

Wild Heather Digital Research



MARKET RESEARCH TOOLKIT #2

Quantitative or Qualitative?

Both methodologies have their merits, however your research objectives and scope should decide which methodology best fits your objectives.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is by definition investigative, and it is used when you don't know what to expect, to define the problem or develop an approach to the problem. It's also used to go deeper into issues of interest and explore nuances. Common data collection methods used in qualitative research are focus groups, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic participation / observation. They often work best with interaction and discussion during the research process.

When to use:

- To develop an initial understanding of a problem.
- To unearth a range of feeling about an issue.
- To investigate strengths and weaknesses of a concept, proposition or creative approach.
- To uncover underlying motivations and factors that influence decision making and decisions.
- To provide preliminary information needed to design a quantitative study.
- To help explain the findings of a quantitative study.

Quantitative research

Quantitative research is the collection of attitudes and opinions through quantification and counting. Data is usually collected through surveys (online, postal, face-to-face, or telephone).

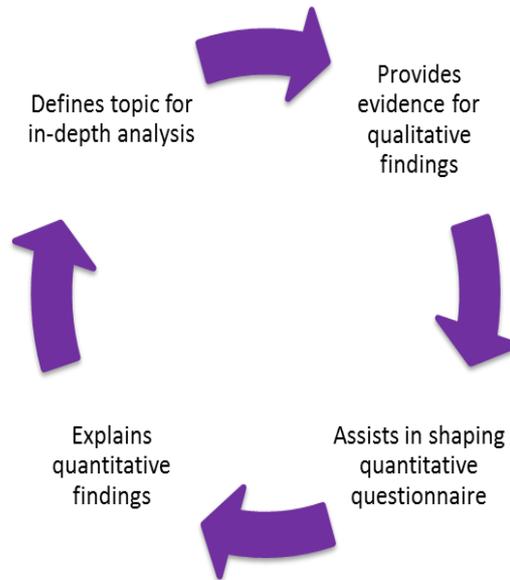
When to use:

- When you need statistical based evidence.
- To measure levels of awareness, knowledge, behaviour, and understanding.
- To measure strength of feeling.
- To find out if there a consensus on a particular issue.
- Projects results to the general population.
- Describe characteristics of relevant groups of people.
- Identify market segments.
- To compare differences across different parts of the research target.

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- To help recommend a final course of action.

Both methodologies can complement each other, when used together. If your budget doesn't allow for a mixed methodology approach ensures you select an approach that best fits your research objectives. Combining methodologies will generate statistical evidence but will also illuminate the 'why' and 'how' beneath the number. And vice-versa, qualitative evidence can help inform a researcher what questions to ask in survey.



Never assume that doing more focus groups is a substitute for quantitative research or that a long survey will give you all the in-depth information you can get through qualitative research methods. The above diagram demonstrates how quantitative and qualitative can be used together to define and assist each methodology. A mixed approach will deliver a well-rounded project with a combination of statistical evidence and in-depth analysis.

This sheet is part of series, for more information please see:

Toolkit #1: Introduction to Market Research

Toolkit #3: Online & Web-based Surveys

Toolkit #4: Online Focus Groups & interviews

Toolkit #5: Survey Design – Top Tips

Toolkit #6: Types of Questions

Toolkit #7: Qualitative Research: Practical Advice

This toolkit was prepared by Wild Heather Digital Research. WHDR uses the latest technology to deliver primary research insights to organisations. We offer online quantitative and online qualitative research services, including the development and use of panels, and broad based consultation programmes in addition to online group discussions, depth interviews and online surveys.