

# Using qualitative research to inform a segmentation system

*Gerri Morris* shares the key insights gained from combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques for the Edinburgh International Film Festival

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**M**orris Hargreaves McIntyre is an arts management and research consultancy. We have an in-house research facility and are unusual in that we deliberately combine qualitative and quantitative research. Traditionally the sector makes a distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative surveys are robust but limited in scope. Qualitative techniques produce rich but unquantifiable insights. Many of our projects require that we make sense of our clients' world for them, providing them with insights into their market that enable them to plan strategically from a position of deep understanding of their audience's motivations, needs and wants.

In order to provide this insight Morris Hargreaves McIntyre's approach deliberately breaks down the artificial divide between quantitative and qualitative data. We use a process that enables us to synthesise the qualitative views, or motivations, of many visitors into a range of quantitative measures.

Our bridge between the two types of research is modelling. Essentially, we gather as many qualitative responses as possible using a battery of creative techniques. We then analyse, pattern, classify and structure this data into models of visitor motivation, behaviour and response.

We then use these models to generate quantitative survey questions that can accurately measure these

motivations, behaviours and responses. This intelligence is used to distil and clarify findings into real-world strategies to help our clients develop new and existing audiences.

An example of this merging of qualitative with quantitative data is the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Several years ago we were asked to undertake a full audit of the festival's marketing activity which included conducting research into their existing and potential audiences. This entailed using a battery of techniques which included an attender survey, a population survey, depth interviews and focus groups. The quantitative and desk research helped us identify a number of behavioural factors that seemed to point to important strategic issues in relation to marketing the festival and selling tickets. It was obvious that we needed to understand the differences between people who booked in advance and people who bought tickets on the door, and between highly frequent attenders and one-off attenders.

Depth interviews and focus groups with festival attenders disclosed that the essential difference between groups of visitors, which determined their levels of frequency and the way in which they engaged with the festival, was their attitude towards taking risks. The openness to taking risks as opposed to a cautious mentality or risk aversion emerged as the main definer in a segmentation system that we developed for the festival.

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**Risk segments**

Risk level	Segment	Segment description
High	Risk Taker	Willing to try films without knowing what to expect and without much prior recommendation
Medium	Cautious Gambler	Willing to choose films without necessarily knowing what to expect but where there is a familiar actor, director, studio etc., or friends or reviewers have recommended it
Low	Safety First	Willing to only choose established films, where they know what to expect, and stick to familiar names that have been consistently recommended



The segmentation system presented eight distinct audience segments.

**1999 / 2003 segments**

Attitude to risk	Segment	Segment description
<b>Risk Takers</b>	Vocationals	Customers with a professional or personal involvement in film
	Avids	Customers with a very high frequency attendance (11+ screenings)
	Confident Selectors	Customers aged 25+ with high frequency attendance (3–10 screenings)
	Conscious Image Builders	Customers aged under 25 with high frequency attendance (3–10 screenings)
<b>Cautious Gamblers</b>	Mainstream Selectors	Customers with high frequency attendance (3–10 screenings)
	Open Minded Samplers	Customers with low frequency attendance (2 screenings)
	One-Off Incidentals	Customers with very low frequency attendance (1 screening)
<b>Safety First</b>	Arthouse Strangers	Customers who had not attended any arthouse screenings in past 12 months



