

A

Market research

In designing products and services, **market research** – finding out what people really want – is very important.

There are five ways of carrying out market research:

- **Surveys** are of four types:
 - 1 **In-person surveys** can show an example or **sample** of a new product, but they are expensive.
 - 2 **Telephone surveys** are less expensive, but people do not like to be **called up** and asked questions.
 - 3 **Mail surveys** have **low response rates** because few people send the surveys back; they are inexpensive, however.
 - 4 **Online surveys** are simple and inexpensive, but usually unpredictable as there is no control over the **pool** or selection of people that **take part in** this kind of survey.
- **Focus groups** usually last 1–2 hours. A **moderator** uses specially prepared questions to ask a group. It takes at least three groups to get accurate results.
- **Personal interviews** usually last about an hour – they are normally recorded. As with focus groups, not doing enough interviews gives inaccurate results.
- **Observations** involve observing consumers in action by videoing them in stores, watching them at work, or observing how they use a product at home.
- **Field trials** involve placing a new product in selected stores to test customer response under real-life selling conditions.

See Unit 15 for more on development and Unit 21 for more on marketing.



In-person survey



Focus group

B

Development and launch

- When software **developers** (see Unit 15) have finished the **beta version** – first version – of a program, they **release** this on the internet and users are asked to **try it out** and to identify **bugs** or problems.
- Car **designers** use **CAD/CAM** (computer-assisted design / computer-assisted manufacturing) to help develop and test the first versions or **prototypes** of the new product.
- **Researchers** in **laboratories** may take years to develop new drugs, **testing** or **trials** them in **trials** to show not only that they are **effective**, but also that they are safe. Drugs need to be made in large numbers on an **industrial scale** before they can be sold.
- **Rollout** is the process of making a product available, perhaps in particular places to test reaction.
- **Product launch** is the moment of truth when a product is officially made available for sale.
- If a **design defect** or **design fault** is found in a product after it has been launched, the company may have to **recall** it, asking those who have bought the product to return it, perhaps so that the defect can be corrected.

Note

Design defect, design fault and **design flaw** all mean the same thing, but the first of these is the most frequent.



Testing and **trials** (BrE) / **trials** (AmE) are both used to talk about people trying new products and services. The noun **trial** is used especially to talk about testing the effectiveness of new drugs, for example in the expression **clinical trial**.

Exercises

14.1 Which expression in A opposite does the underlined word refer to in each item (1–6)?

- 1 It lasts up to two hours and has someone asking specific questions, but just one is not normally considered enough. *focus group*
- 2 These are useful because you can see how people actually use the product.
- 3 These can take different forms – some are more efficient than others at getting information about what people want.
- 4 He or she organizes the discussion in a focus group.
- 5 These cause problems for one type of survey, which mean that they might not be reliable.
- 6 With these, you can examine how people react when they see the product on the shelves.

14.2 Three people are talking about their work in product development. Correct the mistakes in the words in *italics*, using expressions from A and B opposite.

- 1 ‘**(a)** *Market researches* showed that there was a real need for this service on our webpage, but before offering it, we had to test it in a **(b)** *beta copy* with small groups of users over several months to eliminate all the bugs. Even so, after the **(c)** *product lunch*, some users said they could get into other people’s email accounts!’
- 2 ‘Our **(d)** *searchers* have shown that our new diet drink can make you slimmer and the **(e)** *focal groups* said they liked the taste, but first we had to prove to the authorities that it was **(f)** *secure*. Another problem was making the drink on an **(g)** *industrial level*: at first we could only make it in small quantities in the laboratory, but making it in bigger quantities was impossible.’
- 3 ‘At our research centre in Toulouse in France, the **(h)** *designators* develop the prototypes. People think that my job of flying new aircraft is dangerous, but there is so much **(i)** *proving* on computer first, that all the danger has been eliminated by the time I fly the plane.
(j) *CAM/CAD* means that all the process of design and manufacture is much quicker than before.’

14.3 Complete this talk by a marketing specialist using these words from A and B opposite.

consumer design groups launch market recall surveys

A few years ago a famous car company launched a completely new car. They’d done years of technical research and **(1)** research with focus **(2)** and **(3)** panels, and analysis of responses to questionnaires and **(4)** Then came the **(5)** Sales of the car were very good until a Swedish newspaper reported the results of its ‘elk test’. They found that the car had a tendency to tip over if you turned quickly to avoid an elk. This was due to a **(6)** fault in the car, so they had to **(7)** all the cars they’d sold in order to correct the fault.



Over to you

- What does a pharmaceutical company need to do before it can release a new drug?
- What kind of surveys have you taken part in?
- What will a company do if they find a problem in a product after the launch? And why might this be a big problem?