

Chapter 9

Theoretical and Empirical Comparative Analysis on Quantitative and Qualitative Marketing Researches

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative marketing research projects and the possibilities of combining them in triangulation. The comparative analysis of both types of the research was conducted on the basis of literature review and the empirical research results, which were obtained from the evaluation of usability of Polish bank website. In the following sections, the authors discuss issues such as: 1) specificity of quantitative vs. qualitative marketing research, with regards to the implemented research projects; 2) methodological aspects of quantitative and qualitative research. They compare the selected research and sampling methods. Also, the problems which may occur with reference to quantitative and qualitative marketing research triangulation on different stages of the research project are discussed. Moreover, strengths and weaknesses of triangulation are analyzed. At the end, the example of quantitative and qualitative triangulation in the research project investigating the usability of websites is presented.

QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE MARKETING RESEARCH – IDEA AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN RESEARCH DESIGN

Comparing quantitative with qualitative marketing research is not always successful, among others, because of the nomenclature used. For example,

the term “qualitative research” is often associated with “qualitative data analysis”, used in sociology and psychology, as well as with the term “analysis of qualitative data”, which is used in statistics. Similar situation occurs in quantitative research, where overlapping, ambiguous terms can be found. For example, on the one hand, we have the term: “analysis of quantitative data”, but on

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the other hand, the term “quantitative analysis of qualitative data” can be found. Therefore, the use of the term “quantitative data analysis” without using the second part, that is without the reference to the particular type of data, is completely incomprehensible.

The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research concerns several areas (Borys, 1991):

1. **Philosophical-Logical:** Involves asking questions like “what is the research subject or set of subjects”, or in other way, “what is the character of the research subject or set of subjects” and “how many subjects is there?”, which describe appropriately the qualitative and quantitative aspect of the analysis of the subject set.
2. **Qualimetrics:** A discipline dealing with the theory of quality, which assumes that qualitative description is equivalent to describing particular characteristics, whereas quantitative description is equivalent to having particular characteristics. It means, in practice, that qualitative description refers to the trait, which is a definition of a notion (for example: “reliability”, etc.) and referring to the information theory, it reflects *the set of information of the same type about the subject of the research* (Baborski, 1979). As a result, we always should accept some agreed convention, under which the information about the research subject is considered to be of the same kind.
3. **Statistics:** In which the term of quality variable (also called “attribute”) is used the most often as a synonym of such terms as: “*qualitative trait*”, “*non-measurable trait*”, or “*qualitative attribute*”, whereas, with reference to quantitative variable, the most often used terms are “*quantitative trait*”, “*measurable trait*”, “*quantitative attribute*”.

Apart from the above comparison, we may refer to the research, in the view of the project planning, under which the researcher is looking for the answer to such questions as (Tarka, 2014):

- On what level of detail and generalization should our knowledge be?
- Should the knowledge result from the information on objective or subjective level?
- What detail methods, data collection and analysis techniques should be applied to solve our research problem?

When looking for the answers to such questions, both on the grounds of quantitative, as well as qualitative research, the researcher should, first of all, realize the purpose and the aim of the conducted research project and the final form of the collected data (Mertens, 1998; Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Neuman, 2000).

Under the quantitative approach, the researcher describes the phenomena on grounds of the objective criteria of evaluation. However, in qualitative approach, the researcher, so to say, “is portraying” the environment and its phenomena, using the subjective criteria of description. The quantitative approach comes down to the precision of defining operational variables and formulating research hypotheses, as well as allows for reliable measurements and result testing. On the other hand, in qualitative approach, it is assumed from the very beginning that the researcher is a “person-side” of the research, because of overlapping personal experience or giving meanings and interpreting facts occurring in the research project. The reason for this is that the researchers move in the culture of a particular society, in which they live and they give the sense and the meaning to the observed phenomena. As a result, the researchers can’t be unbiased and impose their views, for instance, by choosing the research issues or subjectively interpreting the existing reality.

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