



NEW BOOKS IN REVIEW

EDITOR: *Naveen Donthu*

ASSOCIATE EDITORS: *Meryl P. Gardner*
Sandeep Krishnamurthy
Stephanie Noble

QUALITATIVE MARKET RESEARCH: PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE, Gill Ereaut, Mike Imms, and Martin Callingham, eds., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002, 1104 pages, \$250.00

The past 20 years have been marked by an explosion of academic and practitioner interest in and use of qualitative methods in applied areas, including market research. Sage Publications has fueled attention with many books directed at understanding and using an array of qualitative methods. This review considers the seven volume series published in 2002 on *Qualitative Market Research: Principle and Practice*, edited by Gill Ereaut, Mike Imms, and Martin Callingham, all of whom have extensive industry experience. I overview and situate the contributions of this series and provide further direction for market researchers interested in qualitative methods.

The titles of the volumes might lead readers to expect an authoritative series for teaching qualitative market research at the undergraduate and/or graduate level. However, though ambitious in purpose and scope, the series is more narrowly focused on the *practice* of commercial qualitative market research primarily from a U.K. perspective. The impetus for these volumes is to write down the oral tradition of experienced practitioners to make the qualitative process more transparent and linked to theory. As such, the seven volumes provide a thoughtful and well-organized record of the first-hand experience of conducting commercial qualitative market research. Each volume draws heavily on the ideas of a few key practitioners who especially, according to the authors, have been involved in developing accepted ideas of good practice in the United Kingdom: Peter Cooper (1987), Wendy Gordon (1999), and Mary Goodyear (1996).

As primarily a U.S.-based academic market researcher, devoutly multimethod in approach, I was surprised by three aspects of the series. First, I was surprised by how differently the authors view commercial practice in the United States and Europe. The first book in the series, *An Introduction to Qualitative Market Research*, depicts commercial qualitative research in the United States as based on a cognitive or descriptive model. In this model, respondents' comments are taken at face value and thus simply need to be classified, summarized, and reported. In contrast, commercial practice in Europe uses a conative model that is focused on the interpretive role of the researcher. The key tasks are theorizing and conceptualizing, and great importance is given to mediation and translation on behalf of the

client. The importance of the interpretive task is prominent throughout the series, but it is especially emphasized in the fourth book, *Analysis and Interpretation in Qualitative Market Research*. The role of the researcher to mediate and translate data and thus maximize value to the client is also evident throughout the series, but especially in the final book, *Delivering Results in Qualitative Market Research*.

Second, I was surprised by the paucity of references to academic qualitative market research across the volumes. With the exception of the fourth book on analysis and interpretation, there is virtually no trace of the research that has informed and shaped academic qualitative market research over the past 20 years. This is unexpected because there are close parallels between the substantive foci of these books and those of many academic qualitative market researchers. For example, the fifth volume, *Developing Brands with Qualitative Market Research*, does not mention the mounting qualitative work on brand meanings, relationships, and communities that should inform scholarship in this area (for a review, see Arnould and Thompson, in press). This omission recurs in the sixth volume, *Developing Advertising with Qualitative Market Research*, which does not mention seminal work by academic qualitative researchers on advertising meanings (Arnould and Thompson, in press). This omission is odd because academic qualitative market researchers also stress the interpretive role of the researcher. Not only is academic qualitative market research neglected, but academic market research in general has a negligible role as well.

Third, I was surprised and disappointed by the cursory attention given to anything other than depth interviews and group discussions. The first book justifies this limited scope because of the dominance of the interviewing format in commercial qualitative market research. The third book, *Methods Beyond Interviewing in Qualitative Market Research*, is the only book in the series that attempts to address other types of commercial qualitative market research. This is an ambitious undertaking. For example, author Philly Desai includes a chapter on observation and ethnography, a chapter on semiotics and cultural analysis, and a chapter on qualitative research on the Internet. An array of other tactics for introducing creativity and innovation to the market research process also is briefly described. Considering the assorted array of techniques overviewed in this book, the concluding chapter does a good job of summarizing key shifts in the future of qualitative research, including exploration of behavior rather than talk; involve-

ment of clients in experiencing customers rather than just reporting; engagement of respondents as research partners; and an eclectic mix of methods, data, and theory. If these shifts are likely to mark the future of qualitative commercial market research, it is unfortunate that so little space is allocated to them in this series. Similarly, I was disappointed that almost no attention was given to how qualitative market research interfaces productively with other forms of market research.

The seven books are well structured and easy to read. Each book is carefully positioned to the other books in the series. Naturally, in an effort to provide an integrated series and, at the same time, stand-alone books, there is redundancy across the seven books. Each chapter begins with an overview of the chapter and concludes with a summary of key points. Within each chapter, the authors rely heavily on bullet points, summary boxes, and figures to enhance easy reading. The following paragraphs briefly overview each of the seven books. I conclude with a summary statement of the series' contribution to qualitative inquiry.

The first book provides a descriptive overview and introduction to the series. The first two chapters provide a strong introduction to the commercial qualitative market research industry. The authors Mike Imms and Gill Ereaut make two especially important points in these chapters: that commercial qualitative market research is an experience-based practice with an oral tradition and that practitioners draw on a wide variety of theoretical sources. The dual role of the researcher as accountable to research standards and to client objectives is stressed in these chapters, as well as throughout the series. In Chapters 3, 5, and 6, the authors outline why organizations buy qualitative market research and how projects are designed and organized. These chapters include some of the challenges associated with managing various phases of commercial qualitative research projects. Chapter 4 details the industry structure and trends, and Chapter 7 concludes with ethical and professional concerns that underpin qualitative market research. Chapter 7 is fairly superficial and does not provide much insight into the unique issues associated with conducting certain types of qualitative market research.

The second book focuses on interviewing and is authored by Joanna Chrzanowska. She begins with a detailed description of how a focus group unfolds on the topic of teenage skin-care products. This is an excellent, entertaining chapter that provides the reader with a vivid description of moment-by-moment interviewer choices. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 represent the heart of the book. In these chapters, the author describes the interviewing relationship, plans for the interview or group discussion, and important interviewing skills. These chapters offer many tactical guides to interviewing that are enlivened by thoughtful examples. Chapter 8 provides a discussion of how stimulus material and projective techniques can be used to enhance the interview. Given the scope of this chapter, the author does a reasonable job of classifying different techniques and appropriate applications. Chapters 2 and 3 cover theories about the nature of the information that qualitative market research can access and theories about the processes of interviewing.

I have already highlighted some aspects of the third book, *Methods Beyond Interviewing in Qualitative Market Research*, authored by Philly Desai. The departure point for

this book is to review methodological criticisms of the interviewing method and posit changes in the marketing context that compel qualitative market researchers to draw on different methods, including observation and ethnography (Chapter 2), a host of other creative approaches (Chapter 3), semiotics and cultural analysis (Chapter 5), and Internet methods (Chapter 6). Chapter 4 describes the use of qualitative research in the public sector and useful methods for consulting in the public sector, emphasizing the importance of representing diversity, gaining an informed response from participants, and often reconciling conflicting interests. Each chapter provides a flavor for the value of the focal methods, but to understand the value and use of these methods requires further reading. This volume references several qualitative methods books published by Sage that provide additional insight into these methods, but this would have been an opportune place to include an appendix of additional resources sorted by method.

The fourth book, *Analysis and Interpretation in Qualitative Market Research*, authored by Gill Ereaut, tackles one of the most difficult and important tasks of qualitative market research, whether commercial or academic. Ereaut stresses the differences between analysis and interpretation in the commercial arena and academia, but I am disappointed that what I consider the best treatments of this subject in academic market research, two of which are published in *Journal of Marketing Research*, are not referenced (see Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Spiggle 1994; Thompson 1997). In the first two chapters of this volume, the author overviews characteristics of the commercial research context that affect analysis and interpretation. Chapter 3 offers some broad general frameworks for considering analysis and interpretation, and Chapter 4 affords a broad overview of how practitioners think about and approach this phase. The heart of the volume, in which the author focuses on key tactical components of performing analysis and interpretation, is Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 8 provides a cursory treatment of the use of computer software in qualitative analysis, something quite common in academic market research but rare in commercial practice. Chapter 9 is a relatively weak chapter on reliability, validity, and value issues in qualitative market research, and Chapter 10 provides a brief summary of some best practices in analysis and interpretation of commercial qualitative data.

The fifth and sixth volumes in this series focus on developing brands and advertising with qualitative market research. Either book could be used as a supplementary text for a course in branding or advertising, but recall my criticism that both do not incorporate much academic market research. The heart of the fifth volume, *Developing Brands with Qualitative Market Research*, authored by Jon Chandler and Mike Owen, is Chapters 6, 7, and 8. The prior five chapters either focus on a basic understanding of brands or are redundant with ideas found in the previous four volumes. In the sixth volume, *Developing Advertising with Qualitative Market Research*, author Judith Wardle writes in an engaging style and with contagious enthusiasm for advertising. She integrates many examples to enliven the text. As with the fifth volume, the first several chapters of this volume set the stage for understanding advertising and qualitative research basics before focusing on the combination. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 detail the research process, which

includes many helpful figures, boxes, and illustrations. Chapter 8 is a brief, useful depiction of the politics at play in advertising research, and it offers some suggestions on how to handle tricky conflicts and differences of perspective. Chapter 9 concludes with a perfunctory treatment of international advertising research and the special problems multicountry studies present.

The seventh and final volume in the series, *Delivering Results in Qualitative Market Research*, is authored by Geraldine Lillis. This volume focuses on the client–researcher relationship, particularly in the context of commercial qualitative market research. Nevertheless, most of the insights highlighted for managing this relationship are useful, regardless of the type of commercial market research proffered. For example, Chapters 2 and 3 emphasize the changing business environment that affects the practice of commercial qualitative market research as well as that of quantitative market research. Chapter 4 outlines the key roles and skills required by a qualitative market researcher to deliver valuable research, but these skills would be highly prized for any commercial market research. Chapter 5 focuses on key elements of defining the research problem, and again this chapter has useful guidelines for any practicing market researcher. Chapter 6 delivers the general principles of narrative structure and argues that it is important to tell a story in the delivery of qualitative research output. I believe in the value of story-telling regardless of research method, but I prefer the treatment Karl Weick (1995) provides of the characteristics of a good story. The remainder of the chapters in volume seven focus on the practicalities of presentation, with specific emphasis on qualitative market research but with more general applicability. A person teaching market research and seeking a more comprehensive treatment of how to negotiate client–practitioner relationships than that offered by the typical textbook might elect to use this volume as a supplementary text.

In this review, I have highlighted specific aspects of the seven volumes that contribute to the understanding of commercial qualitative market research, as well as some of the potential limitations of the series. Anyone teaching qualitative market research would probably sample selectively from this series, emphasizing instead some of the key handbooks on qualitative inquiry, many of which are published by Sage (see Denzin and Lincoln 2002; Lofland and Lofland 1994; McCracken 1989; Silverman 2000; Stern

1998; Stewart 1999). Nevertheless, the series offers an overview of commercial qualitative market research. I anticipate that the series will be especially helpful in providing a comprehensive practitioner view for the qualitative market research industry. This is the major intended audience for the series, and I believe the series is likely to serve that audience well.

LINDA PRICE

University of Nebraska

REFERENCES

- Arnould, Eric J. and Craig J. Thompson (in press), “Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, forthcoming.
- and Melanie Wallendorf (1994), “Market-Oriented Ethnography: Interpretation Building and Marketing Strategy Formulation,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31 (November), 484–504.
- Cooper, Peter (1987), “The New Qualitative Technology,” in *Qualitative Research: The ‘New,’ the ‘Old’ and a Question Mark*, P. Sampson, ed. Amsterdam: ESOMAR, 7–25.
- Denzin, Norman and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. (2002), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Goodyear, Mary (1998), “Qualitative Research,” in *ESOMAR Handbook of Market and Opinion Research*, 4th ed. Amsterdam: ESOMAR.
- Gordon, Wendy (1999), *Goodthinking: A Guide to Qualitative Research*. Henley-on-Thames: Admap.
- Lofland, John and Lyn H. Lofland (1995) *Analyzing Social Settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- McCracken, Grant (1989), *The Long Interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2000), *Doing Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Spiggle, Susan (1994), “Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data in Consumer Research,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 491–503.
- Stern, Barbara, ed. (1998), *Representing Consumers*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Stewart, Alexander (1999), *The Ethnographer’s Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Thompson, Craig J. (1997), “Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Marketing Insights Form the Texts of Consumers’ Consumption Stories,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (November), 438–55.
- Weick, Karl (1995), *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.