



**Charterhouse Research**

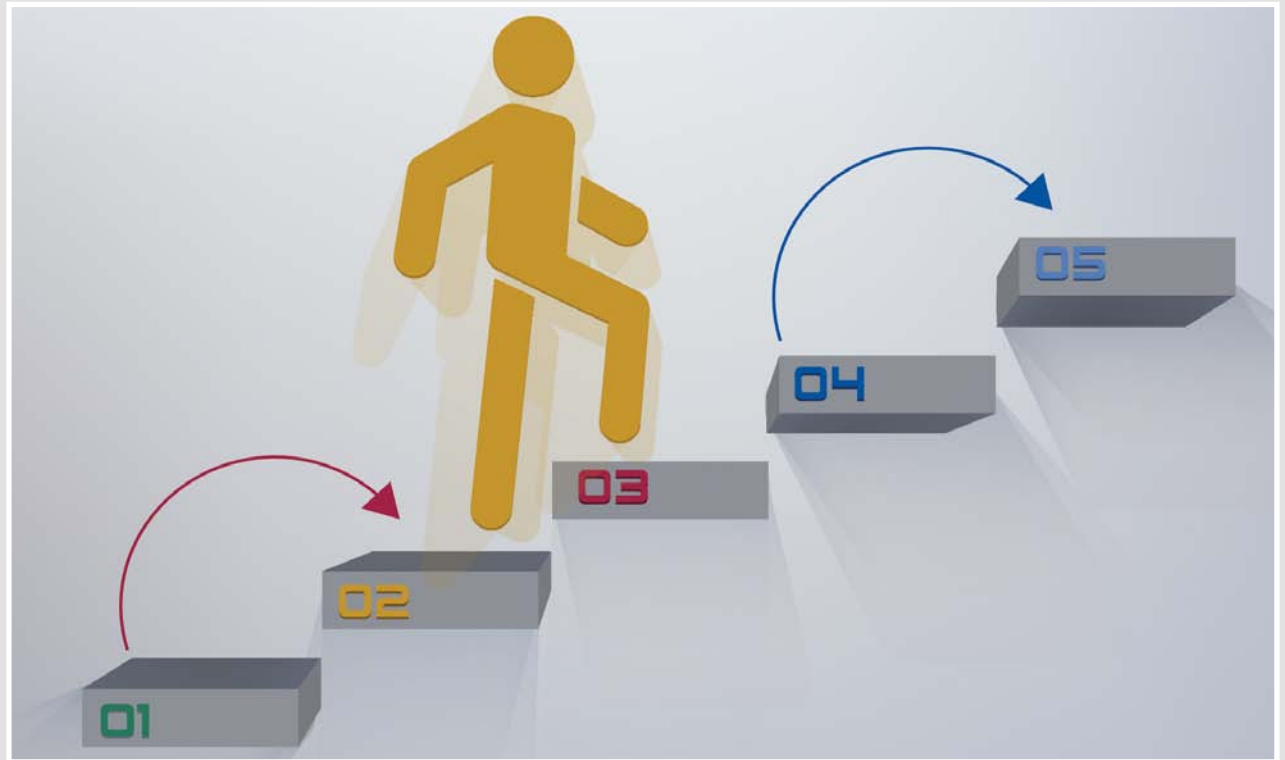


# Fundamentals of market research techniques

An e-book from  
Charterhouse Research



# Foreword



Charterhouse Research is pleased to bring you its *Fundamentals of market research techniques* guide.

The book is intended to be a basic step-by-step guide to market research techniques, designed for new-to-research client-side research personnel.

We are often asked by our clients if we can talk through some key principles with their research teams: for example, what makes a good brief? We hope you find our e-book a useful tool.

Best wishes from the Charterhouse Research team.

# A guide to market research techniques

An e-book from Charterhouse Research

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# 1 Briefing

## 1.1 The structure of an ideal research brief

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The ideal brief is broken down into the following sections:

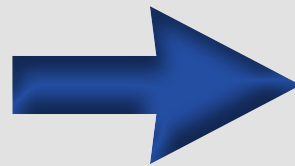


# Briefing

## 1.2 What are you trying to achieve from the research?

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**Rubbish in**



**Rubbish out**

From your briefing from your internal clients through to the briefing of the agency, avoid the rubbish in, rubbish out scenario. A good understanding of the objectives will drive the project's success.



### **Business objectives:**

- What is the ultimate aim to the business of the overall project?  
For example, bring in 10,000 new customers.



### **Research objectives:**

- What are we hoping to learn from the research?
  - What sort of questions are we hoping the research will answer?
- How do we intend to use the research results?

The business objectives are NOT the research objectives. Typically business objectives cover only one or two sentences in the written brief. The research objectives shown should be relatively broad areas and not a list of the questions to be asked in the discussion guide or questionnaire.

# Briefing

## 1.3 What do you already know?

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## Do not reinvent the wheel

Nahhh, I don't think it will work. Let's do something different... something smarter, something cooler!



### Before putting together a research brief, ask:

- What other information does the business have already that answers some of the objectives?
- What similar projects have you already undertaken?
- What other non-research information might answer the questions?

A review of existing information or data might result in a different type or size of project to fill the gaps. Avoids the 'so what/nothing new' final assessment.

# Briefing

## 1.4 Target research audience

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### Who?

- Who is the target audience? How are you defining them, e.g. qualifying criteria?
- Are there other stakeholders – i.e. staff, ex-customers, intermediaries – that need to be included?
- For business research, who within the target company will be the decision maker? Are there any significant opinion formers/influencers?

### How do we find them?

- Does the internal client have his/her own source of sample/database of customers/prospects/intermediaries?
- Have they been developing target lists, etc?
- Does the research agency need to free-find? Do we have any internal data (e.g. penetration figures that will help the agency free-find)?

### Any sub-groups of interest?

- Do we want to be able to identify any differences by sub-group (e.g. life stage, location, gender)?
- Any must-haves versus nice-to-haves?



# Briefing

## 1.5 Possible approach/methodology

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### **Not all methodologies will be appropriate and logistics might prevent you from doing what you ideally want to do**

#### **Objectives**

- Is exploratory research needed: will require qualitative method?
- Are robust numbers needed: will require quantitative research?

#### **Sample provision**

- Does the sample allow for a quantitative methodology; is the universe big enough?
- Does the sample allow for clustering for f2f groups, or cost-effective f2f depths?

#### **Use of stimulus**

- Do we need to show respondents something?
- Is a face-to-face methodology required – could we talk by phone/email/online?

#### **Timing**

- What is the ultimate deadline for results? Do you need topline, etc?
- Is it achievable with 'the best' methodology, or do we need to compromise?

#### **Cost**

- What is the budget available?
- Is 'the best' methodology achievable within budget, or do we need to compromise?



# Briefing

## 1.6 What to ask?

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The respondent **CANNOT** directly answer your business objective for you

They **CAN** answer questions that are relevant to them in language they can understand

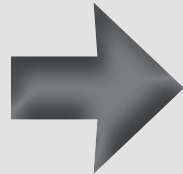


# Briefing

## 1.7 Other items to include in the brief

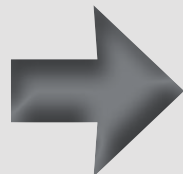
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**Deliverables/  
Output**



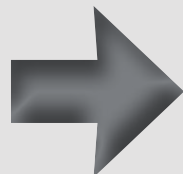
- **What outputs do you need?**
  - Who is going to use the feedback?
  - How are they going to use it?

**Timescale**



- **Are there any deadlines?**
  - Any timings of importance (e.g. communication mailing, product launch)

**Budget**



- **What is the ballpark budget?**
  - Any compromises?

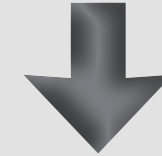
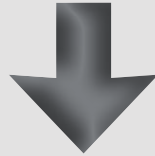
# 2 Research methods available and sampling considerations

## 2.1 When is market research appropriate and not appropriate?

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In the majority of cases, market research can add value where a better understanding of the market, people's motivations and attitudes can affect business

**Importantly, primary research is not always appropriate**



- When existing data is already available
- When you can't conduct the study effectively because:
  - There is insufficient budget
  - There is insufficient time
  - There is insufficient sample
- When results cannot be actioned

- Given strict rules set by the MRS, market research is inappropriate as a:
  - Lead generation exercise
  - Direct sales/marketing tool

# Research methods

## 2.2 What methodologies should be used?

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**Qualitative research** provides the 'why/how do people think?'

- Relatively small number of respondents
- Elicitation and exploration of the full range of reactions, ideas, thoughts, perceptions
  - the motivations, feelings and attitudes behind behaviour
- Not statistically reliable

**Quantitative research** provides the 'how many people think that way'

- Large number of respondents
- Allows for a better understanding of how many customers display the reactions/thoughts/ideas elicited at the qualitative stage
  - places these items in some sort of order/hierarchy
- Statistically reliable data



# Research methods

## 2.3 Qualitative Research – Why use it?

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### Objectives/purpose:

- To gain understanding of underlying reasons and motivations
- To provide insight into the background/context of a situation/problem, generating ideas/hypotheses to be tested in quantitative research
- To uncover trends in thought and opinion and help identify potential market segmentation
- Can be conducted as a standalone research project or part of a mixed methodology

### Samples:

- Typically small numbers, not designed to be statistically significant
- Samples are often structured with a minimum number of respondents in key quota groups (e.g. business size, industry sector, location, consumer socio demographics, etc.) rather than structured to be representative of the total market

### Data collection:

- Unstructured
- Semi structured
- Observation
- Participation



**Qualitative research is used to answer the Why? and How? questions**

# Research methods

## 2.4 Qualitative Research - Methods

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### Focus Groups

- ✓ Cross fertilisation of views and ideas:
  - Ideal for product/service development
- ✓ Relies on availability of clustered sample of relatively homogenous respondents
- ✗ Less suitable where information is sensitive
- ✗ Not ideal for understanding individual decision making



### F2F depth interviews

- ✓ Allows for detailed probing and individual granular feedback:
  - Ideal for investigating why customers have made a particular decision
  - In b2b environment opportunity to observe respondent at work/consumer at home
  - Interviews can be paired/triads
- ✗ Can be costly and time consuming to complete if respondents are not geographically clustered



### Tele-depth interviews

- ✓ Telephone widely used method of communication among b2b audiences and thus tele-depths work well
- ✓ Typically lower cost than f2f
- ✗ Interview length typically shorter than f2f interviews so less detailed feedback
- ✗ Difficult to establish the same level of respondent rapport gained in f2f depths



### Online forums

- ✓ Allows for cross fertilisation of views and ideas although level of detail gained is less than f2f focus groups
- ✓ Can be conducted over a number of days – ideal if some form of diary completion exercise is required
- ✗ Response rates to online forums are typically lower than f2f focus groups



### Mystery/sensitised shopping

- A form of participant observation which typically uses researchers (though sometimes research respondents, marketing staff, business customers, etc.) to act as a customer/prospect to monitor the quality of processes and procedures used in the delivery of a service

# Research methods

## 2.5 Quantitative Research - Methods

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### F2F Interviews

- ✓ Allows for stimulus material to be shown to respondents (e.g. product/service proposition, literature)
- ✓ Can administer a longer interview as interviewer/respondent rapport built
- ✗ Can be costly and time consuming to complete



### Telephone interviews

- ✓ Easy to interview geographically unclustered sample
- ✓ Typically lower cost than f2f interviews
- ✗ Cannot easily show stimulus material, though can email info/link for return call
- ✗ Interview typically shorter than f2f interviews
  - Widely used method of communication among b2b audiences



### Online interviews

- ✓ Can use multimedia/show stimulus
- ✓ Can be a quick and cheaper medium for high volumes, but not always so
- ✗ Open end responses are not probed, so answers often limited
- ✗ Response rates often lower than other mediums with interviewer contact
- ✗ Cannot be sure who has completed
  - Essentially self completion so needs to be relevant and engaging to get good response rate
  - Interview length should be kept to a minimum



### Postal interviews

- Not used as frequently
- ✓ Can be inserted with other marketing material
- ✗ Open ended responses un-probed, so answers often limited
  - Routing and other instructions clear enough for respondents to follow
- ✗ Response rates lower than other mediums with interviewer contact
  - Essentially self completion so need to be relevant and engaging to get good response rates
  - Interview lengths should be kept to a minimum

# Research methods

## 2.6 Types of quantitative study available

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### Individually commissioned custom studies

- One client
- Data confidential to client



### Syndicated studies

- Group of clients share findings – outputs are also not confidential
- Copyright remains property of agency
- Typically market studies – where competitor benchmarking required
- Often involve large sample sizes or hard-to-reach respondents or limited universes
- Costs are shared among subscribers so are often cost effective



### Omnibus studies

- Agency will interview a set number each week/month
- Questionnaires will have a set classification section
- Clients 'buy questions' in the questionnaire
- Omnibus studies can be a cheap and quick way of getting answers to a few quick questions. They are often used to generate data for PR purposes



# Research methods

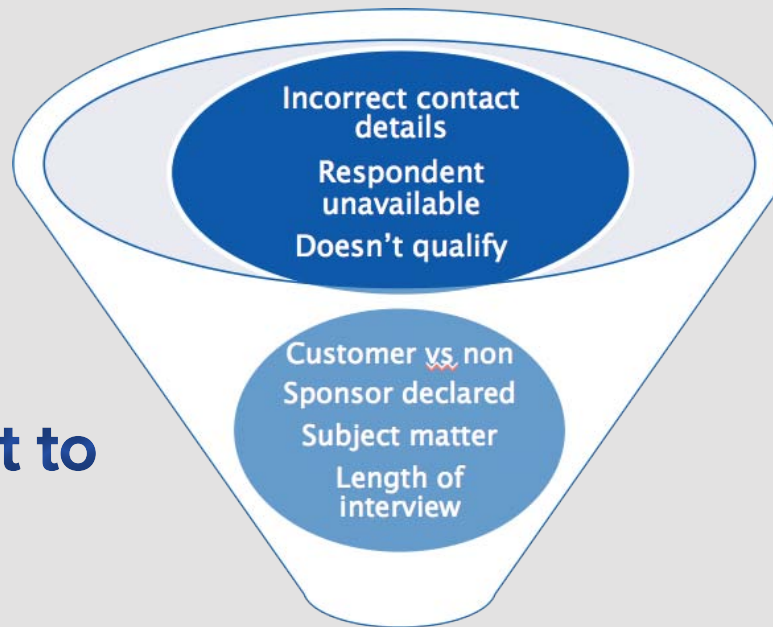
## 2.7 Sampling considerations

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### Not every contact will result in an interview

**Can't do it**  
e.g. away during fieldwork

**Doesn't want to**  
e.g. company policy



**Response rate**

#### **Putting customers first**

You need to consider how frequently you are approaching customers for their feedback and help.

Do you have a contact database so that you can manage how frequently you provide the same customer details for research?

# 3 Questionnaire and interviewing

## 3.1 Questionnaire design and ideal interview length

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### A good questionnaire should engage the respondent from the start

- ➔ Set the scene; tell them why research is being done and why their help is of value
- ➔ Be honest/transparent about the potential length of the interview
- ➔ Avoid repetitive questioning
- ➔ Keep a logical order from a respondent point of view
- ➔ Avoid excessive classification (do we have some of this information already, e.g. on database or sample?)
- ➔ Ensure respondents have a chance to 'have their say'



### Interviews vary dependent on:

- ➔ Respondent type
- ➔ Context/relevance
- ➔ Closeness of relationship
- ➔ Medium (f2f can be longer)

### The shorter the better. Max lengths:

- ➔ f2f: 30 mins
  - ➔ Phone: 20 mins
  - ➔ Online: 20 mins
- 
- An icon showing two stylized human figures, one yellow and one blue, sitting at a table. A red line represents the table between them.

# Questionnaire and interviewing

## 3.2 Questionnaire design – asking the right questions

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**Are we asking questions that can be answered:**



**Accurately – known facts**  
e.g. What was your age last birthday?



**Through memory**  
e.g. How many times in the last month have you done X?



**Through a best choice of options, none of which may correspond precisely to the respondent's view/behaviour**  
e.g. Which of these three statements comes closest to describing your view...?



**Through estimation, guesswork or even speculation**



# Questionnaire and interviewing

## 3.2.1 Questionnaire design – asking the right questions

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### Golden rules

- ➔ Is it possible for the respondent to answer (in business-to-business research for example, can a single informant answer all the different questions? Can a customer answer all questions if a financial advisor was used?)?
- ➔ Keep question concepts understandable with as little ambiguity as possible. A question should be interpretable in only one way
- ➔ Questions should be clear and phrased in language appropriate to the respondent's way of thinking/talking. Consider the appropriateness of question wording to the audience
- ➔ Only one question should be asked at a time – questions containing multiple concepts (e.g. How would you rate the accuracy and speed...?) rarely give sensible data
- ➔ Ensure that respondents are not led to a particular answer
- ➔ Take care with sensitive subject areas, often placing them towards the end
- ➔ Appropriate answer options should be available that reflect the reality of the range of responses. Give the opportunity to decline to answer a question
- ➔ Where appropriate include standard questions or questions used on previous research – it gives comparability across studies and can enhance the value of the data to the client
- ➔ Pilot if possible

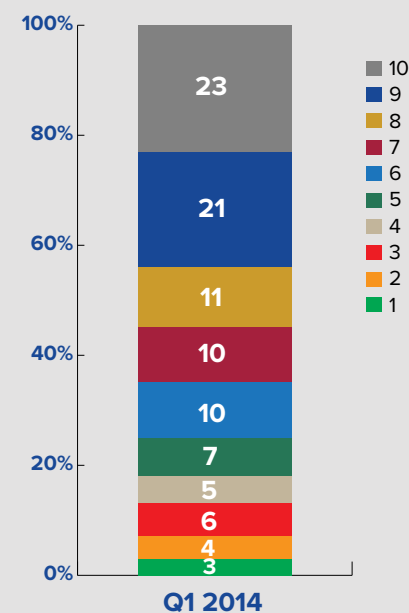
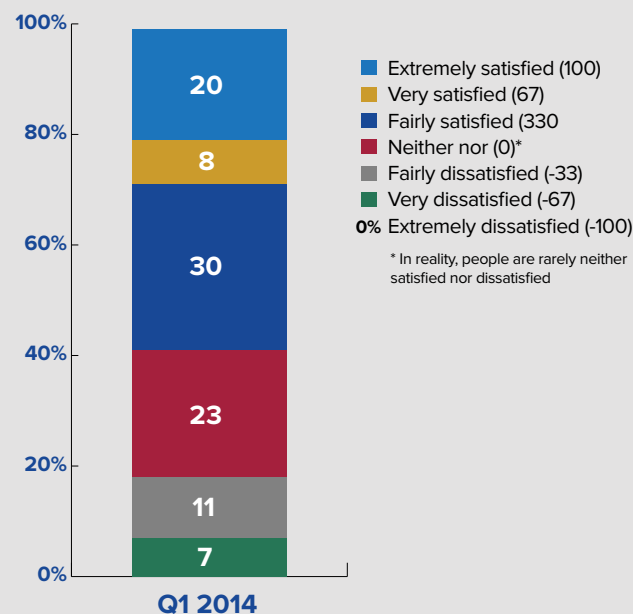
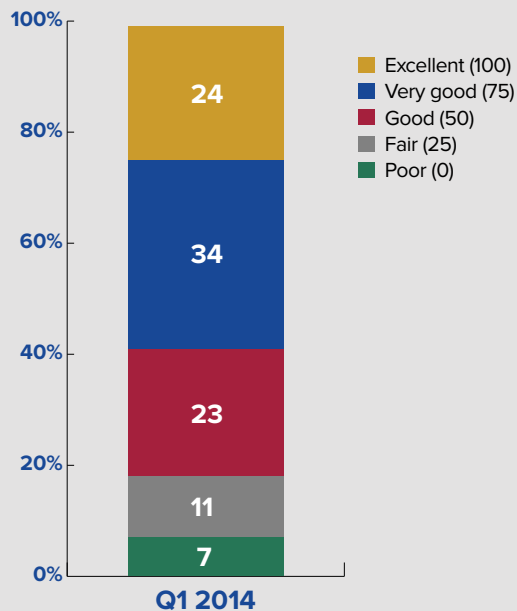
# Questionnaire and interviewing

## 3.3.1 Scales, nets, top box and mean scores

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### Scales

- Scales should be typically balanced. However, some argue that an unbalanced scale is suitable because:
  - good should be the midpoint as most providers would want to be better than good
  - customer experience should usually be positive so emphasis should be on moving from good
- Some researchers prefer 5 or 7 point verbal scales, or some prefer non-verbal scores out of 10. There is much debate about which is best and there is no real black and white answer. The best starting point is 'can the respondent answer the question?'
- It is generally good practice to keep scales consistent throughout a survey so respondents don't get confused



# Questionnaire and interviewing

## 3.3.2 Scales, nets, top box and mean scores

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### Net

- In pre-coded questions, you should have as many options as possible. Nets can be created at the tables stage if needed (linked to client needs/groupings)
- Open-ended questions are usually recorded verbatim and can be coded at a granular level (to provide for more detailed understanding) and also at a net level (to allow for easier measurement)

Reason for Complaint, SME YE Q1 2014 NETS Total

Errors/mistakes	24
Customer Service	12
Charges	9
Online banking	8
Branch Related	8
Poor service (operational)	7
Lending	7
International service	6
Poor communication	6
Relationship Manager	5
Money transmission	4
Lack interest in my business	3
Merchant services/own cards	2
Other	6

Errors re account transactions	4%
Errors re day to day admin	1%
One or two major errors/mistakes	<0.5%
Admin errors/they lose things	4%
Errors/problems with BACS payments	2%
Charges raised in error/clarity of charges	7%
Money taken from account on error/without authorisation/Paid into wrong account/Lost money/cheques paid into account	6%
Silly/minor errors/mistakes	1%

They had a big banking error around system failure

Fees charged in error

Transaction in the account, deduction made in error

# Questionnaire and interviewing

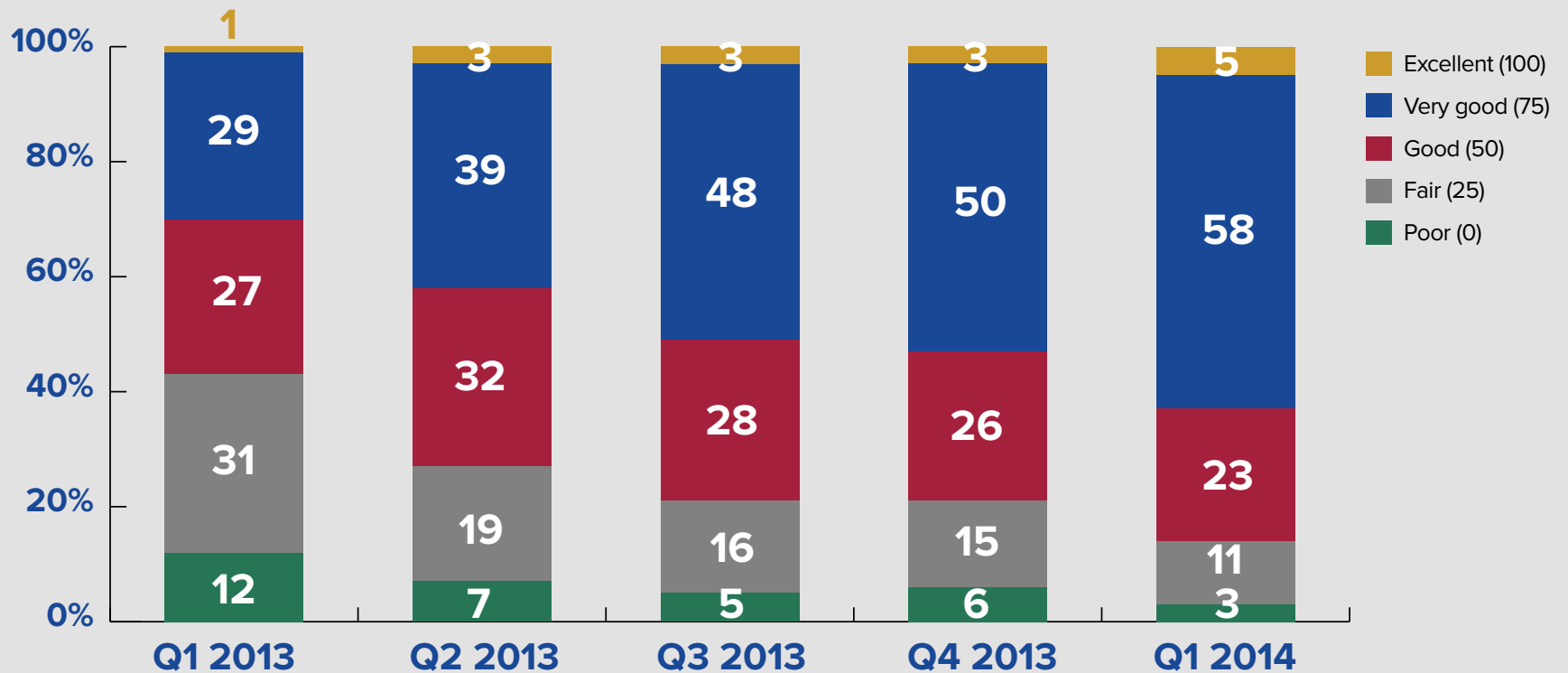
## 3.3.3 Scales, nets, top box and mean scores

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### Top box



- Top box scores are often used by clients to target improvement because:
  - Goals are often for best in class (i.e. better than good)
  - Staff better understand the lexicon 'Excellent/very good' rather than a mean score



# Questionnaire and interviewing

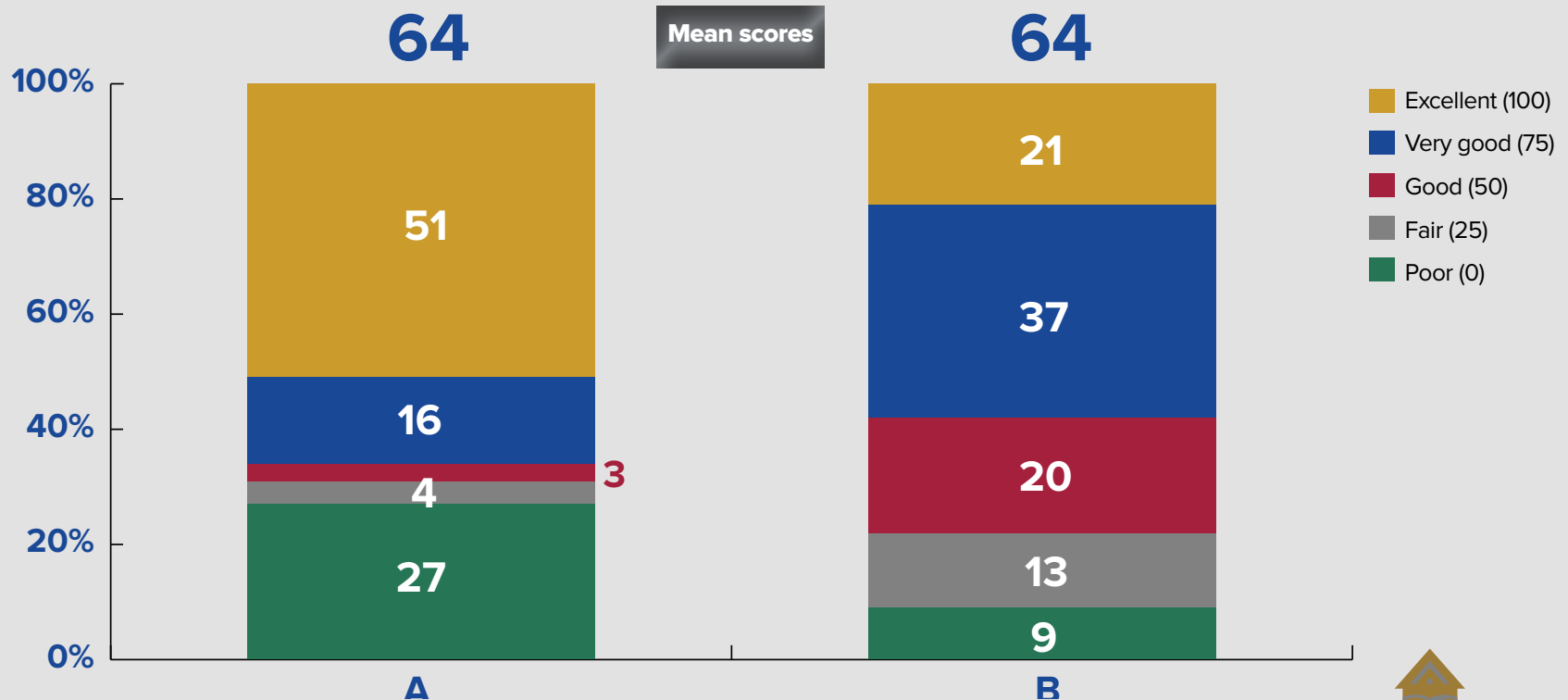
## 3.3.4 Scales, nets, top box and mean scores

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### Mean scores



- Mean scores are a calculated average score. They can be calculated on a scale used in the questionnaire or sometimes you can apply a value to the respondent's answer (e.g. excellent = 100, very good = 75, etc.)
- Mean scores take into account the full range of answers across the scale and provide a single figure, which can be useful for tracking change
- The danger with using mean scores is that they can hide polarised views





# 4 Tables, weighting, sig testing

## 4.1 How to check tables (agency side)

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**Any tables you receive from an agency should be fully checked. However, there may be occasions you have conducted in-house research. Therefore, when checking tables, for all tables you should:**

- ➔ Check that each table you have specified is in fact present
- ➔ Check that its title, base and side headings are correctly described and that there are no spelling errors
- ➔ Check against the hole count to ensure the base is correctly defined
- ➔ Check against the hole count to ensure that the side headings have been correctly defined. Ensure that they add up to 100% for single code questions and to at least 100% for multi-codes
- ➔ Check that the correct breaks have been applied to the table and that they are correctly labelled
- ➔ Refer to the hole count to check that the breaks have been correctly defined. Make sure that where appropriate they add across to 100%
- ➔ Check breaks against their corresponding table (to ensure for example that if frequency of use is used as a break it corresponds with the frequency of use table)

### **LOOK AT THE TABLE AND MAKE SURE IT MAKES SENSE**

- ➔ Where possible, check that the table corresponds with previous or subsequent tables (e.g. spontaneous awareness and prompted awareness equals total awareness)
- ➔ You should also check any data that is derived from the sample – ask data processing if you don't know where to find the sample information

# Tables, weighting, sig testing

## 4.2 How to read tables

Charterhouse UK Business Confidence Survey 2014 (Survey Period: March - May 2014) - BC questions

Table 1

BC1. How do you feel about the current health of the UK economy?

Base: All answering

	Main Bank								
	Total	Barclays	BoS	Clydesdale	Co-op	HSBC	Lloyds	NatWest	RBS
Significance Level: 95%		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
Unweighted base	2418	505	109	36	45	396	380	447	220
Weighted base	3492112	756284	113457	31782	82394	607424	611611	594570	198932
Extremely positive (100.0)	169038 5%	39112 5%	4162 4%	1265 4%	1666 2%	37149 6%	28129 5%	33697 6%	8732 4%
Fairly positive (75.0)	2035703 58%	438141 58%	78129 69%	11476 36%	39969 49%	375616 62%	364800 60%	334145 56%	106293 53%
Neither positive nor negative (50.0)	811006 23%	182378 24%	19647 17%	14807 47%	34556 42%	111678 18%	147131 24%	137720 23%	47546 24%
Fairly negative (25.0)	372843 11%	76507 10%	9605 8%	4234 13%	4670 6%	61996 10%	58627 10%	76585 13%	28254 14%
Extremely negative (0.0)	103523 3%	20145 3%	1914 2%	0 0%	1534 2%	20985 3%	12924 2%	12423 2%	8108 4%
<b>Net</b>									
Positive	2204741 63%	477253 63%	82291 73%	12740 40%	41635 51%	412765 68%	392929 64%	367842 62%	115025 58%
Negative	476365 14%	96652 13%	11519 10%	4234 13%	6204 8%	82981 14%	71551 12%	89008 15%	36362 18%
Mean score	62.8	63.2	66.1	57.7	60.8	64.2	63.8	62.6	60
Standard error	0.44	0.94	1.81	3.12	2.66	1.11	1.04	1.02	1.56

"Columns Tested: a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m - a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m,n,o - a,b,c,d,e,f - a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i - a,b - a,b,c,d"

\* small base

Survey Period: March - May 2014 Charterhouse Research

Question/title

Base

Cross break

Sub break

Total base

Filtered base

Column %

Side label

Mean score point

Net: excellent/very good

Mean score

Standard error (used in significance testing)

Significance testing

Significance testing at the 95% level is applied to the tables. Each column is given a letter and then compared against each other. The letters shown underneath denote where there is a statistically significant difference to other columns

Small base warning

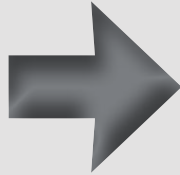
If a base is under 50 it will be denoted by a \*

# Tables, weighting, sig testing

## 4.3 Base sizes

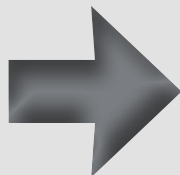
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### Small base sizes



- **We should always be cautious of trying to segment the sample too much as results will become unreliable**
  - As a rule of thumb, bases under 50 should be treated with caution; bases under 20 should be considered more as qualitative indicative findings
  - With specialist audiences (e.g. businesses) we are often restricted to using relatively small sample sizes (due to small universes and budget restrictions). Where this is the case, we look for supportive data within a data set and other client information, rather than relying purely on statistical observations

### Quotas



- **To enable a large enough base for analysis at a sub-group level we often set quotas. This can result in certain groups being over or under-represented at a total level. Thus, weighting is sometimes applied to make sure the results are truly representative of the whole market**

# Tables, weighting, sig testing

## 4.4 Weighting

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### Total respondents – 1,000

Quotas set

**Sector A –  
200 interviews**

20% of total

**Sector B –  
200 interviews**

20% of total

**Sector C –  
200 interviews**

20% of total

**Sector D –  
200 interviews**

20% of total

**Sector E –  
200 interviews**

20% of total

In reality (% of total universe)

**Sector A –  
32%**

**Sector B –  
25%**

**Sector C –  
16%**

**Sector D –  
8%**

**Sector E –  
19%**

Weighting factor

**Sector A – 1.6  
Weighted base =  
320**

**Sector B – 1.25  
Weighted base =  
250**

**Sector C – 0.8  
Weighted base =  
160**

**Sector D – 0.4  
Weighted base =  
80**

**Sector E – 0.95  
Weighted base =  
190**

# Tables, weighting, sig testing

## 4.5 Significance testing

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### Confidence intervals

- ➔ The confidence interval is the range around the survey percentage or mean score into which the true figure for the market as a whole is likely to fall
- ➔ The 95% confidence interval means there is a 95% chance the true figure is within this range – and only a 5% chance it is outside this range
- ➔ For percentages, the range is determined by the percentage and the sample base – the bigger the sample, the smaller the range
- ➔ For mean scores, the range is also affected by how clustered the scores are – the more clustered, the smaller the standard error, and the smaller the range
- ➔ The minimum significant difference between two percentages or mean scores is the difference required to be 95% sure there is a real difference in the market as a whole

PERCENTAGES			
Estimate of 95% confidence interval around survey percentages and minimum significant difference at 95% level between two percentages			
Actual	Sample A	Sample B	Difference
Percentage to be tested	50.0%	54.0%	4.0%
Unweighted sample size	1500	1500	
			MSD
95% confidence interval: +/-:	2.5%	2.5%	3.6%
So 95% sure that true value is between:	47.5%	51.5%	
and:	52.5%	56.5%	
Is the difference in percentage between A and B significant?			Yes

MEAN SCORES			
Estimate of 95% confidence interval around survey mean scores and minimum significant difference at 95% level between two mean scores			
Actual	Sample A	Sample B	Difference
Mean score to be tested	59.1	54.6	4.50
Standard error of mean score	1.81	1.33	
			MSD
95% confidence interval: +/-:	3.55	2.61	4.40
So 95% sure that true value is between:	55.55	51.99	
and:	62.65	57.21	
Is the difference in mean score between A and B significant?			Yes

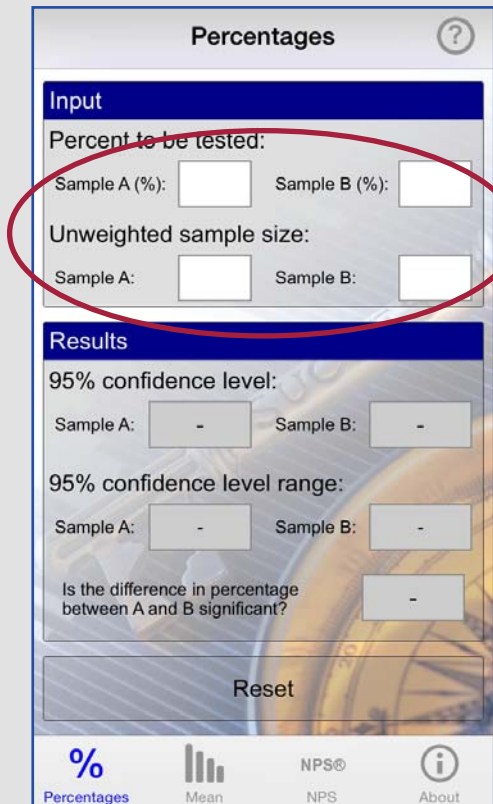
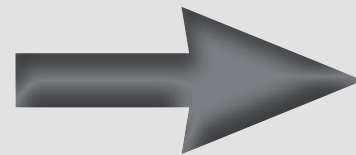
Interactive charts – enter figures into white cells

# StatsChecker

Download Charterhouse's significance testing app

Stats Checker

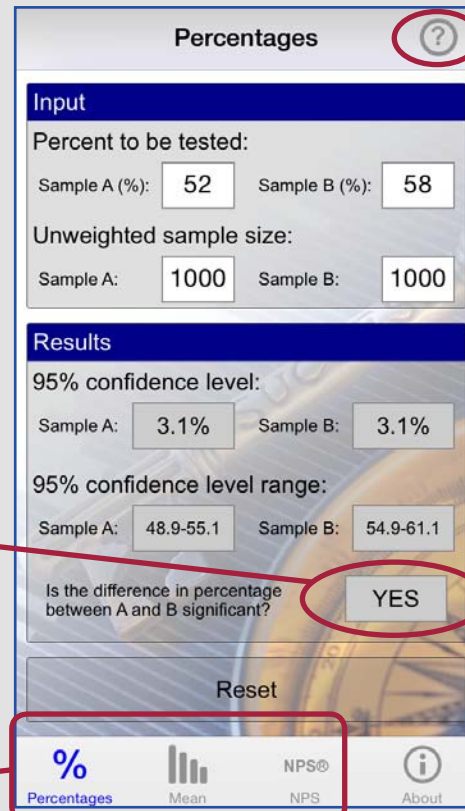
Charterhouse Research has developed StatsChecker, a FREE app for iOS and Android that enables clients to quickly and simply check whether survey percentage, mean score or net promoter score (NPS®) differences are statistically significant

Populate the top four cells – the % scores and the sample sizes to be checked

The app will calculate significance at a 95% confidence level

Test percentages, mean scores and net promoter scores (NPS®)



**How to compare percentage scores**

1. Enter percentage to be tested in the Sample A (%) box
2. Enter unweighted sample size in the Sample A box

*The 95% confidence level and level range around percentage will appear in the Results box*

3. To compare two percentages, also enter percentage to be tested and unweighted sample sizes in the Sample B boxes

*The results will appear in the Results box*



# 5 Timelines

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An agency would turn around a typical ad hoc project in about six weeks, but taking into account internal project briefing and setup, it is wise to allow about nine weeks

<b>Week</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Deliverable/comment</b>
<b>1</b>	Internal briefing meeting	An idea of approach and scope
<b>2</b>	Issue brief to agency	
<b>3</b>	Agency proposal	Near confirmation of approach and scope
<b>4</b>	Agency briefing meeting	Confirmation of approach and scope
<b>4/5/6</b>	Set up, sampling, recruitment	
<b>5/6/7</b>	Fieldwork	
<b>9</b>	Analysis & presentation	

(note: all projects are different and each will afford their own specially designed timetable)

# 6 Outputs

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- ➔ Have you got your story straight?
- ➔ Ask yourself the “so what?” question
  - Any recommendations or questions to put forward?
  - Do the findings have wider relevance? If so, for whom?
  - Test hypothesis with key stakeholders before sharing widely
- ➔ A picture is worth a thousand words...
- ➔ ...but headlines are just as important
- ➔ Context – will the content be delivered face-to-face, or read standalone?
  - Consider the voiceover/amount of detail required, which may differ accordingly
- ➔ Attention to detail/consistency
  - Careless mistakes sow the seeds of doubt!
  - Labelling/keys/scales/appropriate chart types for the data presented
  - Brand guidelines
  - Footers – source/question wording/base size







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