view of the additional input from survey and in-house sources.

Consideration of these pending activities confirms, we believe, a sufficient level of utilization for both the external subject pool and off-site accommodation for the period January 1, 1979 through October, 1979.

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Beyond 1979

There is no reason to believe that any gross changes in the basic requirements for subjects or appropriate accommodation will take place within the foreseeable future. It is not possible, however, to detail requirements beyond 1979 since the specific direction of research will be dependent upon the outcome of current work. It is likely that similar levels of utilization will obtain in whatever particular activities we become engaged. Qualitative work will always precede large scale survey research and laboratory studies will always require appropriate samples of subjects. Given suitable off-site accommodation, speed of progress will be limited only by the size of the research group.

In broad outline we would expect to commission one major survey each year and to undertake a series of about four laboratory studies in a full year, involving extra-mural subjects. In addition, we would continue to use in-house subjects from time to time in the early stages of method development. The projected pattern of activity for 1978-79 is summarised below:

<u>Type of Research</u>	<u>Date Collection</u>	
	<u>No. of Studies</u>	<u>Total Weeks</u>
Survey	1	6
External Subjects	3	18
In-house Subjects	1	6

These estimates are based upon the assumption that off-site accommodation is available from January 1st, 1979. For the whole year, October 1979 through October 1980, we would expect the following pattern to obtain:

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<u>Type of Research</u>	<u>Data Collection</u>	
	<u>No. of Studies</u>	<u>Total Weeks</u>
Survey	1	8
External Subjects	4	24
In-house Subjects	2	10

This pattern is likely to be typical for subsequent years. The expected distribution of activities to October 1979 is suggested in the appended Figure. In order to achieve the target throughput for the external subjects, it has been assumed that facilities enable parallel processing of subjects by two group members. From January 1st to September 30th, it is projected that 16 weeks would be available for other activities (see below). A similar maximum figure will obtain for subsequent full years.

Other Studies

The availability of an external pool of subjects and off-site facilities can be of benefit to other groups within G.R. & D.C. Some aspects of the smoking behaviour programme, product evaluation, and especially activities related to acceptability and description of low delivery products come readily to mind. Recently, B. & W. have found it beneficial to undertake face-to-face debriefing of consumers engaged in product testing trials, using their Du Pont Circle facility. The establishment of a similar rendezvous here would enable such procedures to be implemented in relation to our own product development activities.

Conclusion

It is our contention that the recruitment of an external

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pool of subjects is essential if the work of the psychology group is to achieve its objectives in an acceptable timespan. The acquisition of off-site accommodation is, we believe, recommended for reasons previously presented (3) and justified in view of the high level of utilization which is expected. The occasional use of the facilities by other groups within G.R. & D.C. further supports the proposal and extends the value of the acquisition.

References

- (1) Note "An Outline for Research in the Psychology Group", MO/JP/46J, 15th February, 1978
- (2) Note "The Provision of Human Subjects for Research in the Psychology Group", MO/LL/46J, 15th June, 1978
- (3) Note "External Accommodation for the Psychology Group", MO/JP/46J, 7th July, 1978
- (4) BAT Report No. RD.1575 Unclassified, 6.4.78
- (5) BAT Report No. RD.1600 Unclassified, 30.6.78
- (6) Note "Smoker Cognition and Personal Construct Methodology", RPF/CAP/46J, 11th November, 1977
- (7) Note "Comparative Personality Attributions of Smokers, Ex-Smokers and Non-Smokers", RPF/CAP/46J, 13th June, 1978

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