

> TIP SHEET

DEPTH INTERVIEWING

- Do your homework on the experts you are interviewing. Before contacting them you should know who they are, what they do, and why their specialist area of concern is of use to you in terms of framing your thesis. Be familiar with their most recent publications and areas of study and research.
 - Create a list of short, to-the-point questions (twenty-five to thirty words should suffice). Write these in a way that allows one question to build on, or add to, the insights or opinions extracted from your expert interviewee in response to the previous question.
 - Provide all experts with your questions in advance, together with a succinct paragraph that outlines the thesis you want to discuss with them.
 - Avoid questions that are complex, ambivalent or 'closed' in the way that you pose them. A closed question is one that is asked or written in such a way that it elicits a singular, negative or abrupt response. Example: 'Do you believe that consumers are becoming more responsible in their consumption habits?' Response, yes/no.
 - Make your questions as conversational and 'open-ended' as possible. Example: 'Perhaps you can tell me more about the idea that consumers are becoming more responsible, etc...'. Interviewees feel less nervous and self-conscious if they can start a sentence that allows them to be expansive rather than reductive in their response.
 - Ask an expert to 'comment on' a statement you wish to test or validate. Again this demands a more complex and richer response. Example: 'According to a food retailer I interviewed, consumers are increasingly buying food that has a low carbon footprint. Can you tell me why this is the case?'
 - Use 'mirroring' – nodding with interviewees when they nod, agreeing with them when they finish a statement, building on the same statement in a positive or affirmative way when they are finished. This helps to put interviewees at their ease and to encourage them to talk more about a subject.
 - Whether you want people to respond to you via e-mail, or to talk on the phone, it is important to limit the number of questions you ask. For instance, five questions will require about twenty-five to thirty minutes of response time from an expert (which is a lot if you are not paying them) so limit the number of questions you ask and be aware of the time while you are asking them. If an interviewee agrees to speak to you for fifteen minutes, be sure that the questions you have set can be answered within this timeframe.
 - Listen carefully to your expert's responses and be flexible enough to ask a question that is not on your list if this seems appropriate, or if his or her reply suggests a new vein of thought that is worth pursuing.
 - Take careful notes (even if you record your interview) as an expert is speaking and underline any points or phrases that seem especially significant or revealing.
 - Mark the date, time, and interviewee's name at the top right hand side of your page, and along the left margin Q1 (as in question one), Q2 and Q3, etc., when you ask each new question. This way, when you return to the words you have written down later, you will know which question they relate to.
 - Type your notes up and transcribe your tapes (if you have videoed or recorded the interview) as soon as possible after the interview. Go through all of the notes and highlight paragraphs, statements, facts, statistics, and other qualitative or quantitative insights that relate directly back to your thesis.
- When doing this, you should look for the following:
- o points which further validate your trend and flesh it out
 - o points which suggest new veins of research you need to follow
 - o statements that challenge or cast a new light on how you are defining the trend
 - o quotes, statements and insights that can be specifically allocated to the sectional headings you have created on your evidence wall or cartogram
- Scan all your interviews to see if there is a sub-trend or sub-theme within the bigger trend you are writing up that needs to be written up as a secondary theme or trend within the bigger one.
 - Keep your transcripts and notebooks for at least six months after your interviews, in case there are any queries about the accuracy of the statements you have recorded.