

Application of Mixed Methods by Consumer Marketing Practitioners: Lessons for the Academy? Abstract

Peter J. McGoldrick and Chihling Liu

Abstract A mismatch is becoming apparent between academia and leading marketing research practitioners in their use of mixed method research (MMR). Reviews find very few marketing papers in leading journals reporting MMR (Hanson and Grimmer 2007; Harrison and Reilly 2011; Davis et al. 2011). Likewise, our content analysis of leading textbooks in marketing research finds little attention to MMR, except in specialist MMR texts such as Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) and Creswell (2014). Conversely and despite greater time pressures typically in commercial settings, MMR is becoming the norm in major companies and agencies. This raises questions regarding the validity and effectiveness of some academic research, and also instruction in methodologies for market(ing) researchers and future practitioners.

Our objectives here are to (1) define mixed methods from academic and industry perspectives; (2) examine use of mixed methods in commercial consumer marketing research; (3) develop a framework for understanding use and drivers of MMR in practice; (4) assess parallels/mismatches between industry and academic practices; (5) and discuss implications for marketing researchers, educators, and managers.

Using a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1994), our theoretical sampling, data collection, and analysis developed concurrently. Elite interviews with four senior insight directors of multinational companies lasted for 60–120 min and involved multiple interviewers. Twelve further phone interviews with experienced insight directors followed, each lasting for around 60 min. Using the constant comparative method for analysis of transcripts (Boeije 2002; Bowen 2008), each researcher identified the reoccurrences of codes and themes (Lincoln and Guba 1985), with inter-coder agreement at 91%. The findings are grounded firmly in our interview data rather than preexisting theory.

P.J. McGoldrick (✉)
University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
e-mail: peter.mcgoldrick@manchester.ac.uk

C. Liu
Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster, UK
e-mail: chihling.liu@lancaster.ac.uk

The chapter provides insights into industry use of MMR, including how it is defined, practiced, sequenced, and evaluated. A structured framework of MMR in practice emerges, addressing drivers of MMR use, challenges, configurations and techniques, communication of findings, and evaluation/rigor of MMR projects. The work has strong relevance for validity and rigor of industry research, and thus the quality of marketing decisions and consumer satisfaction/welfare. Understanding contemporary best practice in industry research is also fundamental both for marketing education and for conduct of research that is robust and relevant.

References available upon request.