Quantitative Research investigates a large number of people by submitting questionnaires based on multiple, numeric answers (0 to 10) and open end (open answers, just a few in a quantitative questionnaire). Qualitative Research investigates a small amount of people, by submitting them physically the product itself, thus collecting a great number of behavioral details on a small sample of users.

I realize that most people get confused, even those who have been working in the sector for thousands of years, about difference between qualitative and quantitative research. Much less the brand, my client's client, who is quite unfamiliar. The red line that divides these branches is very thin in some ways but often like the Chinese wall for others. Qualitative research identifies abstract concepts while quantitative research collects numerical data.

But the substantial difference is in the type of action applied and in the size of the sample (respondents).

Qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a type of empathic, empirical, exploratory, direct, physical research. It helps you understand reasons, motivations, opinions, trends that hide behind the more quantitative data of quantitative research. The most commonly used method for RQL is the F2F (Face to Face), the so-called focus group where a small sample of respondents gets interviewed for a long time, even hours, in front of a mirror, behind which the brand and research institute observe and listen. The F2F gets video-recorded and then transcribed as a storytelling, for images and tales.

Quantitative research

As the word itself says, quantitative research helps you quantify, use numeric data or just data that can then be easily transformed into statistics, and it measures behavior, opinions and attitudes of a large sample of respondents. Let's say that we must have interviewed at least 30 people to talk about "quantitative", but there are usually many more than that. Quantitative research can expand its scope if the brand is a multinational, by implementing multi-county investigations. The more data you obtain and the more statistics will be more accurate. Methods of collecting quantitative data are mainly Cati (Computer Assisted Telephone Research), so telephone interviews, and CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing), online questionnaires, both lasting approximately 7-10 minutes. Questions often require a rating from 0 to 10. You can measure a level of satisfaction with a product, buying frequency, brand awareness, market segments, and so on. Data will be then transcribed into numbers, graphs, and statistics.

All differences between qualitative and quantitative research

Theory / research ratio

Qualitative research: Inductive setting that is articulated in the context of "discovery", the researcher rejects the formulation of theories. Theory and research work simultaneously.

Quanti: Sequential phases, based on a deductive approach that is articulated in the context of "justification". The theory precedes the research.

Concepts

Quali: They seek to find the character of uniqueness.

Quanti: Definitive and operative, they are the theory and are converted from the beginning into variables.

Relationship with the studied environment

Quali: (active subject) Naturalistic approach: space and actions are analyzed in the present time during the research.

Quanti: (passive subject) Experimental approach: the subject is not responsive but this is not a problem.

Interaction researcher/respondent

Quali: Essential, it is necessary that empathy arises between the two parts.

Quanti: Almost absent, the interviewer must be warm and human but must not interact outside the questionnaire.

Search design

Quali: Without a structure, open, in search of unexpected options, it gets modified in progress.

Quanti: Closed structure, planned in advance.

Representativeness of the respondent

Quali: Inexistent. Different info are taken on different levels of depth.

Quanti: It is necessary to use representative samples.

Uniformity of the detection instrument

Quali: Absent. Not necessarily always the same.

Quanti: It is necessary to use a standard.

Nature of data

Quali: Soft: Data collected in their integrity, subjective.

Quanti: Hard: objective and standardized data.

Type of respondent

Quali: Unique individual.

Quanti: Variable individual.

Type of analysis

Quali: Case based, prospettiva olistica del comportamento umano.

Quanti: Variable based, mathematical and statistical techniques.

Presentation of data

Quali: Quotes, narrative-style extracts, to allow reality as it has been experienced during the study.

Quanti: Tables and graphs, statistics, analysis and comparison with data obtained and data from past years and with estimates.

Generalization

Quali :Absent. Identification of the Weberian ideal types, interpretation of reality.

Quanti: Necessary. Individual fragmentation, correlation between variables, conceptual unit in the random model.

Scope of results

Quali: Limited number of cases.

Quanti: Significant number, representativity.

Methodology

Quali: Observation of the respondent in the focus room, interviews with privileged witnesses.

Quanti: Structured questionnaire for CATI, CAWI or PAPI.