LESS IS MORE: BEING DEPRIVED OFTEN BRINGS OUT THE BEST

THE ADDED VALUE OF DEPRIVATION TECHNIQUES IN RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

This paper uses the experiences of various traditional methodologies that have used a form of deprivation to more deeply connect with people’s true feelings and behaviors. The paper introduces how deprivation was used in the “standard toolbox” techniques of Collages, in-depth interviews, Focus Groups, and Usage and Attitude. Each technique’s deprivation twist is explained and backed up with case study examples showing how the approach resulted in “higher level insight”.

WHAT NEW COKE CONTINUES TO TEACH US, 30 YEARS LATER

Thirty years ago this year, the biggest ever deprivation study of a major brand occurred. In April 1985 The Coca-Cola Company introduced New Coke, with no shortage of hype and fanfare. It had been carefully researched and studied. New Coke went through the full gambit of qual, quant, product tasting, talking, watching – well you get the idea. It was launched with the sole objective of re-energizing the flagship beverage which was starting to be challenged literally by the competition and “the Pepsi challenge” campaign. And frankly the launch of New Coke did succeed in shaking up the market. But not in the way it was intended.

Now, with 30 years of distance and the benefit of a plethora of marketing case studies documenting “the modern day marketing mistake of New Coke” we can now humbly say that the New Coke study taught The Coca-Cola Company some valuable lessons. “First: don’t mess with something that can’t be improved. Second: the people who enjoy our brands ultimately own them.”

Many still ask: if we valued the secret formula of Coca-Cola enough to keep it in a bank vault, why would we consider changing it? A very good question. The research had shown us that people preferred the taste of New Coke (although it is now revealed that as it was mainly conducted on “one-sip” taste tests). But beyond any flaw in the product testing research protocols, the bigger lesson was that consumers connect emotionally with their brands and any changes are taken personally and seriously. There is a deep connection to Coke and as we learned it was difficult to articulate until the consumer no longer had it.

FIGURE 1. NEW COKE, LAUNCHED IN 1985 WITH NEW GRAPHICS AND A NEW TASTE

On the day that New Coke was launched The Coca-Cola Company (TCCC) received 7,000 calls - and let’s be honest they were not calls but outright complaints. Back in 1985, before SNS, Facebook, flashmobs, tweets and the like, 7,000 calls was a great deal of traffic. We had broken faith with the consumer, and they loudly let us know it. And TCCC listened.
Consumers wanted Coke back and now the consumer is back to enjoying “The real thing”. New Coke became a beverage of the past.

So the question remains, what could have research done to make sure that we are able to unlock these true connections. The hint of “deprivation” is there. Take something away – seriously take it away and see how the consumer reacts, modifies their behaviors. Then learn from this. Understand it – as there is more insight waiting for deprivation to unlock.

In most of the research that we have conducted in the past months/years, there is a great deal of “providing stimulus, concepts and inputs” for the consumer to react to. But how often have we actually employed the idea of deprivation to research designs? As they say, hindsight is 20/20, but it would have been so simple to design research that incorporated the “switch out” of Coke to New Coke with Coke’s most loyal users, but it was overlooked. Maybe it is overlooked because we are working with a set of guidelines on “how to test” – built on the belief that research designs are “objective” but failing to realize that it may actually be quite subjective. And so the question we put to ourselves is, “are we ready to challenge our set beliefs?” Are we ready to admit we might be wrong in assuming that when we are asked to assess the launch potential of a new product that the best way is to automatically set up “sip/taste tests” and concept screenings, etc. or take the off-the-shelf tool and use the normative database that has existed for 10 years as the action standard.

In reality TCCC needed to flip its beliefs 180 degrees and realize that a non-use test is equally important in understanding as a home-use test. In fact in the Case of New Coke, the “Deprivation: Non-use test” which was the national launch proved that the non-use test could unveil richer insights, deeper meaning and indeed provide more impactful input as to the true strengths, emotional connections and purchase drivers of the world’s most loved beverage.

But Coca-Cola didn’t do it. And 30 years later the lessons are still there and being highlighted in marketing case studies around the world. Nobody wants to be a case study of “what not to do” and so in an effort to turn this piece of unfortunate research history into a learning opportunity we aim to reconsider our current techniques. We have found that we can still learn and challenge even the most mundane and “tried and true” of approaches.

It is our belief that new techniques in research do not always have to be at the “bleeding edge” and incorporating neuro, gamification, teen-blogging communities or in-home 24-hour video streaming ethnography or geo-tracking capabilities to name a few. They can, in fact, be simply challenging the status quo with a slight adjustment that can deliver the pinnacles of success rather than the depths of disaster. After all, the plight of the Titanic was just a few degrees of adjustment.

So this paper highlights the power and thinking of deprivation and then puts this power into action by highlighting case studies where standard methodologies and approaches have been “challenged” with a deprivation twist – a few degrees of adjustment. By doing this we aim to spark a discussion in what we can “do without” in research to surprisingly uncover “what we need to do”.

THE POWER OF DEPRIVATION
To begin … imagine if the rest of this page were blank, that there was no more to this paper.

That absence would make you feel awkward, a little troubled, perplexed by the absence. Deprived.

Well maybe you would feel relieved if you dread reading conference papers. But you would think it was strange and something happens as you react. First there are feelings that you were previously unaware of or unable to articulate (or chose not to) suddenly come rushing to the fore. The relief that you do not have to read papers highlights the true feeling about conference papers. Then there is a modification of the behavior. Maybe you search deprivation on Google (highlighting an alternative to conference papers), maybe you just move to the next conference paper (highlight the lack of importance of the topic itself, and the importance of conference papers in general). This would not be so readily “visible” or “understandable” without the deprivation having happened.

If you do the inevitable Google search concerning “deprivation” you will find that the matter of sleep deprivation comes up a lot. Research into the subject is deep and common. The physical deprivation of sleep is written up widely. What the sleep deprivation papers highlight is that with deprivation comes change in behavior as people’s mental and physical defenses are lowered. Studies have highlighted that working memory – a key element of executive functioning – was essentially unaffected by as much as 51 hours of total sleep deprivation. Instead, they saw a degradation of non-executive components of cognition, such as information intake, that accounted for the overall impairment in subjects’ performance on cognitive tasks. In other words, the sleep deprived brain appears to be capable of processing information, but this information may be distorted before it can be processed. Depriving people of one thing (sleep) distorts/amplifies/impacts their ability to intake information. This further highlights the role of sleep which is not just restorative but the ability to be
able to apply filters and see the world in an undistorted manner. This is why under sleep deprivation (while studying for an exam or writing a conference paper) small things can suddenly become momentous and amplified.

The now infamous Stanford Prison Experiment conducted by Phillip Zimbardo took male students and redefined their roles as Prisoner or Prison Guard. While the study was conducted to understand the impact of “prison life” it also highlighted another interesting outcome of deprivation. In his book “The Lucifer Effect”, Zimbardo noted that in trying to understand unusual, or aberrant behavior, we often err in focusing exclusively on the inner determinants of genes, personality, and character, as we also tend to ignore what may be the critical catalyst for behavior change in the external situation or in the system that creates and maintains such situations. He then went on to challenge readers of his book to reflect on how well they really know themselves, and how much confidence they have in what they would or would not ever do when put into new behavioral settings (The Lucifer effect; Phillip Zimbardo). When the “prisoners” were deprived of their comfort zone and their usual freedoms and famously “dehumanized”, their latent characters came through and behavior modification ensued. The act of deprivation revealed highly unexpected behavior modifications that were compensating for what had been deprived. This therefore highlights for us what roles certain elements play for people.

The Chinese governments’ One Child Policy can even be considered a mass scale deprivation experiment. It has deprived an entire generation of siblings, and as such behaviors have been modified and there are unintended consequences that could be the subject of a whole different paper. While an inverted demographic pyramid and a consequential aging of the population may have been predicted, the desire to have male heirs and the consequent huge disparity of males and females may not have been (but this highlights an insight – the importance placed on gender). However what may have been even less predicted is the maturation of whole generations who have never learned to “share” due to a lack of siblings. It is the latter that really is interesting in the context of this paper. We now have thirty years of watching what is now around 400 million people grow up in a society where they had no brothers or sisters with which to share, or to learn to share with. So we now live in a world where we are watching whole generations mature without what we would see as normal social behaviors. The role of siblings has become even more amplified and understood as we see this deprivation experiment play out. As many societies go down the path of smaller families due to economic reasons (as opposed to government policy) this deprivation study of China will indeed reveal some critical learnings.

Deprivation techniques are in fact used in research regularly. Discrete Choice exercises are deprivation studies; depriving consumers of a wide range of choices to deepen our understanding of preference. Recent internet techniques are depriving respondents of time to help drive deeper understanding of their innate preferences. And of course there is the blind taste test which deprives consumers of branding so that we can focus purely on taste. These trade-off techniques are, we argue, surprisingly not used as extensively in qualitative work.

And this was a question that was asked by Dave McCaughan (one of the authors of this paper) a number of years ago.

In a world where teens and young adults struggle to articulate their true feelings and understand what motivates young people, he set up and managed a program where for one week a dozen young adults in Japan were asked to deprive themselves of something they saw as a “daily necessity”. Participants selected a single thing they “could not live without” each day and those things ranged from, yes coffee in the morning, to listening to music, to one person who voted for brushing their teeth. Each day of the week the participants were asked to video tape a blog of how they were coping. The physical change in all of them varied but was obvious. The deprivation of a key part of their daily regime was causing stress and this was highlighting different aspects of motivations.

This paper began when the two authors started discussing techniques they had found that gave interesting results. It started as what seemed a mixed bag of techniques until we stumbled upon the realization they had something in common: deprivation. Our discussion deepened as we realized that perhaps it was the absence of something that made it so interesting. As we dug into deprivation we came to believe that by asking less, stimulating in a minimal way, by withdrawing stimulus we force people to fill gaps. We see them physically (as in sleep deprivation) mentally and socially react with answers we had not expected.

And so less is more.

We will run through a number of cases and personal examples where we have used some form of deprivation in order to force reactions and that have then led to useful and perhaps unintended and imaginative results.
DEPRIVATION 1: COLLAGE REDEFINED BRINGS BACKGROUND THINKING TO THE FOREFRONT

It is no news that technology is continually evolving the way that we conduct research. We can no longer list the impacts on one hand – shifts from PAPI to CAPI, CAPI to CAWI and now to mobile. The collection of “big data”, and the introduction of the MROC. Although we as researchers every day turn to Google to find images to enhance the visualization of reports, it is with interest that we still have the “selection of magazines” as part of the qual group set up. It was with wonderment that a young researcher (straight out of university and in his first OTJ qual training) bravely asked “why are we selecting magazines right now?” as the team sat around debating if they had the right mix of magazine types. Patiently it was explained that the consumer was going to be asked to make a “collage” of their image of a brand. To which he boldly replied “why don’t we just ask them to use Google images?” Why not indeed! So in the first example of deprivation we highlight the added value of collages without magazines.

The initial set up is quite simple. One laptop per person or people working in pairs. You clear the internet search history cache and then when the time comes you give them the topic they need to create their collage on. They are to select images and arrange them in a PowerPoint slide. As most people in Japan are used to using Google and PowerPoint it is not a large barrier to execution. The team has found that creating a template for the collage helps to govern the output in a way that still offers freedom within a framework.

We highlight that they are to select a core background image for their collage, a key image and then supporting images. They are told they can make the images larger or smaller to create the “weighting” of the image. They can also connect images or overlay them.

**FIGURE 2. TEMPLATE FOR “GOOGLE SEARCH” COLLAGE**

Below, we share an example of an output from a focus group that was asking the respondents to share with the meaning of being a mother. We are seeking the meaning behind the pictures and the way that the consumer tells the story of their collage. We do not ask them to explain each picture but to explain the overall portrait and the collection of images as a story. However the true power of this technique is not from the unlimited number of images available via Google search or the ability to “size” and overlay images, or even the story telling that the consumer well.

**FIGURE 3. COLLAGE BY RESPONDENT REGARDING THE THEME “WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MOTHER”**
The power is sitting in the cache of the internet history file, which is a documented result of the respondent’s thought process. The first “image search” they did was on Duty, then Protect, followed by Love and Busy. The choice of a clock from all the pictures for busy help us to close the loop on “time” and the fact that it is overlapping with the word for patience shows the interesting juxtaposition and conflict that is happening in this mother’s mind.

**FIGURE 4. GOOGLE SEARCH HISTORY OF THE MOTHER’S COLLAGE: UNCOVERING THE THOUGHT AND SEARCH PROCESS**

Interestingly without instruction we have recognized a tendency for respondents to arrange their images and story in a clockwise pattern around the central image, with the 1 o’clock position being ‘feeling generated in the past’, 6-9 being about the present and 9-12 being about the future. We have not recognized this tendency in less structured instructional magazine collages. This may be due to the lack of choice of pictures (for typical collages we choose modern current magazines which will tend to have more modern images of the topic we are exploring) and in all honesty we are still exploring this pattern that seems to be occurring in the collages. I would be interested in combining experiences with others who would like to share their collages to add to the mix of analysis.

The act of depriving ourselves of magazines in the focus groups has inherently unlocked the power of thought and process. This new approach unlocked some new insights for us on mothers. Previously we were aware of the busy lives and constant sense of time stress. However, the types of pictures that were selected and showed the busy office or traffic jams. By allowing the choice of pictures we had more actual clocks which uncovered for us that there is just not enough time in the day to fill all their roles rather than a strong connection to the busy activities they were facing.

But the real insight was the desire to be a role model or teacher not just a supporter. As this was commonly placed in the top left hand corner and the search words of “duty” and “role model” they used to “find the images” they placed in that top left hand corner led us to the interpretation that this was the desired state. This “desire” to be a good mother was often articulated in previous groups – but to be role model was not. This was for us a new insight about mothers. Being a role model has inner facing qualities – to “be the person I want to be” and to “model behavior”.

The insight was leveraged, along with other insights around the role of exercise, in a new platform for Aquarius which had the core message of striving for a “better you” with the connection for mothers of striving to be that role model. The new campaign scored high in copy testing. And when released in the market the TVCM which has an Olympic athlete as a coach of an 80 year old mother who decided to learn to swim (as her daughter was a swim coach) drove awareness and followers of the campaign with the highest levels in Japan’s Aquarius’ history of impressions in social media.
Less (magazines) is More (imagery and story)

What: Collages without magazines
Why: Card sorts/collages are limited by the pictures we choose/ the magazines we choose.
When: In focus groups/idi or homework exercises when you can also get the history of their search downloaded as part of the exercise.
How:
1. A clear theme and topic for the collage (not overly narrow) and 10-15 minutes in the interview time
2. Provide a PowerPoint template and internet connected laptop (laptop must have the search history cache cleared).
3. Consumer presents their collage
4. Collage. Google search history and consumer narrative is combined in analysis to uncover the insights

Watch out: Without a framework it can be a little too free. Interpretation requires a triangulation of the search results, pictures and narration by the consumer.

DEPRIVATION 2: THE QUALITATIVE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW REDEFINED REMOVES OUR BIASES AND SUBJECTIVITY

A trained psychologist was discussing the key elements of relationships with Coca-Cola’s key brands. It was deep and revealing. It was a new approach aimed at determining why consumers had been falling “out of love” with the Company’s brands. The reasons behind why the relationship and loyalty was vulnerable or gone. Does this sound familiar? Relationships in trouble. It is not something that is the sole domain of brands.

When a relationship is in trouble it is often common practice to turn to a counsellor – like a marriage counsellor to understand the deeper underlying issues and determine the steps that need to be taken to get a “broken or stressed relationship back on track”. And so this is what this new technique was trying to unearth, using trained marriage and relationship counsellors to teach moderators a new approach and the art of “therapy interviewing”. This approach is quite different than the standard moderation techniques and standard moderation guidelines. In fact, the “interview guide” needs to be totally redefined.

The interview guide on brand relationships and brand connection has to be rewritten. With this technique the guide contained no questions. The moderator was deprived of questions.

The theory behind this is that through questions the consumer is directed into a space that the interviewer needs them to focus on. This is the type of interviewing done by police officers when interviewing witnesses and conducting interrogation. But what “therapy interviewing” is looking for is a naturally flowing encounter of the topic. It is a technique that allows the respondent to tell their story in their own order with their own key themes and points. The story then unfolds and truly highlights the passion, the milestones, the frustrations and the energy on the topic. It is in the consumer’s order and pattern of connection and by doing this the interview avoids priming or guiding and allows the true connections to be naturally uncovered.

In this technique the research designer was deprived of asking “what do you like about the brand?”, “why do you no longer like the brand?”, “if the brand was a person who would it be?”, or “what words do you associate with the brand?”. All of these questions were not available to the moderator. In essence the session is emulating the way a counselling session would happen. No straight questions of “do you love your husband” “what has happened to your relationship” but more of “tell me what is happening with you right now”. It is in short a “stream of consciousness.”

At Coca-Cola we named this the “Consumer Journey” research and it was aimed at uncovering the journey of brand engagement, brand involvement, brand love and loyalty and then finally brand disengagement for our coffee brand Georgia. We have also used this approach for sports brands, and Fanta.

The interview flow is very simply structured and follows the structure of a therapy session:

- Introduction of the topic (e.g. we are here today to talk about Fanta)
- Using an A3 piece of paper we highlight where we draw a starting point – here is where you first engaged with Fanta, then an end point which is TODAY. We ask the consumer to tell us about the journey from the start to the finish.
- The consumer begins their story.
- No questions are allowed. No “Why did you do that?” or “when did you stop drinking coffee?” The moderator is deprived of questions entirely.
• The moderator (as a therapist) has the key role of listening and keeping the consumer talking. As the consumer speaks of their journey, notes along the timeline are made (for example, at this point they started a new job, and there was a Starbucks nearby). Later on they were given a coffee machine as a gift and started drinking more in the home. All through the interview notes are being made just as a therapist would.

• The moderator can probe with only two approaches
  o Pointing at an event that has been mentioned and noted on the map, and say “tell me a bit more about this time”.
  o Or repeat the “consumers’ words followed by silence.” E.g.: Consumer says, “I started high school – I started drinking less Fanta”. Moderator repeats “You started drinking less Fanta ….” The pregnant pause begs the consumer to want to tell us more.

The interview lasts for about 90 minutes and becomes a narrative of the milestones (large and small) of their relationship with the Brand. When the consumer tells you they stopped drinking one product, and started drinking another the temptation is to ask “why”. When a respondent is faced with the question of why there becomes an overriding temptation to justify their decision with rational and logical explanations. Typically in the beverage world it falls to “it tastes better”, “it was cheaper or on promotion.” At times we have seen this why approach feel sadly like we are interrogating the respondent when in fact we are just trying to understand.

It became a pathway and story that the consumer shared with the moderator. The narrative was somehow richer and it is easier to determine where the consumer’s passion was. The “tell me more” led into conversations of “limited pocket money set by parents”, “but then using that pocket money in an act of defiance” to buy items that were normally restricted to them at home – candy, sweet beverages. Stories of older senior school mates introducing them to new beverages or “telling them” they should be drinking this or that. But most revealing was the animation of feeling “free” to choose and seeking that variety. That the competitive product we feared so much was in fact “the new kid on the block” at the moment and that loyalty was frail.

FIGURE 5. VISUALIZATION OF THE JOURNEY STORY TYPES CREATED FOR EACH RESPONDENT

Coffee Journey – drop in frequency individual narrative

The struggle with the “deprivation of questions” technique is that the Client or in Coca-Cola’s case the Brand Manager does have questions. This is hard for the untrained analyst or indeed client that is sitting behind the glass with their very concrete question of “Just ask them why they don’t drink my brand anymore”. To manage this, expectations need to be well managed at the beginning. It is an unusual technique and so all those “watching” need to feel comfortable that we will be able to access the answers to the questions. In the past we had tried this technique and had found the difficult part was taking all the stories and getting them into something meaningful and orderly. Unlike a normal in-depth interview or focus group discussion guide, there is no structure that each and every person will go through. There are no “sections” in the guide where “we will now ask about equity”, etc. This makes the analysis more challenging.

In order to facilitate the harvesting of the information and creation of a strong report, Coca-Cola developed an insights gathering template. This was very helpful in helping to calm down the brand manager client – it communicated that we were clear about what the key objectives and questions are and making sure that the research (streaming technique) will answer them. It also provides a way to mine the narrative and structure it into a business and strategic report. A report
that merely plays back the story may be interesting but the reality is that the objective is not to develop stories. The objective is to find responses and provide guidance to Business Questions. The story is not the end goal – it is the means to the end.

FIGURE 6. EXAMPLE OF OBSERVATION AND HARVESTING TEMPLATE (ONE PAGE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question/theme</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Insight/aha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics/lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to Sparkling beverages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of beverage (Fonte) In their life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switching Triggers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is unhealthiness a barrier? Is Naturalness a need?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand personifications Equities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By using this stream of consciousness approach on brands at the Discovery phase it is possible to get more granular ideas of the drivers and motivations, opinions and behaviors of our consumers. The best use of this technique comes from the ability to compare and contrast narratives and so when setting up the research it is important to ensure there is a good balance of "both sides of the story". Being able to answer the question sometimes requires seeing the other side – to fully understand "black" it is helpful to juxtapose it against "white".

In the cases that Coca-Cola has used this stream of consciousness journey technique there have been the juxtaposition of loyalists and lapsed, male and female, young and old. The point here though is to fully understand that objective of studying the female perspective is to better understand the male question you have at hand. We have fallen into the trap where the key business question was about lapsed users but we find interesting information on loyalists from the interviews which are “easier” to action. So we go down that path. The business question is set based on the needs that we have identified through our analytics of sales and tracking data. For example, the issue for the brand is retention (i.e. lapsed users) as its base is decreasing, and not improving depth and loyalty of current users.

For this reason having the key questions template helped to ensure we were mining the narratives for information, observations and insights that ensured we answered the client’s key questions. We have found that the Journey stories are helpful as workshop materials also, where we can lay out the story or the narrative and create word clouds, visual pathways from past to present as large posters of stimulus. Then during the workshop we search for the answers to the key questions hidden in the narratives.

In all transparency, at Coca-Cola it has become clear that this is not an easy technique to perform as a moderator, to watch as a client, or to report on as an analyst. It takes effort – but the truth is that insights are not easily found and so like anything in life it requires effort – it is not as simple as “ask and answered”. And the experiences are that just as therapy sessions are more skilled at getting to the deep causes of issues and feelings, this technique is also more effective at uncovering what was once hidden and not easily accessible. And also like therapists, the more exposure to the technique the more familiar it becomes. Then it almost comes naturally (like driving a car, or riding a bike – which is difficult at first but then becomes intuitive).

The key analytical Framework that is used is the “Deep Metaphor” analytics as explained in Zaltman. During the narrative consumers will use “Surface metaphors” or everyday expressions. Then when collected together these surface metaphors begin to develop a clear “metaphor theme” which runs to the Deep Metaphor. It is the job of the analyst to collect the Surface Metaphors and then create the Deep Metaphors for the topic.
For the Coffee Journey work we uncovered the fact that the consumer’s coffee journey was very much linked to a maturing of themselves but the choices and ways they were using the new universe of choices was changing. Their induction into coffee starts with the coffee-milkshakes as they aspired to be more adult and “drink coffee” – where previously this was owned by Japanese canned coffee drinks and paper pack cheap coffee, Frappuccinos were quickly encroaching on this space with the younger generation. For those in their 40s the coffee experiences started with canned coffee, but this was no longer true.

The consumers then progress to “real coffee” of which black coffee was the pinnacle of being a real coffee drinker. But again this was being redefined – black coffee was not the only definition of maturity and real coffee – it fragments into espresso and drip, bean types and even lattes. Our stream of consciousness unveiled something this new environment for us – while we knew they existed we were not sure of how it was operating and changing. Ethnographic work was providing snapshots of today – but not the evolution that the consumer had gone through to get to today. We concluded that the Coffee Journey, for so long dominated by the canned coffee of which Coca-Cola and its brand leader Georgia, was now being “interrupted” by other coffee players – Starbucks, 7-11 coffee, McDonald’s premium coffee. It helped us “uncover” that although canned coffee was great and the equities were still the strongest compared to the competition, the competitive set was indeed changing and the Ready to Drink (RTD) coffee environment was changing.

This technique is best used at the initial stages of the “insights and discovery” process for research. It requires a clear understanding of the business questions around a journey that needs to be told. The Journey can be a decision making process (from the moment of deciding to lose weight to actually getting started and then losing the weight, to making choices on universities, cities to live in, cars to buy, insurance to subscribe to) or it can be a journey with a brand, company or category. It is a process and technique that uncovers each thought and milestone in the process and helps to unlock the pathways and milestones. These pathways then provide guidelines for when and how the brands, communications, and conversations need to be best positioned to ensure the outcomes that are desired from the consumer and from the brands.
**Less (Questions) is More (consumer led understanding)**

**What:** Stream of Consciousness - interviewing without Questions

**Why:** To uncover the key milestones, feelings and motivations underpinning behavior through a complex decision making process or relationship.

**When:** During the discovery phase that deals with key relationships and milestones. In-depth interviews or as the initial interview set up to ethnographic research.

**How:**
1. Identify the key theme and business questions
2. Create an insights harvesting template that has the key questions
3. Conduct 90 minute interview using only “tell me more” as the key probe
4. Create Journey summaries and Insight templates for overall analysis

**Watch out:** Set expectations for the clients as it can be frustrating not seeing “sections” that answer their questions. Build in time to train new moderators as this is extremely new for the moderator’s who are not trained in this type of interviewing. Ensure report is structured against the questions and not coverage off the Journey.

**DEPRIVATION 3: SILENCE AND SINGULAR FOCUS IN QUAL GROUPS FOR DEPTH**

Dave has watched probably a couple of thousand focus groups over the last thirty years in many different countries, often held in languages that he did not speak. He mostly attentively uses excellent translators. But one of his early mentors in the field of market research explained that watching is as important or more so than listening. After all, so much general wisdom states that 70% of communication is non-verbal. And so Dave also spends a lot of focus groups not listening to the participants at all. He just watches. Think about it ... I came to the realization that when doing a number of groups or interviews, that after a while I was stopping listening anyway. Certainly we transparently admit that we have both seen many observers get carried away with backroom conversations, the range of snacks, or napping.

So Dave has made a habit of not listening to every third group or interview he observes. He will read transcripts later but every third group he just watches. He can tell where the moderator is on the flow from experience and really is looking for the way participants react to stimulus, to each other, to the flow of the discussion. He learns much from that about the way people express themselves, their attitude to the broad subject at hand, the success of the moderator in keeping up interest. And after a few years a thought started to appeal about experimenting in other ways.

What if we deprived the participants of stimulus? The idea was actually sparked by that same early mentor, Hugh MacKay, the doyen of Australian social research. Hugh had taught Dave that a good moderator’s guide should be as short as possible, that research should be undertaken after deeply thinking about the one key question to be answered, and a moderator’s guide developed only to ensure getting to every aspect of the question.

And so Dave has made it a habit on occasion of designing what he might call a deprived guide. One question. To be asked and repeated and asked again and again. The moderator’s job then is not to ask a lot of questions but to deprive the participants of any choice but to answer the same question over and over, in as many ways as they think possible.

An example ... in trying to understand why Thai mothers chose one brand of baby formula over another it was decided to hold groups of mothers of babies from newborn to three months. The mothers were asked to bring the babies with them to a “discussion” being held at a mom friendly health centre. The moderator was chosen because she had recently had a baby herself and bought her child with her. The participants were told they were being introduced to other new mothers to share ideas about caring for their babies. The discussion would last 1.5-2.0 hours. The moderator was asked to be as informal as possible, to allow the mothers to simply introduce each themselves and how they were finding it being a mother.

And then the one question: “You all have chosen to use an infant formula, you don’t have to say why, but it would be great and helpful to all of us if you could explain why you use the brand you choose.”

And that was it. No other questions, no other stimulus. Every time the discussion slowed the moderator would look at one of the mothers and repeat the question. If the participant looked puzzled or did not answer the question was just repeated in a different tone. No other stimulus, no other hints from the moderator.

The first time this technique was tried the discussion went for well over the two hours allotted. It was far reaching, it was allowed to wander into discussions of baby care, of “what my mum taught me” stories, to how terrible ( or good )
husbands were at helping, to labor pains, to hopes for their children. etc. And among it all was some real gold about
decision making and baby product purchases, and the creation of a simple and meaningful insight. What was discovered
may seem obvious but helped immensely. We found that mothers fell into three types when deciding on buying food and
health products for their babies:

1. “Perfectionists” : mothers who believed they should go to any length to get the best for their babies
2. “Researchers” : mothers who believed they should do all the homework they could, including investigating the back of
the packs
3. “Socialists”: mothers who knew the other two types were probably right but who, in the end, decided to go with the
brands they saw in other mother’s grocery baskets.

And in the end, no matter how many of these groups we did by repeating the same question and depriving them of any
other stimulus, distraction or means to express themselves at the end the majority admitted that while they really wished
and intended to be one of the first two types of shopper they always ended up being the third. Now remember this
research started in 1998, well before social media. It has been repeated for a couple of clients in Thailand, Malaysia, China,
Hong Kong as recently as 2014. Same result every time. And in the process the clients ended up with a very full and rich
understanding of the whole lives of these mothers.

Because unlike normal moderator’s guides that use multiple questions to force the participants to stick to the subject and
go into its minutiae, the lack of questions allowed the mothers to really generate the discussion, to articulate what mattered
to them.

Less Questions/Stimulus is more Honesty

| What: Keeping the moderator’s role to the real minimum |
| Why: Allowing the participants to interpret the research question as they see it. |
| When: With a category or field of enquiry which has been done before, depriving participants of any real stimulus will open up interpretation to them. |
| How: By being determined, the moderator can shame people into answering the same question many times, each time with more depth, more “news” |

Watch out: Stimulus free discussions require as much discipline, or more, than traditional techniques. The moderator cannot allow members to not participate. By reducing the questions asked to one they are forcing the participant to constantly re-think and reflect on their own and other’s responses

DEPRIVATION 4: THE HOME-USE TEST REDEFINED AMPLIFIES THE TRUE ROLE OF THE PRODUCT

When there is a new product to be launched, or an existing product to be upgraded or changed, the automatic pilot of
research protocols comes fast and furious. There is:

1. the Blind Product test to ensure the product beats the competition purely on its merits;
2. the Concept plus product test to ensure the product lines us with the concept and meets expectations;
3. the package and product test – ensure the product and the packaging are working together not against each other;
4. the communication testing;
5. the home use test to understand how the product is truly liked and used;
6. the full “bundle test” of concept – pack – product.

And when it is not a new product but the understanding of a current product the list gets supplemented with:

1. Ethnographic research;
2. Diary studies;
3. Use and Attitude.

The research design will often include groups of respondents that use Brand X and others that use Brand Y but noticeably
nowhere on this “standard list” of research techniques for understanding products and brands is the idea of the “non-use
test of your category/brand”. Even after the lessons stated above from New Coke, there is still limited use of this technique
as a way to expose the vulnerability or strengths of a brand or category.
Case Study 1: When fruit and vegetables becomes juice

There is a great deal to be learned through this technique. In 2014, the juice brand Minute Maid in Japan was seeking a deeper understanding of the positioning and use of juice for the Japanese consumer. In previous Semiotic research it was uncovered that the role of fruit in Japan was less based on nutrition and more based on indulgence and dessert.

However, when conducting research on fruit juice, consumers stated how healthy it was and the rational reasons behind their choices. The Semiotic research was uncovering something interesting and yet it was not gelling with the consumer’s commentary of their choices. It was felt that maybe there was something not being fully articulated – some connection with juice that the consumer was not fully aware of themselves and so could not sufficiently articulate. In order to uncover the true role of juice, a non-use test was set up. The research protocol was set up with Ipsos Japan and used mobile diaries as the capture method. Key to designing a non-use test is understanding first how often the product is used and so what would constitute deprivation. For someone who watches movies once a month, banning them from movies for one month will provide little insight. But for someone that watches movies on a daily basis – then this will uncover the “pain”.

As the objective was to understand the role of juice for consumers, the recruitment target was heavy juice users (Vegetable and Fruit). They were asked to diary document their daily activities including their feelings, and products they were using. They were to document their full day (not just their beverage choices) in order for the research to capture all changes to their behaviors. After a collection of data for weekday and weekend, the respondent was then banned from the entire juice category - not just the Coca-Cola brands but the entire category. The respondent then continued on with the diary for the non-use test. As this is a daily routine we are banning, it does not have to be done for longer than one to two weeks, as the modifications of behaviour will become apparent quickly through the photo diaries.

The use of the mobile phone provides a strong photo diary capability and “tagging” comment type capability of #feeling healthy, #feeling tired, etc. As we gathered together the results from the non-use diary the role of Juice became surprisingly evident. The heavy vegetable users, when banned from their vege-juice product, returned quickly to the source. They took up eating salad and vegetables. Their comments complained about the inconvenience of preparing vegetables, complained about not being able to get the right balance of variety of vitamins, and complained about the taste. Vege-juice was a more convenient, better tasting approach to getting the nutrition they felt was necessary. It was a “nutrition life-hack” for their busy day.

FIGURE 9. THE REPLACEMENT OF JUICE WITH OTHER SOLUTIONS

When we take Juice away from consumers (deprivation study) we learned that Vegetable juice drinkers return to the source, but fruit juice drinkers replace it with sweetness. Juice is a “Nice to Have”, not “Must to Have”

![Diagram showing the replacement of juice with other solutions.]

Fruit Juice, on the other hand, was not replaced with an apple or an orange. It was replaced with a sugary, sweet, boost – a cola or an energy drink. The diaries showed that the consumer that was drinking fruit juice was also already eating fruit. Fruit Juice was not a replacement for fruit. In fact Fruit Juice was seen as a disappointment compared to fruit. Lacking the sensory pleasure, drama (is it perfectly ripe, the sensations of texture – soft pieces, bruises, pips). Consumers were emotionally engaged with fruit but when fresh fruit became fruit juice – it became a “good calorie” sweet indulgence for the sugar-pick me up.
The key insight was revealed through the act of deprivation. Coca-Cola Japan has now actioned these insights into a new product that will be launched in the coming months. The standard new product launch tests (Blind taste, test, concept screening and full bundle tests) put the product in the top of the normative database. The Semiotic work had uncovered a cultural truth which the consumers were struggling to articulate.

**Case Study 2: Try brushing your teeth … just brushing**

How long are you supposed to brush your teeth? Most readers will know they are supposed to brush their teeth after each meal. And most will not do that. More likely is that they brush one to two times a day. Many people do it first thing in the morning, many last thing at night. One of your authors, Dave, has worked on various oral care brands continuously for 28 years across Australia and all major Asian markets and from experience knows that there are distinct differences in tooth brushing culture across countries.

However, wherever you go dental academics will agree on two things … that each time you brush your teeth it should be for about three minutes, and that most people don’t brush for that length of time. And for a simple reason: toothpaste. Quite simply this is not because of a problem with the paste. Most brands have added benefits in terms of cleaning. The problem is in the flavor.

When dental "powders" were first marketed in the late nineteenth century with the promise of helping the scrub stains and other bad things from your teeth they were primarily a form of baking soda, and tasted like it. Gradually various manufacturers added a flavoring in order to mask the taste and also to cover the smell of cavities gone bad. Around the early twentieth century concern over bad breath, historically a normal case for everyone, was becoming something that the socially upward at least were worried about. The prevalence of smoking only made bad breath worse and so at the same time we started to see the sale of mint flavoured chewing gum as another form of masking effort to make breath acceptable in close quarters.

Mint flavor. That was the key. Whether it was Wrigley in gum or Colgate in toothpaste the suggestion that “minty freshness” meant better smelling mouths soon took off among the rising middle classes and then throughout Western societies. By the 1920s tooth powders and the newer, more convenient toothpastes were adopting mint flavoring with a duel promise that breath would be better and your mouth would be fresher feeling. Fresher feeling!

So here is where the problem arises. Typically the moment you know put the toothpaste in your mouth and wipe it around your mouth feels better, fresher. And the need to keep brushing is lessened. Or so it seems. But the result is that people brush less. How do we know this?

A simple deprivation experiment. On many occasions over the years Dave has asked people to brush their teeth - in observed sessions in bathrooms, on mass in focus groups. On one occasion a group of over sixty at a seminar. The experiment is simple. Give half the people involved toothpaste, the other half are asked to brush with no paste. Ask them to brush as they normally would and then stop when they think their teeth are clean.
By now you will have guessed what happens. People deprived of toothpaste brush longer and more vigorously. They do so part out of a Pavlovian type response in that their mouth “does not feel right” or because “I could feel my teeth were not so clean”. You notice people brushing more and then doing the “blow their breath into their hand trick” to try and judge freshness much more. And you hear a lot of comments about “it is taking so much longer to get to a great mouth feel”. All of which is to say that being deprived of their paste has made them more conscious of their brushing effort.

Why this experiment? Regardless of the brand (and having worked on Sensodyne, Oral B, Reach, Sunstar, Darlie and other brands and repeating the experiment on all ) the learning always helps to understand what it is about their toothpaste they miss most. Perhaps unfortunately it is not the ability to clean, to remove stains, de-sensitise pain, plaque control, germ removal or any of the other many benefits that modern toothpastes can offer. What is missed most is “the feeling of cleanliness” and the confidence that comes from that feeling. Hence why all brands of toothpaste today now cannot avoid making claims about “great mouthfeel”, “freshness”, “personal confidence”.

By undertaking a very simple deprivation experiment we learn the language people use to describe the best benefit of paste – a copywriter’s dream.

Case Study 3: Freakout
This final example will be brought to you by first inviting you to view the “Burger King Whopper Freakout” campaign at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhF6Kr4ITNQ.

The simple act of depriving the consumer of their “beloved Whopper burger” – “we are sorry it’s been discontinued” – brought consumers to their knees. Remembering the place this burger had not only in their food repertoire, but in their lives and in their memories and hearts. The comments of “I used to eat this with my grandpa – it’s a tradition, it’s a memory” are comments that we may have been able to access with great moderation and probing and laddering. But the simple act of deprivation enabled the reaction within seconds.

Less (Use) is More (behavioral insight)

| What: Removing a product/category from a consumer’s repertoire for a lengthened period |
| Why: To uncover the deeper connections to the products, brands that consumers have which they struggle to articulate |
| When: If there is a need to more deeply understand emotional and easy to access non-rational elements of a brand, category, or product experience. |
| How: |
| 1. Determine the Product/Category Focus. Is it an unarticulated brand insight or broader category insight? Choose heavily involved respondents (heavy users, lovers). |
| 2. Understand the standard usage and behavior timeline to determine the “necessary deprivation time” needed to uncover behavioral change. |
| 3. Mobile phone photo diary of daily activity. Document with pictures and comments. Switch from use to non-use. Ensure you have weekday and weekends and a length of assessment time to fully capture the impact of the non-use. |

Watch out: Not setting the timeline long enough. Not choosing the right respondents (not in love and engaged enough).

CONCLUSIONS: LESS CAN BE MORE
When the research industry speaks of deprivation studies, it is quickly assumed that it is regarding “home use” tests or product use. Ban using your mobile phone and see what happens, ban watching MTV and see what happens. The aim of this paper was to highlight through the presentation of examples and case studies that there is more than one way to apply the theory of deprivation in research.

From sensory deprivation, to applying interviewing techniques from other fields there are still ways for us to continue to improve on the current “traditional” methodologies through the lens of deprivation. Advancement in Market Research is not just dependent on the new technologies available to us, but can be accomplished also applying new thought paradigms and refining of current tools and techniques. So we challenge all of us to think more deeply on what more we could accomplish with less.
ENDNOTE

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