



# SIS Case Study: Assessing Consumer Opinions and Preferences on DSLR Camera Lenses

Based on fieldwork conducted in New York City

**Background and Research Goals:** The client, a manufacturer of DSLR camera lenses, sought to understand the reasons behind American consumers' opinions on the aesthetic elements of mid-range and high-end DSLR camera lenses. The interest was specifically on the visual, tactile, and auditory aspects of the lenses rather than the photo quality they produced. Consumer attitudes towards lens appearance, feeling, and structure have been somewhat overlooked in previous research in this area, which has focused mainly on the functional aspects of lens quality.

**Methodology:** 23 respondents were selected based on three main criteria: 1) owning a high-end and mid-range Canon and Nikon digital cameras; 2) owning at least 3 DSLR camera lenses 3) taking photos with a DSLR camera at least five times per week. These respondents were invited to a Manhattan photo studio where they provided their in-depth opinions on 14 different DSLR camera lenses. The lenses, each from different manufacturers, were selected to represent different aesthetic styles and choices that designers make, e.g. the location of labels and controls on the lens, the ease or difficulty with which the focus and zoom rings can be turned, and the feeling of the material the lens is made of. Each respondent completed one hand-written survey per lens, which included both scale-ranking questions as well as open ended, qualitative questions. The results of these surveys were then analyzed on both a quantitative and qualitative level to uncover market trends.

**Findings and takeaways:** Analysis of these questionnaires yielded several key findings, including:

- 1) The client realized the opportunity that lies in producing zoom and focus rings that require minimal effort to adjust while still maintaining a feeling of precision and sturdiness. This came from the surprising finding that this was the greatest determining factor of overall lens quality.
- 2) In-depth interviews with select respondents illuminated the need to have lenses that make as little noise as possible when working in professional environments so as not to distract photo subjects, representing an opportunity in marketing silent lenses to professional photographers.
- 3) The survey analysis revealed that the weight of the lens is a strong determinant of its overall feeling of durability. Since these lenses are a significant investment – many high-end lenses sell for upwards of \$1,000 – consumers want to feel that they are buying a product that will last. The client was then able to recognize the value in the messaging of a strong, durable lens that will last a lifetime.