



## Qual Research: First Impressions Methodology

### **Research shows that first impressions are formed within a matter of seconds.**

A research study<sup>1</sup>, published in *Psychological Science*, found that it takes less than a second for somebody to judge another person during their first encounter. Trustworthiness, status and attractiveness are immediately assessed during a first impression. This same principle applies to products. Consumers immediately judge a product based on their first impression. “Buyers make most decisions by relying on their two-second first impressions based on stored memories, images and feelings,” writes Malcolm Gladwell in *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*<sup>2</sup>.

Because first impressions hold such power, it is essential for companies to consider two things. First, they need to create a strong and positive impression with branding, packaging and other tactics. Second, companies need to understand how consumers are viewing their products within those first few critical seconds once products are in market. Companies who incorporate this monitoring strategy into their business plan have a more holistic and timely view of the market and their customers.

### **“For most qualitative research, roughly 80% of the key insights come from 20% of the interview.”**

The Pareto Principle is the observation that most things in life are not distributed evenly. When applied to qualitative market research, Cue Insights has experienced that the majority of key findings in a traditional qualitative interview can be expressed by a respondent in a short time frame when structured appropriately. A very high-level introductory question opens the door to rich, valuable insight that includes key signals that can be distilled by an experienced ear.

A study<sup>3</sup> conducted by the Advertising Research Foundation found that 80% of market research’s best success stories were enabled by searching for the unexpected. Giving respondents the freedom to share their broad thoughts on a specific topic allows a company to hear about issues that may not have been under consideration.

**First Impressions** research provides the powerful benefit of understanding consumers’ first impressions while applying the Pareto Principle.

### **What is the *First Impressions* methodology?**

**First Impressions** research is used to capture the realistic oversimplification of a wide array of information that people process as they make decisions. The methodology is a hybrid qual-quant design, consisting of 5- to 7-minute qualitative interviews. This has efficiency and quality benefits relative to traditional qualitative research, and more nuance and context relative to traditional quantitative research.

<sup>1</sup>Willis, J.; Todorov, A. (2006). "First impressions: Making up your mind after 100 ms exposure to a face" (PDF). *Psychological Science*.

<sup>2</sup>Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. Back Bay Books, Little, Brown and Company. 2005.

<sup>3</sup>Rubinson, Joel. "The New 80/20 Rule of Marketing Research." 27 March 2009, <http://blog.joelrubinson.net/2009/03/the-new-8020-rule-of-marketing-research/>.

A **First Impressions** interview starts with an open question such as, “What do you think about BRAND X,” allowing respondents to freely share their thoughts and experiences with the brand. The moderator then asks specific questions proactively if they have not already been answered by the respondent.

Five to seven minutes is far from the traditional 60-minute in-depth interview, but it is all that is necessary for a **First Impressions** interview. First impressions are formed within a matter of seconds, and it only takes a matter of minutes to share those first impressions.

The idea of a short interview is appealing to respondents and also encourages them to be purposeful and efficient in their responses. In fact, both Bill Gates and Elon Musk are known for scheduling their days in 5-minute increments in order to maintain their high level of productivity.

## Benefits & When to Use **First Impressions** methodology

As the name implies, a **First Impressions** methodology is ideal for following a new product upon its launch, but it can also add tremendous value in several other circumstances. For instance, **First Impressions** could be used to monitor a competitor’s new product launch. Additionally, the methodology does not need to be exclusive to first impressions. It can also provide a global impression of any activity or idea at any given point in time to illustrate the current pulse in the market. For example, an event might occur that has strong, negative implications for an industry or brand. A company might conduct **First Impressions** research to take a proactive approach to monitoring the impact so that they can minimize the damage to their brand.

The short length of interviews provides multiple operational and practical benefits, improving overall study quality.

### Operational and Practical Benefits

- *Lower cost.* Shorter interviews require lower incentives.
- *Recruitment efficiency.* Respondents are more willing to provide 5 minutes of their time versus an hour, contributing to higher cooperation rates.
- *Reduces non-response bias through higher cooperation rates*
- *More interviews in less time.* In regular qualitative studies, moderators are typically limited to 8-10 interviews per day. With **First Impressions**, moderators can conduct dozens of interviews each day.
- *Provides scalability of qualitative feedback with breadth of coverage*

Beyond these benefits, Cue Insights provides added value through their **First Impressions** research experience and expertise. Cue Insights has conducted **First Impressions** research across multiple categories and business situations. Our moderators have mastered the skill of capturing the realistic oversimplification of a wide array of information that people process as they make decisions. The table below highlights how the top-of-mind verbal responses to very open questions reveal subjective insights relative to other types of research that are more specific and structured.

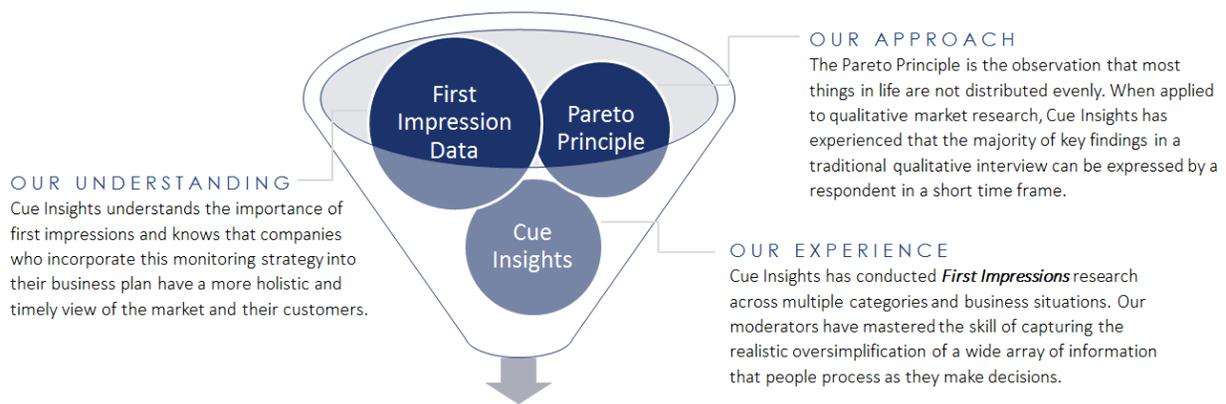
Syndicated Self-Completed Mobile Questionnaire	Cue Insights First Impression Verbal
Direct respondent feedback	Executive-level interviewing with expert interpretation
Hard numbers	Nuance
Structured self-proctored questionnaire	Respondents' free spontaneous thoughts
Longitudinal reference	Moment of decision insight into a unique situation

**First Impressions** research is a critical, yet often overlooked tool to ensure that all of the time and effort put into the brand strategy is coming across as intended. You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

### Case Study: New prescription drug launch

Cue Insights conducted a **First Impressions** study for a client who wanted to understand the impression of their new prescription drug. This new prescription drug launched with administration occurring at specialized “sites of care.” Additional burden on HCP staff and facility were barriers that the client team needed to monitor in real time at launch. Due to the **First Impressions** methodology, the study design was able to accommodate 80 qualitative interviews each week for 4 weeks, for a total of 320 interviews. Cue Insights uncovered various situations which either caused frustration or potentially damaged the brand’s reputation. These findings were shared with the client in real time, and the client was able to rapidly adjust tactics and resources to meet customer needs and address questions.

### The Cue Formula for **First Impressions** Research



## Brand Strategy Understanding

Have a product or opportunity that could benefit from a **First Impressions** study?

Visit [www.cueinsights.com](http://www.cueinsights.com) to schedule a consultation.