

## The New Hybrids

### Technology and New Techniques Blend Qualitative and Quantitative Research for the Best of Both Worlds

By Jeff Horst, Senior Project Manager, KS&R

- Do you want quick facts, or do you want to get to the heart of your customer?
- Do you need broad insight from a large audience, or in-depth responses from a smaller group?

You probably want all of the above. The good news is that with today's technology and a hybrid research approach, you can have the best of what both qualitative and quantitative research can offer.

#### How traditional research may be limiting

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods have their advantages: Quantitative research is best for surveying many people quickly, particularly online, and is typically less costly. Qualitative research can help you gain deep insight into customers and even help strengthen your business relationships.

At the same time, both types of research have their limitations. Because qualitative research uses smaller sample sizes, it may be tough to make decisions

based on research findings. In addition, qualitative research is often more labor-intensive and may require travel, both of which increase time and cost.

Quantitative research also has its drawbacks. Surveys are static, so respondents – and survey administrators – can't go "off-script." It can be difficult to obtain in-depth answers, such as the underlying rationale for a response. And because surveys are often conducted on the Internet or over the phone by someone in a call center, it's impossible to read the emotion of a respondent or gauge respondent engagement.

#### The new hybrids

Emerging technologies are helping to breed new hybrid research models that combine the best of quantitative and qualitative research. Consider the following scenarios:

- A respondent is taking an online survey which has been programmed to detect specific answers to questions. When the survey taker selects a given

combination of responses, at that moment, she receives an invitation to an online chat session with an interviewer who jumps in to get more in-depth, qualitative information.

- During an in-depth interview, the interviewer asks qualitative questions. However, there are some closed-ended, quantitative questions woven into the conversation. When the respondent answers, the interviewer keys the responses into a database in real time.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Horst is a Senior Project Manager at KS&R, specializing in the software and technology space. With more than 15 years of market research experience in both qualitative and quantitative methods, he assists our technology clients with assignments such as new product/service development and the testing of value propositions, messaging, and advertising.



- At a large trade-show event, the event planners use smartphones and online bulletin boards to gather qualitative and quantitative information from dozens of attendees throughout the conference. Respondents answer qualitative questions, quantitative ratings and rankings, and even have the opportunity to record their impressions of the event using their smartphones to create “testimonials” as to what they find valuable about the event.
- **Time and cost savings.** Everyone wants to keep up with speeding business cycles; you need information fast. While many qualitative-only approaches can be time consuming, adding quantitative components can accelerate the process.
- **Future possibilities.** As social media becomes a huge source of potential qualitative data for companies – consumers publically posting and tweeting about products and services – there’s a greater possibility than ever to capture, quantify and analyze that data.

### Hybrid advantages

Blending qualitative and quantitative approaches delivers many advantages, including:

- **Greater insight from a “right-sized” sample frame.** The traditional thinking is “quantitative = large sample” and “qualitative = small sample.” With a hybrid approach, you can gain data from a given sample frame, plus get specific, qualitative-level insight where you need it.

As with most research, there is no one-size-fits-all hybrid. Each hybrid solution is developed individually to fit time and budget constraints, and to provide the best-possible insight at the lowest cost. Technology and creativity are expanding the way we do research, and the possibilities for creating new hybrids are endless.