

# NEW METHODOLOGIES AND TENDENCIES IN QUALITATIVE MARKETING RESEARCH

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*ABSTRACT : In this paper we will approach another qualitative marketing research type based on a new relation – from “laboratory” to “reality”. In fact “believe and do not research” is an old saying stepped out of the marketing specialists’ vocabulary. The increased competition and the quick rhythm of the technologies’ evolution and together with them of the products and services are engines that are pushing and imposing a permanent adjustment of the offer to the higher exigencies of the consumers. Romanian consumer entered later in the crazy race of the consumption society. He was, at the beginning, confronted with the diversity alternatives and he was surprised that he did not have to wait like before. Such as accommodating with “good” is not very difficult, we, the Romanians, skip of stages and we adjusted to the new stile.*

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There are rising the new generations (those born in '80 and '90) formed by dependents on information and communication, raised in consumption spirit, those for which the market looked always like this: dynamic, competitive, full of temptations.

The valor raising over 20% of the publicity or research market are reflecting the ascending tendency of the consumption level.

Higher competitiveness and the increase of the consumers’ exigencies are imposing a reshaped profile in relation with company and qualitative research marketing firms.

Regarding the qualitative research marketing approach, on the new occidental markets there are manifesting since few years ago, the tendency to use alternative methodologies of research more and more used instead of the “traditional” ones (focus groups, face to face interviews).

We are talking about new methodologies in the new qualitative research marketing that is supposing the consumers’ supervision in their natural mediums of evolution, acquisition and consumption.

In the last period there are more and more studies and projects that are following the consumers supervising when they are choosing products, when they are talking with the products and services’ producers, when they are using goods.

1. Ethnography is the new methodology of qualitative research marketing based on researcher involving in the studied medium, in real life involving both direct observation techniques of the behaviors and interviewing that allows completing and verifying the information obtained through observation. All these can be doubled by the materials that the selected participants are receiving for accomplishment during the study (written journals, photo materials and movies).

The great advantage of this methodology is the fact that it helps to detect so called “shadow areas” that cannot be identified and completely understood through simple discussion (individual or in groups).

What offers and ethnography approach is the possibility of determining the individual behavior sense in the specific consumption framework. The main situations in which is recommended such a research methodology or the ones in which the client desires to understand some extremely atomized behaviors, hard to rationalized and expressed or when he talks that he “is reinventing” the offer in terms of goods or package, to identify new “needs” or ways of satisfying some known needs, but uncovered until now. There are many situations that are following to point out the next aspects:

- Customs and trends in consumption/using some technologies;
- Lifestyle customs and free time;
- Following the attitudinal and behavior impact of some informational stimulus (home, shops, consumption and outside the home)

If a standard discussion in a focus group can give an indication referring to goods choosing habits, a methodology that is combining discussion with direct observation can draw the attention towards some elements that are functioning as automatism and which few mentioned (not on wrong intention) in the manifest discourse.

As well, home observations bring more decisive information for the gamma strategies (for example aroma, perfumes, tastes, texture of many products from the consumers goods rapid distribution category).

Most innovations in this direction left from such qualitative marketing research’s approaches.



Not only the consumers goods rapid distribution category can benefit by such an alternative approach, but also the retail category (understanding the choosing and orientation behavior in store), pharmaceuticals products (attitudes towards some medicine, towards new terminus of treatment), electronic products and even cars.

As well, the efficiency of such technique is bigger when we are facing uncovered market segments, when what is interesting is the attitudes and behavior of a special consumers category (raised income and education, areas experts, persons that can be opinion leaders).

GfK Romania (Institute of Market Research SRL Bucharest) organized many projects based on ethnographic methodology qualitative marketing research through which we observed both in and outside home consumers' behaviors (HoReCa). The results were extremely interesting and lead to product concepts' evolution and development.

2. Pre-testing in store of a product of which official launch had not been realized is another alternative method or methodology of qualitative marketing research often used in countries like England, Holland Northern countries. This is equivalent with a "first edition" through which the producer organizes a product test by placing a small number of products for consumers. There is an experiment that does not benefit of any promotion, in which there are not invested money and which follows the evolution in store of tested product: the interest that is raising, consumers reaction towards new proposal (observed or not, what raise interest of the consumers when they are choosing this proposal, if at last it is taken or not), how quick is disappearing from the store and others. Such an approach is more suitable in situations in which we want to introduce new alternatives of tastes, aroma, when we desire to adapt an "outside" product to the internal market.

3. Creative idea generating session is another methodological approach that gains more and more on the advanced modern market. It refers to a team working that supposes a strong relation between the company or client firm, of marketing research or advertising, sometimes including also the consumers. What is following is gaining a new approach, a new vision or strategy for a mark with troubles. The new concept is creativity and the mechanism that supports it is the brainstorming on a given theme. Once obtained these ideas we made a selection and feasibility evaluation of them, stage in which there are interfering the companies' production responsible. Among generated informational fervency, the greatest advantage of such creative idea session of brainstorming is related to efficiency in obtaining positive results in qualitative marketing research.



Comparing it with traditional research, these creative insights session, the results are tangible at the end of the brainstorming session, without any supplementary reports or analysis. The

only ulterior calculating is the one related to the idea of ability (but this one is inherent for any type of qualitative marketing research).

We talked before that the market evolution is asking a new type of relation between clients and qualitative marketing research companies. We can say that the tendency is towards building a relation that supposes a strong partnership between client and the qualitative marketing research company during the entire project's evolution. These are closely collaborating from setting the followed objectives, translation of the marketing objectives in research objectives, to field working and then to results using and their application in the product or category strategy. If not so long ago the marketing research was split of the internal "kitchen" of the marketers, now it tends to get more and more closely to this world, to integrate in it.

From the relation, somehow "cold", formalized, it goes to a new strong collaboration relation, its advantage functioning in double sense: on the one hand the researcher can understand better what he is following the client in that study, which are his objectives, afraid and hopes. This will help him to come with design proposals more interesting and with pragmatic interpretations for analyze made, to behave like a consultant for the client business and not only the data presentation, without that these data to be integrated to the life framework of the product. On the other hand, for the client appears the advantage of the access to a better knowledge of the consumers' world, of their needs and expectations in real life.

The gain there is not only informational but a pragmatic one. The idea that is suggested to the ones that had the main roles on the market is the following: "if I do not do this thing first, somebody else will be there " before me because he used better the qualitative marketing research or the benchmarking!

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