

Chapter 3

Grounded Theory and Market Research

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ABSTRACT

One of the important issues in marketing research studies is the quality of them, especially qualitative researches. Considering some conditions lead to the achievement of high-quality qualitative researches (such as Grounded Theory), the objective of this chapter is to identify major criteria in the quality assessment of studies done on Grounded Theory. Within the current research study, the definitions of Grounded Theory, the validity of Grounded Theory, and the levels of studies on it are addressed. Furthermore, the way to operationalize Grounded Theory in marketing research studies is dealt with. Next, the major elements in the quality of studies done on Grounded Theory and the duties of marketing researchers against qualitative research studies are discussed. Finally, the unique characteristics of Grounded Theory are introduced, and the studies done in this regard are summed up.

INTRODUCTION

Paying attention to methodological principles in research studies is one of the most important ways in order to achieve quality within marketing qualitative researches. Nowadays, great advances have been done in the field of research quality and this has led to a range of differing criteria and standards for evaluation. Studies done on

Grounded Theory are no exception and various criteria in different levels have been presented to assess their quality. Quality is a difficult and ambiguous concept in qualitative marketing research studies. In the discussions related to the quality of qualitative researches on marketing it is often assumed that the required criteria have been met, while the achievement of these criteria is a difficult job (Suddaby, 2006). Flick argues

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that the problem related to the finding a method of evaluation for qualitative researches done on marketing has not already been resolved. Considering all the arguments that continue on qualitative researches on marketing, these studies should be guided in a scientific, creative, and artistic way to have quality as their final product and reflect these dimensions. The quality of research studies is a key issue in clinical studies, too. That is because they need to make use of the best evidence in those studies (Flick, 2009). Because of the growing use of Grounded Theory in marketing research studies, taking into account the quality of the studies that make use of this research methodology has gained a great importance.

Grounded Theory is a general research methodology to generate theories. What Grounded Theory means is a theory based on the data that have been collected and analyzed systematically during the process of research. In this approach, the collection and analysis of data and the theory that is derived from them are in a close relationship with each other. Instead of beginning the study with a predetermined hypothesis, the researcher starts with a specific field of study and allows the theory to appear from the data collected. The theory that has been derived from data can reflect the reality in a higher degree compared to the one that is the result of the combination of a set of concepts that are based on experience or mere contemplation. Since grounded theories are derived from data, they can be safe guides for the operation by the establishment of a deeper understanding and insight.

THE STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Mansouriyan (2007) defines the research methodology based on Grounded Theory in the following way: "In its simplest form, Grounded Theory means the process of creation of a comprehensive theory through the organized collection and induc-

tive analysis of data in order to provide answers to the new questions arising from qualitative researches that do not have sufficient theoretical bases regarding their subject of study."

He mentions five major applications for the theories that are based on Grounded Theory:

1. They enable researchers to explain and analyze the subject of study and provide the opportunity to predict possible events related to the subject of the study.
2. It is useful in the development of theoretical bases for the subject of study.
3. In addition to theoretical bases, it is also useful in the practical aspects of the study.
4. It provides a new approach to view the subject of study and takes the researcher to a degree of understanding towards data in which he/she can give meaning to the collected raw data.
5. It provides a modern way to guide the future studies that are going to be done on the subject matter (Mansouriyan, 2007).

Powel argues that Grounded Theory is a method in which the theories, concepts, hypotheses, and propositions are directly drawn from the data instead of extracting them from previous presuppositions, other studies, or present theoretical frameworks. At the time that the collection and analysis of the data is finished, the extracted theory provides a deep understanding of the subject under study. In this way, the theory is emphasized as a process. In other words, instead of a finalized product, the theory is viewed as a continuous existence being developed. Here, generalizability is not considered a major factor since the aim is to understand a phenomenon and not controlling it. In addition, the goal is to understand the condition in a particular context as it is and not predicting what might happen in similar environments. Therefore, the research is done to understand the reason for individuals' behaviors.

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