In search of excellence

The influence of Peter Cooper on qualitative research

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Peter Cooper founded Cooper Research & Marketing (CRAM). During his career he wrote many papers and gave frequent conference presentations worldwide, which have influenced the growth and diversification of qualitative research as practised now. He promoted a breadth of vision and eclecticism that enhanced the methods used today. Peter's influence was based on his breadth of knowledge, inventiveness, disrespect for the status quo, as well as his boldness, imagination and creativity. In this review of his contributions to qualitative research and marketing science, we focus on four key aspects – innovation, vision, professionalism and the achievements of qualitative research to bring about marketing successes.

Introduction

Peter Cooper was the founder and CEO of Cooper Research & Marketing (CRAM International). During his career he wrote around 45 papers and gave many conference presentations, which contributed greatly to the development and practice of qualitative research both in the UK and internationally.

From the early 1960s onwards he was one of the key people who broadened and enriched the nature of qualitative research from rather formal 'question and answer sessions' into in-depth explorations and analyses of perceptions, attitudes and feelings. He sought to root qualitative research in psychological and sociological knowledge and theories that would broaden its applications and uses, and to influence a repositioning of motivational research that had become dominated by psychoanalytic approaches that were increasingly discredited due to

their narrow focus on individual repressed motives and reliance on the inspirations of practitioners ('gurus'). While Peter drew inspiration from Freud and Jung's theories, his approach was also grounded in the empirical and social sciences.

Peter played a significant role in the growth and diversification of qualitative research over the next four decades, promoting a breadth of vision and eclecticism that enhanced the methods we use today. He focused on social influences as well as individual motivations (Imms 1999). In particular, he contributed to the divergence of techniques used to elicit information from consumers, under the title of 'Extended Creativity Groups'. He was also no stranger to statistical methods, having trained as a psychologist.

Peter's influence was based on many factors, but the most important were his breadth of knowledge, innovativeness and disrespect for the status quo, as well as his boldness, imaginativeness and creativity.

In this brief review of his contributions to qualitative research and marketing science, we have focused on four key (though interlocking) areas:

1. *Championing and enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of qualitative research*, which developed during his lifetime from a 'fringe activity' that was considered to be of questionable use for many potential market research clients (De Groot 1986) to a rigorous and valued approach that delivered marketing opportunities, inspiration and creativity for businesses and advertising agencies.
2. *Innovating and inspiring new techniques and tools for analysis.* He was fascinated by the workings of the 'consumer mind' and what influenced it. He created techniques that would get more deeply and thoroughly inside it. From his background in psychology, he introduced many new methods and refined older ones to increase the depth, insight and usefulness of qualitative research.
3. *Visionary – towards a more comprehensive understanding of consumer psychology.* Peter wanted qualitative research to be a marketing tool that would enable clients to engineer their brands and position them in the marketplace, in a predictable and reliable way, and to forge brand relationships by drawing on information about consumer behaviour, the effects of cultural influences and social pressures, and changing consumer values or motivations. He had a wide breadth of vision and picked up new ideas from many disparate sources. He was an outstanding communicator: bold, insightful and a catalyst to deeper

understandings by sharing his ideas and discoveries with clients and peers alike.

4. *Improving standards and professionalism.* He believed passionately in the value and usefulness of qualitative research for improving marketing. The goal of research was the understanding of consumers and finding solutions to meet the needs of marketing, not just consumer preferences. He instinctively identified with the needs and aspirations of his clients, and recognised the importance of thoroughness, responsibility and rigour, especially in a discipline that is based upon data that are individual, idiosyncratic, subjective and not easily open to inspection by others. This was especially needed in the analysis and reporting of findings to bring authority and credibility to the advice being given.

The following four sections, based on a comprehensive review of his publications, describe some of the key contributions that Peter made to the development of qualitative marketing research both in the UK and internationally.

Championing and enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of qual research

Peter's background and education led him to a degree in psychology, and a passion for the subject. After graduating at Manchester, he became a lecturer in the Psychology Department, where he conducted empirical research studies into (among other things) the psychology of gambling and risk taking. In the early 1960s, psychology was heavily orientated towards scientific values and the experimental method, which was present in his research on risk taking. Working with Professor John Cohen, they combined this with a rather philosophical approach to the analysis and reporting of results. However, during this period, Peter also studied the perceptions and feelings of children from different countries about war and peace, and worked as a freelance consultant for Ernest Dichter's London agency, the Motivational Research Centre, run by Bill Schlackman (Schlackman 1989, 1997).

What is particularly interesting is that Peter's second line of academic research, into children's attitudes towards war and peace, combined questionnaires with drawing pictures, which were then analysed qualitatively. Drawings were successfully used therapeutically in clinical psychology, but less so as a research tool for understanding ideas and

feelings – a method he later called 'psychodrawing', which proved very useful in many marketing research projects. These experiences led to an appreciation of what could be gained through both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the ways in which they provided complementary understandings.

When he came to full-time involvement in the business of marketing research, having established CRAM in the late 1960s with his then wife and partner Jackie French, Peter turned to qualitative research because of its flexibility, direct contact with the consumer, and more creative aspects for giving advice and consultancy on complex marketing issues. Nevertheless it was important to Peter that qualitative research should have rigour and integrity, derived from psychological approaches and interpretations, as a basis for confidence in the recommendations.

At that time in America (the 1950s and early 1960s), psychology was being used by the 'Mad Men' of Madison Avenue to devise advertising campaigns based on 'motivational research'. This had been pioneered in the 1950s by Ernest Dichter who worked at NBC where he gathered information from questionnaire studies of car purchasing for news programmes. However, Dichter came to the view that the 'real reasons' for car choices lay at deeper, more psychological and emotional levels. As a former student of psychoanalysis before the invasion of Austria at the start of the Second World War, he set up a business in studying the deeper needs and desires of buyers. However, the approach fell into disrepute through the use of unqualified researchers, over-claiming and exaggeration of the findings, and lack of rigour. Hence, 'motivational' research was rebranded (in the UK especially) as 'qualitative' research.

Peter believed qualitative research should have more integrity, and be rooted more in psychology than psychoanalysis. Research papers during the 1970s emphasised the reliability and validity of this approach. A conference presentation entitled 'Qualitative technology – new perspectives on measurement and meaning through qualitative research' left little room for doubt about its theme and intentions (Cooper & Branthwaite 1977). The doubts and issues of the day (regarding sample sizes that were suspected of being unrepresentative, unstructured procedures that lacked standardisation, and the potential for qualitative researchers to impose their own views in the collection and analysis of data) were met head on.

The paper showed that there are sound practical, statistical and theoretical reasons for the increasing use of qualitative research. It was demonstrated that:

- qualitative researchers had put their house in order since the days of motivational research
- social sciences and other empirical disciplines were turning to the greater depth of understanding that qualitative methods offered, even if this offended strict scientific methods
- pragmatically, qualitative research was being used increasingly, both in conjunction with surveys and to replace quantitative research
- qualitative research accounted for some 20% of all market research in the UK, and was the chief tool in fields like NPD, concept development and advertising
- some activities, such as media research, traditionally the province of quantification, were seeking the benefits of softer, more insightful qualitative data
- marketing managers were complaining about lack of imagination in interpreting survey data, preoccupation with computer technology and excessive numerical data that failed to produce actionable information
- there was a need for both qualitative and quantitative findings, and their complementary roles were clearly identified
- there is a trade-off statistically between sampling and non-sampling errors in that sampling error declines with increasing sample size (as in quant research), while non-sampling errors (such as questionnaire design, meaning of rating scales, monotony/fatigue, etc.) decrease with the more intensive interviewing techniques and facility for self-expression found in qualitative research.

This ground-breaking paper urged the use of psychological theory and models in the analysis of qualitative findings. Models of motivation, inhibitions, attitudes and behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 1972) phenomenology and participant observation (the forerunner of ethnography), and even 'co-creation' as we would know it now, were advocated as legitimate (if not essential) approaches.

Finally, and perhaps most convincingly to counter-balance this largely theoretical debate, the paper presented a specially commissioned experiment to compare findings and recommendations from independent quantitative (a hall test with 500 respondents) and qualitative (six group discussions) studies into five new designs for a Heinz product label. Designs were shown monadically to independent samples in the hall test, whereas all labels were shown in each group discussion. The findings from the two studies agreed closely in their recommendations, although the quantitative 'seemed' more reliable to the clients, and to give more

precise judgements and differentiations. However on the assessment of the imagery communicated, the qualitative approach produced greater discrimination and finer assessments of differences and nuances between the labels. The quantitative research indicated fewer differences and it was necessary to search the data for distinguishing features. It was also clear from these comparisons that the meaningful analysis of any data (qual or quant) is a creative, qualitative process.

A follow-up paper (Cooper & Branthwaite 1978) provided a more detailed analysis of the Heinz case study, that demonstrated what can be achieved by qualitative research relative to quantitative, which was taken as the 'gold standard' at that time. This emphasised the trade-off between the sampling and non-sampling errors that make qualitative research more effective than had been thought. Some of the reasons for this were: more sensitive question phrasing; responses in respondents' own terms that gave finer differentiations between alternative stimuli; checking on understanding of questions and meaning of responses through probing; and less monotony and fatigue than with questionnaires. In addition, interviewing could be adapted to individual respondents. Complex thinking and behaviour were elucidated, and private feelings, irrationalities and repressed thoughts revealed. These features are still as relevant, and potentially more important in today's marketing environment.

The qualitative and quantitative studies of the Heinz labels came to almost identical conclusions about the optimal label and the rank order of the other rejected ones, except that the two studies interchanged the positions of two adjacent, rejected labels. Previous to this demonstration, this comparability would have been neither credible nor accepted.

There were, however, some practical differences in the achievements of the two methods:

- There were few statistically significant differences between labels in the quant study.
- In the qual study, the image differences were more marked as a result of probing into user imagery and product personality projected by the labels. This may have hot-housed the differences, which is a familiar effect in qual research, but was an advantage here in discriminating between labels when there was a need to take a marketing decision.
- The qual report suggested a minor modification of the recommended label based on spontaneous reactions.
- It was noted in questionnaires filled in by company executives that there were differences in the way the reports were handled. The

qualitative was read straight through from beginning to end, and took less time. The quantitative report took more time comparing different tables with the conclusions, and checking questionnaire wording.

- This personal involvement and processing may be one reason why executives had greater confidence in the quant findings, whereas the qualitative report required more trust in the researcher. This was seen as a good reason to encourage clients to view qualitative research and experience it for themselves.

- The cost of the quantitative study was approximately twice that of the qualitative study, whereas executives estimated the quant was worth 1.3 times more than the qual report, so it could be argued that qualitative research was better value for money!

Innovating and inspiring techniques and analysis

Peter brought enormous energy, imagination and inspiration to almost any topic. He had a great ability to enthuse the people with whom he came into contact, even in casual conversations.

When Peter first became involved in market research, his first paper in this field, while still a lecturer at Manchester University, introduced the concept of Begrudging (Cooper 1964), which grasped the importance of subjective values in decision making and risk taking. This might be considered as one of the first papers on economic psychology. The hypothesis was based on an insight gained from talking with consumers, which led him to the idea that it was not simply the cost of goods that influenced purchasing (as measured by the 'buy response curve') but also subjective perceptions about value for money:

> The value of the same amount of money to the same buyer varies according to what it is spent on. Buyers do not obey the rules of addition and subtraction which economic logic might demand of them, but rely instead on some personal and often anomalous logic. (p. 2)

Peter developed and popularised many new approaches and techniques in the practice of qualitative research. Such techniques were not invented for their own sake, nor simply to create more drama for clients watching in the viewing room. They had a strong underlying rationale and purpose.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the scope and applications of qualitative research expanded from its traditional uses for preliminary exploration, sorting and screening ideas to new and more complex applications as advertising and branding became less telling, more

sophisticated and more inspirational. To respond to these growing demands, a new understanding was needed of the ways in which qualitative interviews worked, and what they could potentially deliver to generate greater depth and insight. This gave rise to a new perspective on the nature, dynamics and processes involved in consumer interviews (Cooper & Branthwaite 1977).

At the surface level of social interactions and interviewing, the information exchanged consists of superficial attitudes and ideas that are presented for public consumption, communicable through language and which the informant is fully conscious about sharing – things we would tell even to strangers. Theoretically, this level is accessible via structured interviewing to gain knowledge of recent purchases, and awareness of TV ads for example, although such data is known in some instances to suffer from various biases and distortions, arising mainly from cognitive failings, but also emotional censoring.

As we go deeper into the consumer mind (i.e. further down the hierarchy in Figure 1), obtaining responses by structured interviewing becomes progressively more difficult, and responses to qualitative interviewing techniques are more reliable because they are better able to cope with private feelings, irrationalities, 'illogical' behaviour or repressed attitudes. An essential feature is the level of trust developed between interviewer

			Layer	Method	Output
Public	Communicable	Accessible	Spontaneous	Simple questioning	Immediate, spontaneous Top-of-mind needs
			Reasoned, conventional	Asking Discussing	Justifications, explanations Rational wants
			Pre-conscious	Pressing Reminding	Detailed elaborations/ introspections
Private			Concealed, personal	Sympathetic probing, empathy Elicitation Building trust	Personal admissions, private wants
	Incommunicable	Inaccess-ible	Intuitive imagination Fantasy	Play, drama, collage Non-verbal processes	Symbols, metaphors Latent wants
			Personal unconscious Collective unconscious	Projective approaches Semiotic analyses	Repressed wishes Hidden needs Archetypal needs

Figure 1 Layers of consciousness

and respondents, and permission or support may be needed to express thoughts and feelings without facing social or personal censorship.

At these deeper levels, interviewing benefits from the use of specialised techniques, including projective approaches and non-verbal modes of expression. Peter experimented with new ways of getting richer, deeper and more emotive responses from consumers, based on the methods of clinical psychology and his experience with children drawing pictures of 'war' and 'peace' to express their inner feelings and perceptions without the use of language. Psychodrawings became one tool for doing this.

Peter and his colleagues at CRAM used psychodrawings and psycho-drama extensively with a wide range of respondents and research topics. This led to particularly profound insights in a series of projects to change the brand positioning of Guinness, with great effect and success (Broadbent & Cooper 1986). Extended creativity groups (ECGs), which were developed and registered by CRAM, lasted three to four hours and used a range of verbal and non-verbal techniques to investigate brand values and associations for Guinness users and potential users:

- imagery of users and non-users (mime, bubble picture completion)
- brand imagery (metaphors, analogies)
- brand symbolism (psychodrawings, collages, clay modelling).

Some psychodrawings became the direct inspiration behind the advertising campaign that followed the research. These ECGs were filmed by the BBC and featured in a *QED* programme that raised awareness among market researchers, marketing executives and consumers about qualitative research (or 'focus group') methods, and the way products and brands are marketed.

The findings indicated that existing and potential consumers had a complex relationship with Guinness which fascinated them. This derived from the product associations and imagery, as well as past advertising – the dark liquid, the white head that emerges from the blackness in a fascinating, organic process of settling, from which the whiteness comes to the surface while the darker elements fall towards the bottom. Respondents related this core imagery to its satisfying, nourishing values, which at an inner level relate to fertility and archetypal myths of power and energy. On the other hand, the drink is challenging – bitter but dark and strong.

In the analysis, the inner and outer gratifications of product and brand were likened to an egg. The yolk was the inner heart and soul – its meanings and values. The shell was its public and social imagery. However, these two
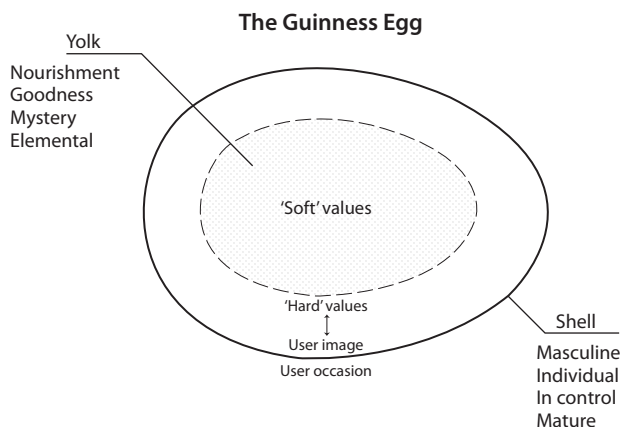
The Guinness Egg

Yolk

Nourishment
Goodness
Mystery
Elemental

'Soft' values

'Hard' values
↕
User image
User occasion

Shell

Masculine
Individual
In control
Mature

Figure 2 Egg and yolk

aspects did not necessarily harmonise. For Guinness, at its deepest levels, the yolk was symbolically female (nourishment, goodness, mysterious, elemental): 'The product itself is an adult transformation of the original comforting liquid [from the mother] being still, rich and creamy with a playful white head, but also black, bitter' (p. 8).

The shell is masculine, individual, mature and in control. In essence, Guinness had a split personality. To meet the needs of different Guinness drinkers, two advertising campaigns were required to re-establish (1) the Guinness core values as reasons to drink, and (2) address the shell values as permission to drink.

International qualitative research was another important area of innovation where Peter was again at the forefront, conducting parallel research in several countries on the same project, and using common tools to compare reactions across markets. Other research companies, including John and Mary Goodyear's MBL, were also active in this field (Goodyear 1971). Peter approached this task not only at a practical level but also from a theoretical stance that explored the problems, issues, needs for standardisation and best methods to produce comparability across countries in both the conduct of the research and the analysis. He threw himself into honing the tools needed, and educating the researchers with whom he collaborated. These principles of international qualitative research were drawn together over the years in several conference presentations and papers (e.g. Cooper 1990, 2000).

The task of international qualitative research was not just to check out whether the likes and dislikes of a product or concept were the same across countries, but to look for synergy in consumer needs and motivations.
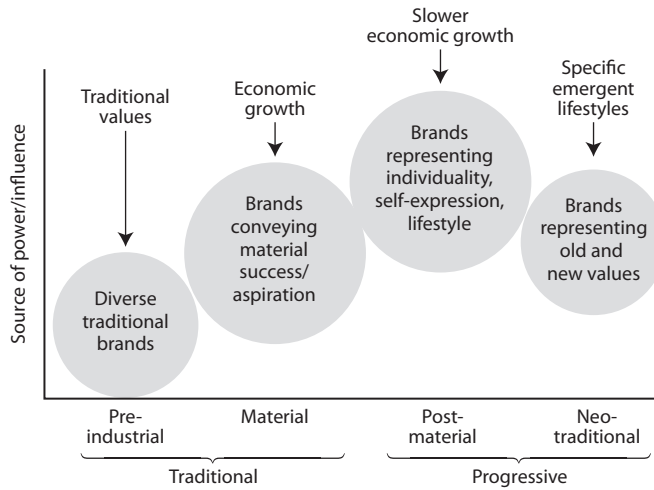
Figure 3 Cultural stages of development (Hanby & Cooper 1990)

International brand marketing (in companies such as Guinness, United Distillers and Unilever) required an integrated understanding of the essence of their brands and the essence of local cultures (Hanby & Cooper 1990). A working model was developed of cultural change and branding that enabled local and central management to attain a common understanding and vision for brand growth.

Peter emphasised that it was essential for researchers not just to use standardised tools and techniques (such as projective tests) but also to explore 'the far reaches of human values, the labyrinths of culture, the mundanities, joys and tragedies of everyday life from around the world' (Cooper 2000, p.253); Peter was seldom given to understatement or underplaying a point of view! He believed that international business looked to multi-country qualitative research to provide more than an in-depth understanding of consumers, but also a grasp of the relationships that exist between cultures and business environments.

Guinness tested-out both quantitative and qualitative approaches to studying international markets, and concluded that only qualitative research, in combination with multi-disciplinary sources on cultural background, was capable of delivering the analysis, interpretation and depth of insight that would provide the conceptual common language for management.

The practical guidelines he drew for the conduct and analysis of international research projects were as follows:

- To collaborate in each country with researchers who have deep experience of the cultural context and marketing environment, as well as the psychology of the individual in that society.
- Ideally, researchers should have a broadness of mind, sensitivity and experience of various cultures to contextualise and translate the findings so they are meaningful to clients in very different places. They should not be travelling linguists sent abroad to replicate UK interviewing.
- The researcher should search for commonalities while respecting inherent differences in traditions, customs, social roles and relationships, as well as the marketing and advertising environments.
- Avoid over-emphasising differences for reasons of national pride and desires to preserve uniqueness.
- A need for mutual understanding and shared terminology in interpreting the findings. For example, in what a brand is and how advertising works. This is where the (graphic) models, of which Peter was so fond, played their part.
- Use techniques in interviewing (including non-verbal ones) that researchers are familiar with or have been trained in that will help to standardise comparisons across countries.
- Reporting benefits from researchers meeting together across markets to discuss and integrate findings.
- Recognition of 'trans-culturalism' in what is shared between countries and from western media that has created awareness and had a harmonising influence between countries, especially in areas of technology, mass media and internet communications.

Based on these guidelines, the analysis of these multi-country studies brought about a richer understanding of the dynamics of marketing and the sophistication of consumers across different parts of the world (Hanby & Cooper 1990; Cooper 1997). It transpired that there were common trends, and emerging markets were developing in similar ways, although some countries seemed to 'leap-frog' particular stages. Backlash effects were also discovered where consumer sectors reacted to international brand marketing with a desire to combine more traditional values and icons into the brand essence.

Another, later, innovation for getting inside the consumer mind (or 'black box' as Peter liked to refer to it) was expounded in two papers that focused further on the importance of non-verbal images and sensations in responding to advertising and choosing brands (Branthwaite & Cooper

2001; Cooper & Branthwaite 2003). This was prompted by developments in neuro-psychology and the ways in which consumers were increasingly looking at brands in terms of the 'experience' that was offered (either real or imaginary) from Levi's jeans, Nike Stores and Citroën cars to Starbucks coffee, and so on. Sensations were becoming more central to the impressions and benefits of brands.

Synaesthesia offered a means of exploring these sensations emanating from experiential brands, in order to heighten the brand experience so they remain in tune with their market, or find new opportunities to exploit.

Synaesthesia is a specific psychological, and neurological mechanism of perception and experiencing. Derived from the Greek '*syn*' (alike, together with) and '*aesthesis*' (sensation), synaesthesia literally means 'experiencing together', where sensations in one modality also give rise to experiences in another different sensory channel. That is, one sensory experience or mental image is expressed or felt in terms of another. For example, listening to music may give rise to sensations of colour, touch, taste, or images and patterns. Visual forms can be experienced as sounds and taste, and so on. Peter was very fond of the passage in Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* that conveyed very picturesquely the nature of synaesthesia:

> No sooner has the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate (he was eating a 'Madeleine' with tea) than a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses with no suggestion of its origin … Suddenly, the memory revealed itself. The taste was of a little piece of Madeleine which on Sunday mornings my Aunt used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea. Immediately, the old grey house on the street where her room was, rose up like a stage set and the entire town, with its people and houses … sprang into being from my cup of tea.

Without some universal experience of synaesthesia, it is unlikely that people would resonate with the writer's experience, or appreciate metaphors and images, whether in literature, art or advertising. Consumers are often unaware of their sensory experiences. Nevertheless these unconscious background sensations condition our attitudes and feelings towards the products and brands we use. So it is important to surface them through verbal and non-verbal elicitation techniques. Moreover, consumers normally have a limited vocabulary to describe sensory experiences, especially beyond the visual world. Using techniques based on synaesthesia can identify the product benefits, and assist in understanding well-known effects relating to products:

- Sensations, particularly of taste and smell, are highly suggestible. Synaesthesia accounts for the influence of words and images on packaging and in advertising. These raise expectations of the product experience, which are then inferred and perceived in the use of the product.
- There is a widely recognised gap between expert or blender/flavourist language, which is trained and standardised, and the naïve consumer language, which is subjective, idiosyncratic, limited and variable. Synaesthesia can lead to a shared language between the public and the experts through sensory metaphors and expressive language.

This approach provided a richer, fuller view of the nature of brands. There are now research tools based on synaesthesia, which are intensely rich and extensive, to investigate 'experiential brands' using elicitation or projective techniques. Quantification can also be achieved through the use of standardised stimuli and response sets.
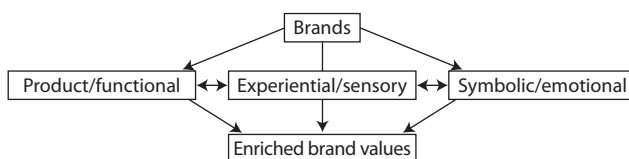

Figure 4 Brand symbiosis revised

Visionary – towards a more comprehensive understanding of consumer psychology

Peter was fascinated by both the workings of the 'consumer mind' and the ways in which consumer perceptions and relationships with brands developed and became more complex. Brands, together with their advertising, appeared to him as having an existence and a life of their own that consumers relate to.

This interest led in 1983 to a ground-breaking paper, 'Humanistic advertising', written with Judie Lannon, based on the question 'What do people do with advertising?' in place of the more traditional question 'What does advertising do to people?' (Lannon & Cooper 1983). The traditional approach was based in a simplistic, linear model of cognition: awareness, comprehension, conviction, action. This positioned the viewer as a passive receiver, soaking up information and advice, with no understanding or allowance that people are active participants who assimilate and process information in a holistic, integrated fashion. The linear models assumed

a rational, ever-thoughtful consumer, and neglected the impulsive and emotional factors in watching ads (indulgence, reward, greed, etc.). There was no allowance made for dissonance reduction, or the defensive mechanisms people use to reduce effort and shield themselves from the trouble and complexity of changing their minds and giving up cherished beliefs and behaviour.

Lannon and Cooper created a new model, and fresh metaphors, for the way ads work that is self-evident to the everyday experience of researchers talking with consumers. This model reveals how people select, distort and create messages (or counter-messages) out of the advertising they see or hear, according to their personal perceptions and values. They aimed for an approach that would produce research that met the needs of creative advertising directors to devise better commercials by accurately capturing and reflecting, in an active and holistic way, how consumers really view ads.

Their paper also noted a difference between American and British advertising of the early 1980s. American advertising was based on a culture of information transmission and control, while British ads were embodied in shared myths and rituals that linked consumers and sellers in common understanding and aims. For example, After Eight chocolate ads use the myth of the upper class, while Hovis brown bread was based in the sentimentality and myth of the hard-working, simple but honest manual worker. UK viewers had become familiar with ad techniques and were aware of their purposes, but instead of dismissing this, they sought a symbiotic relationship with the brand. The article went so far as to express their belief that the success of some fmcg goods in the US was due to product excellence and *despite* the style of ads, which were resented by women who are sensitive to being hectored, patronised and portrayed in stereotyped roles and menial contexts.

This new, humanistic view of advertising positioned consumers as active participants in communication via ads, provided they were entertaining, interesting, relevant, and less patronising or insulting. (In passing, we might note that these characteristics were subsequently found to be strong predictors of advertising success in quantitative ad tests, such as Millward Brown's Link Test.)

The implications of this revolution in perspective from 'advertising using people' to 'people using advertising' was a return to a motivational rather than a mechanistic perspective. This new model of advertising effectiveness envisaged that consumers made a distinction between the ostensive, face value of brands and their latent or inherent symbolic and emotional values. This is the means by which a product is transformed into a brand
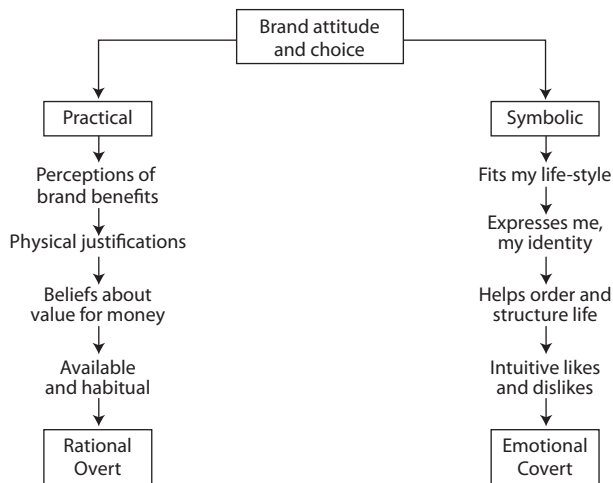
Figure 5 Brand attitude and choice

through the added values of the image and feelings it creates. The public and advertisers endow brands with associations and meanings over and above the sheer functional values, which is a kind of symbiosis consumers have with 'their' brands (Cooper 1979). The role of research that Peter advocated was to identify those latent, inherent values in a product's potential, and the creative task is to communicate those meanings in ways that motivate and reinforce usage.

This distinction between the ostensive and intrinsic properties of brands had been trailered by Harre (1979) as being inherent in all social interactions. We do things in everyday life for practical benefits and outcomes, but at the same time, the way we do them gives us reputation, style and social positioning in the eyes of others, although we may not always be conscious of this.

From the point of view of consumer research, the implications of this new outlook on advertising were as follows.

- Research should focus on the symbolic side of brands. This can be achieved best through qualitative research that is able to explore the deeper, idiosyncratic associations, thoughts and feelings of brand users, competitor users and non-users.
- This involves exploring intuitive feelings, associations and thoughts using the 'new qualitative' approaches to provide the subtlety and sensitivity needed to elucidate the intuitive and playful properties of a brand.

Lannon and Cooper's paper included a long list of suitable research techniques, which they openly shared with other researchers for better understanding brands and creating effective ads that differentiate brands from their competitors.

The mystique of brands and advertising was further developed in a series of thought-provoking papers on the brand as 'Trickster'. The Trickster was at the core of Peter's ideas about contemporary marketing and advertising. He welcomed the fun, teasing and bizarre elements of the Trickster archetype as being an essential part of converting modern consumers who entered into the spirit of ads and derived new benefits from brands.

These papers at the turn of the millennium investigated the Trickster's role in ads to entice, persuade and seduce the consumer (Cooper & Patterson 1999, 2000). They endorsed the clear distinction between the 'old world' view of advertising as sending messages, making claims and giving rational evidence to persuade, and the modern approach (practised by ad agencies in the UK since the mid-1980s). These papers drew attention to what was happening unwittingly in advertising culture, which had assumed a special place in the consumer's mind that had historically been occupied by mythical stories and folk tales. We know we are being sold to, but we enjoy our irrational selves and become accomplices to our own seduction. The Trickster is a way of seducing minds, but one that works in a symbiotic way by engaging the viewer and working with the consumer. The creativity and imagination bring interest, even excitement, to the brand by breaking rules and creating new associations.

The Trickster is found in all cultures. As an archetype in ancient mythology and modern marketing, the Trickster is not evil or malevolent, but a tease and a joker who in fun, friendly and imaginative ways brings humour and enjoyment into our lives. The Trickster operates in the interplay between reality and fantasy, seriousness and jest. Traditionally, the Trickster was often pictured as a court jester or hoaxer whose role was to be a 'delight maker' or divine joker. This appeals to a part of ourselves that secretly desires the fantastic or seductive, and brings escape from the routine and mundane. It is a role we can all take, and often do in our relations with children, friends and work colleagues, by breaking the rules or taboos, and stretching the mind. 'The Trickster is … necessary to achieve great advertising' (Cooper & Patterson 2001, p. 32).

Especially in the UK, we have come to treat ads (also packaging and other promotions) in this fashion. The archetypal Trickster is not a conman, nor are the tricks mere stunts, sleight of hand or gimmicks. The Trickster is 'at once moral and immoral, good and evil, earthly and divine, outrageous

and subtle, mischievous and primitive … but also wise, deceptive and wondrous' (p. 29) – which is not a bad description of modern advertising! Advertising viewers appreciate the realism of these dichotomies, as well as the satire, irony and self-mockery of the brand itself. We are not innocents or naïve in the consumption of ads, but engage with them as collaborators for the enjoyment, self-satisfaction and enrichment of our lives.

These changes in approach to advertising development supported the case for 'new qualitative' research, which relied more heavily on the use of projective and elicitation techniques:

- 'New qualitative technology' was more relevant to capture the nuances, subtleties and complex paradoxical feelings about the new advertising.
- It is needed to surface what the consumer brings to the advertising, and how they work with ads to create new fantasies and hidden pleasures, not just what the advertising does to the consumer.
- Projective techniques were an essential tool to surface the symbolism and changing relationships between viewers and advertising.
- Trickster ads are multifaceted (not a simple verbal monologue of the product's good points), being childish and adult, simple and complex, foolish but with a serious point (or vice versa), exaggerated yet enticing. Extended creativity groups (lasting three, or sometimes even four, hours) gave the scope to get to know consumers and the meanings and feelings they had for these ads.

In a completely different way that might seem surprising, Peter Cooper and John Pawle pioneered the use of 'new qualitative techniques' (such as word associations, bubble drawings and even collage construction) into online surveys, which were branded as 'QualiQuant' (Pawle & Cooper 2001).

This had several advantages that were particularly relevant to new product development, where there is constant pressure to shorten the innovative process and speed up the time taken to get new or updated products to market or launch new ad campaigns. Combining the statistical rigour of quantitative samples with the in-depth diagnostics provided by qualitative techniques to enable the fine-tuning of concepts and brand offering, enabled new product developments to be examined holistically and shorten the lead time to market. Segmentations can be produced based on statistical analyses of attitudes, and combined with more subtle information and insights from the projective pictures and word associations given by different segments.

Projective techniques were 'translated' for this use in the internet environment while also exploiting internet technology to make them more interesting and richer. Presentation of techniques such as bubble drawings, picture associations, collage creations, and even psychodrawings, has a 'natural fit' with the playful visual environment and the privacy for responding spontaneously to self-completion tasks. A case study of this QualiQuant approach can be found in Sharman, Pawle and Cooper (2003).

Improving standards and professionalism

The early practitioners of modern qualitative research based in the UK, including Mary Goodyear, Peter Sampson, Roy Langmaid, Wendy Gordon and Peter Cooper, had a keen interest in the rigour and standards of qualitative research.

The papers discussed earlier on qualitative technology (Cooper & Branthwaite 1977, 1978) also introduced an analytic model for how qualitative research should be conducted and analysed, which has had long-lasting influence in establishing the goals and values for outstanding quality in qualitative research. It demonstrated how different layers of consciousness required different approaches and techniques, and how interviewing and analysis should seek to obtain depth that goes beyond the superficial and common sense to produce richer, but equally valid and dependable insights (Cooper 1987a).

This approach was developed in later papers, with increasing sophistication (Cooper 2007). Peter abhorred pure reportage that simply summarised opinions expressed by respondents. For him, the analysis and exploration of the consumer mind in relation to the project objectives was at least as important and time-consuming (if not more so) than the interviewing.

Analysis should be based on respondents' cognitive and motivational processes, as well as personality factors, social psychological interactions, and cultural expectations and influences. It did not merely involve a routine cataloguing of remarks (as is sometimes done using computer software), but a dynamic 'content analysis' that searched for the underlying meanings, together with the connections and processes that tied together the remarks with the underlying beliefs, outlook and personality of consumers.

Analysis also searched out similarities and differences between consumers, to identify typologies or segmentations that would give more precision to marketing recommendations. The key questions were how did these consumers operate in the marketplace as individuals and groups, and

what were the perceptions, emotions, cultures and social influences that drove their choices. The clues lay in the nuances of similar and different reactions.

Peter believed that the analysis of qualitative research should bring out essential psychological truths (based on understanding and theory), and cope with the paradoxes of human ideas, feelings and desires. Ideally a report should provide a dynamic working model of how consumers' knowledge, perceptions and feelings about a brand interact to influence their relationship and behaviour towards different products in a market sector.

Peter's reports were full of analytic models to capture and convey the complex workings of the consumer mind that would give marketing managers an insight into the processes and connections that drive their sales and stimulate innovations.

When the use of qualitative research expanded rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s, proposals were put forward at an ESOMAR conference (Cooper & Patterson 1995) for enhancing the international standing
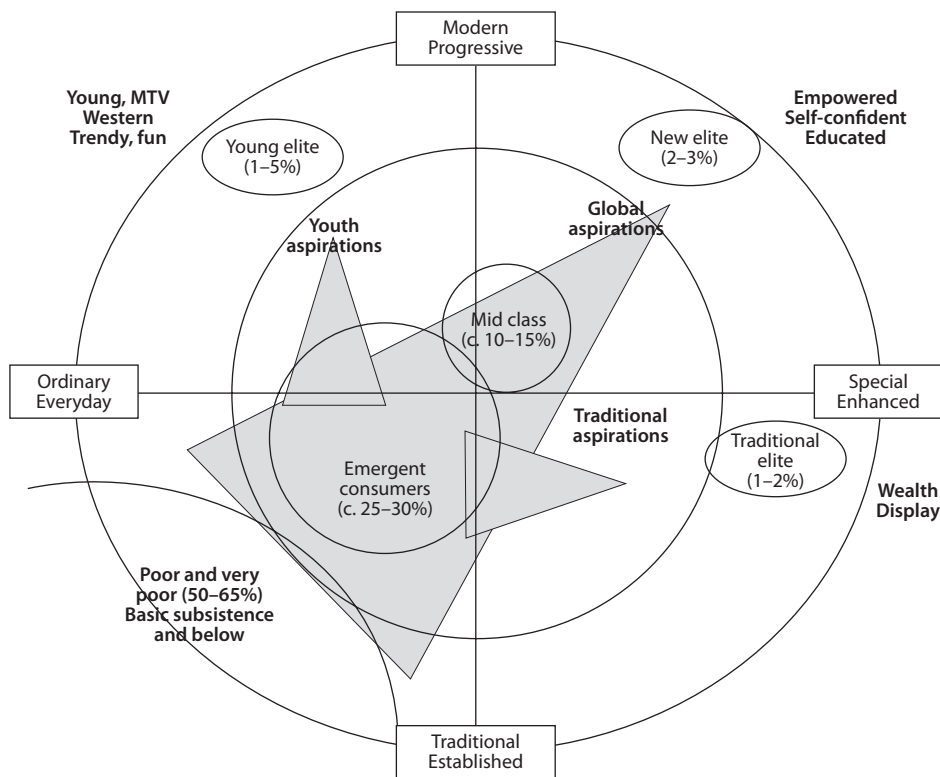

Figure 6 Exploring developing markets

and reputation of qualitative research. Qualitative research was now being used to make decisions in marketing, advertising and also social policies. These proposals called for the establishment of international organisations to serve the interests of professional qualitative researchers by protecting standards. This was important for the reputation of qualitative research companies worldwide to maintain confidence in the findings and recommendations.

Cooper and Patterson wanted to establish recognised principles for data collection and analysis in research while not putting a strait-jacket on the variety and richness of the techniques and methods that were used. Standards also needed to be set on respondent recruitment – an issue that remains problematic to this day (although some countries have made more progress in establishing country-wide databases of respondents).

Recruitment is important because of the smaller samples, so there is a greater dependence on interviewing the correct consumers. They also noted the differences between US or UK recruitment, which uses a screener, while the French approach gives the recruiter a list of the research objectives and a description of the type of respondents required. However, there appears (even now) to have been little investigation into the advantages of either approach.

Other key areas identified in the paper, where better standards should be set, included: training of researchers; conducting the research; reporting and international coordination processes.

This paper also recognised the difficulties in establishing and policing international standards when there are definite cultural differences in the nature of knowledge and ways of investigating human behaviour (e.g. scientific rigour vs empathy and subjectivity) and even the norms of interaction in groups.

However, more has been achieved over the years through training and international exchanges (promoted by organisations such as ESOMAR) rather than setting tight rules. Peter also encouraged improvements in the standards of qualitative research by liaising with researchers, companies and organisations around the world, and giving training courses and conference papers from America to Australia and Russia to Thailand.

Conclusion

Peter Cooper played a major role over the past 50 years in shaping the character and success of qualitative marketing research as a valued and highly effective approach to marketing intelligence. Through his input and

influence, qualitative research emanating from the UK differentiated itself by being more creative, insightful and humanistic compared with the more mechanistic approach in American marketing research (Cooper 1987b), and became a discipline in its own right based on social sciences including psychology, sociology and anthropology. In passing, it is worth noting that it was only seven years ago that the British Psychological Society set up a Qualitative Section.

Peter brought an enormous enthusiasm, creative mind and a wealth of ideas to the development of qualitative marketing research in the UK and internationally. His insights also benefited from his energy, ebullient personality and empathy with clients, colleagues and consumers with whom he worked.

Peter Cooper died in February 2010 at the age of 73. He was a Chartered Psychologist, Chartered Scientist, Fellow of the MRS, and also a regular contributor to *Admap*, as well as ESOMAR, MRS, AQR and ARF conferences.

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