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Qualitative Interviews in Strategy Projects: How Real Market Voices Sharpen Decisions

A brief interview on hypotheses, market entry and why qualitative research makes strategies substantially more robust

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Interview with Jasper Kleid

DTO – B2B Research & Strategies

In this interview, Jasper Kleid explains why qualitative interviews in strategy projects are more than an additional research format. Their value becomes especially clear in new market entries, repositioning projects or the assessment of new business models, where tables, market sizes and secondary sources reach their limits: in the specific decision logic, reservations and reasoning of target groups.

> **"Good interviews do not produce opinions to file away. They reveal why target groups decide as they do, where a concept becomes fragile and which arguments genuinely carry weight in the market."**

Question: Why are qualitative interviews so valuable in strategy projects?

Answer: They reveal part of the market reality that is often missing from conventional market overviews. In many projects, it is relatively easy to estimate the size of a market, identify visible competitors or understand the technology trends being discussed. The more difficult question is how customers, experts and decision-makers actually interpret these factors. Interviews show which risks are taken seriously, which arguments are persuasive and where a strategic assumption may sound logical but is not yet supported by market reality.

Question: In which situations should interviews be used particularly early?

Answer: Interviews should be used early when a company is entering a new market, changing its positioning or assessing a new business model. These situations usually involve many plausible hypotheses: Which segments are attractive? Which product features matter? How can a price level be justified? Which barriers arise in sales or implementation? Interviews enable companies to test these assumptions against real market logic during strategy development rather than only at the end.

Question: What can interviews provide that secondary research alone cannot?

Answer: Secondary research provides orientation. It identifies market trends, competitive moves, regulatory developments and often technical dynamics. However, it only partly explains why a decision-maker trusts a provider, why a feature is regarded as a basic expectation or why an objectively strong offer fails to make the shortlist. Qualitative interviews close this gap. They show not only what someone evaluates, but how that evaluation is formed.

Question: What role do interviews play in validating market entry?

Answer: Market entry is rarely only about whether a market is attractive in principle. The decisive issue is which entry logic is credible. Interviews show what a new provider must deliver, which proof points target groups require and where trust is built or lost. In complex industrial, mobility or technology markets, an offer may look strong on paper and still fail because of service expectations, pricing logic, process requirements or perceived risk. Direct conversations reveal these issues much earlier.

Question: How do qualitative interviews support strategic repositioning?

Answer: Repositioning only works when it is not merely formulated clearly internally, but is also understood and believed in the market. Interviews show which messages resonate, which terms feel interchangeable and where a performance promise is too far removed from perceived reality. A crucial distinction is between differentiation and minimum standards. What the company sees as a strong argument may already be expected by customers. Interviews make this gap visible and help sharpen the positioning.

Question: What contradictions do good interviews typically uncover?

Answer: Interviews often reveal tensions that are almost invisible in aggregated data. A concept may appear attractive but lose credibility at a certain price. A technology feature may be viewed positively without creating a real purchase impulse. A provider may be considered innovative and simultaneously perceived as risky. These contradictions are strategically valuable because they show where an offer must be sharpened, de-risked or explained differently before it becomes a go-to-market plan.

Question: How should an interview guide be structured methodologically?

Answer: A good guide is neither an informal conversation nor a rigid questionnaire. It combines open exploratory questions with targeted hypothesis testing. The first stage is to understand the respondent's logic: how they think about the market, providers, risks and decision criteria. Specific assumptions, concepts, pricing logic or communication approaches can then be tested. The guide must leave enough room for unexpected insights without losing focus on the core strategic questions.

Question: Which target groups should be interviewed in a strategy project?

Answer: That depends on the decision being validated. Expert interviews are particularly useful for understanding market mechanisms, competitive dynamics, regulation or operational barriers. Interviews with customers, users or commercial decision-makers show how offers are actually perceived: what is understood, what builds trust, where doubts arise and what evidence is required. The method becomes especially powerful when different market roles, countries or decision-maker profiles are analysed in a systematic and comparable way.

Question: How does interview material become a robust strategic recommendation?

Answer: The value does not come from individual quotations, but from the structured analysis of reasoning patterns. A strong analysis asks which drivers recur, where target groups differ, which statements explain a quantitative trend and which hypotheses are confirmed or need adjustment. This leads to concrete implications for positioning, product, communication, sales, service or pricing architecture. Interviews therefore provide not only a better understanding of the market, but a substantially more robust basis for decisions.

Question: Do qualitative interviews replace quantitative market research or competitive analysis?

Answer: No, and they should not be used that way. Qualitative interviews add depth to quantitative market research and competitive analysis. Quantitative data shows how widespread attitudes, barriers or preferences are. Interviews explain why they arise and what consequences follow. In strategy projects, this combination is essential: market overview, target-group understanding, competitive logic and hypothesis testing work together and reduce the risk of deriving strategic decisions from only one perspective.

Question: What is your most important closing message?

Answer: In strategy projects, the strongest approach is not the one that collects the most information, but the one that asks the market the right questions. Qualitative interviews help interpret uncertainty, test assumptions earlier and align strategic options more closely with real decision processes. Especially in market entry and repositioning, this can make the difference: a strategy becomes not only internally plausible, but robustly supported from the perspective of the target groups.

From interview to decision: DTO helps companies use qualitative interviews as a strategic instrument, integrate target-group and expert perspectives and validate market entries, repositioning projects and new business models more robustly.

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Interviewee

Jasper Kleid

Junior Consultant | B2B Research & Strategies

Jasper Kleid has worked at B2B Research & Strategies since 2025. During his time at DTO, he has supported several projects directly related to European industrial markets. He holds a B.Sc. in Business Administration and focuses particularly on market and competitive analysis and strategy development.