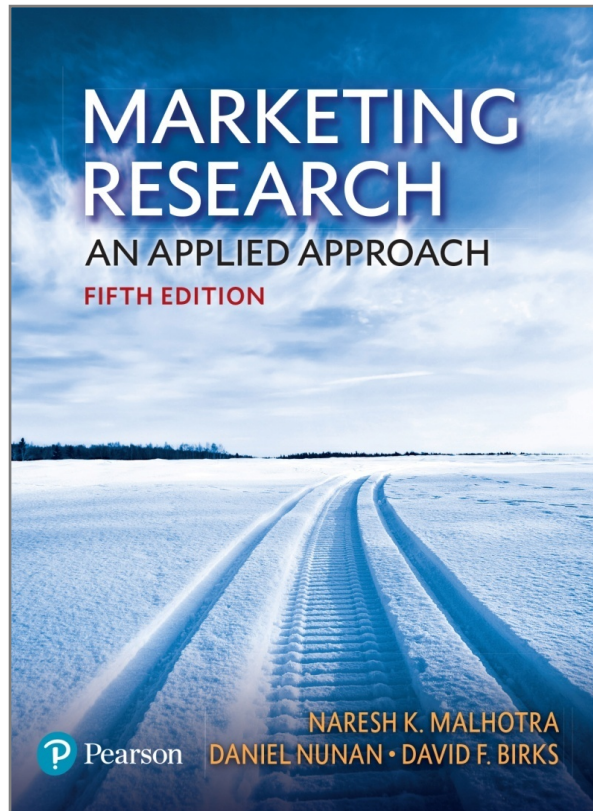


Marketing Research

An Applied Approach

5th edition



Chapter 6

Qualitative research: its nature and approaches

Qualitative research helps the marketer to understand the richness, depth and complexity of consumers.

Chapter outline

- 1) Primary data: qualitative versus quantitative research
- 2) Rationale for using qualitative research
- 3) Philosophy and qualitative research
- 4) Ethnographic research
- 5) Grounded theory
- 6) Action research

Overview (1)

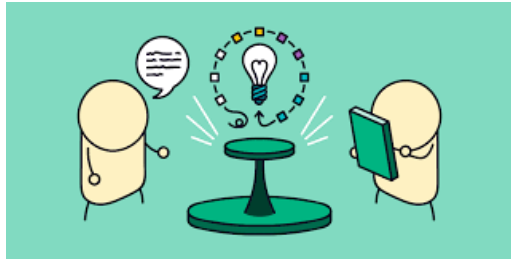
- **Qualitative research** has a major role in supporting marketing decision making primarily as an **explorative** but also as a **descriptive** design.
- **Qualitative research** is often used to define a research problem, to support quantitative (descriptive or casual) research design, or as a design in its own right.
- It may be used **after** or **in conjunction** with **quantitative approaches** where illumination of statistical findings is needed.
- Qualitative research design can also be used **in isolation**, after secondary data sources have been evaluated or even in an interactive process alongside secondary data sources.
- In this chapter we discuss the **differences** between qualitative and quantitative research and the role of each in marketing research. The focus will be on *ethnographic techniques, grounded theory and action research*.

Overview (2)

Living with your customers



- When designing domestic appliances, the German branch of Korean-based LG Electronic needed a **way to find out** what **people need** from its **kitchen equipment, washers** and **vacuum cleaners**. They found their answer in using **ethnographic research** with a combination of **video diaries** and **long in-depth interviews**.
- The projects were directed to find out how **European consumers** used electrical appliances, their workflow in the kitchen, how they go about doing their laundry [lavanderia] and their habits in wet and dry floor cleaning.
- The company believed that habitual **non-conscious behaviour** should be researched in an **authentic environment** with a minimum of external factors.
- It carried out research focusing **on the kitchen** (10 households each in Hamburg, London and Paris), **laundry** (10 households in Paris, Budapest, Stockholm, Madrid and London) and **vacuum cleaning** (15 households in Paris, Budapest, Madrid and London).
 - To observe kitchen behaviour, it installed **cameras** focused on **major appliances** for a **week** for the video diaries.
 - For the laundry study, it installed **fixed cameras** with a motion detector [sensore di movimento] to observe behaviour with the washing machine and dryer. The same was made for the vacuum-cleaning.



Overview (3)

- In **qualitative research**, research agencies and company are continually looking to find **better ways** to understand consumers' thought **processes** and **motivations**.
- This has led to a wealth of research approaches, including techniques borrowed from anthropology, ethnography, sociology and psychology.
- For examples, Philips has a specialist team including ethnographers, anthropologists and psychologists.
- *“At Philips Design, we have created research tools to enable **ethnographic insights** to be delivered into the creative process in a truly actionable way. We aim to push the agenda of research from the side of future studies, people research and their lively **embodiment** into advanced design”* (Marco Bevolo, Design Director at Philips Design).

Primary data: qualitative versus quantitative research

- **Dogmatic positions** are often taken in favor of either **qualitative** or **quantitative** research by researchers.
 - There are researchers who apt to *dismiss qualitative studies* completely as giving no *valid findings*; they assert that qualitative research ignores *representative sampling*, with its findings based on a single case or only on a few cases.
 - But there are researchers who *reject statistical* and other *quantitative methods* as misleading information. Qualitative techniques are considered the only methods of data collection sensitive enough to capture the nuances of consumer attitudes, motives and behavior.

Primary data: qualitative versus quantitative research

1. The nature of marketing decision making **encompasses a vast array of problems** and **types** of decision makers. This means that seeking a singular and uniform approach to supporting decision makers by focusing on one research approach is futile. Business and marketing decision makers have always used both qualitative and quantitative marketing research approaches.
2. There is a close parallel in the distinction between **exploratory** and **conclusive research**, and **qualitative** and **quantitative** research. There is a parallel but the terms are not identical.
 - There are situations in which qualitative researches are used to present detailed descriptions that cannot be measured in a quantitative way [the interplay of how families go through the process of choosing, planning and buying a holiday].
 - There may be circumstances where quantitative measurements are used to answer specific hypotheses or research questions using descriptive or experimental techniques. Beyond answering specific hypotheses or research questions, there may be sufficient data to allow data mining or an exploration of relationships between individual measurements to take place.

The nature of qualitative research

- Qualitative market research includes methods that can be applied in a flexible manner to enable participants to **reflect upon** and express **their views** or to **observe their behavior**.
- It investigates and encapsulates the behavior, experiences and feeling of participants.
- It is based on at least two **intellectual traditions**:
 - The first is the use of methods from the board area of **in-depth psychology** and **motivation research** – we are in front of methods the gain access to individuals' subconscious and/or unconscious level;
 - The second is the use of **methods from sociology, social psychology** and **social anthropology**, and the disciplines of **ethnography, linguistic** and **semiology** - the emphasis is upon an **holistic understanding** of the *world-view* of people. The researcher is expected to “enter” the hearts and mind of those they are researching, to develop an empathy with their experiences and feelings.
- **Qualitative research** is a significant contributor to the marketing research industry accounting for substantial expenditure (around **13%** of all spending on marketing research methods). In commercial terms, it fosters a global industry generating over **1 billion\$** annually.



Rationale for using qualitative research

- It is not always possible to adopt **quantitative techniques** to obtain information from participants and to observe them. There are several reasons to use **qualitative techniques**.
 - **EXPERIENCE OF THE RESEARCHER:** just as some researchers enjoy the challenge of using statistical techniques, there are researchers who enjoy the *challenges of qualitative techniques* and the interpretation of diverse types of data. There are researchers who have been trained in particular disciplines (anthropology) and philosophies (hermeneutics) that make use of qualitative research design.
 - **PREFERENCE OF THE RESEARCH USER:** some decision makers are more oriented to receiving support in a qualitative manner. This orientation could come from their *training*, but also from the *marketing decisions* they have to take. Decision makers working in a creative environment of *product design, advertising copy* or the development of *brand personalities* may have greater preference for data that foster design and visually based decisions.



I once sat with a woman who was ironing for five hours

- Microsoft's chief design anthropologist, Anne Kirah, made a **qualitative research**. She watched 40 ordinary, randomly chosen **American families** try to set up and use an early version of Windows XP.
- **After many hours** of frustration most ended up furious with Microsoft, and the **video** she took of these families made a big impact at Microsoft.
 - The first assumption was that **something was wrong** with the people she had chosen, among them a *couple in the seventies*.
 - The second assumption Anne made was that there was **something wrong with the way** they had been testing software until then: volunteers who had completed the task in laboratory conditions were all tech enthusiasts and therefore not all representative of the population.
- Anne says: *"I am an observer that is what an **ethnographer** is. It is not taking a list of questions you would otherwise ask online and, sitting in someone's kitchen, asking the same thing. **I go to people's homes when they wake up and leave when they go to bed; I go with them.** If they are changing a baby's nappy, I watch them do it. I once sat with a woman who was ironing for five hours. I do not go into homes to study computers. I do not give a damn whether they have a computer or not. If you really want to know what makes people tick, and their motivations and aspirations, that is where innovation comes from. **Do not ask them questions, listen to them**".*



Rationale for using qualitative research

- **SENSITIVE INFORMATION:** participants may be unwilling to **answer** or to **give truthful answer** to certain questions that invade their privacy, embarrass them or have a negative impact on their ego. Techniques that build up an amount of rapport and trust, that allow gentle probing [analysis] in manner that suits individual participants, can help researchers get close to participants and may allow sensitive data to be elicited.
- **SUBCONSCIOUS FEELINGS:** participants may be unable to provide accurate answers to questions that tap their **subconscious**. The *values*, *emotional drives*, and *motivations* residing at the subconscious level are disguised from the outer world by rationalization and other ego defences. [For example, a person may have purchased an experience sports car to overcome feelings of inferiority. But if asked “Why did you purchase this sports car?” that person may say “I got a great deal”, “My old car was falling apart” or “I need to impress my customers and clients”].
- **COMPLEX PHENOMENA:** the nature of what participants are expected to describe may be difficult to capture with structured questions. They may know what brands of wine they enjoy, what types of music they prefer or what images they regard as being prestigious. They may not *be able* to clearly *explain* why they have these feelings or where these feelings are coming from.

Visual ethnography at MTV

- MTV Networks (www.mtvne.com) wanted to understand **identity construction** among **young people**.
- It used an alternative approach that combined principles from *visual ethnography* and *user-generated content ethnography*.
 - Using **pictures** for **observing individuals** in their environment is at the core of **visual ethnography**. In the early days of visual ethnography, **pictures were mainly taken by the observer**.
- The user-generated ethnography took place in two phases.
 - First, participants got instructions to take pictures of all **aspects of their lives** that they believed that MTV should know about in order to get a better understanding of who they were and to get a sense of their daily lives.
 - Next, at several times they received "**special tasks**". Each participant was asked to photograph the context where **their identity** manifests itself. A special role was given to *clothes* and *peers*. Participants were asked to take pictures of clothes they wear on different occasion [clothes they wear at home, clothes representing their social identity; clothes that give insights into their aspirational behaviour; clothes they do not want to wear]. Then participants were asked to take pictures of the friends [friend they think important, others with whom they are not friend but would like to be friends, adolescents whom they would like not to be a friend].
- To get a better understanding of personal identity, participants were invited to take pictures of **objects** that were typical of themselves. And they were asked to take picture of the **place** where they could really be themselves.

Rationale for using qualitative research

- The **HOLISTIC DIMENSION**: the object of taking a **holistic outlook** in qualitative research is to gain a comprehensive and complete picture of the whole context in which the phenomena of interest occur.
 - An example is the measurement *the satisfaction* with a *meal* in a restaurant. A *questionnaire* can break down components of the experience in the restaurant and quantify the extent of satisfaction with these. But what effect did the “atmosphere” have upon the experience?, what role did the type of music, the color and style of furniture, aromas coming from kitchen, other people in the restaurant, the mood when entering the restaurant, feelings of relaxation or tension as the meal went on, contribute to the feeling of atmosphere? Building up an understanding of the *interrelationship* of the context of consumption allows the qualitative researchers to build up this holistic view.
- **DEVELOPING NEW THEORY**. The development of new theory through a qualitative approach is called “grounded theory”.
- **INTERPRETATION**. Qualitative techniques often constitute an important *final step* in research designs. Using qualitative techniques can help to elaborate and explain underlying reasons in quantitative findings.

Philosophy and qualitative research – Positivist perspectives

- **Good marketing research** is founded **upon theory** and contributes to the development of theory to improve the powers of explanation, prediction and understanding in marketing decision makers.
- The **dominant perspective** of developing new theory in marketing research has been one of **POSITIVISM** [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3JRpYgrEIV>]. [REALE, UTILE, CERTEZZA, PRECISO].
 - A fundamental belief shared by positivists is the view that the social and natural worlds “conform to certain fixed and unalterable laws in an endless chain of causation” [è rigorosa/scientifica la ricerca che si basa sull’osservazione sperimentale, sulla formulazione di leggi e sulla loro verifica sperimentale].
 - The main purpose of a **scientific approach to marketing research** is to establish **causal laws** that enable the prediction and explanation of marketing phenomena.
 - To establish these laws, a scientific approach must have as a minimum reliable information of “facts”. The emphasis on “facts” leads to a focus upon objectivity, rigor and measurement.



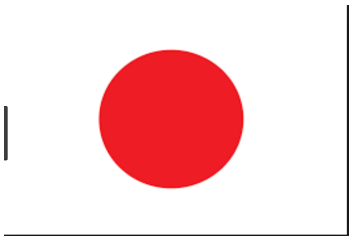
Philosophy and qualitative research – Positivist perspectives

- Qualitative research does not rely upon **measurement** and thus it does not fit with a **positivist perspective**.
- A possible *positive perspective* of qualitative research is to see it as a **set of techniques**, applied as preliminary stages to more rigorous techniques that measure, i.e survey and questionnaires.
- But using qualitative techniques just to develop quantitative techniques represents a **narrow perspective** of their rich, creative and exploratory powers.

Philosophy and qualitative research – Positivist perspectives



- As illustration, it is possible to examine how **different perspectives of the nature and values of qualitative research** can impact upon a qualitative technique may be conducted.
- We focus on the technique of focus group. There are two main schools of thought that underpin the technique which may be termed “**cognitive**” (American and Japanese origins) and “**conative**” (European origin).
 - **Cognitive.** American and Japanese researchers generally follow this tradition. It follows a format and interviewing style as used in *quantitative studies*. American style groups is shorthand in Europe *for large groups* (10 participants on average) and a *structured procedure* is followed. Before the analysis or articulation has been worked before and so the interviews are largely meant to confirm or expand on known issues.
 - **Conative** [*esprime lo sforzo di compiere un’azione*]. European researchers follow this *tradition*. There is less structure to the questions, with group members being encouraged to take their own paths of discussion, make their *own connections* and let the *whole process* evolve.



Japanese focus group

- The moderator is discouraged from explaining too much about the **concept** of the focus group, what **marketing research** does and what **the study** at hand is trying to achieve. Sharing such information has been considered contamination of the participants and introducing a bias.
 - For the moderator to show **human warmth** beyond the strictly polite has likewise been considered a biasing approach.
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- **Free expression of opinion** and having an opinion is a value in Western culture, whereas in Japan it is not.
 - **Non-Japanese clients** are inevitably frustrated with the failure to **achieve a group** that engages in an open discussion with the sharing of deep thoughts and opposing statements: people there do not usually express an opinion on things and people.
 - Japanese research makes use of boardrooms and office chairs into rooms with no windows and artificial light on grey walls.
 - **The successful application of home-visit and ethnography research in Japan, demonstrates that in relaxed and humanised conditions, consumers can talk more openly about their innate needs and private thoughts.** Rooms with a relaxing décor, music in the background, dimmed lights and even alcohol can help the participant engage in the group situation and offer deeper insights.

Philosophy and qualitative research – Positivist perspectives

Characteristics	Cognitive	Conative
Purpose	Demonstration	Exploration
Sample size	10–12	6–8
Duration	1.5 hours	1.5 to 6 hours
Interviewing	Logical sequence	Opportunistic
Questions	Closed	Open
Techniques	Straight questions, questionnaires, hand shows, counting	Probing, facilitation, projectives, describing
Response required	Give answers	Debate issues

Characteristics	Cognitive	Conative
Interviewer	Moderator	Researcher
Observer's role	To get proof	To understand
Transcripts	Rarely necessary	Usually full
Analysis	On the spot	Time-consuming
Focus of time	Preplanning	Post-fieldwork
Accusations against other style	'Formless'	'Over-controlling'
Suited for	Testing or proving ideas	Meaning or understanding
Output	To be confirmed in quantitative studies	Can be used in its own right to support decision makers

Philosophy and qualitative research – Positivist perspectives

- **American-style qualitative research** started from the same **evaluative premise** as quantitative research but **on a smaller scale**. This made it cheaper, quicker and useful for checking out the less-critical decisions.

- **European-style qualitative research** started from the opposite promise to quantitative research: it was developmental, **exploratory** and **creative** rather than **evaluative**. It was used as a tool of understanding, to get underneath consumer motivation.

- The **American styles** uses a detailed discussion guide which follows a logical sequence and is usually strictly adhered to. The interviewing technique involves **closed questions** and **straight answers**.
- This type of research is used to about behavior and to **confirm hypotheses** already derived from other sources. The group interaction supplies the answers. Transcripts are rarely necessary and reports are often summarized or even done away with altogether.

- The **European style** is used to gain new insight: it also works as a discussion guide, but in a less structured way. The **interviewing technique is opportunistic and probing**.
- Projective techniques are introduced to help researchers understand underlying **motivations** and attitudes.
- Because the purpose is “understanding” which requires a creative synthesis of consumer needs and brand benefits, analysis is **time-consuming** and usually involves **full transcripts**.

Philosophy and qualitative research – Positivist perspectives

- It is clear that the American/Japanese perspective is positivist. The facts investigated may be established, but they may not be enough. They may not provide the richness or depth of understanding that certain marketing decision makers demand.
- Peter Cooper declares in this way the power of focus groups viewed in a **non-positivist manner**.

*“Forming groups has given us primates our evolutionary competitive edge. They enable us **to learn, solve problems, communicate, share experiences, and understand others**. Around the flickering campfire we swapped stories, develop relationships, built up togetherness, groomed one another, resolved conflicts, played games, adopted roles, deceived, told falsehoods, and invented spirits and gods. There is a compulsion about group that we all share. **One explanation is that in the contemporary world where campfires no longer exist and there is reduced opportunity for real social interaction, joining in groups is yearned for [qualcosa di desiderato]**. But focus groups are not kinship (parentela) groups. True, participants are paid to come, but most are made up of people who do not know one another, and are largely drawn from wider circles that happen to have some behaviour in common. We know them as types not as people. This is where their everlasting fascination lies. Participants are often deliberately strangers, virtual people who then disappear. We that people posture, exaggerate, deceive, but we can step into their shoes for a fleeting few hours”.*

Philosophy and qualitative research – Interpretivist perspectives

- There is another philosophical perspective in marketing research. This is the **interpretivist** perspective that is at the basis of disciplines such as *anthropology* and *sociology*.

POSITIVIST

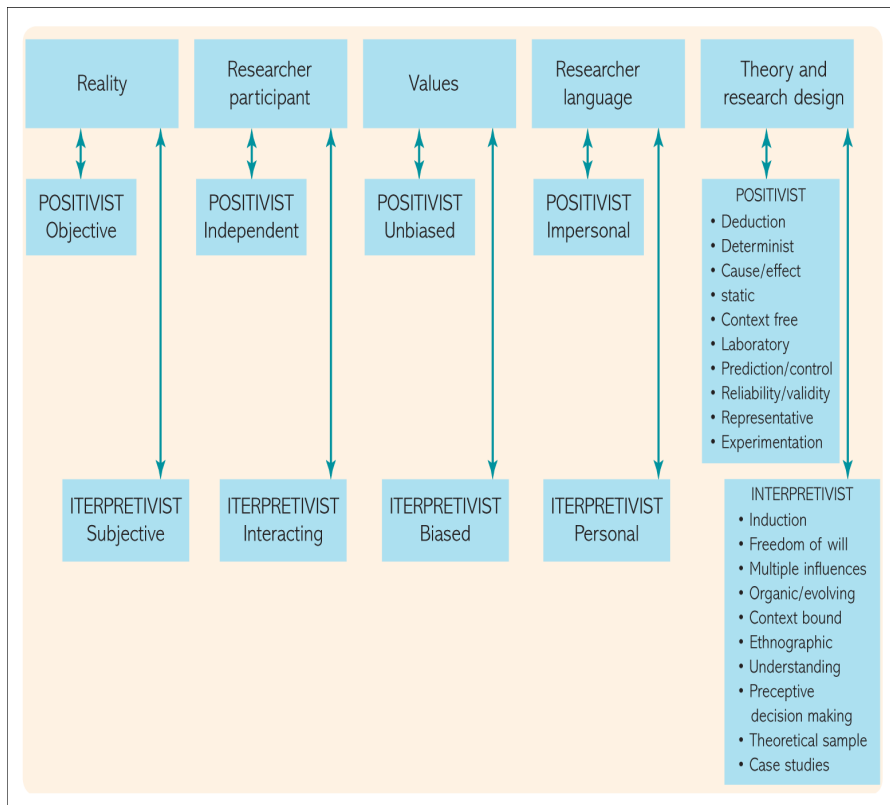
1. Quantitative
2. Objectivist
3. Scientific
4. Experimental
5. Traditionalist

INTERPRETIVIST

1. Qualitative
2. Subjective
3. Humanistic
4. Phenomenological
5. Revolutionist

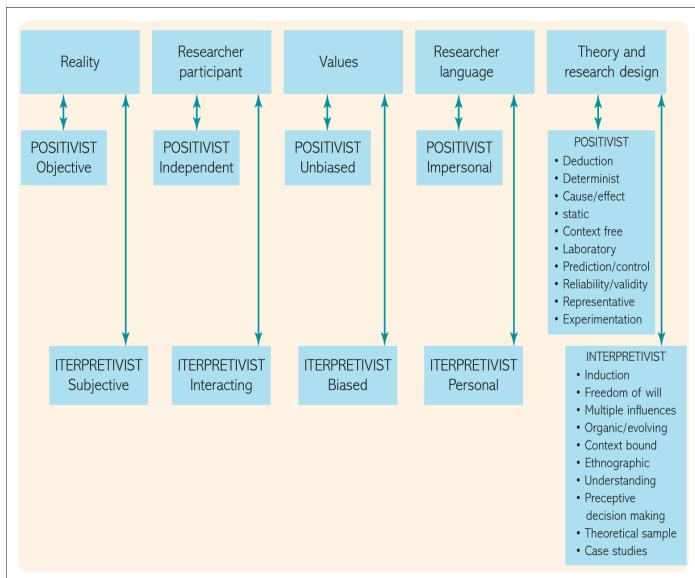
La realtà sociale non può essere conosciuta di per sé ma può essere conosciuta soltanto attraverso l'interpretazione.

Philosophy and qualitative research – positivist and interpretivist perspectives



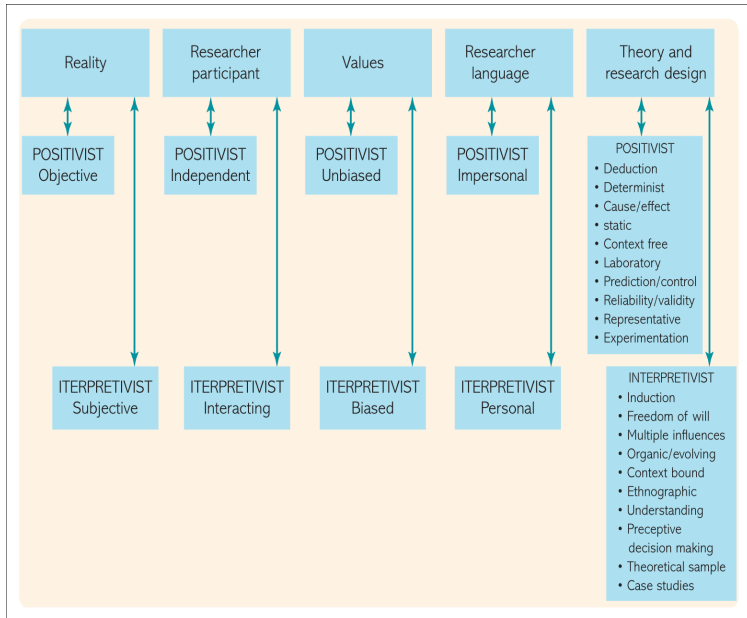
- The paradigms can be compared through a series of issues. The issues are the following one:
 - **REALITY:** the positivist (POS) supposes that the reality is “out there” to be captured. It is objective. And it is necessary to find the most effective and objective means possible to have information about this reality. The interpretivist (INT) stresses the dynamic, participant-observed and evolving nature of reality. It may be known through interpretation.

Philosophy and qualitative research – positivist and interpretivist perspectives



- RESEARCH-PARTICIPANT:** the POS sees the participant as an “**object**” to be measured in a reliable or consistent manner. The INT sees participants as “**peers**” seeking the right means of observing and questioning to suit [adattarsi] individual participants.
- VALUES:** the POS seek to set aside [mettere da parte] his or her own personal values. The POS measurements of participants are guided by theoretical propositions. The INT recognizes that their own values affect how they observe, question, probe and interpret.
- RESEARCHER LANGUAGE:** the POS uses a language in questioning that is uniformly **recognized**. This uniformity may emerge from existing theory. The INT seeks to draw out [tracciare] the language and logic of target participants.

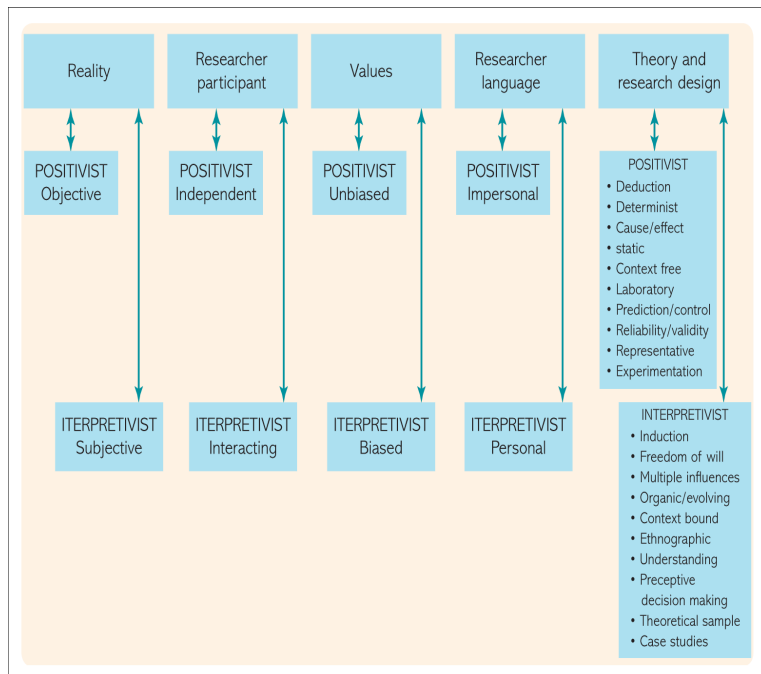
Philosophy and qualitative research – positivist and interpretivist perspectives



THEORY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

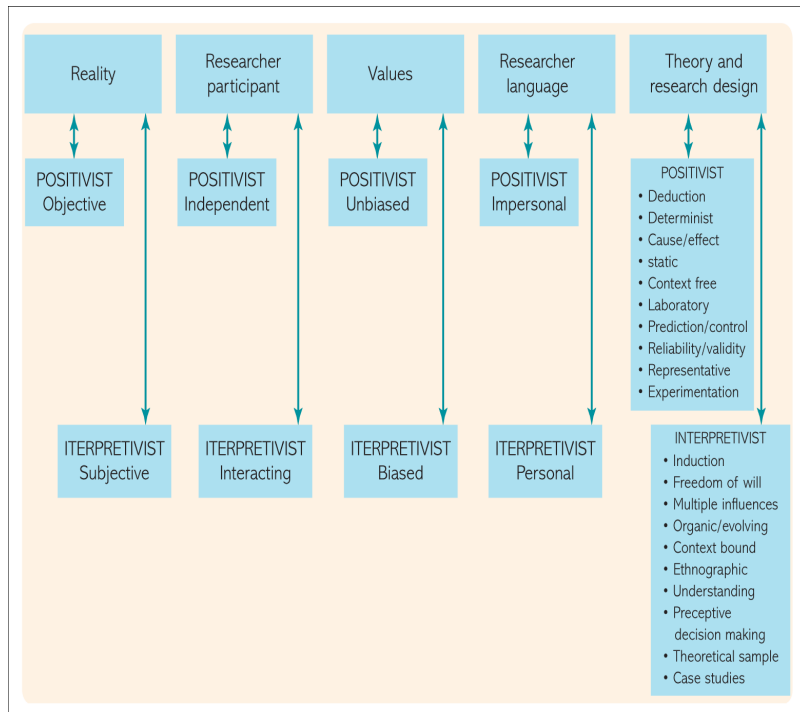
- The POS seeks to establish **causality** through **experimental methods**. Seeking causality helps the POS to explain phenomena and hopefully predict the recurrence of what has been observed in other contexts. The POS has the desire to **generalize** findings to a target population.
- The INT seeks to understand the nature of multiple influences of marketing phenomena through **case studies**. The search for multiple influences means focusing upon the **intrinsic details of individual cases** and the differences between different classes of case. This helps the interpretivist to describe phenomena and gain new and creative insights to understand consumer behaviors.

Philosophy and qualitative research – positivist and interpretivist perspectives



- The **contexts** in which consumers live and consume constitute the field in which interpretivists immerse themselves to conduct investigations.
- In understanding the nature and effect of context upon consumers, the INT does not consider that everything that happens has an **external cause** and that we live in a determinist universe. There is a recognition and respect for the notion of **free will**.
- The INT will go to great pains to learn from each step of the **research process** and **adapt the research design** as their **learning** develops. He adopts an **evolving research** design: particular research techniques are chosen as the researcher develops and understands the issues and participants.
- Rather than seeking to study large samples to generalize to target populations, the INT uses **theoretical sampling**: this means that the data-gathering process for INT is driven by concepts derived from evolving theory, based on the **notion** of seeking out different situations and learning from the comparisons that can be made.

Philosophy and qualitative research – positivist and interpretivist perspectives



- The INT use theory initially to help guide which cases they should focus upon, the issues they should observe and the context of investigation.
- As their research design evolves, they seek to develop **new theory**. The INT seeks to *evaluate* the strength of the theory he develops. The strongest means of evaluating the strength of interpretivist theory lies in the *results of decision making* that is based on the theory. Its results are found to be meaningful by decision makers and employed successfully by them, this may constitute further evidence of the theory's validity.

Philosophy and qualitative research – summarising the broad perspective of positivism and interpretivism

The **POS** lies in a research process base on **deduction**. Deduction is a form of reasoning in which a conclusion is validly inferred from some premises, and must be true if those premises are true [date certe teorie, ne conseguono ipotesi e verifica ipotesi]

- An area of **enquiry** is identified and set in a context of well-developed theory
- Specifically variables are identified that the researchers tries to measure (hypotheses are set)
- An instrument to measure specific variables is developed
- Participants give answers to specific questions with a consistent language and logic
- The researchers test theory according to whether their hypotheses are accepted or rejected.

The INT lies in a research process base on induction. Induction is a form of reasoning that usually involves the inference that an instance or repeated combination of events may be universally generalized [dalle esperienze si arriva ad una definizione generale/teoria]

- An area of **enquiry** is identified, but with limited or no theoretical framework. Theoretical framework are seen as restrictive, narrowing the researcher's perspective
- The issues upon which to focus an enquiry are either observed or elicited from participants in particular contexts
- Participants are aided to explain the nature of issues in a particular context
- Broad themes are identified for discussion, with observation, probing and in-depth questioning to elaborate the nature of these themes.
- The researchers develop their theory by searching for the occurrence and interconnections of phenomena.

Ethnographic research

- Ethnography: is a **research approach** based upon the observation of the customs, habits and differences between people in everyday situations. It is the art and science of **describing** a group or a **culture**.
- This method requires a researcher to **spend time** observing a particular group of people by sharing their way of life. It relies upon entering participants' **natural life worlds** [at home, while shopping, at leisure and in the workplace].
- Thus, it allows marketers to delve into actual situations in which products are used and services are received. They take part not in laboratories but in real world. Marketers benefit from a more **holistic and better nuanced view of consumer satisfactions**, frustrations and limitations than in any other research method.
- Ethnographers does not only observe. He may work with cultural artefacts, such as written texts, study recordings of interactions. Interplay between observing and interviewing [reduce gaps between expressed and non-verbal communication elements].

Ethnographic research



- It is possible to explore customer interactions with all the elements that comprise **retail store environments**: lighting, smells, signage, display of good, location, size and orientation of shelving.
- Observing how these may impact upon the **consumers' experience** and their buying behavior can be of great value to designers and marketers.
- The ethnographer's role is to decode the meaning and impact of these ecological elements. These studies utilize **time-lapse photography** as a tool for behavioral observation and data collection over extensive periods of time.

Ethnographic research

Ethnographic research achieves immersion with consumers through the following aims:

- **SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHERS:** viewing events, actions, norms and value from the perspective of the people being studied
- **DESCRIPTION:** built up in many written and visual forms to provide clues and pointers related to consumer behavior
- **CONTEXTUALISM:** events can be best understood when they are situated in the wider social and historical context
- **PROCESS:** viewing social life as involving an interlocking series of events
- **FLEXIBLE RESEARCH DESIGN:** Ethnographers' adherence to viewing social phenomena through the eyes of their participants or subjects has led to a wariness [diffidenza] regarding the imposition of prior and possibly inappropriate frames of reference on the people they study.





Netnography at Nivea

- Nivea is the best-known brand of the multinational corporation Beiersdorf, based in Hamburg (Germany).
 - In order to integrate the voice of consumers beyond traditional marketing research techniques, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, the Nive Body care Division instituted a **holistic co-creation process** that included the **application of netnography**.
-
- The goal was to draw a landscape of needs, wishes, concerns, consumer language and potential product solutions by users which were explicitly and implicitly expressed in **online communities** and social media.
 - They started with a broad search of more than **200 online communities**, forums and blogs in three languages
 - To follow this search, threads of consumer conversations were analysed using **qualitative data software**.
 - Certain needs, concerns or suggestions for product improvements repeatedly occurred in consumers' online conversations. Fresh, relevant, inspiring and enduring findings were then aggregated to consumer insights. One consumer insight introduced Nivea to do-it-yourself solutions that were exchanged between users online.
 - The consumer insights helped Beiersdorf to develop a deep understanding of consumers, the language they use and what truly bothers [infastidire] them.

Ethnographic research

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8axfYomJn4>

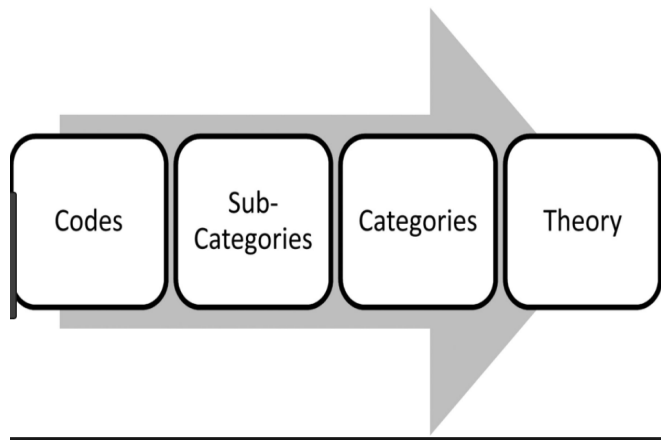
- The method of **netnography** is an adaptation of ethnography that analyses the free behavior of individuals in online communities.
- Observing online communities can be much **faster**, simpler and less expensive than traditional ethnography
- It is also unelicited and **more natural** and **unobtrusive** than surveys and interviews.
- Netnography can refer to the **passive process** of following conversations and interactions on the internet at the individual level
- It can also involve a **more active engagement** with consumers on the net directing questions or becoming a participant observer in a community.
- Debate about what is “in the public domain” and what can be used when, where and how, will impact enormously upon the development of codes of conduct for researchers.
- The use of ethnographic approach has become a part of a **co-creation process**. Co-creation is the practice of developing new designs, including products of marketing communications through collaboration with consumers.
 - The Danish toy company Lego was advocate of co-creation with a project beginning in 2004. Initially, only four people were invited to join; the following years 10 collaborators joined, followed by 100 from 10,000 consumers who applied.

Grounded Theory

- The Grounded Theory was developed by **Glaser** and **Strauss** in the late **1950s**. At that time, **qualitative research** was viewed more as impressionist or anecdotal, little more than “soft science” and “journalism”.
- It was generally believed that the objective of sociology should be to produce scientific theory, and to test this using **quantitative methods**. **Qualitative research** was considered to have a place, but only to the extent to which it developed questions that could be verified using quantitative questions.
- On the contrary, according to Glaser and Strauss: “**theory in sociology is a strategy for handling data** in research, providing **modes of conceptualization** for **describing** and **explaining**. The theory should provide clear enough categories and hypotheses so that crucial ones can be verified in present and future research; they must be clear enough to be readily operationalized in quantitative studies when these are appropriate”.

Grounded Theory

- Some ethnographers may be criticized in their attempts at developing theory. In response, the grounded theorist follow a **set of systematic procedures** for **collecting** and **analyzing data**.
- This systematic procedure is used to encourage researchers to use their intellectual imagination and creativity to develop new theories, to suggest methods for doing so, to offer criteria to evaluate the worth of **discovering theory** and to propose an alternative rhetoric of justification.



- **The most distinctive feature of grounded theory is its commitment to “discovery” through direct contact with the social phenomena under study, coupled with a rejection of a priori theorizing.**
- This feature does not mean that researchers should embark on their studies without any general guidance provided by some sort of theoretical understanding.
- Glauss and Strauss argue that pre-conceived theories should be rejected as they obstruct the development of new theories by coming between researchers and the subjects of their study.

Agency practitioners' meta theories of advertising

- The study's basic aim was to **understand practitioners' thinking** about the **work of advertising** in their own terms. As there was little substantive research of this perspective, a grounded theory approach to qualitative research was used.
- **Semi-structured, in-depth interviews** were used as the key field method; these allowed the discovery of participant-determined points of view.
- **Preliminary preparations for data collection** started before actual interviewing. Informal interviews were conducted with **qualitative-ethnographic experts**. E-mail and phone conversations were exchanged about the feasibility of the project, opinions about method and tips for effective interviewing were exchanged.
- The interview guide was based on three points: 1) what the content of practitioners' knowledge; 2) how practitioners know what they know; 3) how they use this knowledge in everyday practice.
- 28 participants were interviewed until theoretical saturation was achieved. Interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. Most take place in the participants' offices. The field notes were entered into the Nvivo (www.qsrinternational.com) qualitative data analysis software.
- The findings were checked with participants. They agreed that the **content** accurately reflected their thoughts.

Attempting to gain an objective viewpoint

- For grounded theorist, **data collection** and **analysis** occur in alternating sequences. **Analysis begins** with the first **interview** and **observation**, which leads to the next interview or observation followed by more analysis, more interviews or fieldwork and so on. **It is the analysis that drives the data collection.** There is a constant interplay between the researcher and the research act.
- Because this interplay, **researcher is immersed** in the data. The problem is how he can become immersed in data maintaining a balance between **objectivity** and **sensitivity**. Objectivity is necessary to arrive at an impartial and accurate interpretation of events. Sensitivity is required to perceive the nuances and meanings of data and to recognize the connection between concepts.
 - **Subjectivity** is a relevant issue. Researchers should take appropriate measures to **minimize their intrusion** into their investigations and analysis. Being objective means a constant drive for transparency in the actions, decisions and conclusions taken in relation to data.
 - Qualitative researchers should have an **openness**, a **willingness** to listen and to give voice to participants, in whatever manner they wish to express themselves. They have to hear what others have to say, seeing what others do and representing these as accurately as possible.
 - While working on a particular project, the researcher keeps a **diary** or **journal**. This **diary** is used to make notes about the conditions of interviews and observations, of what worked well and what did not, of what questions the researchers would have liked to ask but did not think of at the time.

Developing a sensitivity to the meanings of data

- Having sensitivity means having **insights into**, and being able to give meaning to, the event and happenings in data.
- The quality of the researcher occurs as he works with data, making comparisons, asking questions and going out and collecting more data.
- Immersion in the data leads to those sudden insights.
- A grounded theory is expected to generate findings that are meaningful to decision makers and appropriate to the tasks they face. **Ethnographic techniques are well suited to being driven by a grounded research approach.**
- Another qualitative approach that is meaningful to decision makers is called **action research**

Action Research

Ethnographic technique and a **grounded theory approach** can be applied in an *action research framework*. The social psychologist Kurt Lewin introduced it as a process one could construct a social experiment with the aim of achieving a certain goal.

Action research is a **team research process** facilitated by one or more professional researchers linking with **decision makers** and other stakeholders such as customers who together wish to change or improve particular situations. Together, the researcher and decision makers or stakeholders **define the problems** to be examined, generate relevant **knowledge** about the problems, **take actions** and **learn** from these actions.

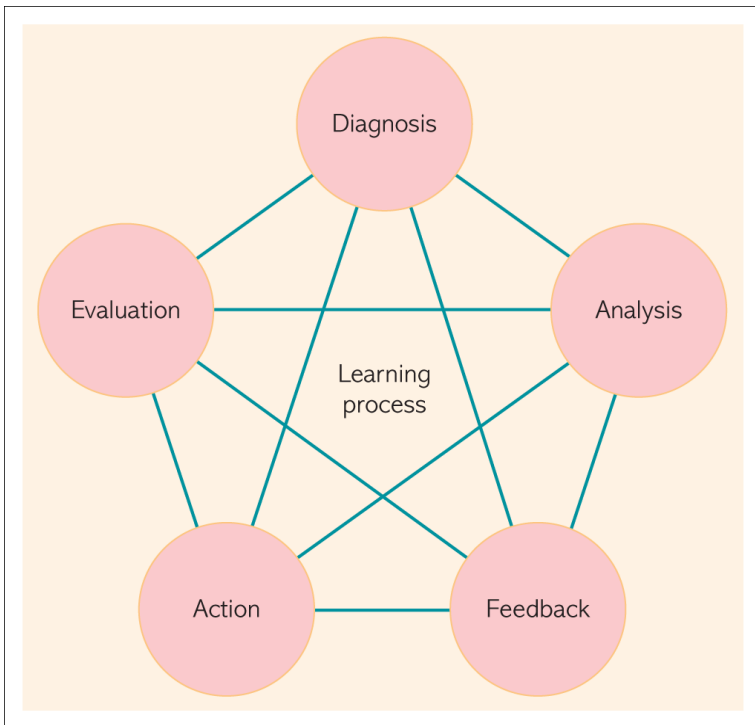
Action Research

Action researchers accept no a priori limits on the kinds of research techniques they use. Survey, secondary data analysis, interviews, focus groups, ethnographies and life histories are all acceptable.

Action research is composed of a balance of 3 elements:

- 1. Research.** It is based on any quantitative or qualitative techniques or combination of them
- 2. Participation.** Action research involved trained researchers who serve as facilitators and teachers to team members. As these individuals set their action research agenda, they generate the knowledge necessary to transform the situation and put the results to work.
- 3. Action.** Action research aims to alter the initial situation of the organization in the direction of a more self-managed and more rewarding state for all parties.

Action Research



The process in figure illustrates the process of the Action Research Approach:

- **Diagnosis.** The present state of affairs are set out including the *barriers to change*. This step includes documenting the change process and all data-gathering activities
- **Analysis.** This step includes an interpretation of data gathered
- **Feedback.** Data analysis are fed back for examination and discussion in the team.
- **Action.** Individual courses of action and the development of broader strategies would be formulated
- **Evaluation.** It include an ongoing review of methods and outcomes.

The dissolution of the demarcation lines between clients, researchers and consumers

- To **develop innovation**, a joint research approach was chosen by Deutsche Telekom Laboratories (www.laboratories.telekom.com). Three teams were involved: one team of **researchers** experienced in the field of **consumer segmentation** and qualitative research methods; one team of experts in the field of **consumer behaviour** and needs; in addition five experts from the **field of innovation development** were engaged.
- The aim was to create **new services** by exploring and discovering how **the every day life of information and communication technology (ICT) users could be explored**. Issues such as “fear” and “barriers” were also of interest, especially for the development of appropriate applications and services in the future.
- The researchers have to dive deep into the world of the Deutsche Telekom Laboratories and to learn about their ideas, problem attitudes and cognitive structure, decision-making processes and organizational structures.
- In this way, research experts were able to think like the developers and additional rounds of expert interviews were conducted to understand the client.
- They installed feed-back loops in order to discuss changes in the team during the research process and to include possible new issues in the interviews and observations.
- Among the researchers, a **continuous learning process** was observable since many participants developed their own ideas about how they integrate ICT into their everyday lives.

Questions:

- What criticisms do qualitative researchers make of the approaches adopted by quantitative researchers, and viceversa?
- Evaluate the differences between an European and an American approach to qualitative research
- Describe the characteristics of positivist and interpretivist researchers
- In what ways may the positivist and the interpretivist view potential research participants?
- What does ethnographic research aim to achieve in the study of consumers?
- What is netnography?
- What stages are involved in the application of a grounded theory approach?
- Describe the key elements to be balanced in the application of action research?