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Monthly insights from your friends  
in the marketing research industry.

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## RECENTLY AT RPG

the Research & Planning Group

A year ago, we held a Client Satisfaction Study to provide us with suggestions on how we could improve our services.

One of the biggest suggestions was to offer some resources that explain all of the research services we offer.

We took those suggestions to heart, and we've developed a new web site and a research catalog that provide a wealth of information.

You can see both of them at <http://www.researchplan.com>!

We've also launched a daily blog that explores new media, research techniques and topics of interest in a unique way at <http://blog.researchplan.com>.

Finally, we're excited to be bringing on two new platforms for online research, both qualitative and quantitative. Some of this stuff is really high-tech, and it will provide us with some new ways to obtain deep and meaningful data for our clients.

We wish everyone a wonderful new year, and we hope that 2011 is an exciting and prosperous time for all!

# RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Online encyclopedia **Wikipedia** celebrated its **10th anniversary in January**. 42% of all American adults use Wikipedia to look for information.

The younger you are, the more likely you are to use Wikipedia; 62% of internet users younger than 30 are likely to use the free encyclopedia, compared to only half of those in the 30-64 age brackets.

While Wikipedia is a popular way to pass the time online, it's still less popular than using social networks or watching videos on sites like Youtube.

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project ([Link](#))



Image source: Wikimedia Commons



Image source: Wikimedia Commons

**Johnny Depp was America's favorite movie star in 2010**, according to a January report from the Harris Poll, taking the top spot from 2009's favorite, Clint Eastwood (who's ranked #9 for 2010).

Denzel Washington (ranked #2) was most popular among men, folks aged 34-64, and everyone aside from the west coast. People aged 65 and above tended to prefer John Wayne (ranked #3).

Angelina Jolie (ranked #5), Julia Roberts (tied for #6) and Sandra Bullock (ranked #10) were the highest-ranked actresses on the list.

Source: The Harris Poll ([Link](#))

**The holiday season in 2010 was a happy one for retailers** - between the months of November and December, the National Retail Federation reports that sales sat around \$462 billion, a 5.7% increase over 2009.

The Apple iPad and the Microsoft Kinect were two of the big ticket sellers this year, but one of the biggest winners was the eBook readers category.

Both Amazon's Kindle 3 and Barnes & Noble's NOOKColor sold like crazy during the holiday season, and while sales numbers have not yet been released, both retailers are claiming that their respective devices are their bestselling item of all time.

Source: National Retail Federation ([Link](#))

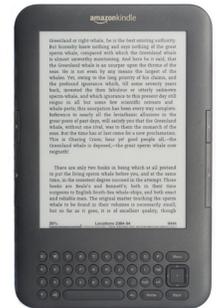


Image source: Wikimedia Commons



Image source: iStockPhoto/Microsoft

**One group that would seem to benefit the most from eBooks would be college students.** And yet they're not ready for the shift yet.

OnCampusResearch reported in May, 2010 that 74% of college students still prefer to use a printed text when taking a class, and only half would consider using a digital text if it were available.

Three in four students who had purchased a digital text had read it via a laptop or a netbook.

Source: OnCampusResearch.org ([Link](#))

**Four out of five adults in the U.S. need to work on their diet**, a December report from the NPD Group says. The older you are, the more likely you are to eat well; those aged 21 to 54 have far worse diets than those 55 and above.

NPD reports that almost everyone knows what healthy eating is, but younger adults have diets deficient in fruits, vegetables and dairy products and high in fat and calories.

Younger generations rank taste and price/value as important attributes in deciding what to eat and drink. Only 40% of adults rank the nutritional values of foods as a top priority. **RPR**

Source: The NPD Group ([Link](#))

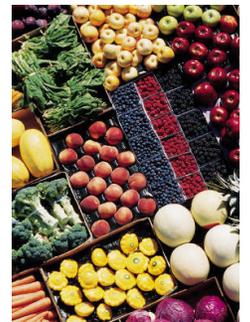


Image source: Microsoft

# WHY ASKING 'WHY' CAN BE MISLEADING

by Sean J. Jordan

It's late, and Joe has been dispatched by his pregnant wife to pick up some groceries. Chief among her requests: a jar of strawberry jam.

"Come home without it," she warns him, "and it won't be pretty."

Joe dashes to the store, makes a beeline for the correct aisle, and finds himself faced with over thirty different varieties of strawberry jam on the shelf. He realizes he has no idea which brand his wife prefers, and in his haste, he's left his cell phone at home.

Almost instinctively, Joe reaches for a jar of Smuckers, and then stops himself as his fingers wrap around it. "I'd better look at the labels," he decides, and starts comparing his options.

Joe realizes that price is the biggest differentiator, but there are also jams boasting reduced calories, or organic ingredients. One brand claims to have an improved taste while another promises fresher fruit.

Joe doesn't move. He can't. He's locked in a state of analysis paralysis, with no idea what choice he should make.

Joe's plight is common, because he's experiencing an inner argument within his own brain that's preventing him from making a decision. But this is not some simple battle between "reason" and "emotion" -- it's a complex conflict between emotional systems where reason can actually get in the way.

In the book *How We Decide*, author Jonah Lehrer explains that decisions about products are influenced by two specific regions of the brain: the nucleus accumbens (NAcc), which plays a role in the brain's reward system, and the insula, which produces aversive feelings to negative stimuli. The insula is like a screaming baby that the brain wants to shush and keep quiet; the NAcc is like a fickle lover that the brain is constantly trying to appease.

The result of all of this, Lehrer says, is that the brain is in a constant argument that is often won by the whims of the NAcc when it comes to decision-making. But the prefrontal cortex (which controls cognition and serves as a necessary balance to the hedonistic NAcc) can get in



the way and disrupt the decision. When individuals attempt to consciously analyze the reasons that they prefer something, the results can be paralyzing... and even misleading.

Consider a study led by Timothy Wilson and published in the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* in 1993. Wilson and his team brought in two groups of women and gave them a choice between five different posters -- two featuring fine art and three featuring humorous cat pictures. The women in the first group were simply asked to rate each poster and select their favorite, which they were allowed to take home. The second group also had to explain *why* they liked or disliked each poster. **95%** of the women in the first group selected the fine art. But only **64%** of the women in the second group made that choice. What's more, the women in the second group were significantly **more likely** to be **dissatisfied** with their choice several weeks later.

The difference, the researchers argued, was that the thinking of the second group became muddled due to the requirement of justifying their preferences. The emotional reaction of the first group resulted in top-of-mind selection and higher satisfaction. Forcing the women to justify and explain their decision resulted in a choice that was less likely to

be the satisfactory option. From a neuroscience perspective, the women made the mistake of telling their NAcc what it wanted instead of letting it be their guide.

Joe eventually goes with his gut and grabs the popular brand he'd initially been drawn to. Upon returning home, he suddenly recalls that his wife's mother had offered them this same brand with their breakfast when they'd visited for Christmas. His wife had commented then that she'd grown up eating the stuff.

Joe's emotions have remembered an important detail that will lead to a pleasant feeling of gratitude from his wife... and allow him to avert the pain of an argument.

Consumers often don't understand the entirety behind the reasons why they make decisions. That's one reason it's important to obtain top-of-mind data before delving too deep.

As with Joe, understanding the emotional component of the decision can make a world of difference in the results. **RPR**

For further reading, we recommend [Jonah Lehrer's book \*How We Decide\*](#) and the article '[Introspecting About Reasons Can Reduce Post-Choice Satisfaction](#)' by [Wilson, Lisle, Schooler, Hodges, Klaaren and LaFleur](#), published in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 19 vol 3

# RESEARCH INSIGHTS

## CUSTOMERS TELL US WHAT THEY'LL NEVER TELL YOU

by David Rich

After many years of conducting customer research studies, I am often asked by those who have not yet benefited from research services, "Why should we pay a research firm to talk with our customers? We are in contact with them every day. What can opinion researchers do that we can't do ourselves?"

The simple truth of what opinion researchers offer boils down to two words: confidentiality and objectivity. Research participants know that they are speaking in confidence when they respond to a research professional's questions. We all know that what people say in private is often very different than what they say in public. Customers have a lot to say, but their service and product suppliers will never hear what they need to know because customers will not tell them. If they don't like the service they receive, they will go elsewhere. They may tell their associates, friends, and relatives, but they will not tell the service provider.

And if they do tell the service provider, there is usually so much emotion wrapped around their comments that the service provider either turns a "deaf ear" to it or tries to defend their organization. In either instance, both confidentiality and objectivity are a lost cause. That's why the opinion research industry is one of the fastest growing segments in business today.

Every company person has an agenda with its customers. That agenda does not include really wanting to hear what customers



Image source: iStockPhoto/Microsoft

have to say and accepting *everything* they say as credible information.

Not so with professional researchers, who establish a rapport with the person they are interviewing, creating a temporary bond that assures the respondent that he or she can feel free to be honest without fear of reprisal. In the space of an opinion research interview, the respondent is invited to be completely expressive, holding nothing back. The interview will not result in a debate, nor will the researcher express a defensive position. It's all about the respondent.

That bond does not and **cannot** exist between a service provider and its customer. A company will never have the advantages of confidentiality and objectivity that their independent research professionals have.

Over the years, we have marvelled at how many things customers have told **us** that they would never tell the companies sponsoring the research. We've felt privileged to function as an intermediary... and we've enjoyed seeing those opinions effect powerful change in organizations once they're out in the open. **RPR**

## DIY Research

There are perils to conducting research on your own, but our white paper will tell you about three studies that are perfect for do-it-yourself research.

Get it now: <http://www.researchplan.com>

## DID YOU KNOW?

Whether it's Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, texting, or one of the thousands of up-and-comers on the Web... social media has changed the way the world is communicating!

Did you know the following?

 82% of American adults are cell phone users, and 72% of adult cell phone users send and receive text messages.<sup>1</sup>

 Adults send and receive a median number of 10 texts per day. Teenagers aged 12-17, on the other hand, send and receive a median number of **50** texts per day.<sup>1</sup>

 79% of American adults are Internet users. 61% of these users are members of a social network.<sup>1</sup>

 There are over 150 million Facebook user accounts in the US, and over 500 million worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

 8% of American adults who use the Internet are Twitter users, but only 2% use the site on a typical day.<sup>1</sup>

 Twitter users tend to be young and urban, and the service is much more popular among African-Americans and Latinos than Caucasians.<sup>1</sup>

 72% of Twitter users have used the site to share personal information. 55% share links to news stories. 54% post humorous or philosophical observations.<sup>1</sup>

 2 billion videos are watched per day on Youtube. 2 billion more are viewed on Facebook each month.<sup>3</sup>

Sources: 1. Pew Internet & American Life Project  
2. Facebook.com 3. royal.pingdom.com

## ABOUT US

The Research & Planning Group's experienced and innovative approach to marketing research has helped clients achieve their business objectives for over 25 years.

We are dedicated to helping a wide range of companies and organizations find solutions to their marketing challenges. Our strengths include B2B, health care, service industry, qualitative and quantitative studies.

For more information, please visit <http://www.researchplan.com>, or call us toll-free at 1-800-318-7094.

We appreciate referrals, and encourage you to share this newsletter with colleagues and friends!