

Quantitative vs qualitative research assignment

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Introduction Marketing research has developed enormously in Ireland since the early 1960's, which was the founding period of the first indigenous market research agencies - Irish Marketing Surveys and Market Research Bureau of Ireland. Now the market includes a range of companies operating as all-purpose, generalist market research agencies using both qualitative and quantitative research techniques (Domegan and Fleming, 2007). Quantitative research is objective; qualitative research is subjective.

Quantitative research seeks explanatory laws; qualitative research aims at in-depth description. Qualitative Denzin & Lincoln (2003) concur, focusing on the attributes of the paradigm, stating that: 'Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative material practices that make the world visible. Qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. It attempts to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them' (2003: 4). 'It seeks deeper understanding of factors, sometimes covert, which influence buying decisions. It is impressionistic rather than conclusive; it probes rather than counts. Intrinsically, it is subjective' (2001; 195). Denzin & Lincoln (2003) put forward a grounded approach to the characteristics of qualitative research, stating: Domegan and Fleming (2007) agree, contending: 'Qualitative research aims to explore and to discover issues about the problem on hand, because very little is known about the problem.'

There is usually uncertainty about dimensions and characteristics of problem. It uses 'soft' data and gets 'rich' data' (2007: 24).

According to Schmalensee and Lesh (1999) the primary advantage of qualitative research is that it identifies areas for further research and can uncover underlying attitudes, beliefs and motives which cannot be understood from quantitative methodologies, whereas Domegan and Fleming (2007) argue that its advantage lies largely in generating ideas on new product development, packing, design, strategy, branding or image.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) postulates that the primary disadvantage of qualitative methodologies is that: Alvesson & Deetz (2000) further add three basic difficulties with qualitative research: There are always sources of influence in an interview context that cannot be minimized or controlled. Naive romanticism – the complexity of the effects of researcher-interviewee interaction and compliance. Statements can be determined by the situation (the interview context) and not to any other specific 'experiential reality' (honesty) (2000: 70).

According to Malhotra (1996) According to Sekeran (1992), an in-depth interview is a lengthy personal interview conducted to uncover primary attitudes, beliefs and motivations.

Malhotra (1996), Chisnall (2001), Denzin & Lincoln (2003), Domegan and Fleming (2007) and O'Sullivan (2008) and all support the fact that this type of technique can yield excellent results but requires very careful planning, training and preparation.

However, Malhotra (1996) and Domegan and Fleming (2007) in particular highlight some of the weaknesses of this technique, advising that sample

sizes are small and statistical extrapolation of findings become a problem. Domegan and Fleming (2007) further add that interviewer bias is difficult to regulate and that: ‘The disadvantages of the technique contribute to its limited use... the focus group is generally capable of providing the same information at a lower cost’ (2007: 174). According to Chisnell (2001): ‘Projective techniques use indirect methods of investigation, borrowed from clinical psychology, in order to obtain data that cannot be secured through more overt methods e. g. direct questioning’ (2001: 202). Again Malhotra (1996), Alvesson & Deetz (2000), Chisnell (2001), Denzin & Lincoln (2003) and Domegan and Fleming (2007) all agree that this type of technique delves below surface responses to obtain true feelings, unlock attitudes or subconscious motivations and that the purpose of the research must be disguised.

Whereas there are many variations on the different types of techniques, Domegan and Fleming (2007) view the most commonly used types as: observational research as: ‘... refers to methods of generating data which involve the researcher immersing himself in a research setting, and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions events and so on, without communication’ (2007: 224). Denzin & Lincoln (2003) agree and suggest that observations can be split into structured or unstructured, direct or indirect or, natural or contrived. Domegan and Fleming (2007) concur, but further add two more types, namely open or disguised and human or mechanical. While Chisnell (2001)

does not suggest and drawbacks to observations, Bailey, Bemrose et al (1995) highlight the problems in consistency with this technique.

Domegan and Fleming (2007), Denzin & Lincoln (2003) and Malhotra (1996) all support the statement that the greatest advantage of observation is that it permits measurement of actual behaviour rather than intended or preferred behaviour and that the most serious disadvantage is that while the behaviour can be recorded, the fundamental motives, beliefs and preferences in that behaviour cannot be examined. Again Malhotra (1996), Alvesson & Deetz (2000), Chisnall (2001), Denzin & Lincoln (2003) and Domegan and Fleming (2007) all concur that there are serious ethical issues to consider when deciding on observation.

Furthermore, according to Bailey, Bemrose et al (1995): ' Research ethics refer to the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that the participants are not harmed by the research' (1995: 4). Finally, Denzin & Lincoln (2003) put forward three other types of qualitative research methods, but they are not widely supported across other relevant articles. They are: Interpretation of documents and material culture Visual methods (photography and image capture Personal narrative, reflexivity text: list-item} Both Malhotra (1996) and Domegan and Fleming (2007) define measurement as: ' The assignment of numbers or other symbols to characteristics of objects according to certain _specified rules' (1996: 271 and 2007: 337 respectively). _ {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} Once variables are defined, scaling must then be considered. Malhotra (1996), Denzin & Lincoln (2003) and Domegan and Fleming (2007) all concur on the following scales: Nominal scale: used to identify data that is mutually <https://assignbuster.com/quantitative-vs-qualitative-research-assignment/>

exclusive and collectively exhaustive . g. a PPS number, a student ID number. Ordinal Scale: goes beyond the nominal scale and allows greater than and less than, but does not provide a scale as to how much greater or how much less e. g. star rating for a hotel. Interval Scale: possesses the characteristics of an ordinal scale plus allowing equality of difference e. g. the difference between 1 and 2 is the same as 3 and 4. However it is arbitrary and has no fixed zero point. Ratio Scale: has all the properties of an interval scale plus a meaningful absolute zero.

Once the variables and a scale are agreed there are a number of techniques used for measuring qualitative data. Malhotra (1996), Denzin & Lincoln (2003) and Domegan and Fleming (2007) group these techniques under two headings: Scaling techniques e. g. Thurstone, Likert, Semantic differential, Stapel scales. Bailey, Bemrose et al (1995) states that qualitative data should be presented through the following measurement tools: {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} Quantitative {text: list-item} ' Quantitative research emphasizes the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes' (2003: 13). _ Alvesson & Deetz (2000) support this claim by stating ' Quantitative research may be defined as research aiming at reducing ambiguity through transforming perceptions into pre-structured, quantifiable categories. Typical methods include using existing statistics, observation scales, tests, questionnaires and experiments' (2000: 55). {text: list-item} 3. 3 Advantages _Quantitative research has significant advantages in business, where managers use a range of numerical information to support their decisions' (1997: 1). _ 3. 4

Disadvantages Schulze (2003) states that quantitative research is suited to theory testing and developing universal statements and so can only provide a 'general' picture of a situation. This type of research thus produces results that are generalisable across contexts, although they neglect the reality of situations. This statement is agreed with universally across all references.

{text: list-item} {text: list-item} Malhotra (1996) defines a survey as: '

Interviews with a large number of respondents using a predesigned questionnaire' (1996: 130). Personal interview Telephone interviews

Postal/on-line interviews Domegan and Fleming (2007) suggest seven

conditions which must apply in order to obtain meaningful results from the survey, and highlights that there are potential sources of error in each:

{text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item}

Observations are dealt with in section 2. 5. 4, however in qualitative research observational research refers to methods of generating data which involve the researcher placing himself in a research setting, and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions events and so on, without communication. It is split into ongoing and current behaviour (Domegan and Fleming, 2007).

Waters (2001) further adds that observations can provide data on issues like productivity, demand, output, costs and other factors, all of which are numerical. Malhotra (1996) states that quantitative observational study is usually classified as longitudinal or cross sectional. Waters (2001), Domegan and Fleming (2007) concur, explaining that a longitudinal study is a

correlation research that involves repeated observation of the same items over long periods of time.

Types of longitudinal studies include cohort studies and panel studies. A cross sectional study involves observation of a sample all at the same time and can such be described as a snapshot (Chisnell, 2001). {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} {text: list-item} Conclusion Mahony and Goertz (2006) put forward the following table in summary of the differences and uses of qualitative and quantitative research: Referencing Carlson, L. 2008. Qualitative vs Quantitative Research Traditions: A Needless and Useless Debate', International Journal of Advertising, vol 27, no. 4, pp 660-663. Wright, A. 2006. An Empirical Study of the Importance of American Importance to Ireland: An Emotional, Connectional and Motivational Context, Ph. D. Cork Institute of Technology.. Schmalensee, D. H. , and Lesh, A. D. 1999. ' How to Make Research More Actionable: Addressing the number one challenge for todays researchers', Journal of Marketing Research, vol. 10, no. 4, pp 22-36.