

Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Editorial Introduction	viii
About this Book	xiv
1 Introduction: The Interview in Social and Market Research	1
The status of interview data	3
Marketing in a postmodern age	6
Conclusions	10
Key Points	10
2 Observation and Ethnography	12
Observation, ethnography and market research	12
The uses of observational and ethnographic methods	15
The observer effect	31
Field tactics	35
Consumer Connection programmes	42
Conclusions	43
Key Points	44
3 Research, Creativity and the Future	45
‘The Age of Uncertainty’	45
Research and creativity	48
Researching the future	57
Conclusions	62
Key Points	63
4 Research and Consultation in the Public Sector	64
The public sector: an expanding area for research and consultation	64
What is different about the public sector?	68
Specific qualitative approaches	74
Commercial applications	80

Conclusions	81
Key Points	82
5 Semiotics and Cultural Analysis	84
Theoretical background	85
The uses of semiotics and cultural analysis	90
Conclusions	97
Key Points	98
6 Qualitative Research and the Internet	99
The impact of the Internet	99
Online and face-to-face interaction	100
Qualitative online methods	103
Online methods: advantages and disadvantages	106
Conclusions	114
Key Points	115
7 Conclusions	117
From talk to action	118
From reporting to experiencing	119
From respondents to partners	119
From understanding to innovation	121
From interviews to eclecticism	121
From data to insight – two scenarios for the future of qualitative research	124
Key Points	126
Bibliography	128
Index	134

About this Book

Book 1 of this series explains how the core of QMR practice lies in interviewing methods and examines the continuing dominance of 'groups and depths' within qualitative market research practice. However, it is clear that not only have commercial researchers always been inventive *within* this interviewing format (a theme explored by Joanna Chrzanowska in Book 2), but in the past few years they have been more inventive and experimental *outside* it as well.

There has of course been spontaneous inventiveness of method within the industry as researchers search for better ways to address increasingly complex client problems. In addition, the specific demands of client organisations have evolved and whole new categories of clients have appeared. Together, these influences have been manifest in a wide range of approaches, techniques and methods.

We therefore needed a book within this series that would explore these departures, explain their significance and set them in context of the qualitative market research business as a whole. This book thus looks at a wide variety of alternatives to standard 'groups and depths' and explores for each one how and why it has appeared within the domain of qualitative market research. It also looks at some of the practical and ethical issues that arise as a consequence.

It is true that some of these approaches, such as ethnography or semiotic analysis, are not 'new', but have been around in academia for many years. Others, like business use of the Internet, are new, but are not unique to qualitative market research. However, they all represent departures in practice from what had become standard approaches for qualitative market research.

One role of the incorporation of a wider range of methods has been to expand on the ways in which qualitative research traditionally attempts to directly understand the lives of respondents. So observation, especially as part of an interview-based project, has been an extremely important addition to methods in recent years.

Some developments, however, employ radically different sources of data and insight. So, for example, cultural analysis and semiotic analysis move away from direct analysis of people and their lives altogether, drawing on quite different kinds of data.

There are also methodological developments which reflect the evolving demands of client organisations, presenting researchers with opportunities to expand and develop their repertoire of methods. These would include the demand for help with creativity, innovation and predicting the future, which is a major concern of many marketing organisations. As internal cultures have changed, too, there has been demand in some areas for direct contact between

respondent and client – a contact that researchers have been asked to mediate and facilitate. Finally, organisational and cultural changes within various non-profit or public sector fields have resulted in a demand for qualitative research in social and policy arenas, some of which requires a rather different approach to that traditionally taken by qualitative market research.

There was clearly some danger that this book, with its ‘everything that isn’t standard interviewing’ brief, might emerge as a ragbag of disconnected trends and ideas. This is a danger that Philly Desai has very obviously, and skilfully, avoided. The book takes a number of trends and directions and clearly outlines their significance, thinking and practice. Some of these trends will be familiar to practising researchers, some less so, but they have not been gathered together like this before.

The book does also, though, take a broader conceptual view of how we might see these developments as connected and draws some general themes and conclusions about the direction being taken by qualitative market research and the opportunities and challenges it now faces.