Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management

Diploma Thesis

Evaluation of Focus Group Recruitment

Bc. Veronika Kalivodová

Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my diploma thesis 'Evaluation of Focus Group Recruitment' by myself and I have used only the resources mentioned at the end of the thesis.

In Prague March 10th 2014 ______________________________

Acknowledgement

I would like to sincerely thank Ing. Tereza Balcarová for supervising this work. Additionally, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this work especially Ing. Jana Chaloupková, Jan Kostera and Isaac Starobin.

Evaluation of Focus Group Recruitment

Zhodnocení rekrutace při Focus Group

Summary

The thesis is focused on qualitative marketing research, namely on the recruitment of focus group participants. The thesis provides an insight into qualitative marketing research and its methods. The thesis is focused deeper onto the concept of a focus group and the recruitment of respondents for market research which is the basis for comparison of the literature review and the practice.

The analytical section deals with the practicalities of recruiting respondents. The author concentrates on the practical deviation from theoretical orthodoxy. The conclusion provides commentary on the results in which the author tries to find the solution of the given problem. The thesis may be used as study material for novice recruiters and for those who are interested in market research and its practical implementation.

Keywords: Respondent, Recruitment, Recruiter, Recruitment Manager, Researcher, Focus Group, Moderator, Interview, Marketing research, Qualitative research

Souhrn

Diplomová práce je zaměřena na kvalitativní marketingový výzkum, konkrétněji rekrutaci pro metodu focus group. Práce představuje náhled do kvalitativního marketingového výzkumu a jeho metod. Bližší zaměření je na metodu focus group a rekrutaci respondentů pro výzkum trhu, což představuje podklad pro srovnání literární rešerše s praxí.
Analytická část se soustředí na rekrutaci respondentů z praktické stránky, kde se autorka blíže zaměřuje na odchylky teorie od praxe a jejich příčiny. Závěr práce přináší výsledky, jež jsou odůvodněny a kde se autorka se pokusí nalézt východisko z nalezeného problému. Diplomová práce může být využita jako studijní materiál pro začínající rekrutátory, dále pak pro osoby zajímající se o výzkum trhu a jeho praktickou implementaci.

Klíčová slova: Respondent, Rekrutace, Rekrutér, Manažer rekrutace, Výzkumník, Focus Group, Moderátor, Rozhovor, Marketingový výzkum, Kvalitativní výzkum

Table of contents

1 Introduction 5
2 Objectives of the Thesis and Methodology 7
2.1 Objectives of the Thesis 7
2.2 Methodology 7
3 Marketing research 9
3.1 History 9
3.2 Types and methods 10
3.2.1 Qualitative vs. Quantitative research 12
3.2.2 Continuous vs. Ad hoc research 13
3.3 Obstacles in the marketing research 14
3.4 Ethics in qualitative research 14
4 Qualitative research 18
4.1 Individual Interview 20
4.2 Focus Group 21
4.2.1 Size of Focus Group 25
4.2.2 Number of Focus Groups 26
4.2.3 Advantages 26
4.2.4 Disadvantages 27
4.3 Observation 28
4.4 Desk research 29
4.5 Questionnaire 30
5 Recruiting participants 31
5.1 Strategies of recruitment 34
5.2 Recruitment guidelines 37
5.3 Arrangement 38
5.4 Administration 38
5.5 Confirmation 39
6 Types of respondents 39
7 The Analytical part 41
7.1 Individual Interview 44
7.2 Focus Group 44
7.2.1 Size of Focus Groups 45
7.2.2 Number of Focus Groups 46

7.3 Observation 46
7.4 Recruitment 47
7.4.1 Strategies of recruitment 48
7.4.2 Incentives 53
7.4.3 Double Check and Confirmation 54
7.4.4 Arrangement 57
7.5 Types of respondents 57
8 Summary 59
9 Conclusion 64
10 Resources 65
11 The List of Abbreviations 68
12 Key terms 69
13 Supplements 71

1 Introduction

Ethics, decency, honesty, truth, and social responsibility are discussed in the world of marketing more and more. The same applies for sustainable development aiming to maintain the planet even for future generations. All this relates to methods of marketing communication. The more people know about current events, the more is understood about the world whose population is flooded with information from both traditional and new communication channels. Thus, this knowledge is important for everybody participating in the communication process – those who pay for the research project, those who implement it and evaluate it as well as those who 'only' take part in it.

The various definitions and characteristics of market research emerge from literature and practice. When focusing on the activities and goals of market research, it is possible to define the research as collecting and analysing data in order to find the cause of the current state and determine how the market is influenced. The key elements of the research are the following - consumer, product, and the environment. By means of market research, a lot of information is gained, i.e. information about the creation of demand, motivation and disposable income; further, information about advantageous formation of the offer, development and production, bringing the product to market, etc.

The preparation of the project is the first stage of the research. First, it is necessary to define the problem and create a research plan. Research design defines the type of the study, research questions, hypothesis, the method of data acquisition, location and other details. The method means to define the particular methods of qualitative and quantitative research. It is usual to combine different methods in one project; however, one of the most commonly used is the focus group. Its considerable popularity comes not only from its long history but rather from its applicability to a broad range of issues. The goal of a focus group is the confrontation of the participants, their opinions and observation how these elements are modified mutually in the group. It is a moderated discussion of a small group of selected people who have personal experience with a given topic. The discussion should not be influenced by personal biases – the participants are not relatives and they do not have any other relationships which would lead to a lack of honesty. The moderator should be prepared to slow down the possible dominance of certain individuals. A main advantage is that, thanks to a focus group, a lot of information can be gleaned in a relatively short time.

As mentioned above, the focus group is a method based on a group of selected people. These people, so called respondents, are invited to participate as a result of previous selection, known as recruitment. To be more precise, recruitment is the process of finding suitable respondents. If unsuitable respondents are recruited to the focus group, the validity of the information can be seriously disrupted or even destroyed. As the quality of research is often dependent on the quality of recruitment, this paper will focus on that aspect.

This thesis provides insight into qualitative marketing research, particularly the focus group method, and specifically the recruitment of participants.

2 Objectives of the Thesis and Methodology

2.1 Objectives of the Thesis

The aim of the thesis is to provide insight into qualitative marketing research, namely focusing on the recruitment part of the focus group method. The paper will explain the focus group method, but also marketing research, qualitative research and its other methods. Finally, the whole process of recruitment and subsequent comparison of compliance with the theoretical criteria in real-situation research will be described. The author will focus on recruitment because of its important role in the whole research. A lack of high quality recruitment seriously jeopardizes the results of the research, and thus is the basis for this thesis.

The specific objective is to find out whether recruitment in certain situations was processed according to the criteria and if not, the author looks at what deviations occurred and why. The final part of the thesis will provide the summary of effectiveness of the recruitment and a new proposal for more efficient process of recruitment if it is necessary.

2.2 Methodology

The first part of the thesis will introduce a literature review and the following part is there to support the findings. The data needed are gathered thanks to a well known marketing research agency which has a long tradition of high quality research and great experience and results. Unfortunately, the agency has requested confidentiality and cannot be named. Comparing specific hands-on research with theoretical literature will allow the author to make a determination whether the criteria were chosen suitably, and whether there were any deviations.

For achieving specific objectives the author has decided to use three different qualitative methods:

Desk research is important for getting the information from the internal agency databases and from agency documentation. This entails acquisition and analysis of secondary data – both in printed and electronic form. The databases, treated studies, annual reports, business reports, professional publications and other resources are used (see chapter 4.4). All the tables introduced in the analytical section are based on those internal data and documents (including supplements 13.7, 13.8, 13.9). Most of the data and documentation are obtained from one particular project on energy drinks. The approval both from the Agency and the client is necessary to obtain these data. Obviously, it is not possible to specify the client. Further it is needed to emphasize that Table 8**,** Table 9 and Table 10 contain fictitious respondent's information including fictitious names. These tables are mostly to illustrate the described situation in the given chapter.

Another method used in author's research is **observation** (see chapter 4.3). Simple observation of five focus group sessions and participant observation of five whole recruitment processes (see supplement 13.1). *“The act of observation is part of the process of looking, seeing and understanding reality”* (Le Riche and Tanner, 1998). After the literature review is processed the author gets the theoretical knowledge and is able to observe and identify the possible deviations between the theory and practice.

During the observation the author uses another qualitative research method – **individual interview**. The recruiter and the recruitment manager are interviewed in order to either confirm or reject the fact-findings. These additional interviews are necessary to understand the analysed data and from objectivity reasons, too (see chapter 4.1). *“Interview is usually defined simply as holding a conversation with a purpose, particularly with the aim to gather information”* (Kalivodová, 2012).

Further, the 10 respondents are interviewed (see supplement 13.2), however only after the finalization of the focus group session otherwise they might provide only scrappy and incomplete information. Last but not least the depth interview with the researcher is needed (see supplement 13.2). The final interview is important to support the data gathered from the observation, interviews and also desk research. It represents the most important step to make objective the author's findings, results and conclusion.

Based on the literature review cited in this work, the identification of differences from the theory is possible and will probably be able propose a new procedure for recruitment through which could be achieved more effective results.

3 Marketing research

“Marketing research is the function which links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information – information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process. Marketing research specifies the information, required to address these issues, designs the method for collecting information, manages and implements the data collection process, analyses the results, and communicates the findings and their implications” (Kolb, 2008).

3.1 History

Marketing is a new field of academic study in comparison to subjects like chemistry or philosophy. However, marketing is not a new human activity. The history of marketing research seems to be quite long and rich. It can be dated back to the 19th century. To be more precise – to 1824 when the first empirical research of voters behaviour and decision making process during the presidential election took place. One hundred years later, a new generation of researchers headed by G. Gallup and E. Ropert enriched the research with the advent of a sophisticated sampling procedure. Lazarsfeld and Berelson published their Voting and The People's Choice in which they analysed the dependence of the voters’ decision on the opinion leaders. Research about behaviour and the decision making process of voters are considered as the beginning of marketing research.

The number of universities and academic fields grew steadily over the course of 20^{th} century. Psychology, sociology and a variety of other fields intended to apply scientific methods upon social issues and thus aid the effort to explain human behaviour. (Kolb, 2008)

Marketing research gained a reputation over the course of that period and became an accepted professional field. Many businesses were levelling up from smaller, regional companies onto a larger, national scale. As they were now selling their goods to a much larger audience, difficulties in understanding customers over a large geographic area arose. Therefore, the companies have implemented a system similar to the ones used in social sciences. Sampling and scientific methods were adopted to try and pinpoint the ideal potential consumers who would take part in the studies. The research, however, was aimed mainly at finding more customers for a product which had already been in existence, rather than exploring the consumer's desires and thus obtaining feedback to improve said product. Later, market research borrowed additional techniques from the social sciences. They discussed interviewing and focus groups as ways of conducting marketing research. Since the use of these techniques has proven successful, the field of marketing research met with more and more interest. (Kolb, 2008)

3.2 Types and methods

The task of the marketing research is to specify, gather, analyse, and interpret the information which is used further in the marketing management. To fulfil this task, a wide range of research approaches is used. These can be sorted by many criteria. (Kozel, 2006)

Types of research (Kozel, 2006)**:**

- **Product research** is focused mainly on searching for new products and testing existing products.
- **Price research** deals mostly with price perception from the different perspectives, namely price elasticity and competitive pricing analysis.
- **Distribution research** gains the information for choosing the best distribution channel, analyses the distributors and gleans data regarding the process of goods distribution.
- **Marketing communication research** deals with the valuation and measurement of the efficiency of propagation, mainly of the advertisement. It includes the choice of the most suitable propagation media, too.

Further types of research (Kozel, 2006):

- **The way of gathering the information**
    - **Secondary** – takes into account already published data. It should always be prior to the primary way.
    - **Primary** – performed the first time in order to get the answers to the specified questions. It is used in case the data given by the secondary way are not sufficient.

- **The character of the gained information**
    - **Quantitative** – provides the description, data on the occurrence, frequency and repetition.
    - **Qualitative** – tries to find the cause, interaction and dependence of the subjects and, if possible, to identify cause and effect.
- **Examining of entities**
    - **Consumer research** – information is gained from the primary demand bearers and the final consumers.
    - **Company research** – information is gained from the secondary demand subjects, i.e. the owners, managers and employees.

Essentially, marketing research collects information from several resources and takes place in two phases. The first stage focuses on the collection of easily accessible basic information - so called desk research. It is based on gathering and analysis of the secondary data. The secondary data can be drawn both from the internal resources of the information system (e.g. accounting, annual reports, retailers' reports) and external resources (databases, statistics, literature, information published by the agencies – e.g. Czech Trade, trade and industry organizations etc.) Very important and easily accessible are electronic information sources and information provided by the Internet. (Machková, 2009)

The second stage – so called field research – consists of the implementation of the research in the particular practise. It is mostly used in case the secondary data are not sufficient enough for making the decision. The field research is usually expensive because it needs to work with primary data which are not publicly accessible and which are obtained only for the purpose of the given research. Due to the complexity of the used research methods the best practice is to use the service of the specialized agencies. (Machková, 2009)

Research agencies use both quantitative and qualitative methods of the marketing research. They are able to offer an assortment of products which can fit the needs of the contracting party. The agencies deal with long-term projects as well as one-time or so called ad-hoc research projects. (Machková, 2009)

3.2.1 Qualitative vs. Quantitative research

The difference between qualitative and quantitative research consists of the nature of the phenomenon being analysed. Whereas quantitative research asks, 'How much?', qualitative research asks, 'Why?' or 'What is the reason?'. For comparison of those two types of research see the Table 1 below.

Table 1

Qualitative	Quantitative
The aim is complete detailed understanding	The aim is to test validity hypotheses
A lot of in-depth information about the small number of individuals	Limited range of information about many individuals
Before the start of the project, the researcher may only have a rough idea of what he/she is looking for	Researcher knows clearly in advance what he/she is looking for
The design emerges as the study unfolds	All aspects of the study are carefully designed before data is collected
Researcher is the data gathering instrument	Researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or equipment to collect numerical data
Data is in the form of words, pictures or objects	Data is in the form of numbers and statistics
Subjective - individuals interpretation of events is important ,e.g., uses participant observation, in-depth interviews etc.	Objective - seeks precise measurement and analysis of target concepts, e.g., uses surveys, questionnaires etc.
Qualitative data is more 'rich', time consuming, and less able to be generalized	Quantitative data is more efficient, generalized, but may miss contextual detail

Source: Kalivodová, 2012

Quantitative research deals with gathering data about the frequency of something which has already happened or is currently happening. The purpose of the qualitative research is to get the measurable figures. In order to fulfil the conditions of data collection and have statistically valid results, it is necessary to work with large number of respondents. (Kozel, 2006)

Qualitative research investigates the causes why something happened or why it is happening. The majority of investigated data comes from the consciousness or sub consciousness of final consumers. Therefore, it is necessarily less of an exact science. Quite often, psychological interpretation or even professional contribution of the trained interviewers is required. The aim is to determine the motivation, thought processes, and attitudes which result in a particular action. Individual or group interviews and design techniques are used. It is usual to work with a smaller number of respondents. For practical example see the Table 2 below.

Table 2

Soccer balls research

Quantitative research	**Qualitative research**
• Number of sold balls	• **Purchase motivation**
• Number of returned balls	• **Satisfaction**
• Frequency of the recurring purchase	• **Complaints**

Source: Author

3.2.2 Continuous vs. Ad hoc research

The goal of continuous research is to monitor and observe the market trend of particular goods and brands. The continuous research enables monitoring and measuring the efficiency of the advertising campaigns, the development of the market share, success in performing the new product and the efficiency in the usage of the distribution channels, the effect of the price policy etc. (Machková, 2009)

One-time (ad-hoc) research can be either cross-thematic or monothematic, it depends on the needs of the company. The most frequent scopes of research are testing the new product before introduction to the market, testing the name, testing the packing, image, price, advertisement etc. Further there are the researches which are focused on the meaning of the consumers and on the way how the products are used (Usage and Attitude) including the satisfaction research. When performing the one-time researches both qualitative (interrogation) and qualitative (personal interviews conducted by professionals) methods are used. (Machková, 2009)

3.3 Obstacles in the marketing research

Although the use of the marketing research is always growing, there are still numerous companies who are not able to use it correctly. The reasons are as follows (Kotler and Keller, 2009):

Narrow conception of the research –some managers consider marketing research being the act of finding the facts. They expect the researcher to prepare the questionnaire, select a sample, conduct the interview and report the results very often even without being provided with a meticulous definition of the problem.

Unequal status of the researchers – some managers consider marketing research to be something similar to a bureaucratic job and they take the relevant attitude towards it - they hire not enough capable researchers. Then due to the incapability and lack of training and creativity the outcome does not capture the most important facts.

Incorrectly formulated task – the company is not able to define the problem from the correct marketing perspective.

Delayed and sometimes even incorrect conclusions – the managers want to have the exact and convincing results and they require them immediately or on a very short deadline. Legitimately high quality marketing research, however, is costly and time consuming. Managers are often disappointed to learn this.

3.4 Ethics in qualitative research

It is now rather easy to identify the ethical principles of research since they are well documented. Although these principles were developed with medical science in mind, they apply to all various kinds of research, qualitative marketing studies being no exception in this case. (Hennink and Hutter, 2011)

The Declaration of Helsinki which was released in 1964 by the World Medical Association (WMA) defined the ethical principles for any kind of medical research involving human participants as subjects. Furthermore, the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Behavioural Research created the Belmont report in 1979, mainly intended to serve as a pillar and a crucial reference on questions of ethics for institutional review boards that attempted to deal with research on human subjects. The report defines three basic principles that underlay any ethical conduct of a research (Hennink and Hutter, 2011):

Respect of persons - The general well-being of participants should always be perceived as more important than the intentions of science or society. The participants ought to be treated courteously and respectfully and may never be forced to enter a research without sufficient information.

Benefice - It should be one of the foremost goals of any researcher to try and maximize the potential benefits of their research for the general public and wide society while simultaneously trying to minimize the potential risks to participants of the research.

Justice - Researchers should have in mind that the research procedures ought to be administered fairly, avoid exploitation and always being well-considered.

These principles when applied lead directly to the following conclusions (Hennink and Hutter, 2011):

Informed consent - Individuals ought to be supplied with adequate information regarding the research, the format of this information must be comprehensible and the decision to participate in a study must be voluntary.

Self-determination - Individuals should always have the right to decide whether they do or do not wish to participate in a research. This also includes the ability to refuse participation without any form of prosecution.

Minimization of harm - The researchers should never harm the participants in any way or put them at risk.

Anonymity - Researchers should strive to guard the personal information of the participants at all times.

Confidentiality - Researchers ought to make sure that all the data recorded is kept at a secure and confidential place at any given moment.

The various ethical and moral responsibilities of qualitative researchers are basically identical to researchers in different branches, the ethical challenges are much more emphasized because of the nature of qualitative research. Its methods are used to glean information about perceptions, beliefs and feelings of people and it's a somewhat intimate relation between the researchers and participants who asks for a very careful consideration of 'doing no harm', therefore protecting the security of gathered information and anonymizing the collected data. The application of qualitative research is also a problem since the research is often conducted to gather information on rather sensitive issues such as intimate hygiene or asking for a loan. The result of the aforementioned must be an even more meticulous approach towards the implementation of ethical principles described above. Furthermore, it is also necessary to consider the questions of morality and ethics while performing an in-depth ethnographic fieldwork study, when the researcher gathers information while living in close contact with the participants for a longer time. (Hennink and Hutter, 2011)

Ethical issues in recruitment

During the recruitment of participants for qualitative research, even more ethical problems appear. Mainly it is important to have permission for the conduct of the research and also being able to provide enough information to the participants in order for them to easily decide whether they wish to participate in the study or not. While the recruitment is taking place, we should always take into account the potential harm to participants based on the chosen method of recruitment or taking part in the study itself. Also, names and other personal information of the participants ought to be securely preserved at any given moment. (Hennink and Hutter, 2011)

Being able to secure permission is the vital part of any research project. Generally it is perceived as part of good protocol to ensure the stakeholders' full approval of the research. This includes providing the stakeholders with information on the main purposes of the research, potential use of the data and access to it, how the researchers are going to handle personal information and how the potential harm to the participants shall be minimized. There are countless approaches towards recruitment in qualitative research. Minimizing the potential harm to the participants is one of the core ethical principles. Preventing physical harm is fairly simple, however there are other ways how the research may hurt a participant, be it an embarrassing, troubling or even traumatizing experience or distorting one's own image about perception from others. (Hennink and Hutter, 2011)

It is also possible to recruit participants via the use of the so-called 'gatekeepers'. A gatekeeper may be someone already within the researched structure – e.g. a manager of a restaurant, a corner shop owner etc. They might suggest the ideal people that would then become the target participants for the study. This is a common practice, it is however the duty of the researcher to observe whether the participants are in any way influenced by the gatekeeper. (Hennink and Hutter, 2011)

Another issue that may well arise is that while an individual may express desire to participate in a study, they are rejected by the other participants. It often happens that questions of ethics are not entirely straightforward and the final decisions rely upon the judgement of the researcher. (Hennink and Hutter, 2011)

4 Qualitative research

The qualitative research was considered as the supplement or opposite of the traditional quantitative methods only for a long time. From the long time perspective it has been underestimated. Recently, due to the saturated and unpredictable market, its importance in marketing research grows. Qualitative research is often equalled in practice to the psychological research which is of course not the same. Qualitative research is used in all the spheres of finding knowledge about the inner process of the customer decision, his/her motivation and stimulation, shopping habits and consumer behaviour. With the help of qualitative research techniques and methods it is possible to convert the individual and subjective valuation of the researched phenomenon (which is hard to achieve by using the common quantitative methods only) to the quantitative form or at the minimum to the form which is possible to order, sort and compare. The goal of the qualitative research is to find the motivation, causes and attitudes etc. by means of the work with the individuals or the small groups. The opinions and displays are often analysed psychologically. The actual implementation is achieved by the group discussions or in-depth interviews. (Kozel and Mynářová, 2011)

The majority of the qualitative research methods are based on psychology, however, it includes the other fields, too. This requires less structured process, the higher number of phenomena and relationships, the assessment is usually not possible without the participation of the specialists (psychologists). The analysis emerges from a large amount of information about a relatively small number of individuals. The research analyses the relations, reliance and causes directly at the researched unit. Afterwards these are generalized to a certain level. (Kozel and Mynářová, 2011)

Qualitative research has a number of advantages as a research method. Qualitative data provide insight into cultural activities that might otherwise be missed in structured surveys or experiments. Qualitative research can uncover salient issues that can later be studies using more structured methods. Indeed field research may lead to close and trusting relationships that encourage a level of disclosure unparalleled in self-reports. Such work has the potential to provide insight about marginalized, stereotyped, or unknown populations. Qualitative research is especially well suited for accessing tacit, intuitive understanding of a culture. Rather than merely asking about what people actually do. Last and perhaps most important, good qualitative research helps people to understand the world and their society. Qualitative methodology can provide knowledge that targets societal issues, questions, or problems.

In summary, qualitative research (Tracy, 2013):

- is rich and holistic;
- focuses on lived experience, placed in its context;
- provides understanding of a sustained process;
- can help explain, illuminate, or reinterpret quantitative data;
- explains 'why';
- interprets participants viewpoints and stories;
- illustrates how a multitude of interpretations are possible, but how some are more theoretically compelling, morally significant, or practically important than others.

General principles of the psychological methods usage (Kozel and Mynářová, 2011):

1. The psychological methods and techniques can be used in the research successfully only by the specialists as there is the limited number of people being able to evaluate them correctly and make the proper conclusions which are relevant for the given tasks. The psychologists are trained for this properly and they have the specialized experience needed for the correct application of the given techniques in the particular conditions.
2. There is the rule that only single psychological technique usually does not provide the sufficient information. Therefore the several techniques or the combination of them are used.
3. The information rising from the research are not supposed to be evaluated separately but only in the relevant context.

There are many qualitative methods that can be used. The division of those methods differs from author to author but generally summarized the qualitative research methods are: individual interview, focus group discussion, observation and desk research.

4.1 Individual Interview

Individual interviews is a scenario while the researcher is talking to only one person, which in return means that projects with individual interviews seldom involve more respondents than for instance focus groups do. These interviews however allow for the exploration of individual motivations and behaviours in a much greater detail and also to pinpoint their various influences more easily. (Beall, 2010)

The individual interview is used when more detailed information is needed or when talking about sensitive issues. It usually does not take more than one hour and it is places anywhere i.e. at respondent's house or workplace, in the restaurant, at school. It is better to interview in the respondents environment because it is important to them and useful for the researcher. Researcher needs to understand what impact the nature environment has on respondents and what effects are. Individual interview is also used when respondent has difficulty to get on researchers location (i.e. businessman, director, president).

Individual interview provides deep view with detailed information on the purpose of study but takes amount of time. There are three different types of interview which are based on the level of formalization:

The un-standardized interview does not have given the precisely formulated questions neither their binding order. The emerging factors are both interviewers and respondents. In this kind of the interview there is the possibility to analyse the particular topic when it is actually needed to do in-depth and on the other side, if this is relevant and some of the topic is not familiar enough to the respondent, to quickly solve or even skip some. This type of interview is used in the research of not fully known or not entirely mapped topic or in case when the respondents are the specialists in certain field and there is an expectation they would provide more information than it is required by the questions and predefined answers. The result of the un-standardized interviews is not possible to consider as mass phenomenon and therefore it is not possible to process these with statistical methods. (Nový and Surynek, 2006)

The standardized interview develops according to the firmly given questions with the pre-defined answer possibilities. The questions have the established order. Formally it resembles the questionnaire. The emerging factor is the interviewer, however this development is given in the scenario already and the interviewer is not allowed to put in his/her personal interests, conviction etc. His/her attitude must be impartial, he/she must be neutral and in any case is he/she allowed to evaluate or comment the statements of the respondent. The advantage of the standardized interview is the possibility of getting the information of the mass character which is well statistically processed. (Nový and Surynek, 2006)

The semi-standardized interview usually lacks one of the standardized interview characteristics. It uses the advantages of both types described above, however it is affected with their disadvantages as well (although not in such an extent). Quite great demands on the respondents – this is the disadvantage of this type as well as the difficult statistical processing of the result or possibly the fact that the interview topic is given in advance to matter what are the interests of the respondents (Nový and Surynek, 2006). To be more precise: in the semi-structured interview the questions are usually given in advance similar to the structured one, however, the respondent does not have the pre-defined answers, he/she is allowed to use his/her own words which is typical for un-structured interview.

4.2 Focus Group

Group interviews or in other words focus groups are currently the widespread method. They are very practical but not always and not even suitable to solve all the problems. It is not complicated to define this method, however, when going into the details there is a dispute among the authors.

"Focus Group consists of people who have been recruited according to a pre-determined set of criteria such as age, gender, life stage, social class, and product, service or brand user ship (Gordon, 1999).

Focus group means that there is an assembly of about six to ten people who have been chosen carefully according to the certain demographic, psychological or other criteria. This group is supposed to discuss the topics of common interest. (Kotler and Keller, 2009)

According to Miovský the Group discussion means the structured interview with the minimum of three people after the submission of the pattern questions and answers. At the same time he avoids the group interaction or dynamics. (Kalivodová, 2012)

Focus group is very useful and efficient practical tool when it is correctly applied and when all the methodology principles are kept. At first sight it seems to be so easy to invite a small group of people into the studio and chat with them for two hours about a certain topic. It is exactly this apparent simplicity which can be dangerous because non-

compliance with all the principles may result in the failure of the whole research with the consequent distrust to the method as such. (Vysekalová, 2012)
The beauty of the focus group, as said by one of the marketing managers, consists in the fact that until now it is the most efficient, the fastest and the smartest way how to get the information quickly considering the costs incurred. During the pros/cons analysis this was formulated accurately by Americus Reed from Wharton: 'The group is like a chainsaw. If you know what you are doing, it is very useful and efficient. If you do not, you might lose a limb.' (Kotler and Keller, 2009)
Focus Group is perceived as one of the most advanced methods of qualitative research. As Morgan presumes, a Focus Group is an important research method which makes it possible to gather the data emerging from a discussion on a topic which is set by the researcher. (Kalivodová, 2002)
Generally the Focus groups are by nature very formal in comparison to other group interviews. Why is that? Perhaps the answer is that the participants are encouraged to take part in the interviews and that the role of the facilitator is very distinctive. Experts have different opinions regarding the option of having the exact distinguishing formula of what is the focus group and what is the session of some other format. In practice the overall level of formal approach in each group session is mainly determined by the individual goals and objective of the research project in question. (Kalivodová, 2002)
Regarding the other criteria of assessment and categorization of the focus groups the size and usage of specialized facilities for asking questions need to be taken into account. The question in respect of this is who takes the decisive role in proclaiming the focus group to be the one – who is able to decide whether the group is adequate in terms of the number of the participants (is the group too small or too big?) or in terms of the proper setting (e.g. is the group not too casual?). Definitely the further research is needed in this respect. Data gathering strategies would be included in the frame 'research design'. Various designs of research have varied levels of success in connection with making the research efficient. (Kalivodová, 2002)
The role of the researcher is to establish and communicate the focus on the discussion and to ensure that it goes in agreement with the main goals of the research project. With the concentration being clearly determined, it needs to be easily understandable to all the participants of the discussion. Focus Group can be applied very flexibly, it can even

provide for an alternative to individual interviews which can be found by some individuals not easy and refused therefore. (Kalivodová, 2002)

Focus groups are prepared and lead by the researcher who specifies the way data will be processed and collected. Marketing research is one of the pathways which are defined by its liberal and pragmatic point of view, where repeated experiences and inquiries into outcome show who is able to use the method fully in practice. Psychological method should remain unavailable to those who have yet to achieve adequate results and sufficient experience in the past. Mostly the projects follow the pragmatic point of view where inexperienced researchers and facilitators are perceived as a large risk to the participants, but also to themselves and the project itself. Therefore many resources may go to waste if the point of the research is to draw high quality valid data from it. Soft skills, communication skills and also strategies are vital here, being able to handle group dynamic is also desirable. (Kalivodová, 2002)

Moderators are prepared to (Gordon, 1999):

- steer the discussion towards the various topics the client has expressed a wish to explore,
- Distinguish between unimportant and vital points of view of the participants and pursue those deemed important further,
- be able to handle group dynamics effectively.

Focus groups can contain a plethora of detailed data and deep insight. When the research does not lack in execution, a focus group provides for an optimal setting which allows the participants to contemplate their various opinions and carefully answer questions with meaning. Surveys can be very useful for instance to collect data about people's attitudes, understanding problems on a deeper scale requires the use of a focus group and such. (Guidelines for Conducting a Focus Group, 2005)

Focus Group preparation

It is rather challenging to put a focus group together since many relevant factors come together and shape up the final quality of the output – the degree of organization, quality of the input etc. Practically, this means arranging for adequate venue in substantial advance before the session. The aspect of time and venue comes into the equation whilst picking appropriate staff to be involved in the project. An amount of an incentive must be present for the attendees in order to prevent them from not turning up. While the project is carried out, needless to say, all the rights of the respondents must be respected. (Kalivodová, 2012)

Deception or lying to any party involved during a research is unacceptable. The researcher may not abuse the participants' confidentiality and ought not try and persuade them into other viewpoints or force them to perform anything that might prove unsettling for them. The respondent's rights always come first before the wishes of the clients and their identity must be made known to the participants. (Gordon, 1999)

It is necessary to approach the venue choice with rigorous care. The goal is to make respondents feel nice for which not only adequate refreshments are necessary, also it is a good idea to obscure the recording equipment so that the respondents do not feel as if their privacy is being directly invaded. All these factors play a large part in helping the moderator make the focus group session a successful one. (Kalivodová, 2012)

In order to prevent conflicts, it is very important for the various roles to be carefully assigned to members of the researching team as there are usually more than three members in it. A well-prepared session guide helping the moderator to facilitate discussion within the group is essential. (Kalivodová, 2012)

A multitude of clients approach the guide expecting that the larger it is the better. However, this is not the case. It is necessary for the researcher to identify the key study goals and ask the most significant questions and work with various topics so that they do not confuse the respondents. (Gordon, 1999)

Focus Group in marketing

Focus group enables the marketers to track costumer's way and reasons of accepting or refusing certain concepts, ideas and opinions. The most important issue with the focus group is to listen carefully without the prejudice. Despite the fact that focus group provides a lot of useful information there are still doubts regarding usefulness – mostly in the current marketing environment. Some of the researchers believe that the consumers are so much bombarded by the pervasive advertisements that unconsciously they only parrot what they had heard instead of really communicating in the real opinion. There is always even the concern that they try to sustain their self-image and the style they promote themselves in public or they have the need to identify themselves with the other members of the group. The participants should be willing to admit publicly and perhaps become aware of their behaviour model and their motivation. There is the need that they feel relaxed and that they are obliged to tell the truth at the same time. It is possible to support them with a pleasant milieu. Some of the research agencies adjust the settings, some of them try to tune it accordingly to their wishes, the others are totally ignorant about the surroundings. (Kotler and Keller, 2009)

4.2.1 Size of Focus Group

Miovský recommends the minimal number for the participants of a focus group to be 4, according to him, it is sufficient as to provide grounds for basic interaction within the group. This number however is not ideal giving into consideration the elevated pressure on each participant. Therefore the most optimal number of participants is 6-10 which allows for other, complementary methods (visualization etc.) to be used. (Kalivodová, 2012)

For a multitude of topics the best possible focus group size is ranging from five to eight participants. According to some sources, extending the focus group beyond ten participants bring less benefits to the overall experience since it is inherently difficult to handle a group of this size and also to provide sufficient grounds for all the participants to make themselves understood in such a large group. The top line for the size of a focus group is however between 18 and 20 participants, a higher number would ask for a special approach.

Mini groups which represent small focus groups with four to six participants are becoming increasingly more popular since it is less difficult to recruit for them, easier to provide adequate rooms and also more pleasant for the participants. As mentioned above, the main disadvantage is that the total range of expertise is then limited by the small number of participants. A smaller group of people holds less information than a large focus group. The size of the focus group relates to the main goal of the study. If the aim is to delve more into people's experiences, it is desirable to carry out in-depth insights for which small groups are more useful. The groups (eight participants) however are ideal for testing new materials or ideas and when the focus group attendants do not know a great deal about the given topic. For instance users of the product know more information than non-users.

4.2.2 Number of Focus Groups

The final number of how many focus groups need to be carried out on every research project is mostly decided by the desired quality and quantity of the output. Resources and the given timeframe play a vital role in the decision process as well. As of today, in the studies where focus group plays the important role or the only part in qualitative data gathering, it is desirable to carry out from 3 to 6 focus groups. (Kalivodová, 2012)

4.2.3 Advantages

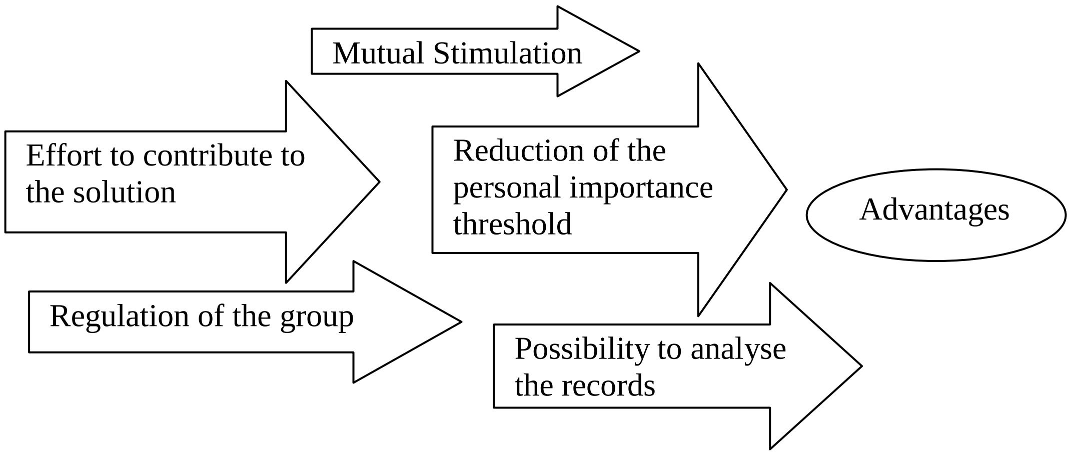
Very important advantage of the group discussions is the possibility to get the required information quite easily. This will help then to orientate themselves in the given task. Further asset of the focus group is its comparative speed of implementation. The whole preparation, i.e. organization and recruitment of the responders usually does not exceed seven days. Even the prices of the research conducted using this method is not inaccessible. As stated by Vysekalová the price in Europe and USA moves within 1000 – 3000 USD per focus group. The prices of the renowned Czech agencies move within 35000 – 65000 CZK.

High abundance in usage the group discussions are given by its innate flexibility during the interrogation. While in the standard pooling the interviewer needs to keep up strictly to the given order and wording of the questions the moderator of the focus group is allowed or perhaps even obliged to react sensitively to the reactions of the respondents and adjust the scenario accordingly by adding or modifying the topics. (Vysekalová, 2012)

"Group discussions are the source of direct knowledge about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experience"(Kalivodová, 2012).

Focus group contributes to the plurality of opinions and possible views. The so called snow ball effect occurs when the individual participants comment on the opinions of the others. The advantages are easily explained in the following Diagram 1.

Diagram 1

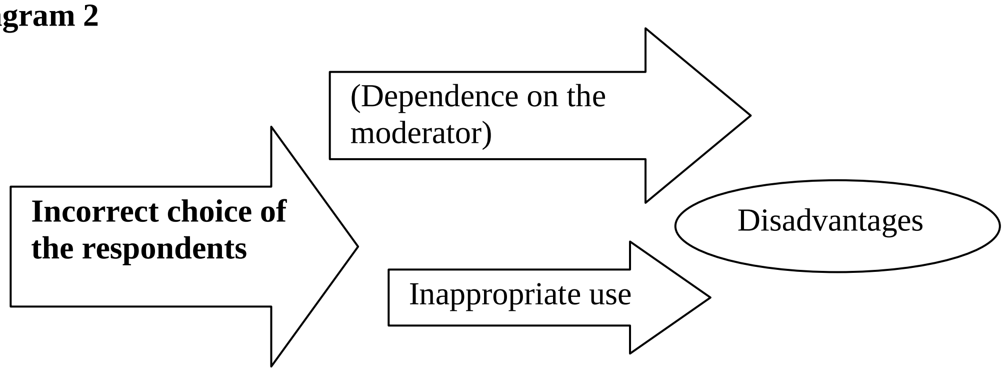


Source: Author

4.2.4 Disadvantages

One of the common problems is the situation when the discussion is dominated by a typical aggressive leader who does not allow the others respondents to talk. In this case the others either keep silent or they uncritically accept his/her opinions. In case there are more such personalities in the group there is the danger of having the hostile atmosphere in the group and even the leakage of information can occur. It is crucial that the moderator maintains the control even in this situation. This is the reason why it is essential to use the experienced psychologist as a moderator. (Vysekalová, 2012) It is not only about the dominating respondent but also about mis-recruited or silent respondent (see chapter 6).
(Further disadvantage can better possible dependence on the moderator, however this happens only when the moderator is not well experienced and good psychologist. The high quality performance depends on the communication skills of the moderator. He/she needs to distinguish very precisely and sensitively when to lead the discussion in order to get the more detailed information and when, on the contrary to stop the respondent who is meandering the topic. However, the ability of the moderator to involve all the respondents in the discussion is essential.)The disadvantages are given in the following Diagram 2.

Diagram 2



Source: Author

4.3 Observation

It is possible to gain the new data thanks to the observation of the people and the surroundings. This is one of the oldest methods and although it may seem to be simple at the first sight it is not the case – on the contrary. *"The act of observation is part of the process of looking, seeing and understanding reality. Observation is also a universal activity which is continuous and characterized by passivity and lack of involvement"* (Le Riche and Tanner, 1998). The observation can be public or hidden. The disadvantage of the public observation can consist in non-authentic behaviour. The hidden observation is often impossible, however, because it is not often possible to enter the privacy of the customers. Yet, it is possible to watch the customers unobtrusively while shopping or using the products. Some of the researchers instruct the consumers to put down what they do whenever they are asked to do it. Or they organize the informal meetings in the cafe or bar. (Kotler and Keller, 2009)

If it is possible the observation should be done in the natural surroundings of the customers. The observers should submerge into the natural world of the respondents, put themselves into them and feel them empirically. If it is possible the actual situation is audio recorded or video recorded because it can happen that during the personal involvement the observer can overlook the details which can show important later on. (Trommsdorff and Steinhoff, 2009)

Observational method can be divided into three different but still similar sub-methods: **Simple observation**, there is a very fundamental strategy which includes observing and recording the behaviour. It is a rather effective method of capturing behaviour in a more natural environment, which further enables the researcher to evade the co-reactivity issue (changing the phenomenon of interest in the process of measuring it.

The disadvantage of simple observation is that observing and making sense of behaviour take a lot of time and effort. Anyway it is true that simple observation is really useful in primary stages of researches. (Jex, 2002)

Participant observation is rather similar to the strategy mentioned above, with one exception – the observer is also the participant in the studied event. This strategy proves very beneficial in some eventualities – e.g. when a participant in the event discloses some information to a researcher which otherwise would not happen. There are of course some risks to that method, for instance that the researcher may be influenced by the role of a participant and change the phenomenon under scrutiny. (Jex, 2002)

Archival data sources represent the third method of observation. In some resources archival data method is explained similarly as desk research. To explain and not confuse, archival data sources are used for desk research. For more see following chapter 4.4. These data are records or any form of data that are independent of the research and are compiled for purposes. In large organizations, factors such as job performance, turnover etc. is under meticulous scrutiny and the information is recorded. Also databases may represent the archival data source. Much of the data in the archives may be accessed easily by the public as they are not gathered to be further used by the researcher since there is no chance that the participants would somehow twist the responses and thus influencing the validity of the research. On the other hand archival data are in most cases indirect. (Jex, 2002)

4.4 Desk research

Desk research provides many type of information i.e. the desk research means the acquisition and analysis of the secondary data – both in printed and electronic format. The databases, treated researches, annual reports, business reports, professional publications and other resources are used. The acquired data can be used for the preparation of the primary research. The desk research is considered to be one of the basic and cheapest tools of the marketing research. Despite this it can provide with a lot of valuable and important material for the further decision making. The disadvantage is that the publically available data are often chaotic, oversupplied (containing too many information which are not needed). Desk research provides many types of information i.e.

- **Information on company** – company accounts, product literature, press mentions and directories
- **Product details** – product brochures, advertising, directories and press reviews
- **Market size and structure** – available statistics, trade press articles and reviews in specialized directories and published extracts
- **Background economic data** – published sources

4.5 Questionnaire

Although the questionnaire is generally ranked to the quantitative methods it is often used as a supplementary method of the qualitative research. In terms of the form the questionnaire has the fixed order, content and the wording of the questions. It is usually provided with clearly defined variants of the possible answers. While preparing the questionnaire the researcher needs to select the proper questions carefully, he/she needs to formulate and word them precisely, he/she needs to determine the proper sequence of questions. The marketing researchers distinguish between the closed and open questions. Closed questions specify all the possible answers and it is easier to interpret them afterwards. The questionnaire is supposed to be filled in by the respondents personally. The way of the handover of the questionnaire to the respondent can differ as well as the subsequent submission of the finished questionnaire. The questionnaire is afterwards supposed to be handed over to the particular person from who it had been gained. This is the organized process so that it is sure that each of the respondents really has the questionnaire and so that he/she really gives it back. When the respondents receive the questionnaire personally they feel themselves more obliged to cooperate. It is possible to strengthen this obligation further by using the psychological methods, it is possible to require more information and even more detailed. Moreover this is possible due to the tight relation of the subject and object and due to the fact that the questionnaire filling is often organized as a separate event with the planned timing. The questionnaire practically eliminates the other people's intervention. The advantage of the questionnaire can be diminished by the possible mistakes which can occur. In case it is more complicated there is the risk the respondent does not understand the questions or the instructions.

5 Recruiting participants

How many people should be invited to a focus group? Who should participate and how he/she should be recognised? What causes people to participate?

“Recruitment is the process of selecting and finding participants to take part in a market research. The term recruiter refers to a person who is specially trained in this process. The precise sample definition should be discussed and agreed by client and agency before the recruitment process begins” (Gordon, 1999).

Countless hours are being spent by research agencies on ways how to recruit. The effect of choosing wrong respondents is immediate – the agencies lose their reputation. Sometimes clients wish to know the desires of their customers however they may not disclose their names, which mean it is the client's job to recruit, which in addition often proves less financially demanding for them as opposed to letting the agency do the recruiting.

Ahead of the actual recruitment, the following points must be clear to the person doing the research (Participants in a Focus Group, 2013):

- What is the purpose of the study?
- Who is paying for it?
- What makes it important?
- How will the results be used, to what avail?
- Why are those recipients contacted, where were their information and name received?
- What are potential benefits, incentive for participation?

Telling About the Sponsor

Market research firms traditionally don't reveal the sponsor of the study for two reasons: they are often comparing products and don't want to bias participants, and their research is proprietary. Instead, they describe the type or category of product, such as soft drinks, credit card services or automobiles. Often the client wants to find out how their product, service or organization is positioned in relation to the competition. If the participants knew the sponsor of the study, they might be biased in their rankings. Market researchers anticipate that people will ask about the sponsor of the study, and they have a generic response that provides an answer without influencing later responses. At the end of the focus group session, the participants might be provided more specific information on the sponsorship and purpose of the study.

Nonprofit and public organizations need to be much more transparent. In most situations, complete openness is preferred. While it might be acceptable for a private corporation to be coy about sponsorship or purpose, this approach can backfire in the public environment. The public does not respond favorably when a public agency is evasive or appears to be deceptive.

Source: Participants in a Focus Group, 2013

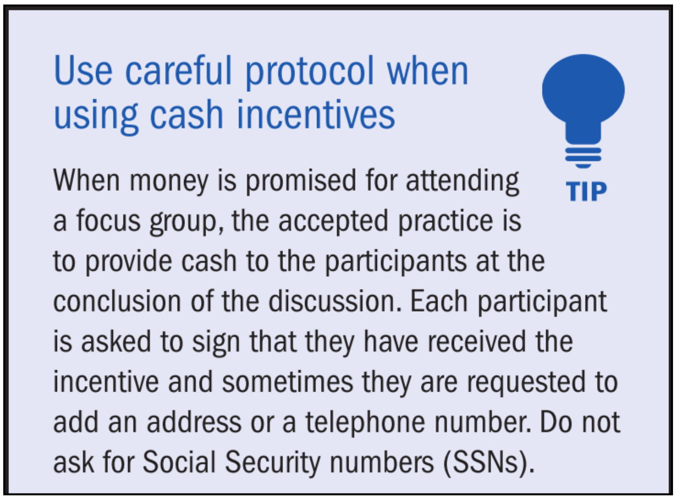
The optimal focus group contains people who are feeling comfortable around one another however they are not acquainted with each other. To reach this ideal there is necessary to process the recruitment in the best possible way. It may prove risky to move recruiting focus group participants down the priorities ladder. Various concerns may rise regarding potential bias of the choice of participants if it is not meticulously thought out and executed. If mistakes in recruitment have been made, they may prove the entire research and gathered information entirely purposeless.

It is important to provoke the respondent into feeling that they are essential to the course of the research. If the budget is sufficient for such a thing, incentives are a rather good idea to further encourage the participants into taking part. They ought to verbally declare they shall attend the focus group. However, while the potential incentive may increase the chances of them turning up, it might also draw attention of various people in very different ways.

Focus groups differ from the rest of ways how to collect information in requiring a considerable investment from the participant. Unsurprisingly, there has been a tradition of providing some sort of an incentive for them. Sometimes the effort to compose a focus group without any form of a motivation for participation whatsoever may prove entirely futile. However these forms of motivation should not be considered a reward or a salary of any form, their sole purpose remains to capture the attention of the potential respondents and make them turn up, preferably on time. (Participants in a Focus Group, 2013)

Usually this incentive is presented in the form of money, which happens for various reasons – namely because the value of money is universally understood and appreciated, in administrative terms this kind of incentive is also rather simple to process and the reason of the utmost importance is that it works. Immediate payment is preferred. Another way such as account transfer or check will be disappointment. The amount of incentive can and should vary – but not within the same focus group. In that case it may persuade some of the participants into thinking that the researcher values some of them more than the rest of them. This cannot happen.

Considering the value of the US dollar in 2006, a minimum incentive in the form of cash should be no less than 50USD. Possible alternatives include vouchers, gift certificates, or a possibility to win something of a larger value. (Guidelines for Conducting Focus Group, 2013)


Use careful protocol when using cash incentives

TIP

When money is promised for attending a focus group, the accepted practice is to provide cash to the participants at the conclusion of the discussion. Each participant is asked to sign that they have received the incentive and sometimes they are requested to add an address or a telephone number. Do not ask for Social Security numbers (SSNs).

Source: Participants in a Focus Group, 2013

It is advised to gather all the respondents with a time reserve of three to one weeks before the actual session and ensure they shall attend via phone on the day the focus group session is being held. Also it is a good idea for the participants to not be acquainted with each other since peer pressure is definitely a factor to avoid here.

The views or opinions of the attendants will be of a much more impulsive nature if they are not acquainted with the topic beforehand. Gathering people new to the concept of a focus group is also a good idea, since it will prevent "know-it-all" from ruining the spontaneity of the answers.

It is useful to over-invite respondents of 10 to 20 percent to be sure there the necessary number of respondents will come. To reduce barriers of attendance it is useful to offer:

- Late afternoon or weekend sessions for those who cannot make it during daytime
- Covering the cost of transportation to the venue
- Child care service provided
- Setting the venue at a convenient and well-known location
- Interpreter services

5.1 Strategies of recruitment

Once there is known what types of people are needed, there is necessary to find participants who fit those criteria. There are so many opportunities how to recruit participants that no one of authors uses the same division, but basically it is similar.

The paper *Participants in a Focus Group* gives seven different strategies:

Lists – using an existing list of people fitting to the criteria, if there is any. It is fast and economical. This may include lists of employees or clients who buy products of the organisation who asked for the research. For this strategy it is important to be sure the list is up to date, it is embarrassing to call for dead people.

Nominations – the most effective strategy is to have some unbiased parties name potential respondents. The unbiased parties may be people who have access and are able to contact a multitude of potential attendants. It may be local resistant, officials or influential. This strategy consists of identifying the identifiable criteria required of the respondents and then using multiple sources for a nomination list. Names are then randomly selected for the invitation to the focus group. For example if there is a working university student living alone in Prague needed, it might seek nominations from a university employee whose work cover accommodation scholarship. An alternative is also possible and it is called the snowball sample. This method consists of asking the people who already underwent the selection process to appoint other people similar to themselves, who they are likely to easily identify among those they know.

Piggyback Focus Groups – added focus groups to another event. This focus group session occupies the breaks and free time as to not to interrupt the primary event. For example this is ideal for professional groups.

On Location – focus group held at the place where the people come for shopping, recreation or otherwise. Potential respondents are contacted upon entering the chosen venue and are given a short series of introductory questions and – if they are eligible – are offered participation in the session. For instance: "A state department of natural resources wished to explore the experiences of visitors in the natural parks falling into their authority. The actual employees of the parks were taught how to successfully carry out a focus group and at certain times, they would stop vehicles entering the park and ask the crew the following: "Would anyone over 18 in this group be willing to attend an hour long discussion which shall take place at 7pm tonight? The topic of discussion will be the park and we wish to hear your opinions or ideas for improvement. For anyone who wishes to join the session, free firewood will be provided." (Participants in a Focus Group, 2013)

Screening/Selection Services – an existing database of potential participants categorized by socio-demographic characteristics. It is often supplemented by phone screening. This kind of screening and selection can be expensive.

Random Telephone Screening– a random choice of numbers from a phonebook, the screening questions filter out those unfit for the session. This method is categorized as an ineffective path to take whilst gathering participants.

Newspaper ads or mentions included within the company's internal PR (message boards, emails, etc.) – may prove efficient under certain circumstances but more often than not the participants then come after the financial (or other) reward.

In the workbook *Using Focus Groups* is written about four possible ways:

- Convenience – the choice is based on the availability of the people and being able to reach them in a simple manner. These are simple to recruit.

- Reaching the participants using the phonebook, randomly calling people and then simultaneously filtering out the unfit ones via the use of screening questions.
- Reaching the participants through organizations relevant to the research in some way, usually community based (church, community centres etc.), the client company or alternatives.
- The professional way – recruiters have a complete database at hand equipped with all the information on general consumers willing to attend the group sessions.

On the other hand *Guidelines for Conducting Focus Group* explains five possible ways:

Nomination – Certain people nominate individuals they deem fit for the research since the nominated people are known to them as being informed about the topic and able to sacrifice several hours of their free time whilst also respecting other people's opinions and expressing their own in a comprehensible manner.

Random selection – In case the potential participants are presented in the form of a specified set of people (e.g. all the employees of a certain company) with all of them willing to join, names may be chosen by chance for instance by a random draw conducted until the required number of participants is reached.

All members of the same group – It may also happen that a certain group may also serve well as an aggregate of people from which to choose participants (e.g. Kiwanis Club, PTO, Chamber of Commerce).

Same role/job title – The set of people to choose from may also be determined by one's position, a role in society, level of education etc. (e.g., retired nurses, young postgraduates etc.).

Volunteers – The criteria for participants given may be broad enough as to allow for a global recruitment to be carried out for instance with leaflets (see supplement 13.4) or ads.

Finally the source *Participants in a Focus Group* discuss the problem of conventional methods such as newsletters, letter invitations or announcements. Those methods are useless also. If the universal goal is defined as gathering as much quality data as possible, it is not advised to use these methods.

It is much simpler for a recruiter to pinpoint the ideal attendants of a focus group when the said recruiter has names, numbers and a little info on the participants. It is advisable to gather information from materials already at the recruiter's disposal (internal records, company directories etc.). If none of the aforementioned is available, the process may be more demanding. (Participants in a Focus Group, 2013)

It is almost impossible for any recruitment process to be entirely flawless. The recruiting forces make decisions based on their experience in the field and thus the whole process is restricted by their own capabilities. Some recruiters may fail to notice certain factors relevant to the research or even overlook characteristics in a potential respondent that would make the focus group session unique. It is useful to perform a test of the entire selection process and have the recruiters stand by and defend their personal choices in front of the parties that commissioned the research and also their own colleagues. Trade-offs are not exactly unusual and it always pays off to consider that some form of bias may be present. (Participants in a Focus Group, 2013)

5.2 Recruitment guidelines

For establishing selections criteria and drawing the guidelines it is useful to consider gender, age and power (Would a student be likely to make candid remarks when his/her teacher is also a respondent?). It is necessary to pinpoint the key characteristics of the desired participants in terms of demography and discernible character features which are wanted in the group. The criteria needs to be laid down in advance and must adhere solely to the main goal of the research. The more criteria are used, the more difficult is to find suitable people.

It is advised to use a screening questioner based on the desired characteristics to filter out those unfit for participation. The questionnaire (see supplement 13.5) is meant to be short and concise (4 to 6 questions), but is essential in order to prevent incorrect individuals participating in the session.

5.3 Arrangement

When thinking of meeting dates, there cannot be conflict with functions and special events. Some people have schedule that cannot be changed (i.e. teachers). Also events like elections, World Championship can make a barrier of attendance.

In setting the time of focus group, it is important to take into account what will yield the ideal results for the given aggregate of people who are recruited. New mothers may prefer late mornings; students give their preferences to late afternoon or evenings.

Location has to be easy to find with ample parking spaces and comfortable for the type of people who are invited. Depending on the group, it might be considered a bus line. The room should have a door in order to make the atmosphere a little bit private for the participants. The furniture should be arranged as follows – a circular table with up to 12 chairs (max. of 10 participants and both the assistant moderator and the moderator). Many public institutions (libraries, community centres) have such rooms at their disposal for free reservation.

Food is present at all times, at least it is necessary to offer a light refreshing drink and a small snack (biscuits etc.). It serves the purpose of having the participants in good spirits well if you arrange for a full meal but it is necessary to bring time into the equation and reserve further half an hour for that purpose. (Guidelines for Conducting Focus Group)

The recruiters must keep in mind that they are there to make the participants feel nice, limit any potential obstructions to a minimum, find any possible incentives so that the participants turn up etc. They must also coordinate the entire process, e.g. when the agency conducts more than one focus group using a particular type of a respondent, they fill out the groups gradually. (Participants is a Focus Group, 2013)

5.4 Administration

Once there are set all the criteria, times, locations etc. It is important to contact potential participants directly and personally. It is customary for the first contact to happen two weeks in prior to the session. If the potential participants are professionals, exceptionally busy people, they must be contacted a month or longer in advance.

People do not like cold calls in general so it helps when the recruiter tries to somehow bond with the recipient as early in the call as possible, for instance: “I got your name from John Carey. He is helping with this project...” (Participants is a Focus Group, 2013)
Some sources recommend creating a form with people who are invited (their phone numbers, addresses, comments,…). It supports the order in the recruitment process and provides the information who accepted, who rejected, who is substituent. It helps to orient in times, locations and different focus groups.

5.5 Confirmation

When a group of viable participants has been composed, it is advised to contact each and every one of them to ensure that they intend to turn up for the research. All the necessary info (time, place, incentive) must be given out in order to prevent confusion, also that the recruiter will contact them all first via e-mail and two or one day before the session, they will receive a phone call.
The scientific paper *Participants in a Focus Group* contains information that the follow-up letter cannot be a form letter (see supplement 13.6). The letter is put on an official company paper, signed by a responsible person (i.e. the moderator, the recruiter, the researcher).
The participants should also be aware that they ought to reserve at least between one and a half to two hours of their time. They should have given a session starts quarter of an hour before the actual focus group begins in order to have all the administration done by the beginning and some food and refreshes, and settling in to the group.
Another resource also indicates that there should be made a reminder phone call one day before the focus group session. It reinforces the importance of the group and it freshens up the memory of those who may have already dismissed the focus group session from their mind.

6 Types of respondents

Focus Groups are based on the group dynamics. Group dynamics is raised by the respondents. Based on the literature review it is possible to sort the respondents into several groups:

The **active individual** is optimal for the focus group. He/she engages in the discussion and he/she gives the space to the others as well. The moderator can listen only and make necessary records. There are no special interventions needed while working with this type of people.

On the contrary when there is a **shy or introverted individual** who is not able to communicate freely and who is willing to keep silent during the whole interview there is a huge necessity to pay attention to him/her in order to foster the discussion and because he/she represents a threat of an unbalanced group. Sometimes the body language can be very useful as well as the other gestures e.g. providing the coffee or adding the water etc. It can be useful to create the pairs of the respondents or to address them directly with their names.

If there is a **dominant individual** in the group and it is not possible to tame him/her and he/she keeps his/her dominating position during the whole group session it means not only the risk of losing the information but the inability of the moderator, too. The experienced moderator should not have any problems to bring such an individual into line and create a balanced group.

The most complicated situation occurs when there is **the respondent who actually does not want to participate** in the discussion, he/she keeps to be negativistic, he/she tries to make the position of the moderator complicated by means of the sarcastic notes or irrelevant comments, he/she keeps to show himself and he/she is obsessed with getting the attention of the other participants (Vysekalová, 2012). The moderator should try to motivate the respondent and make him/her cooperate.

A mis-recruited respondent is the respondent who does not meet the criteria of a research. The quick decision about how to proceed further with him/her needs to be taken. Such issues link discrepancy in the age or residences are not of a big importance. However, if it deals with the other brand of the researched product the respondent needs to be asked to leave the group. Even in this case the respondent is given the full remuneration, in some cases even the transport costs are reimbursed. (Kalivodová, 2012)

The Late Respondent means the trouble for the group as he/she is not fully involved. If it is only about five minutes, it is the minor issue (Kalivodová, 2012).

7 The Analytical part

As of this page, this thesis has been mostly theoretical. There was a literature review processed but it was not based on resources obtained from practice. This is important to know because to get an objective view it is useful to have comparison of theory with the reality. In the following part of the thesis will be the analytical part processed and summarized. This can be processed only because of an Agency which was so kind to provide all the information necessary. The Agency does not wish to be identified so in this work is called 'the Agency'. The Agency mentioned before will be introduced as an opening to the practical part of the thesis.

The Agency is a private and independent marketing agency and each of its owners have more than ten years of experience in the field. The owners of the Agency help clients to find and use the opportunities in the market. Further they offer the simple and useful solutions based on the understanding of client's needs and consumer behaviour. They specialize mostly in the qualitative research however they are capable to ensure the complex research including the quantitative analysis. The Agency ranks among the most successful in the marketing communication and brand management.

The Agency is not limited by the borders of the Czech Republic. It expands into many European Union countries and boasts with a lot of experience. The flexibility and high client orientated attitude is highly preferred. The series products are not the offer; on the contrary the products are tailor-made design researches where the standard and totally new methods and technologies are combined. The Agency is mostly focused on:

- Mapping the market and segmentation
- Brand management support and support of effective marketing communication
- Innovation and new product development
- Product and service optimization (price, content, design etc.)
- Employees research
- Customer satisfaction and service quality

Typical research tasks are:

- Observation
- Desk research

- Individual interviews
- Group discussion

Qualitative research agency's position is complicated due to the wide range of the problems which are examined. Simply spoken it is always the relationship between the client, customer and the Agency. It is not possible to generalize the client's requirements. The same applies for the methods used in the research. Practically the Agency creates the entirely new research design, thus deciding the usage and frequency of the given methods. This is depicted in the below given Table 3 where is the number of respondents, too. This is to clarify the difference between the focus group and other methods. This is exactly one of the points where there are the disputes among the authors of the publications. The boldly given methods are the most commonly used by the researchers.

Table 3

Method	Number of respondents
Individual interview	1
Diad	2
Triad	3
Mini group	4
Focus group	6 - 8
Workshop	10 - 20
Observation	
Desk research	

Source: Kalivodová, 2012

As each of the clients has the idea about the research of his/her own it is necessary to mention the two types of clients. This distinction is important as it influences the project considerably, although indirectly.

"The first category of clients gives the agency a pre-defined 'hard' project design, this is usually the case of the service sector. This category of clients is often made of large companies with their own sales department which makes a choice of the winning bid out of

several bids made in a tender" (Kalivodová, 2012). This type of design is the cheapest, however it is not tailor-made, which means the results are not always fully adequate. In this moment it is needed to refer to the chapter 3.3, some of the managers consider the marketing research being something similar to a bureaucratic job.

The second category of client asks the Agency to create a research design. This is the best but more expensive way. Usually these clients come from the consumer products sphere. Their task generally sounds to help with the product launch, new product evaluation, brand change etc.

The Table 4 gives the idea about the research design created by the Agency. It has been mentioned several times already. This research design was created for project of Energy Drink A (the brand wished to stay in secret).

Table 4

	Primary Group (older people)		***Secondary Group (younger people)***	
	Preferents XYZ	***Preferents competition***	***Preferents XYZ***	***Preferents competition***
City A	1 FG men 1 FG women	1 FG women	1 MINI men	
City B		1 FG men	1 MINI women	1 MINI women
City C	1 FG men		1 MINI men	1 MINI men
Details	Everyone consumes the XYZ products at least once a month or more frequently Everyone has their favourite brand = consumes it the most often Target group A = XYZ brand. Target group B = XYZ brand; none of them rejects the above brand. Everyone go out regularly (clubs, discos, atd.). Some of them (at lest 2 per group) go in for sports. Most of them are single.			

Source: Kalivodová, 2012

To sum up mentioned above, although the Agency is a research agency which operates with psychological methods and works with people, it is still just a business. The more money is the client able to pay for a research project, the better and useful will be information gathered.

7.1 Individual Interview

Often the individual interview is the integral part of the project. The researchers decide to use this method in case they need to be sure that the respondents are not influenced. *"Only individual interview can prevent respondents from having their answers influenced by others" (Kalivodová, 2012).*

The further reason of using the individual interview is the effort to get more details about the researched issue. Only in case of the individual interview the researcher can concentrate fully on the given respondent, pay all the attention to him/her, react promptly to his/her answers or sometimes even to his/her questions.

The final note to the topic of individual interviews needs to be mentioned, they are the alternative to the focus group in case of sensitive topics, i.e. mortgage, intimate hygiene, cancer treatment etc. The respondents have the tendency not to be so shy and they are willing to talk more. There is more time and privacy during the individual interview.

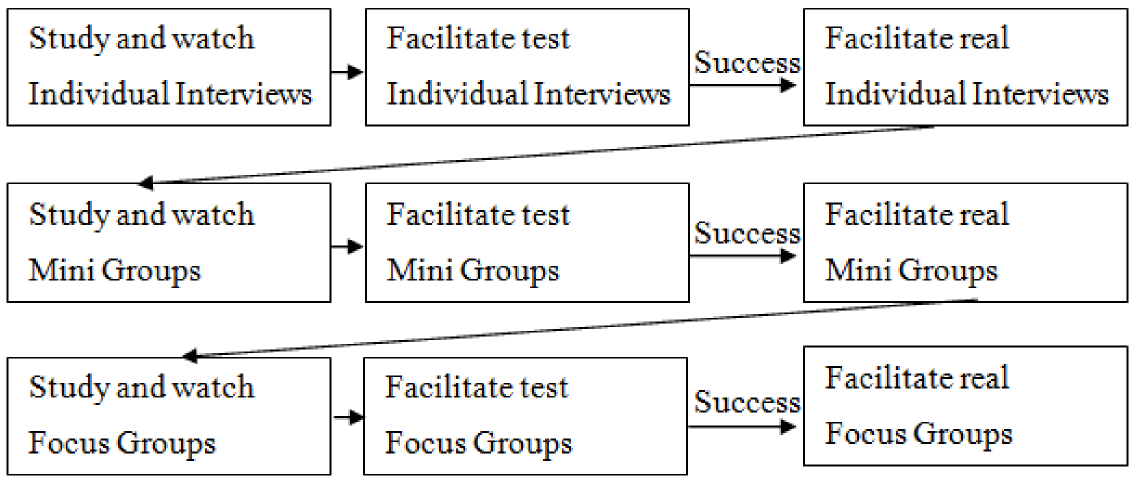
Even though being aware of all the advantages, the agency still prefers the focus group, individual interviews are time consuming and time is one of the most important factors in marketing.

7.2 Focus Group

A focus group is considered to be the most efficient way of doing research. It saves time for all the parties involved and on the client's part it also saves quite lot of funds. It is swift and ensures that both the participants and the client will experience something interesting. To clarify – a single team of researchers may take care of three group sessions of a total estimate of 20 people in approximately six hours. On the other hand one team of researchers is able to manage 12 individual interviews, i.e. questioning 12 respondents. This number is much lower than in focus group case.

The management and architecture of a focus group is taken care of by the researcher. From the time the Agency had been established, it has grown steadily by enrolling more researchers, who must be thoroughly trained, the process of which takes up about one year. To illustrate this process, see the enclosed Diagram 3. The new employees start by learning how to perform individual talks with respondents, move on to smaller groups of people and by the end of this process they are finally capable of managing an entire focus group.

Diagram 3



Source: Kalivodová, 2012

7.2.1 Size of Focus Groups

It is customary for a focus group session to contain from 6 to 8 participants, this number however may vary depending on the aim and various relevant factors of the research. Larger groups of people are required to draft an evaluation project or an assessment of the researched subject. For instance a client may wish to filter out the least effective two of his/her seven video advertisements, thus the focus group identifies them but also provides explanation why they were chosen. Further down the road, a quantitative research is conducted to see which advertisement is viewed as being the most effective – the required criteria rise from the data gathered in the focus group sessions. (Kalivodová, 2012)

On the other hand, for example to explore new research or market ideas, it is advised to use smaller groups to enable the researchers to delve more into the researched points and get a deeper insight. The same rule applies here as well - the larger the group is, the less space an individual gets to express themselves which has as a result that the Agency more often than not uses these smaller groups. (Kalivodová, 2012)

7.2.2 Number of Focus Groups

The types of focus group session may vary within one research project, e.g. two larger sessions and a Mini Group, while the number of sessions conducted is decided by either hard design (see Table 4) or will rise from the talks with the client prior to the research. It may of course happen that the number of sessions is found to be inadequate since not enough relevant data had been gathered during the predefined number of sessions. What is there to do? Conduct another session or work with the existing data? It is rather easy to answer this question – it does not happen. Only experienced researchers are employed by the Agency and thus they ensure the goal of any given project is reached. Their expertise is high enough for them to rightly estimate how many sessions are necessary to reach the aim of the research and all aspects and factors are taken into consideration and implemented into the design prior to the research. (Kalivodová, 2012)

7.3 Observation

Although not being mentioned in the literature review in reality the observing is very much connected to the focus group. The connection is that high that the researcher very often gains more important and more detailed data this way. How does it work? The agency has its own established system having two researchers in each focus group. The first one is the moderator, it is not necessary to mention the role more here, the second one is the observer.

The observer is located in the adjacent room equipped with the one-way glass. This glass is perceived as a mirror by the respondent (see Picture 1). There is the recording device in this room functioning (each of the focus group is video recorded). The observer watches the behaviour of the respondents and makes notes. In the moment the focus group is finished the observer works together with the moderator and they share their knowledge, watch the video if there is the need to summarize more information of if one of them realizes that he/she lacks the part of the focus group. Afterwards they make the analysis together and prepare the report.

Almost always there are more groups for each project (see Table 4)**.** That is the reason why the researchers take turns in their roles. The first one of them is the moderator, the other one the observer, in the next group it is vice versa.

Picture 1

Source: Technet.cz, 2014

7.4 Recruitment

Guidelines and questionnaires for the project are agreed between researchers and confirmed by the project manager. Once all those specifications are listed, they are forwarded to a recruitment manager. The recruitment manager has nothing to do with creating guidelines and questionnaires; it is strictly the work of researchers. However, the researcher as well as the recruitment manager has to be sure that he/she understands deeply the purpose of the study and is able to answer any question that may occur.

The Agency has two people who are trained to manage and coordinate the recruitment process. Generally the work is divided equally between those recruitment managers. It may often happen that there are more projects running at a time which means that each recruitment manager leads their 'own' project. In some cases one manager has more difficult project than another.

The recruitment managers take care not only of getting quality respondents but also of the whole administration process and the Agency in general. The head of recruiting has to take care of the execution as well – the place where the sessions will take place and also managing the sessions not held within the agency's premises. Arranging of food and beverages for the attendants also falls within their job description. All their responsibilities are listed in supplement 13.10.

7.4.1 Strategies of recruitment

The work of the recruitment manager starts when he/she receives specifications and relevant questionnaires (see supplements 13.7 and 13.8). The choice of recruitment strategy is clear in advance and depends on the type of project. Mostly the strategy is given for the recruitment manager but when discussing with the project manager, he/she is able to change it. The Agency uses four strategies of recruitment and does not use the Piggyback focus groups because they are too risky and uncertain.

Nominations

The most common strategy within the Agency is nomination. The recruitment manager gets in touch with the external forces and hands them the standards required. The recruiters are hired by the Agency to arrange possible participants. They have a home office, they are paid for each appropriate respondent and officially there are no special sanctions for participants who do not meet the needed criteria. The only thing which worries recruiters is that in the next project there will not be any work for them. When the recruiter gets more than the usual amount of people who do not meet the criteria needed, the recruitment manager will not give him/her the job in the next project. Managers divide the work only between reliable people so the one who nominated not suitable respondents is out of the work. To sum up the recruiter decides who has a chance to attend the focus group. The recruiters usually work via classified advertising or through informal contact network.

When the recruitment manager has enough time, he/she can take an advantage to manage the nomination by himself/herself. It is necessary to mention that the manager never nominates all the people needed for the project. His/her nomination is only to supplement the recruiter's nomination. In this case the manager is extra paid by the Agency as the recruiter would be. Due to the amount of projects, this occurs exceptionally.

The nomination strategy of recruitment often battles with considerable risks connected with *briefing* people (see chapter 12). Recruiters usually acquaint the participants with various details about the project, thus influencing their opinions and values. For instance while an alcohol-related research was conducted, men who drink a minimum of ten beers and five shots weekly were needed. A recruiter informed the participants of this requirement, thus distorting their message – the participants knew what they were supposed to say even if it was not true. As a result, even a man who drinks barely five beers and no liquor a week joined the research. The distortion of results is imminent, yet hard to discover since is not always possible to detect the *briefed* participants.

List

As was mentioned above, the most common method is nomination. From time to time, it occurs that a client (a mobile operator for instance) gives their own list of potential recipients (i.e. customers who bought a smart phone in the first half of the previous year). The following process of recruitment is then less costly, but also less pleasant. The reasons are obvious – the Agency has a list of potential participants at hand and thus spares the costs for recruiters but the list contains people who have no clue as to what the Agency-conducted marketing research is. The recruitment manager contacting these people often faces refusal and needs to explain what the point of the research is over and over again – provided that the people even let him/her. Over 35% (see Table 5 and Table 6) of the recipients hang up right at the beginning. However this percentage is relative due to varying levels of sensitivity of the projects. Point being that it is more difficult to handle a research commissioned by a bank to survey clients who took a loan rather than customers who own a smart phone. This assertion is supported by the Table 5 and Table 6 where are statistics of two different projects. The numbers differ and due to the various specifics of the projects, it is impossible to average them out. The difficulty of recruitment is also made harder with increased number of recipients. Due to their lack of interest it is often to recruit up to 100% further participants. Also their reliability in terms of being able to attend the surveys is much more limited compared to recipients who answer an advertisement.

It needs to be said that this method happens to be the most accurate one with minimal distortions due to wrongly conducted *briefings*. This advantage often exceeds all the potential drawbacks.

Table 5

Project 1 Services of phone operator	No. of groups in the project	Number of people						Success rate
		in the given list	needed	contacted	who declined at the beginning	who declined	who agreed to join the session	
Recruitment manager 1	2 (8+8)	250	32	142	67	33	42	29,5 %
Recruitment manager 2	2 (8+8)	268	32	157	97	38	22	14 %
Σ	4	518	64	299	164	71	64	21,4 %

Source: Author

Table 6

Project 2 Bank services	No. of groups in the project	Number of people						Success rate
		in the given list	needed	contacted	who declined at the beginning	who declined	who agreed to join the session	
Recruitment manager 1	1 (4+4)	270	8	132	95	27	10	7,6 %
Recruitment manager 2	1 (4+4)	289	8	174	121	47	6	3,4 %
Σ	2	559	16	306	216	74	16	5,2 %

Source: Author

To be able to understand the given tables it is necessary to note that the data come from the internal Agency statistics. The Agency has the statistics not only for its own review but for the clients and employees as well. This is the feedback for the projects.

The Table 5 already meets the criteria, it is only necessary to persuade the people to come to the focus group. This explains why there is the considerably higher success rate. On the other hand the second table shows the list of the potential respondents for the sensitive projects, where there is the much lower percentage of cooperation.

As already mentioned previously it is not possible to generalize the data from the lists. First of all it is depended on the recruitment manager, secondly on the project and last but not least on the respondent as such (as the respondent cannot always fulfil all the criteria for participation in the focus group).

On Location

Although the recruitment on location rarely occurs, it is still used and effective. In case it is demanded by client, the Agency has to obtain a permit of the person or company in charge of the location. For instance Unilever may order a research of consumers buying Hellman's mayonnaise in Albert and Tesco stores. The Agency has to obtain a permit to recruit in those shops.

This strategy of recruitment is quite complicated, takes a lot of time but there are usually no deviations and no wrong participants. In this case the recruitment is usually done by the researchers, because in the process there might be much information obtained. The recruitment manager would not be able to pass that information correctly because he/she is not trained for that. Since there has been only few projects using this kind of strategy (there was only one project in 2012), researchers are able to cover it within The Agency. To compare with other strategies see Table 7.

Table 7

The type of strategy	No. Of recruited respondents (in 2012)	% of use
Nomination	1199	77,4 %
'Own' nomination	42	2,8 %
List	215	13,9 %
On Location	58	3,7 %
Own databases	34	2,2 %
∑	1548	100 %

Source: The Agency, 2013

Own databases

The agency has a database of all the people ever to participate in surveys at its disposal. The purpose of this database is mostly for use within the Agency, it is strictly secret and accessed by only a selected few. The database contains information provided by the recipient and also notes made by the researchers and others (see Table 8). For some projects, participants from the internal database are chosen, specifically those who expressed the wish to be contacted if the Agency is interested in further research.

Example: A project assigned by Vitana to survey uses of instant soup – people who participated in another research connected with the use of Vitana bouillon were contacted. A time limit must be kept though – it is unacceptable to use people who participated in a research less than half a year ago.

Table 8

Surname, Name	**Phone no.**	**BCN**	**Date**	**Project**	**Location**	**Project no.**	**E-mail**	**job**	**education**	**Other information**	**Recruiter**	**Fee**
NOVÁK, Pavel	725 123 456	600505 /05xx	3.9. 2011	Bier	Prague	8001 23	novak@seznam.cz	policeman	SS	Absent with no excuse	Kozel	0
SLEPKA, Ota	765 834 953	781212 /0939	3.9. 2011	Bier	Prague	8001 23	sa@volny.cz	gardener	SVS	Paid, very good	Kozel	600
JOZEF, Jiří	602 258 952	890403 /638	3.9. 2011	Bier	Prague	8001 23	jozjir@seznam.cz	student	SS	Paid	Kozel	600
NOVÝ, Miloš	777 227 227	811010 /3456	3.9. 2011	Bier	Prague	8001 23	Novy.m@seznam.cz	dustman	PS	Do not ask AGAIN!	Hádková	600
ZRZAVÝ, Jan	739 090 999	871111 /3421	3.9. 2011	Bier	Prague	8001 23	jazrz@seznam.cz	student	U	paid	Hádková	600
STROH, Adam	605 987 098	880423 /9430	3.9. 2011	Bier	Prague	8001 23	Ada.stroh@itc.com	student	U	Weird – paid before	Běhal	400
KÁCEL, Tomáš	769 094 093	791009 /2340	4.9. 2011	Bier	Brno	8001 23	kacel@zmen.co.uk	analyst	SS	Paid before	Hádková	400
TIK, Jonáš	602 854 093	710928 /3458	4.9. 2011	Bier	Brno	8001 23	admin@gmail.com	operator	SVS	paid	Běhal	600

Source: Author

To explain: Table 8 contains fictitious data and is used only to illustrate how the Agency's database looks like. In the table is included:

- SURNAME, Name
- Mobile phone number of the respondent
- Birth certificate number of the respondent
- Date of the focus group
- Subject of the project
- Location where was the focus group placed
- Project number is for internal use of the Agency
- E-mail of the respondent
- Job of the respondent

- High achieved education of the respondent (PS – primary school, SVS – secondary vocational school, SS – secondary school, U – university)
- Other information – in this column is written if the respondent participated the focus group, if not if he/she had called for an excuse, if he/she was good in the discussion, if he/she was paid before the group because of the high number of respondents, and other important notes
- Recruiter's name is there to be sure who has a responsibility for the respondent and who was/was not paid for the respondent
- Remuneration, fee in CZK differs from project to project

What is important in the Table 8 are red and yellow respondents. The red ones are the respondents who had been disturbing and interrupting the group, who had not been able to cooperate, who had been responding too much or not at all. This group includes the respondents who had not arrived and had not excused themselves either. Shortly given – these respondents are the ones in whom the Agency is not interested any more.

The yellow ones are the pre-paid respondents. This means the half-year limit to attend another session after the research is not needed.

7.4.2 Incentives

Respondents are informed at the very beginning about incentives which is prepared for them if they will participate (by the recruiter in the nomination case or by the recruitment manager in another kind of strategy). The respondents are further informed of the fact that if they accept the remuneration, they must provide the Agency with their birth certificate number which is used in a payment forms for the Tax office (see Table 9). The remunerations are of financial nature in 99 % of the cases and vary from 300 CZK to 5000 CZK per session (300 CZK is awarded to a student for an hour in a focus group session and 5000 CZK is awarded to a person of a higher social status – doctors, lawyers etc.). Sometimes even a reward in the form of a gift is possible – i.e. in a Tescoma research with predominantly female, low-income respondents, a high-quality Tescoma frying pan is an interesting offer.

In coherence with the rewards it is necessary to mention that the respondents are not informed about the client. The main reason is not to influence respondent's opinion, moreover 19 out of 20 clients require to hide their identity, although it is of course difficult to obscure the identity of the client if the respondents receive a Tescoma frying pan. A client who is comfortable with no hiding its identity rarely occurs. In that case are respondents informed only when they asked for that.

Table 9

A Payment form				
Surname, Name	**BCN**	**The address (according to ID card)**	**Incentive**	**Signature**
NOVÁK, Pavel	930706/1287	Hlavní 8, Praha 5, 150 00	600 CZK	
SLEPKA, Ota	811010/3476	Fialová 98, Praha 2, 121 00	600 CZK	
JOZEF, Jiří	871111/3456	Korunní 16, Praha 2, 120 00	600 CZK	
NOVÝ, Miloš	880423/9423	Plackého 1, Praha 1, 110 00	600 CZK	
ZRZAVÝ, Jan	791009/2309	Kozlého 87, Praha 1, 110 00	600 CZK	
STROH, Adam	710928/3400	U Krbu 45, Praha 9, 190 00	600 CZK	

Source: Author

7.4.3 Double Check and Confirmation

The recruited respondents must meet the required criteria and this is retrospectively verified by the Agency. When the recruitment manager receives contacts from the recruiter, he/she must ensure via the use of a telephone questionnaire that the aggregate of people is satisfactory, complies with the criteria required (see supplement 13.8) and checking the respondent in Simar databases. During the phone call the respondent is asked to provide his/her first eight numbers from the birth certificate number. Birth certificate number is a key point in searching in Simar.

Simar is an association of a selection of the foremost marketing research agencies and public opinion research institutions in the Czech Republic. Simar pays the most attention to improving the quality of services provided by member agencies. Simar formulates the Czech standards of quality, ethics and methods, obligatory for members of the Simar association. See more at: http://www.simar.cz/simar/o-simaru.html#sthash.PFzYgTbz.dpuf

Access to the Simar database is paid and works on the basis of the first eight characters in the birth certificate number, which displays information about the person in question, provided that they had already participated in a research. If the database comes up with no result, the person is 'clean' and may participate in the research.

Simar is a rather useful tool, it is also quite a costly one though. For that reason not all companies are willing to use its services. The database is paid and provides information not only about respondents but also about the rest of recruiters. There is also a black list of various troublemakers who may never participate in focus groups of any kind or who may never recruit participants for focus groups.

If the respondent is not *briefed*, the recruitment manager is able to discover inconsistencies in the criteria during the phone checking. However if the recruiter has *briefed* the respondent on questions that may turn up, this questionnaire is of no use to the Agency. When non-compliance is determined, such a participant is excluded from the focus group and is substituted by a back-up respondent. For one group are usually recruited one third of people more to avoid troubles with not attending or improperly recruited respondents.

After the group has been composed together, the participants are again notified about all the relevant information on the session via a text message two days before the session. To make the process easier the recruitment manager creates the list of respondents who are coming for the focus group session (see Table 10). This is useful tool for checking the attendance but also for other administration necessary for each focus group.

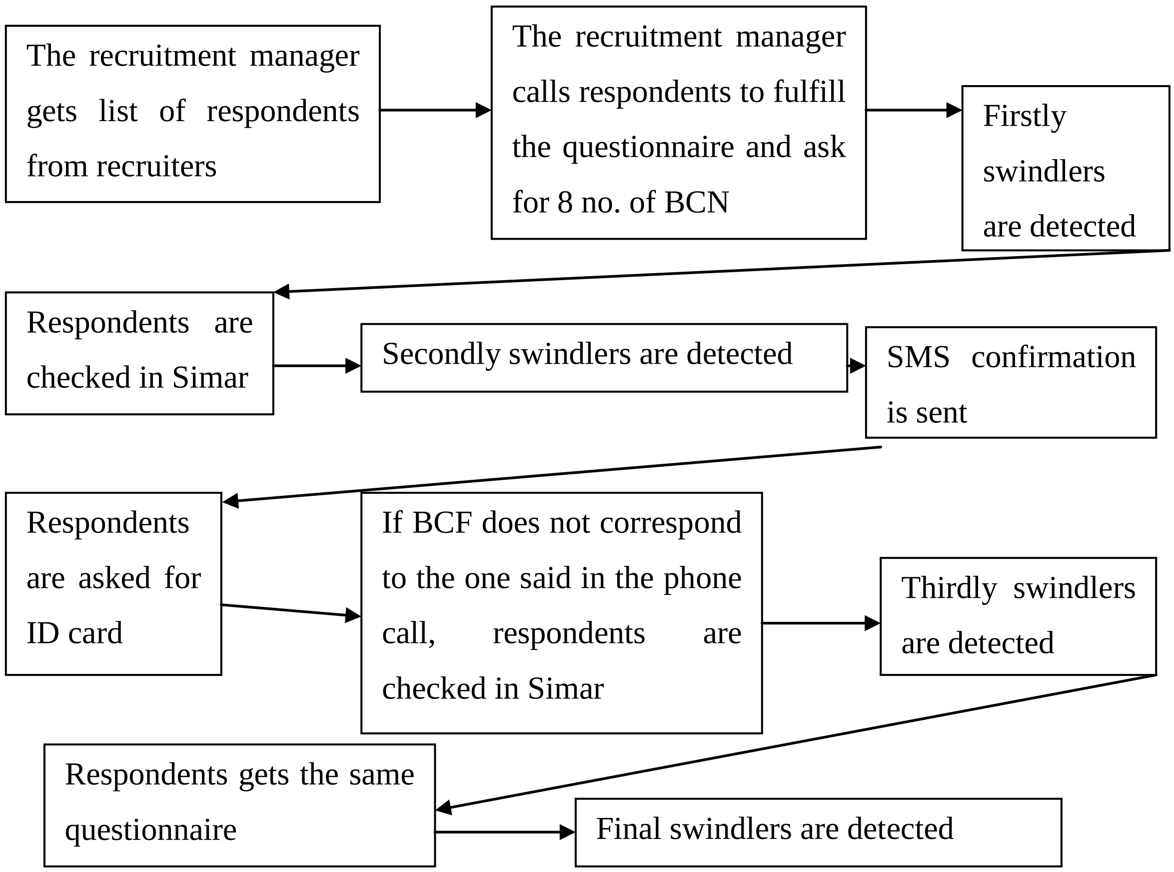
Table 10

Project: 800123 Energy Drink XYZ				**Date: 3.9.2011 Prague**	
Time	**Surname, Name**	**Phone no.**	**BCN**	**Recruiter**	**note**
18:00	NOVÁK, Pavel	725 123 456	930706/12XX	Kozel	
18:00	SLEPKA, Ota	765 834 953	811010/34XX	Kozel	
18:00	JOZEF, Jiří	602 258 952	871111/34XX	Kozel	
18:00	NOVÝ, Miloš	777 227 227	880423/94XX	Hádková	
20:00	ZRZAVÝ, Jan	739 090 999	791009/23XX	Hádková	
20:00	STROH, Adam	605 987 098	710928/34XX	Běhal	

Source: Author

Prior to the actual discussion it is necessary to verify the identity of the participants via their ID card, to confirm the birth certificate number is the same as the respondent said in the phone call). If the birth certificate number differs, the respondent is again checked in the Simar databases. In this step are finally the cheating respondents revealed. Then they are given a questionnaire with questions identical to the one they have already given answers to via the phone (see supplement 13.9). This is the last stage of the compliance check and it is the time when the really last swindlers are uncovered. They are either *briefed* or spend their lives searching for upcoming focus group sessions and consider attending them as a form of occupation. There are more and more people who systematically do so which is why research agencies integrated their information and experiences in the Simar database. To sum up the process described in this chapter see the Diagram 4.

Diagram 4



Source: Author

7.4.4 Arrangement

The researcher himself appoints the time and date of the research. Sessions are held during the working week, seldom during the weekends - for instance a research with businessmen who participate in the research solely for being able to contribute to the research thus all measures must be taken to tailor the conditions of the research to the needs of respondents.

When talking about location, the focus groups take place in two possible locations. The first option is held in Prague. In that case sessions are run in the Agency's venue. There is a room for pre-session administration – checking identity of respondents and filling questionnaires by participants. This room is also used during the session when respondent needs to answer a call or take care of urgent matters. This room is here not to disturb the process of the focus group.

Then there is a room where the focus group actually takes place (see Picture 1). It is equipped with a round table, all the recording equipment necessary and a large artificial mirror behind which is another room for the eventuality if the clients decide to observe the process of the focus group.

Catering is also the recruitment manager's responsibility. The respondents have coffee breaks that consist of warm and cold non-alcoholic beverages. Lunch or warm dinner is never ordered for the respondents however it is done so for the clients. Their offer consists also of a large choice of high-quality alcoholic beverages.

The second part consists of focus groups held outside the Czech Republic or outside Prague. In this case the recruitment manager arranges for appropriate locations in hotels or restaurants. The premises must be primarily comfortable, located near to one another and it is necessary for them to be separate. In the client's room a TV is ready broadcasting a live feed from the room in which the focus group takes place, thus replacing the artificial mirror.

7.5 Types of respondents

The types of respondents are given in the literature. However, dealing with them can differ in practice. The Agency uses the high quality recruitment in order to gain the suitable respondents. Even in this case it is sometimes not possible to influence or avoid this.

It is necessary to identify the **introverted individual** in the very beginning of the session. If this is the case the moderator keeps repeating and emphasizing that it is the opinion of each participant what he/she needs to hear. There is no incorrect opinion, everybody is important for the research, after all this is the reason for each respondent to participate. If the introvert keeps to be non-responsive the facilitator skips general stuff and asks only concrete questions to which is the participant able to answer.

On the other hand **dominating participant** can occur in the focus group. It is not a rule but it happens often. The facilitator again stresses the needs to hear everyone in the session. If this does not work, the facilitator tries to explain again that it is necessary to give room to other participants. Although dominating or silent participant are more work for moderator, researchers put emphasis on its importance to get different opinions and group dynamics.

In case the **mis-recruited participant** and not willing to participate is revealed in the beginning he/she is excluded and the replacement is invited (this is exactly the reason why there are more respondents than needed recruited for the group). If it comes up that the respondent had been cheating during the recruitment process he/she is excluded without the remuneration and he/she is listed in the black list database. If the mis-recruitment was caused by the Agency's failure the respondent still receives the remuneration, however, he/she cannot participate.

In case the mis-recruitment is revealed only during the session, the moderator does not show anything and the group keeps going. The only thing is that all the information provided by the respondent in question are not considered and are not used in the research. The participant is not excluded because this would influence the group considerably with the consequences of invalid data and useless group session.

Late participant is always sent away with no remuneration to prevent disrupting the session.

8 Summary

The results of the thesis confirmed that the majority of professionally published theories are compliant with practise or they show only minor deviations which are necessary for the practical implementation of the research. The brief summary of the results based on the observation and follow-up interviews with the involved employees of the Agency can be seen in the below provided Table 11. The Table shows the main focus of the author, the basic description of the situation provided in the literature and the practical solution of the situation taken by the Agency including the reason of the deviation of this solution in comparison to the theory.

Table 11

In what part occurred the deviation	Theory	Practice	Why that deviation occurred
Who recruits?	Usually clients	Always the Agency	To be sure that respondents meet the criteria
Recruiter must describe respondents at the beginning	Who is paying for the research	Respondents cannot be informed about the client	Not to influence their opinions
	What will be done with results	Respondents are rarely informed about the target of the research	Only when the Agency has an approval from the client
Incentives	Used when budget allows	Is used for every FG	To support the attendance
	The agency cannot ask for SSN	The Agency always asks for BCN	Necessary for the Tax Office

In what part occurred the deviation	**Theory**	**Practice**	**Why that deviation occurred**
Respondents	Are recruited one to three weeks in advance	Are recruited three weeks to the beginning of the session	Sometimes it is necessary to recruit a day before the session
	It is preferable if respondents do not know one another	Respondents never know one another	The respondents cannot influence one another and should not have the same experiences
	Newcomers are preferable	Newcomers are preferable but half a year distance from FG is sufficient if not otherwise specified	Not always possible to recruit newcomers
	Over invitation 10 to 20 %	Over invitation 1/3 of respondents needed	The proportion was established after long experience in the field
	Reduce barriers of attendance via transportation help, child care services	Reduce barriers of attendance via remuneration and description of way	The experience showed it is enough to support the attendance
Strategies			
List	Up to date list, fast and economical	Less costly but less pleasant	The list contains people who have no clue about the research

In what part occurred the deviation	Theory	Practice	Why that deviation occurred
Nomination	Neutral parties	Recruiters	Recruiters are hired by the Agency
Piggyback Focus Group	Added FG to another event	Never	Too risky and uncertain
On Location	Recruiters ask several screening questions and then invite to a FG	Researchers recruit on location	Researchers are able to analyse data from recruitment and use is as valid information for research
Screening	Expensive, supported by phone screening	Own database	Rarely occurs
Telephone screening	Random selection of names from telephone dictionary	never	Inefficient and time consuming
Recruitment questionnaire	Brief – 6 to 10 questions	Detailed – all criteria included	Used twice
Confirmation	Call each one + written confirmation (letter, email)	Confirmation right after recruitment via SMS or e-mail	Electronic way is quick and efficient
Reminder	Two or one day before the session via call	One day before the session via SMS	Electronic way is quick and efficient
Information letter	Official	Never	Inefficient, slow, expensive
Double check	*No data founded*	Simar, Questionnaire	To prevent mis-recruitment

In what part occurred the deviation	Theory	Practice	Why that deviation occurred
An association of marketing research agencies	*No data founded*	Simar	To prevent mis-recruitment
Types of respondents			
Mis-recruited respondent	Is requested to leave the session; represents a threat of invalid data	Never sent away because of disrupting the session.	Information gained from such a respondent is filtered out
Late respondent	The first five minutes are not problem	Sent away without any compensation	Disruption of the session
Dominating respondent	The fault of the moderator; threat of unbalanced group	Needed for the balanced group	Interaction is the basis of FG
An introvert	Threat of unbalanced group	Specific question; everybody's views are important	Difference between respondents is the basis of FG
Location of FG	Public agency	Agency's studio or a private room	Comfort
Time of FG	Weekend included	Seldom during the weekends	Businessmen, doctors, lawyers
Refreshment	Full meal	Snack	No break – time is money
Clients room	*No data founded*	Always prepared	To be transparent

Source: Author

It may seem that the process of the recruitment is complicated, however, the opposite is true. Due to the number of the steps the recruitment in the Agency is very transparent and efficient. It comes mostly from the multiple checking of the respondents. When focusing on Agency process it is needed to emphasize that it is the marketing agency and that is why the financial aspect is significant. As mentioned in the thesis the range of the project depends on the budget. Even the research among the respondents confirms that the financial reward is a significant motivation for them to participate in the focus group and it strengthens their willingness to 'adapt' themselves (see supplement 13.3).

After the proper observation and the following consultancy with the researcher and the recruitment manager it showed that the only problem of the recruitment is the inadequately recruited respondent. The mis-recruited respondent means the failure of the individual (the respondent or the recruiter) and this can influence the outcome of the whole research. It is crucial to pay attention to this trouble and focus on its source.

The recruiters try to make their work easier, to get more money for less time. They make it easy by briefing a couple of people and afterwards transmit them to the recruiting manager as suitable candidates fulfilling the criteria. This statement is confirmed by the researcher and the recruitment manager, however, not by the recruiter as such (the recruiter involved in the mis-recruitment was not willing to participate in the author's research).

The respondents have the tendency to be willing to adjust themselves to the criteria because they feel this is the simple way how to get the money. This statement is confirmed by the researcher and the recruitment manager, indirectly by the respondent, too (see supplement 13.3), not by the recruiter (the recruiter involved in the mis-recruitment was not willing to participate in the author's research).

As already mentioned in the thesis the main task of the recruitment manager is to check the given criteria of the recruitment. Due to the importance of this task the checking process is time-consuming (see Diagram 4) but efficient. The percentage of the wrongly recruited respondents taking place in the focus group is very low. Every briefing of the respondent means the consequences (see chapter 9).

The theory insists that the dominant or introverted individual means the threat as well. However, the researcher of the Agency refuted this statement. There is more work needed with such respondents during the group, the moderator needs to pay them special attention. However, their presence is necessary for the required dynamics of the group, which is the substance of the focus group. The Table 11 shows how to deal with such respondents during the focus group.

9 Conclusion

The marketing is irreplaceable in the market economy, its research methods are reliable and elaborated. As each of the methods carries certain risks, too, the author has decided to concentrate on the risks occurring during the focus group session.

“No selection process is perfect. Recruiters make the best choices they can with the knowledge they have available at the time of decision. Selection is limited by their human capacities” (Participants in a Focus Group, 2013).

The profound problem during the process of recruitment is the mis-recruited respondent. There are a lot of risks related to this problem – e.g. the loss of the value of the group discussion, it can influence the research result or even bring the cooperation between the client and the Agency to the end.

The outcome of the author's research shows that the problems during the research are caused mostly by the failure of the individual. If the conscious failure of the recruiter is proofed the cooperation with him/her is terminated immediately in order to prevent the recurrence. This not-reliable recruiter is listed in the black list in the internal database as well as in Simar. This will prevent his future cooperation of such a person with any other agency. As mentioned in the thesis, the same procedure is done when the failure of the respondent is proofed.

According to the explanation of the researcher and the recruitment manager, fraud with the respondents caused by the recruiters is generally rooted in the ethics of the Czech society. The general awareness of the people is that it is normal to go round in order to make benefit. This was caused to the significant extent by the former socialist regime, common ownership made people not to feel responsible for their deeds and duties. According to the researcher, the internal statistics of marketing research agencies proof that the developed democratic countries are much better in this respect. The author comes to the conclusion that if everybody accepts the responsible attitude to the research the mis-recruitment disappears. It follows that avoiding the aforementioned problem is unfortunately virtually impossible but still it may be the subject of further psychological research.

10 Resources

1. BEALL, A. E. Strategic Market Research: A Guide to Conducting Research That Drives Businesses, USA: 2010, iUniverse, Inc., ISBN 978-1-936236-16-9
2. BELK, R. W. Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing, Great Britain: 2006, MPG Books Ltd, ISBN 978 1 84542 100 7
3. BENS, I. Facilitating with ease! United States of America, California: 1997, Participative Dynamics, ISBN 0-7879-5194-3
4. BERG, B.L. Qualitative research methods for the social sciences, United States of America: 2001, Allyn and Bacon, ISBN 0-205-31847-9
5. BIRN, R. The International Handbook of Market Research Techniques, UK: 2002, Kogan Page Publishers, ISBN 0-7494-3865-7
6. DAYMON, CH.; HOLLWAY I. Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications, New York: 2011, Routledge, ISBN 0-203-84654-0
7. DISMAN, M. Jak se vyrábí sociologická znalost (How is sociological knowledge made), Praha: 2002, Karolinum, ISBN 978-80-246-0139-7
8. GORDON, W. Good thinking – A guide to qualitative research, Great Britain: 1999, NTC Publications, ISBN 1 84116 030 X
9. HENDL, J. Kvalitativní výzkum – základní metody a aplikace (Qualitative research - basic methods in and applications), Praha: 2005, Portál, ISBN 80-7367-040-2
10. HENNINK, M., HUTTER, I., BAILEY, A. Qualitative Research Methods, London: 2011, SAGE Publications Ltd, ISBN 978-1-4129-2225-8
11. JEX, S. M. Organizational Psychology: A Scientist-Practitioner Approach, New York: 2002, John Wiley & Sons,Inc., ISBN 0-471-38420-2
12. KALIVODOVÁ, V. The Focus Group Method in Qualitative Research, Czech Republic: 2012, CULS
13. KOLB, B. Marketing Research A Practical Approach, London: 2008, SAGE Publications Ltd, ISBN 978-1-4129-4796-1
14. KOTLER, P. KELLER, K. L., BRADY, M., GOODMAN, M., HANSEN, T., Marketing Management, Engalnd: 2009, Pearson Education Limited, ISBN 978-0-273-71856-7
15. KOZEL, R. Moderní marketingový výzkum (Modern marketing research), Praha: 2006, Grada Publishing, a.s., ISBN 80-247-0966-X

16. KOZEL, R., MYNÁŘOVÁ, L., SVOBODOVÁ, H. Moderní metody a techniky marketingového výzkumu (Modern methods and techniques of marketing research), Praha: 2011, Grada Publishing, a.s., ISBN 978-80-247-3527-6
17. LE RICHE, P., TANNER, K. Observation and Its Application to Social Work: Rather Like Breathing, London: 1998, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, ISBN 1-85302-926-8
18. MACHKOVÁ, H. Mezinárodní marketing (International marketing), Praha: 2009, Grada Publishing, a.s., ISBN 978-247-2986-2
19. MARIAMPOLSKI, H. Qualitative market research: A comprehensive guide, London: 2001, Stage, ISBN 0-7619-6954-3
20. MERTENS, D. M. Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, USA: 2010, SAGE Publications, Inc, ISBN: 9781412971904
21. MIOVSKÝ, M. Kvalitativní přístup a metody v psychologickém výzkumu (Qualitative approach and methods in psychological research), Praha: 2006, Grada, ISBN 80-247-1362-4
22. MORGAN, D. L. Focus Groups as Qualitative research, United Kingdom: 1997, Stage, ISBN 0-7619-0343-7
23. MORGAN, D. L. The Focus Group Guidebook, USA: 1998, Stage, ISBN 0-7619-0760-2
24. NOVÝ, I., SURYNEK, A. Sociologie pro ekonomy a manažery (Sociology for economists and managers), Praha: 2006, Grada Publishing, a.s., ISBN 80-247-1705-0
25. TRACY, S. J. Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact, UK: 2013, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, ISBN 978-1-4051-9203-3
26. TROMMSDORFF, V., STEINHOFF, F. Marketing Inovací (Innovation Marketing), Praha: 2009, C. H. Beck, ISBN 978-80-7400-092-8
27. VYSEKALOVÁ, J. Psychologie reklamy (Psychology of advertisement), Praha: 2012, Grada Publishing, a.s., ISBN 978-80-247-4005-8
28. POWEL, R. A.; SIMGLE, H. M. Focus Groups, Great Britain: 1996, International Journal for Quality in Health Care, Vol. 8m No. 5, pp. 499 – 504

Internet resources:

29. FORET, M., STÁVKOVÁ, J. Marketingový výzkum (Marketing research). Grada Publishing, 2003, 20 pages. [online]. [cit. 2014-01-27]. Available at: http://www.ereading.cz/nakladatele/data/ebooks/1445_preview.pdf
30. *Using Focus Groups*. Version 2.0. Toronto, 2002, 64 pages. . *thcu.ca* [online]. [cit. 2013-07-10]. Available at: http://www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/publications/focus_groups_master_wkbk_complete_v2_content_06.30.00_format_aug03.pdf
31. Lutherwood [online]. [cit. 2013-07-11]. Available at: http://www.lutherwood.ca/employment/services/workshops-events
32. [online]. [cit. 2013-07-11]. Available at: http://www.urban.org/reentry_mapping/Conducting_focus_groups.pdf
33. *Participants in a Focus Group*. [online]. [cit. 2013-08-11]. Available at: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/24056_Chapter4.pdf
34. Technet.cz [online]. [cit. 2014-01-29]. Available at: http://technet.idnes.cz/foto.aspx?foto1=PKA31ab37_IMG_2395.JPG

11 The List of Abbreviations

BCN	Birth Certificate number
e.g.	'*exempli gratia'* = for example; example given
etc.	and so on
FG	focus group
i.e.	'*id est'* = that is; in effect
MINI	mini group
no.	number
PS	primary school
SMS	short message service
SS	secondary school
SSN	Social Security number
SVS	secondary vocational school
U	university
WMA	the World Medical Association

12 Key terms

Desk research is an acquisition and analysis of the secondary data – both in printed and electronic format.

Ethics is set of beliefs used to distinguish what is right and good from wrong and bad and that result in a duty or obligation to act in a certain way.

Facilitator is a person who presides over a debate, focus group.

Focus Group also called group discussion is a qualitative research method in which a group of people are interviewed about their views, opinions and perceptions.

Gatekeeper is a person or group who controls access to something or somebody.

Hypothesis is a statement that makes an assumption about the cause of a problem.

Information is relevant data that have been analysed to diagnosis the cause of a problem.

Knowledge is information that has been analysed to find a solution to a problem.

Marketing concept is philosophy that states the purpose of marketing is to provide consumers with products they either need or desire.

Marketing research is an ongoing process of gathering accurate information from the external environment and customers to assist the company in implementing the marketing concept.

Moderator is a person who presides over a debate, focus group.

Observation is a research method where information is gathered by watching participants and recording their actions.

Participant is a person attending the study, an active subject of the study.

Qualitative methods is an umbrella phrase that refers to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of interview, participant observation, and document data in order to understand and describe meanings, relationships, and patterns.

Qualitative research is a research based on social science principles used when the problem is still vague or when information.

Quantitative methods are research methods that use measurement and statistics to transform empirical data into numbers and to develop mathematical models that quantify behaviour.

Quantitative research is a research based on scientific principles used when proof of a fact is needed or when the research question deals in descriptive facts such as who or how many.

Recruiter is a person who is specially trained for the recruitment process.

Recruitment manager is a person who is specially trained for the recruitment process and is responsible for it.

Research design defines the type of the study, research questions, hypothesis, the method of data acquisition, location and other details.

Research is a systematic creative work to increase the stock of knowledge.

Research proposal is a written plan of action that describes why and how the research will be conducted and also how the resulting information will be analysed and reported.

Research question means what an agency needs to know to solve a problem and provide the basis for a research study.

Researcher also called scientist is a person who conducts a research.

Respondent is a person attending the study, an active subject of the study.

Secondary data is data that already exists in a useable form because they have been connected by others.

To brief - The term comes from aviation jargon. Briefing is an event that takes place before a mission, during which the pilots are familiarized with the mission objectives and all the relevant factors. It holds the same meaning in the business world – its purpose is to concisely inform a person of key information about a given transaction, product etc. It is typically used for example in a sentence like “I need to be briefed on tomorrow”, meaning “I need you to give me all the necessary information I need to know for tomorrow's meeting.” Briefing is taken care of by product specialist, project managers or account managers, depending on whether they inform the top management, salesman, or PR managers.

13 Supplements

List of supplements

13.1 Observation

13.2 Individual interview

13.3 Shortened outcome from the individual interviews with the respondents

13.4 Sample flyer

13.5 Sample screening

13.6 Sample confirmation letter

13.7 Definition of recruitment

13.8 Recruitment questionnaire for a recruiter

13.9 Recruitment questionnaire for a respondent

13.10 Job description of the recruitment manager

13.1 Observation

The simple observation of focused groups will be based on:

- What is the location
- What time is stated
- Refreshment
- Is there any client's room, does the client have space
- What types of respondents are attending
- Does every invited respondent come
- How a client reacts to a focus group session
- What a researcher thinks about a client
- How much does a client talk to a researcher

In the participant observation of recruitment process the author will focus on several points:

- Division of the work between people responsible for the recruitment
- What those people explain the respondents and what cannot be mentioned
- How long before a focus group are respondents recruited
- What is an incentive and how much does it motivate respondents
- What the Agency does to decrease the attendance barriers
- How many people are over-invited for a focus group

- What the strategies are used, what are the specifics and how often are they used
- What methods are used in the Agency for the checking and following confirmation of respondents

13.2 Individual interview

10 respondents involved in the Energy Drinks research were answering the following questions (the respondents were ensured that no answers will be used against their interest and the research is fully anonymous):

- How did it happen that you are involved in the FG? (advertisement, recruiter, flyer, telephone call…)
- What was the motivation for you to participate in the FG?
- Were you promised any reward for participating? If yes, what reward is that?
- Describe the recruitment process (from the very first contact till the start of the FG)
- Were you 100 % frank during the recruitment process and during the FG? Or did it come to your mind to think about what the Agency would like to hear?
- How many respondents were there participating in the FG?
- Was anybody from the respondents in the FG exceptional (introverted, dominant, negativistic, not able to respond etc…)
- Did you know someone from the respondents?
- Were you willing to answer all the questions fully? (including the BCN)
- Did you like the environment, location and time of the FG?
- How would you evaluate your participation? Did it mean any contribution for you? Would you participate again? Why?

One **recruiter** was interviewed about:

- Strategies of recruitment
- Recruitment guidelines
- Incentives
- Financial incentive for recruiters
- Mis-recruitment (where does it occur and why?)

Two recruitment managers were asked about:

- Strategies of recruitment
- Recruitment guidelines
- Arrangement
- Administration

- Confirmation
- Incentives
- Double check
- Mis-recruitment (where does it occur and why?)

With one **researcher** will be discussed all of the above. Furthermore:

- Methods used in one research
- Individual interview as a method
- Observation as a method
- Types of respondents
- Size of focus group
- Number of focus group in one research
- Mis-recruitment (where does it occur and why?)

13.3 Shortened outcome from the individual interviews with the respondents

1. ***How did it happen that you are involved in the FG? (advertisement, recruiter, flyer, telephone call…)***

3 respondents mentioned the advertisement
7 respondents were contacted by the recruiter

2. ***What was the motivation for you to participate in the FG?***

6 respondents were motivated financially
2 respondents wanted to know something new
1 respondent found the FG being a good way how to spend the leisure time
1 respondent mentioned the location

3. ***Were you promised any reward for participating? If yes, what reward is that?***

600 CZK for the participant, 400 CZK for the substitute

4. ***Describe the recruitment process (from the very first contact till the start of the FG)***

Respondent – advertisement (the answers were identical)

I found the advertisement when browsing the internet and responded. I received the questionnaire afterwards. Within the three days the agency called me whether I am still interested, on phone I made the detailed questionnaire again which served them to proof that I fulfil the given criteria. Afterwards they told me the time and location of the FG. One day in advance of the FG I received the text message confirming that they count on me in the research and they reminded me the time and location. In the given day I was at the agency 15 minutes in advance of the starting time of the FG. They checked my ID in the reception and I received the questionnaire again. It was quite similar to the one which I had filled in together with the agency lady before. I gave the questionnaire to the reception. Shortly before the start the lady from the reception announced that I had been chosen as a substitute despite the fact that I had fulfilled all the criteria. I received the amount CZK 400 and was ensured that I am allowed to participate in another research in the nearest days and that the half-year period does not apply for me.

Respondent– recruiter (the answers were identical)

I received the text message whether I am interested to participate in the research with the given theme. I agreed and then I received the call from a lady who introduced herself as being the co-operator of the marketing agency and she offered me the time of the research. Then I needed to answer about 10 questions in order to confirm that I comply with the criteria. Afterwards she pointed out that there would still be one more call from the agency *and another questionnaire. The following day the agency called and we made another questionnaire. Afterwards I was provided with all the details about the time and location that I need to be on spot 15 minutes in advance and have the ID with me. At the same time they informed me about the reward and that there is the possibility to be the substitute only and what is the reward in such a case. They asked me to inform them in case I am not able to participate in the FG. One day before the FG they texted me confirming that they count on me and they reminded me about the time and location again. In the day of the FG I came to the agency 15 minutes in advance. My ID was checked in the reception and they gave me the questionnaire. It was quite similar to the previous one with the lady from the agency. I gave it back to the reception and afterwards I was chosen to participate in the FG.*

5. ***Were you 100 % frank during the recruitment process and during the FG? Or did it come to your mind to think about what the Agency would like to hear?***

7 respondents were fully frank
3 respondents were thinking about what might the agency like to hear

6. ***How many respondents were there participating in the FG?***

10 respondents arrived, 7 participated

7. ***Was anybody from the respondents in the FG exceptional (introverted, dominant, negativistic, not able to respond etc…)***

Author's note: based on the interview with the researcher it was recommended not to include this question. Each of the respondents reflects the environment different and unique way.

8. ***Did you know someone from the respondents?***

All of them stated that they did not know anybody from the others.

9. ***Were you willing to answer all the questions fully? (including the BCN)***

All the respondents gave the positive answer.

10. ***Did you like the environment, location and time of the FG?***

All the respondents gave the positive answer.

11. ***How would you evaluate your participation? Did it mean any contribution for you? Would you participate again? Why?***

FG was the contribution for 6 of the respondents, 3 were not sure, 1 was negative
9 would participate again, 1 not

13.4 Sample flyer

Source: Lutherwood, 2013

13.5 Sample screening questionnaire

EXAMPLE OF SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Recruitment Screener

For this project we need to recruit 11 participants who are the primary food purchaser in their household. We would like to get a good mix of people from different age categories and professions.

1 Are you the primary food purchaser in your household?

- ❑ Yes Eligible
- ❑ No Terminate

2 Are you 18 years of age or older?

- ❑ Yes Eligible
- ❑ No Terminate

3 In what year were you born?

______

4 What is your current occupation?

- ❑ Homemaker
- ❑ Retired
- ❑ Self employed
- ❑ Other:

____

5 Gender

- ❑ Male
- ❑ Female

Source: Using focus groups, 2002

13.6 Sample confirmation letter

Follow-Up Recruitment Letter

[Date]

[Name and address of participant]

Thank you for accepting our invitation to talk about designing a home visiting program for new parents. The Department of Health is funding this program, and we want advice from people like you about what will work and what won't. It doesn't matter if you have had home visits or not. We're interested in the ideas of all moms with new babies. The group will be held:

Tuesday, May 14

2 to 4 p.m.

Burns County Department of Health Building

1494 Idaho Ave West in Spooner, just around the corner from Nick's Café

Room 102—just inside the front door and to the right

It will be a small group, about eight people. We've got great child care arranged for Megan and Max. Several teachers from the Early Childhood Family Education program have agreed to watch the little ones. We'll be bringing a few snacks for you and the kids, and we'll have $50 for you at the end of the session.

If for some reason you won't be able to join us, please call as soon as possible so we can invite someone else. If you have any questions, please give me a call at 624–2221.

We are looking forward to meeting you, Megan, and Max next Tuesday. See you then.

Sincerely,

Your name
Title

Source: Participants in a Focus Group, 2013

13.7 Definition of recruitment

NAME OF THE PROJECT:

LEADER OF THE PROJECT:

DATE AND PLACE

Date	**Location**	**Time**	**Format**	**Target Group**
22.3.	City A	4:00 p.m.	FG	Older men, target group A
23.3.	City A	2:00 p.m. 4:30 p.m.	MINI FG	Younger men, target group A Older women, target group A & B
24.3.	City B	2:00 p.m. 4:30 p.m.	MINI FG	Younger women, target group A & B Older men, target group B
25.3.	City C	2:00 p.m. 4:30 p.m.	MINI FG	Younger men, target group A & B Older men, target group A

CRITERIA

- Everyone consumes the XYZ products at least once a month or more frequently
- Everyone has their favourite brand = consumes it the most often
- Target group A = XYZ brand.
- Target group B = XYZ brand; none of them rejects the above brand.
- Everyone go out regularly (clubs, discos, atd.).
- Some of them (at lest 2 per group) go in for sports.
- Most of them are single.

FEE

- Fee for participation: XYZ Focus Group
- Fee for participation: XYZ Mini Group.

NOTE

- Noone has workd in manufacturing, selling or distribution of food stuff or beverages.
- Noone has worked and study in health care.

Source: Kalivodová, 2012

13.8 Recruitment questionnaire for a recruiter

RESPONDENT DATA

Name and surname:…………..……………… Age:………………………………………….............

Telephone no.:………………………………… E-mail:……………………………………….............

Time of the group discussion:………………… Highest achieved education:...................................

Profession: ……………………..………….. No. of children in shared household:………...............

Marital status: Married – single – other

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

1. When was the last time you have participated in research which contained ether group discussion or individual interview? *Never or more than 6 months ago.*

Month and year:……………………………

2. Do you personally or does any of your close relatives work in any of following professions?

Profession	*Answer*	*Work(s) as (only when yes)*
Media and journalism	Yes / No	
Psychology, human resources	Yes / No	
Advertisement, marketing, market research	Yes / No	
Manufacturing, selling or distribution of food stuff or beverages	Yes / No	
Health care	Yes / No	

3. Which one of the following beverages do you drink? *At least once a month of beverage XYZ and at least 2 or 3 in every group I drink more than once a month.*

	How often	*Which brands*	*Brand I buy most often*	*In what package*
Sweetened, carbonated beverages (e.g. Coca-Cola, Fanta, Kofola, ...)				
Bottled water				
Fruit juices				
Ice coffees				
Energetic beverages				
Sports drinks				
Ice teas				

4. Is there any brand XYZ which you try to avoid? Which and why? *Nobody rejects brand XYZ.*

5. How often do you go out for entertainment - bars, club, pubs, parties at you friends house and so on? *At least once a week in average.*

6. Do you do any sport? Which one? *At least 2 of the group actively do sports (ski, bicycle,...).*

Source: Kalivodová, 2012

13.9 Recruitment questionnaire for a respondent

<u>RESPONDENT DATA</u>

Name and surname:…………………………… Age:………………………………………………..............

Telephone no.:…………………………………… E-mail:………………………………………………..............

Time of the group discussion:………………… Highest achieved education:....................................

Profession: …………………………………. No. of children in shared household:……….............

Marital status: Married – single – other

<u>RESEARCH PARTICIPATION</u>

1. When was the last time you have participated in research which contained ether group discussion or individual interview?

Month and year:………………………………

2. Do you personally or does any of your close relatives work in any of following professions?

Profession	***Answer***	***Work(s) as (only when yes)***
Media and journalism	Yes / No	
Psychology, human resources	Yes / No	
Advertisement, marketing, market research	Yes / No	
Manufacturing, selling or distribution of food stuff or beverages	Yes / No	
Health care	Yes / No	

3. Which one of the following beverages do you drink?

	How often	***Which brands***	***Brand I buy most often***	***In what package***
Sweetened, carbonated beverages (e.g. Coca-Cola, Fanta, Kofola, ...)				
Bottled water				
Fruit juices				
Ice coffees				
Energetic beverages				
Sports drinks				
Ice teas				

4. Is there any brand XYZ which you try to avoid? Which and why?

5. How often do you go out for entertainment - bars, club, pubs, parties at you friends house and so on?

6. Do you do any sport? Which one?

Source: Kalivodová, 2012

13.10 Job description of the recruitment manager

During the assignment and during the course

- Sending the terms of assignment to the particular recruiters as well as the quotas (see supplement 13.7), he/she is responsible for correctly recruited respondents;
- Checking the internal database, black list, Simar (see chapter 7.4.3);
- Assembling and adjusting the recruitment questionnaire in order to reveal the possible not desirable respondent by means of the indirect open questions;
- Choosing together with the researcher the respondents who would participate in the group or be the substitutes, he/she is making the list of respondents for each FG (see Table 10);
- Paying the reward to the substitutes;
- Immediately after the termination of the FG posting the first eight characters from BCN to the Simar database in order to prevent that the respondent from attending multiple FG successively in the short time span;
- After termination of the FG paying the reward to the participants (see Table 9) – payment form is used. The payment form is a list on which the participants fill in their personal information for the Tax office to enable receiving the remuneration.

When the project is finalized

- Evaluating the progress of the whole project from the point of view of the difficulty of the recruitment, possible unwanted occurrence, problems and criteria changes in the assignment in relation to the client;
- Evaluating the partial elements of the project for the particular recruiters, proposing their reward and penalties in relation to their work;
- Making the statistical overview about the particular projects for the internal need of the company and for the general survey for evaluation of the project activity (very closely focused on the recruitment difficulties and problems and obstacles with the providing the high standard respondents.

Administration of the Internal database

- Administration of the internal database of all respondents, blacklist included. The database includes the number of the project, data, location, first name and family name, first eight characters of BCN, education, employment, the way how the respondent achieved to participate in the project, name of the recruiter, advertisement, facebook etc. see Table 8.