

Cheskin Knows Teens

All great research starts with a question. When Pepsi, GM, and Purple Moon needed a realistic and strategic understanding of the teen population to help guide product development and communications strategies, they turned to Cheskin. A 50-year-old consulting and strategic research firm, Cheskin designed a research approach that looks at teens the way they look at themselves.

- Cheskin sends cameras out to hundreds of teens, asking them to photograph their lives as they really are.
- Cheskin researchers interview friends together, asking them about their dreams, fears, cares, and concerns.
- Cheskin interviews experts who have built careers on understanding teen psyche.
- Cheskin researchers visit common teen hangouts, observing how teens act when away from adults.

As a result, Cheskin identified five main types of teenagers. Then the researchers designed a new model that tracks the relative influence of these teen types over time, to accurately predict how trends move through the teen population. "We identify youth by their social cliques instead of by demographic constructs, and create portraits you'll recognize in the street." This project is now an annual study of teen culture and behavior.

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sounds and nearly escapes and finally comes in over the rail, his colors pulsing and his tail beating the air, a whole new relational externality has come into being." Qualitative research would define the being of fishing, the ambiance of a city, the mood of a citizen, or the unifying tradition of a group.⁸

When we consider the scope of qualitative research, several approaches are adaptable for exploratory investigations of management questions:

- Individual depth interviews (usually conversational rather than structured).
- Participant observation (to perceive firsthand what participants in the setting experience).
- Films, photographs, and videotape (to capture the life of the group under study).
- Projective techniques and psychological testing (such as a Thematic Apperception Test, projective measures, games, or role-playing).
- Case studies (for an in-depth contextual analysis of a few events or conditions).
- Street ethnography (to discover how a cultural subgroup describes and structures its world at the street level).
- Elite or expert interviewing (for information from influential or well-informed people in an organization or community).
- Document analysis (to evaluate historical or contemporary confidential or public records, reports, government documents, and opinions).
- Proxemics and kinesics (to study the use of space and body-motion communication, respectively).⁹