



CAPO[®] Method Description.

Summary.

CAPO[®], which stands for Computer Aided Psychological Observation, makes it possible for the first time to apply the techniques of depth psychology to larger numbers of subjects. This is achieved by using the principle of a computer game with a contrived format to generate sets of numerical data that describe the projection patterns and associations of the subjects. Algorithms are then used to compress and visualize these data. CAPO[®] was specifically developed by &EQUITY to add the statistical validity of quantitative methods to the investigative depth of qualitative methods since some people simply have to have figures to feel at home with self-evident truths. CAPO[®] can be scaled to handle groups of subjects from n=50 and up and makes it possible to analyze and track brands and brand communication for purposes of strategic planning.

Origins of CAPO[®].

A knowledge of the subconscious perceptions of the target group is one of the most important prerequisites for efficient communication and successful brand management. Qualitative investigative approaches involving the use of an array of instruments based upon depth psychology make it possible to obtain the necessary insights. APIA[®] (Analysis of Projective InterAction), for example, makes use of projective and associative techniques to circumvent the rational control mechanisms of the members of a target group. It allows us to look behind the facade of stereotypic responses and thereby provides valid results that are extremely relevant for purposes of brand management. The results obtained through the use of such qualitative methods are representative in a psychological but not in a statistical sense. Up to now, there have been no convincing methods that provide both psychological insights and inspiration for communication activities on the one hand and statistical validity and objective interpretation on the other hand.

Fundamental Principles behind CAPO[®].

APIA[®] is a method based upon the use of group dynamics, and one of its salient features is that it allows participants to play with the subject of the research by disguising the nature of the workshop. Essentially, this involves tricking the subjects into abandoning their social roles and temporarily relinquishing control over their egos. This allows us to probe the depths of the consumer's soul and obtain valid insights into consumer behavior. CAPO[®] transfers this principle to a computer screen and simply changes the nature of the interaction scenario: Person-to-person interaction within a group is replaced by person-to-animal interaction in the imagination.

Sequence of a CAPO[®] program.

The CAPO[®] program begins with an “official greeting” and the necessary filter questions in order to then be able to introduce the playful context and the animal presenters in an “unofficial greeting”; animated animal figures ask the subject for help with research on a specific subject (see Figure 1).

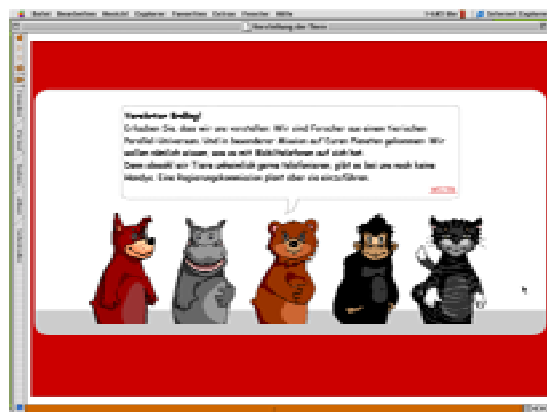


Figure 1: Introduction of the sub-plot.

Each subject chooses a presenter animal and is then led through a series of “games”. The subject is asked to use the drag & drop function to cluster, assign, describe and evaluate all kinds of different visual and verbal projective and associative stimuli (images, symbols, words, sentences, etc.) with a computer mouse. In order to avoid tiring the participants with too many objects and stimuli, the material to be dealt with is rotated through all subjects (see Figure 2).

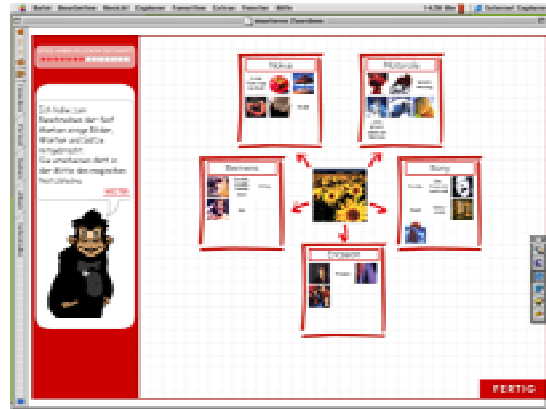


Figure 2: Assignment of stimuli to brands.

CAPO[®] uses semantic networks to sound out the entire associative repertoire of a brand or any other object. The sum total of all denotative and connotative meanings constitutes the identity of the respective brand, and a special software program combines the individual mind maps to create a general mind map (see Figure 3).

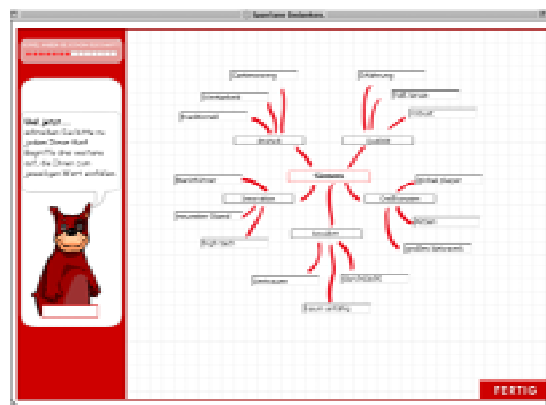


Figure 3: Semantic network.

Spontaneous evaluation of brand communication (ads, commercials, concepts, moods) is handled similarly. However, the playful context eliminates “rational” reactions in order to obtain honest responses instead of clever remarks (see Figure 4).

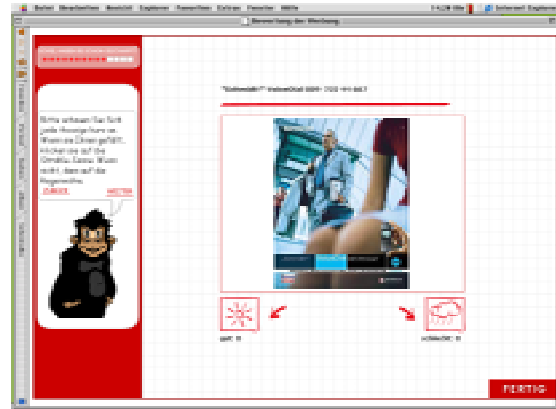


Figure 4: Campaign evaluation.

Evaluation of CAPO[®].

The raw data from a CAPO[®] program provide a typical frequency matrix that can be segmented as a function of all criteria used. In addition to conventional quantitative characteristics such as, for example, awareness, sympathy, image, likes and dislikes, which represent very useful information, CAPO[®] also provides an abundance of data on the frequency with which various stimuli are assigned to the objects being investigated. The nature of this information makes it extremely valuable in terms of the insights it provides.

The array of stimuli, which represent the input used for each CAPO[®] program, was developed and empirically validated in the course of the past ten years on the basis of over 400 APIA[®] workshops. This array of stimuli is now ideally suited for accessing the motivational and emotional structures of consumers and makes it possible to decode their connotative perception of brands as well as other sign systems.

Classic mathematical methods such as factorial analysis or multidimensional scaling and innovative algorithms such as gdp's market structure analysis are used to compress the resultant data to create charts in order to make them amenable to in-depth analysis and use them as a source of inspiration for the formulation of concrete communication strategies (see Figure 5).

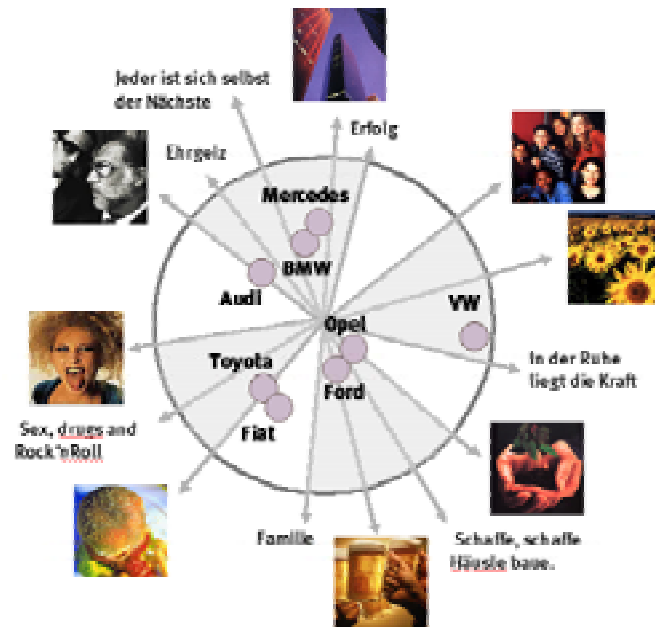


Figure 5: Example of an association chart.

This compression process makes it possible to create an “emotional map” of a market with various brands as the topographical landmarks. What makes this type of visualization of association structures so important and useful is that it focuses on the subconscious perception of brand images and communication. Since CAPO® objectively records “volatile” emotional facts, the results of repeated surveys are stable. This makes CAPO® a viable instrument for empirical evaluation and efficient measurement of communication performance.

Organizational Implementation of CAPO®.

Because the workshop software is based on common technology (html, d-html, Java), any standard computer will support a CAPO® program. As a result, depending upon the make-up of the target audience and the assignment, there are two possible ways for carrying out a CAPO® program:

1. In-studio interviews
2. Interviews via the Internet

In the case of most target groups, in-studio sessions are apt to be the choice of preference in order to avoid distortion of representative results by the “Internet access” factor. Appropriate subjects are recruited by field organizations on the basis of quota guidelines and provided with a computer on site. Interviewers limit their involvement to providing technical assistance. All major market research organizations are now equipped with such screen labs.



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In the case of young or very technophile target groups, however, “Internet access” is not likely to result in any sample bias. In such cases, a CAPO[®] program can be very economically carried out with open or closed online panels.

Performance Scope of CAPO[®].

Although CAPO[®] was created as an instrument for brand management and strategic communication planning, the individual components of the program are so flexible that CAPO[®] can be used for a wide range of different applications. CAPO[®] was originally developed to permit analysis of brand equity in the context of a brand’s competitive environment and plan marketing strategy in terms of brand positioning, communication and diversification. Additionally, CAPO[®] can be used as an instrument for defining target audiences in psychographic terms on the basis of value systems, lifestyles and role models. Unlike APIA[®], CAPO[®] is not only suitable for the heuristic exploration of possibilities but also for empirical evaluation of reality. CAPO[®] can be used for the empirical investigation of communication principles and brand concepts, product ideas and campaigns in terms of uniqueness, consistency and credibility. Last but far from least, CAPO[®] makes an ideal tracking tool that can provide reliable information as to whether the performance of communication for a brand, service or company is in line with strategic objectives.