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# WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

## The Value of Observational Research

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**Qualitative observational research** is brilliant for obtaining unique, first hand insights into how people interact with and behave in your buildings, exhibitions, public spaces and at your events.

You get to see the audience/visitor experience from their perspective with an immediacy and authenticity that cannot be matched.

Done well, it is rigorous and illuminating, far better than anecdotal feedback or internal assumptions based on limited direct audience/visitor experience.

### **OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH...**

#### **...KEEPS IT REAL AND KEEPS YOU IN TOUCH**

You will see and experience REAL STUFF: people's behaviours, emotions, interactions, conversations; how things are used, bought, consumed; the types of interaction between people and staff, and how people move through and engage with your spaces. Observational research is a fantastic way of getting to grips with the reality of the experiences you are creating and managing.

#### **...PROVIDES INSIGHTS YOU CANNOT ACCESS VIA FOCUS GROUPS OR SURVEYS**

If you were to ask someone in a focus group how they behaved or what they experienced in a given time and place, they would have to draw on their memory of it. But memory is imperfect. What is revealed, therefore, might be partial, selective, idealised, inaccurate and might not recall habitual or spontaneous behaviours.

With observational research you see what people do, not rely on what they say they do. It has an incredible immediacy. You witness authentic behaviours. You observe people first hand, in situ, in the time and place that experience was intended.

#### **...BRINGS THE AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE TO LIFE**

Observational research brings the audience/visitor experience to life because you are there with them. And because all experience is in-the-moment, you'll be able to capture the nuances of context (e.g. weather, time of day, time of year), situation (e.g. sight, sound, smell, ambiance, the influence of other people in the space) and the intricacies of cause-and-effect between audience and the experiential touch points you are researching.

#### **...COMBINED WITH INTERCEPTS OR INTERVIEWS, CAN DELIVER RICH DATA**

You can use intercepts or post-visit discussions to add further depth and richness to your observations. Talking with people provides an opportunity to explore experiences from their point of view, giving you the 'why' behind the 'what' of their behaviours.

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## IT'S VERY, VERY USEFUL

Observational research has many valuable practical applications which enables you to proactively manage your audience/visitor's experiences based on rigorous empirical evidence.

The insights gained from observational research can be applied in many useful ways:

- **understand and/or benchmark the experience**  
e.g. of a building, a retail/catering area, an exhibition, a workshop, an event
- **inform new product/service development**  
e.g. way finding, trails, Wifi areas, service innovation
- **road test prototypes**  
e.g. usability testing of websites, museum interactives, interpretation and activity trails, queuing systems, retail layouts
- **building/gallery design and layout**  
e.g. looking at issues of décor, ambiance, dwell zones, bottlenecks, focal points, accessibility, visibility, lighting, retail navigation
- **customer orientation**  
e.g. welcome, support, access, comfort, ease, family friendliness
- **orientation and way finding**  
e.g. signage systems, crowd control, following planned narratives and timelines
- **evaluate success of planned experiences, behaviours and interactions**  
e.g. workshops, events, degrees and types of family engagement, monitor success of customer service training

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### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Contact Lisa at The Experience Business to discuss your research needs or find out about in-house Observational Research

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