Chapter 33
Verbal and Pictorial Representations of Beverage Consumption Patterns:
The Wall of Pictures Protocol

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ABSTRACT

After a first section dedicated to the discussion of the methodological foundations of the image-based research protocols, the chapter introduces the "wall of pictures" protocol. The authors first present the preparation of instrument, the validity check, and the textual data coding process. In the final paragraphs, a large range of descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses is successively presented, and thanks to a combination of innovative technological devices, the wall of pictures outcomes has shown some promising perspectives. Triangulation opportunities are particularly promoted thanks to the combination of quantitative measurements with textual and/or pictorial variables.

1. INTRODUCTION

Regarding marketing communications, we are used to the dictum: "a picture says more than a thousand words." However, when it comes to market research –and especially consumer research– at least the majority of researchers seem to overlook the basic wisdom offered in this saying. Of course, several groups of researchers have already suggested that pictures or images should be used within consumer research, most notably in the context of pleading for appreciation of more qualitative consumer research falling back on, for instance, an interpretative approach and/or projective techniques, etc (Basil, 2011; Boddy, 2007; Catteral & Ibbotson, 2000; Churchill & Iacobucci, 2004; Donoghue, 2000; Gordon & Langmaid, 1988; Hofstede, Van Hoof, Wahlenberg & De Jong, 2007; Will, Eadie & MacAskill, 1996).

Particularly when doing research in a complex intercultural context and raising questions about principally emotionally engaged behavioural consumption patterns, like those in the area of food and beverages, we should indeed try to make use of proper qualitative approaches. The arguments for this are quite convincing. For instance, participants can express themselves without the requirement that they put their feelings into words first; they can provide their initial opinions intuitively (Hofstede et al., 2007). Moreover, participants seem to like creative and unconventional research approaches (Van Riel, 1992; Van Riel, Stroeker & Maathuis, 1998; Catterall & Ibbotson, 2000), and therefore may feel more open to taking part in such research. However, following the basic guideline of "mixed research" (Creswell, Plano, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Molina-Azorin, 2011) we believe that a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research might be the best approach.

Against this background, the purpose of this chapter is to incorporate visual as well as verbal representations and correlate them with quantitative measures normally used within intercultural

consumer research to analyse drinking behaviours and beverage consumption styles. In line with the aims of the COBEREN network, three main objectives were pursued:

- To analyse beverage consumption according to socio-demographic variables,
- To identify differences and similarities among European consumption patterns,
- To explain from a methodological point of view the development of a 'wall of pictures'.

In the shape of a specific approach, the 'wall of pictures protocol', we elaborated a mixed research method which was particularly fitting for our research topic: analysing drinking behaviours and beverage consumption styles in a very complex multicultural context. In this chapter we will present the research approach developed as well as some very interesting basic research results attained with the help of this approach. The results support our conviction that a mixed-method approach is a very good way to obtain results which are not only valuable to research but also to practice, whether from the perspective of micro-marketing by companies in the relevant industry or from that of macro-marketing, trying to evaluate and perhaps influence drinking behaviours from a societal point of view.

The chapter is developed in the following way. Section one reviews consumer research approaches and the marketing-orientated use of images. We introduce the theoretical framework of the study in section two. After providing an outline of the data collection and details of the coding process in section three, the main empirical results are discussed in section four. We conclude by looking at the implications of the results and providing starting points for further research, which is presented in the following COBEREN book chapters.

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