

Using the Repertory Grid Technique for Mining Design Patterns

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In this focus group, we will investigate the use of something called the Repertory Grid Technique to mine design patterns in a methodical manner.

The Repertory Grid Technique is an easy and fun way of getting people to tell you about connections that they see, without them being in any way guided in any direction. This technique has objectivity built in!

Basically, you present your respondents with a number of combinations of three objects, ideas, or whatever; and you ask them which of the three they see as 'the odd one out'. This first step is called *triading*. Then, you ask them to indicate which pole of the identified feature is 'good' and which is 'not good', and how the feature is characterized. This step is called *laddering*. Finally, you go on to *pyramiding* and determine ways to get at the desired positive pole of a feature.

In order to see if the technique is as useful for mining patterns as I hope, I will bring to the focus group 5 samples of design products in a particular domain (I'm not telling which domain, to ensure that participants are truly unprepared!). There are 10 different ways in which these 5 samples can be split up in groups of 3, which gives 10 opportunities for triading and laddering, resulting in a potentially large number of candidate patterns.

Together, we then do the pyramiding to work a selection of them up into proper design patterns.

In this focus group, participants will be at the same time researcher and respondent. The focus group is not about the patterns that we find, it is really about finding out if the Repertory Grid Technique works.

[Reference: Marsden, D., & Littler, D. (2000). *Repertory grid technique: an interpretative research framework*. *European Journal of Marketing*, 34(7), 816]