



# The Aspirational Advantage:

Using Projective Research Techniques to Deeply Understanding your Customer's Goals and Mindstates when Buying your Brand

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In the ever-evolving marketing landscape, market research professionals face a pressing challenge: how do we truly capture the "full voice of the customer" in a way that empowers our brands to make informed, consumer-centric decisions? While we may have access to an array of research tools and methods, there's a critical gap that often goes overlooked. Merely collecting data on what customers purchase is insufficient; we need to delve deeper into their goals to drive meaningful marketing and innovation.

Identifying customers' *functional*, *higher-order*, and *aspirational goals*, (aka jobs-to-be-done) is not just a nice-to-have in market research studies; these insights are essential for helping brands create products and messaging that deeply connect with customers on a profound, subconscious level.

Here's why.

- Exploring functional goals (aka jobs to be done) provides brands with clear direction on what benefits and features customers want you to talk about.
- Uncovering higher-order goals (aka emotional jobs to be done) unlocks the emotional “why” behind these desired features so that brands can optimize product messaging.
- Lastly, identifying aspirational goals (aka aspirational jobs to be done) empowers marketers to align their brand messaging and experiences with customers’ aspirations, forging deeper connections and loyalty.

Understanding these three goals—functional, higher-order, and aspirational—through the use of **projective-based market research techniques** opens a window into your customer’s subconscious to uncover deep consumer insights and strategies that consistently drive substantial brand growth.

Using activities like the ones below, in both qualitative and quantitative research, helps consumers reveal their non-conscious motivations while getting you to those deep human insights that traditional research and A.I. just don’t get.



Here are seven projective-based techniques you can use to unearth these essential goals and equip your brand with actionable insights:

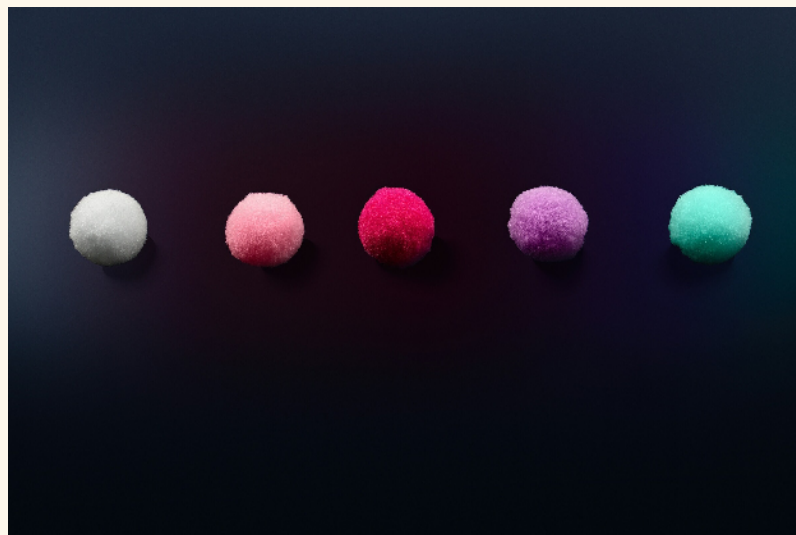
## 1. Storytelling

Tap into the power of narrative. Invite customers to recount their experiences: “Tell me about the first time you bought that product.” Stories unlock the emotional undercurrents influencing purchasing behaviors and help us perceive the world through our consumers’ eyes.



## 2. Image Sorting

This method enables you to gather insights on what matters most to consumers. Have them sort images into categories and then facilitate a discussion about their choices. Not only does this reveal their values, but it also shows how they perceive different aspects of your brand.



### 3. Collage Building

Collages aren't just for craft time—they can reveal deep insights into consumer aspirations. Ask respondents to create a collage representing their ultimate goals in your category and discuss it. What themes or feelings emerge? This can help clarify how these desires relate to your brand.



### 4. Third-Party Role-Playing

Encourage consumers to play an “observer” role, allowing them to analyze their behaviors from a fresh perspective. This exercise can break down personal biases, revealing insights into their ritualistic behaviors and deep-seated thoughts.



## 5. **Personification**

Try asking respondents to envision your brand as a character. “If your brand were a superhero, who would it be?” This playful approach can illuminate the qualities they value in your brand, helping shape marketing messages that resonate.



## 6. **Deprivation**

Utilize the “absence makes the heart grow fonder” principle. Ask participants how their lives would change without your brand, or even ask that customers refrain from using your brand for a few days. This can highlight the significance (or insignificance) that your brand has in their lives and help you appreciate its broader context.



## 7. Word Association

Supplement storytelling with word associations to explore more profound life objectives. Understand how customers' mental models of your brand fit into their overarching goals. This holistic approach equips marketers with the insights they need to craft messages that connect emotionally.



## How to apply these 'goal' insights

Once you've gathered these insights, synthesize the information to pinpoint functional, higher-order, and aspirational goals. Share these findings with your marketing teams so they can create products and messages that resonate on a human level.

**Remember to use functional goals to build a list of features and benefits to build your offers around. Use the higher-order goal insights to understand how to talk about your products. Lastly, use the insights that come from your aspirational goals activities to understand how to talk about your brand.**

But it doesn't stop there. Delve deeper into these insights by identifying your customer's subconscious 'mindstate' when making decisions and where your brand fits in this process. By working with the experts at Mindstate Group to conduct goals research will enable you to understand how to properly activate on all these subconscious insights to ensure every touchpoint aligns with customers' needs.

This way, we elevate our roles beyond traditional research functions to strategic partners in our brands' storytelling. When brands learn to see through the lens of their customers' goals and subconscious mindstates, they transition from mere brands to indispensable partners.

## **Ready to identify your customer's goals and mindset?**



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We use behavioral science-based research methods to deeply understand consumer decision-making during key trigger points. More importantly, we use these behavioral insights to help you create highly influential, behavioral science-based communications/innovations/activations to increase sales for your brand.

**Simply put... We help you grow your brand  
using behavioral science market research**

Contact me to see if this is a good fit for your insights needs or visit our website.

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