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Author name: Jack Ellingham

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Jack Ellingham

Sharing Responsibility: Neuromarketing and the Qualitative Market Researcher

Neuromarketing refers to a range of research methods that study the consumers emotional and unconscious responses (Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Belk 2017; Noble 2017; Romano 2017). Likewise, qualitative research can be used to understand the motivations of consumer decisions (Bryman and Bell 2015). Neuromarketing produces highly objective data (Belk 2017; Noble 2017), whereas qualitative data is subjective (Bryman and Bell 2015). Therefore, does neuromarketing pose a threat to the practice of qualitative research? Whilst this may be the case, the extant literature asserts that all research that seeks to understand human behaviour must be conducted by a human (Seidman 1998; Baron and White 2015). This suggests that neuromarketing may not threaten qualitative practice, but compete with the competency of qualitative market researchers instead. In total, eight in-depth interviews with experienced qualitative market researchers were conducted which sought to understand how qualitative market researchers are being affected by neuromarketing. The findings of this research support existing knowledge on how neuromarketing should be used in qualitative methodologies, and stresses the importance of the qualitative market researcher in the collection and contextualisation of all data. This dissertation concludes that the responsibility of qualitative market researchers is shared across the neuromarketing process with the technology, external research partners and research buyers.

Keywords: Neuromarketing, Traditional Qualitative Research, Qualitative Researcher, Qualitative Market Researcher, Market Research and Shared Responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

In its many forms, traditional qualitative research shares similarities with neuromarketing research. Qualitative research can be used to understand the motivations of consumer decisions (Saunders et al. 2009; Bryman and Bell 2015; Chandler 2013). Likewise, neuromarketing refers to a range of research methods that study the consumers emotional and unconscious responses to marketing stimuli (Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Belk 2017; Noble 2017; Romano 2017). Both methodologies can be defined by how the data is collected and the type of knowledge it aims to yield. For example, research methods like in-depth interviews,

focus groups and ethnographies are used in qualitative research to comprehend the implicit behaviour of human beings (Saunders et al. 2009; Bowleg 2017; Bryman and Bell 2015). Similarly, neuromarketing uniquely uses electroencephalograms (EEG), positron emission topographies (PET), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), galvanic skin responses (GSR) and eye-tracking to measure consumers non-descript responses (Szentesi 2017). That aside, neuromarketing produces objective data (Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Belk 2017; Noble 2017; Romano 2017), whereas qualitative data is generally characterised as subjective and is not necessarily representative of the sample population (Bryman and Bell 2015). Unsurprisingly, neuromarketing has become a popular field of research in both the academic and market research communities (Ariely and Berns 2010; Noble 2017; Szentesi 2017). However, does this mean that neuromarketing may pose a threat to the practice of traditional qualitative research? Whilst this could be the case, the scholarly and industry-related literature maintain that all research that seeks to understand human behaviour must be conducted by way of human interpretation (Seidman 1998; Baron and White 2015). Belk (2017), for instance, maintains that advertising is consumed subjectively, with each environment impacting the consumers understanding of the advert. As such, the research calls for a researcher to appreciate and interpret each response. In contrast, neuromarketing promises to elicit data previously unattainable by the researcher: "it provides additional, better information than traditional marketing methods" (Sebastian 2014, p.754). This suggests that neuromarketing could threaten the ability of traditional qualitative researchers, rather than being a threat to qualitative practice.

In theory, the potential of neuromarketing exceeds the skilful ability of traditional qualitative market researchers (Ćoisić 2016; Daughtery and Hoffman 2017; Rice 2017; Trettel et al. 2017). In addition, the implications of neuromarketing is heavily theorised, particularly on the ethical repercussions of how the data is collected and used (Bercea 2015; Clark 2017; Ducu 2017; Hensel et al. 2017; Thomas et al. 2017). The affect neuromarketing has on today's qualitative market researchers, however, is underresearched. Also, the extant literature lacks a critical view of neuromarketing, positioning these research methods as eliciting superior insights than traditional qualitative methods (Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Belk 2017; Noble 2017; Romano 2017). Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to understand how today's qualitative market researcher is affected by neuromarketing. Moreover, the significance of this dissertation is to discuss neuromarketing and traditional qualitative research within the same discourse, rather than in an either-or scenario. As such, this research will investigate the neuromarketing discourse amongst qualitative market researchers. Drawing from their experience of using qualitative methods and knowledge of neuromarketing this study will compare the different skills required for using qualitative and neuromarketing methods, and accordingly, argue that they both facilitate today's market research. This dissertation will conclude with relevant academic and industry recommendations for how traditional qualitative and neuromarketing methods are equally beneficial in market research; each shedding light on different aspects of consumer behaviour.

Definitions

Throughout this paper particular terms are used to differentiate between groups of research professionals and research methods. For the purposes of this dissertation,

and to avoid misinterpretation, the difference between qualitative researchers and qualitative market researchers is that the former refers to qualitative researchers in an academic context and the latter to consumer marketing practices. Also, neuromarketing, which can reside within a qualitative methodology, refers to the specific data collection tools that utilise neuroscientific and physiological technology to measure an unconscious emotional response.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Qualitative Research Process

What is qualitative market research? Market research is an inquiry for information about consumer needs (Wardle 2002) and qualitative research is defined by the in-depth knowledge it produces (Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders et al. 2009). Dilley (2004) advocates that qualitative research allows researchers to understand meaning within a context:

“meaning is not ‘just the facts’, but rather the understandings one has that are specific to the individual (what was said) and transcendent of the specific” (Dilley 2004, p.128).

Similarly, Chandler (2013) argues that qualitative research is the investigation of the essence of things, looking at the parts which constitute the whole. Also, in contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research is not positivistic (Chandra and Shang 2016). This suggests that qualitative research is concerned with understanding how people interpret what they know. Furthermore, qualitative research can be defined by its differences to quantitative research (Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders et al. 2009). Also, ‘qualitative’ is used as an umbrella term, referring to a group of data collection methods like in-depth interviews, focus groups, observation and ethnography (Bowleg 2017; Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders et al. 2009). Guest et al. (2017) argue that the knowledge produced from each qualitative method is different (Bowleg 2017). In a study comparing focus groups and qualitative interviewing, the authors concluded that

“[researchers] systemically compare these two methods on their ability to generate two types of information: unique items in a brainstorm and personally sensitive information” (Guest et al. 2017, p.693).

Therefore, qualitative research can be defined by the data collection method used to conduct the research.

The qualitative research process is nonlinear which subsequently increases the responsibility of the researcher. Meloy (2001) maintains that there is more than one way to conduct qualitative research:

“the processes are multiple; they are linked and interactive, to each other and to the human being who is the research instrument” (Meloy 2001, p.145).

This suggests that some aspects of the process happen simultaneously: “linked and interactive” (Meloy 2001, p.145). Likewise, Smith et al. (2009) maintain that qualitative research should be conducted cyclically, rather than as step-by-step guide. This is because qualitative research “is a reflective cycle...an iterative, negotiated process” (Smith et al. 2009, p.61). Indeed, as depicted in Figure 1, the qualitative research process is repetitive. It starts, Bryman and Bell (2015) state, with specifying research questions, recruiting the sample and collecting data. Then, at the interpretation of data, a cycle begins where the researcher should adjust the

initial research questions and continue to collect more data. The process ends with writing up the research findings (Bryman and Bell 2015). This model demonstrates how qualitative research is recursive and requires the researcher to reflect on their findings with the rest of the research process (Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders et al 2009). The ever-changing and continuous nature of the qualitative research process, therefore, emphasises that the researchers need to be actively reflexive at all times (Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders et al. 2009). Nevertheless, Bryman and Bell's (2015) model mainly reflects the process of conducting qualitative research in an academic context, not market research. It would be interesting to see how this process compares against market research and whether the role of qualitative researchers differs from academic research to commercial research.

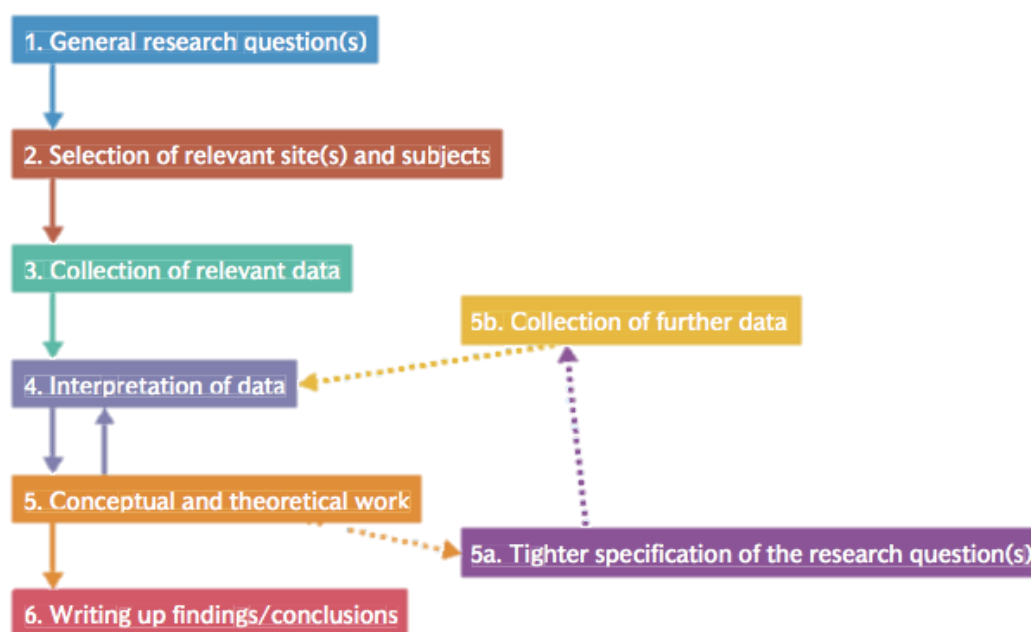


Figure 1: The qualitative research process (Bryman and Bell 2015)

Neuromarketing

Neuromarketing refers to several research methods that produce objective in-depth data (Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Belk 2017; Noble 2017; Romano 2017). Stipp (2015) maintains that neuromarketing elicits data that qualitative researchers would not be able to uncover. For example;

“‘neuro’ methods provide more direct and more detailed information on important aspects of the consumer response...If best practices are implemented, the method will provide additional data-points and insight” (Stipp 2015, p.121-122).

Similarly, in a study comparing qualitative surveys to neuromarketing techniques, Trettel et al. (2017) concluded that consumer neuroscience is better than traditional research methods (Camerer and Yoon 2015; Ćoisić 2016). This is because traditional data collection is contingent to the consumers ability to understand and express their motivations. The nature of traditional qualitative research, Trettel et al. (2017) explain, relies on the participants to honestly convey their own feelings and opinions (Graves 2010), whereas, neuromarketing allows the researcher to

distinguish between what consumers want to say and what they actually said (Trettel et al. 2017). On one hand, neuromarketing could provide extra insight that may be typically missed (Romano 2017). Then, on the other hand, neuromarketing may exceed the abilities of qualitative researchers (Rice 2017). This reiterates how neuromarketing could provide greater insight into consumer behaviour that is more accurate than traditional methods (Camerer and Yoon 2015; Čoisić 2016). However, Trettel et al.'s (2017) study compares neuromarketing data to qualitative survey data. Although there are many ways to distribute surveys, as a qualitative research method, surveys tend to ask structured questions and can therefore be easily misinterpreted (Bryman and Bell 2015). Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge as to how neuromarketing relates to more in-depth qualitative methods like face-to-face interviews and focus groups.

Through technological developments, neuromarketing has become easier to use and more portable (Noble 2017; Szentesi 2017). Consequently, Szentesi (2017) asserts that the increased accessibility of this method has made neuromarketing desirable to market researchers. To exemplify, Daughtery and Hoffman (2017) identified a trend within the market research industry, with agencies like Neilson and Innerscope Research investing in the technology. This suggests that market researchers are popularising the use of neuromarketing as a research method because it has become easier to measure the emotional and unconscious drivers that inform consumer decisions. Also, neuromarketing is considered much more cost-effective than traditional qualitative methods due to the objective data it produces, despite its expense (Ariely and Berns 2010; Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Noble 2017). Noble (2017) maintains that the data produced is more in-depth and precise than other traditional methods, therefore it is wise to invest in neuromarketing. This implies that the depth of insight is what makes neuromarketing more cost-effective than traditional methods, rather than its accessibility and ease of use. Alternatively, Ariely and Berns (2010) argued that whilst neuromarketing is costly the results would justify its expense by using neuromarketing insight to develop better products. This implies that the application of data is what makes neuromarketing more cost-effective than traditional methods. Likewise, Sebastian (2014) argues that the advantages of neuromarketing directly benefit the consumer. This is because the data will be used to build brands according to consumer truths; making advertising and brands more meaningful to the individual consumer (Sebastian 2014).

The aim of neuromarketing research is to uncover the unconscious reactions consumers have towards marketing stimuli (Sebastian 2014; Camerer and Yoon 2015; Stipp; 2015; Čoisić 2016; Szentesi 2017; Thomas et al 2017). Similarly, depending on the research project, qualitative market researchers aim to understand why consumers think and behave in a certain way through a variety of data collection methods (Wardle 2002; Chandler 2013; Guest et al 2017). Several scholars (Sebastian 2014; Stipp; 2015; Čoisić 2016; Szentesi 2017; Thomas et al 2017), however, maintain that many consumer decisions “occur at the implicit or unconscious level so consumers are unable to articulate the reasons for their behaviour” (Camerer and Yoon 2015, p.424). This implies that qualitative researchers can only elicit the describable and observable (Guest et al. 2017), whereas, neuromarketing can identify new insights that are inexpressible and unseeable (Camerer and Yoon 2015; Thomas et al. 2017). To achieve this,

neuromarketing utilises neuroscientific technology (such as EEG, fMRI and PET) and physiological measurements (like heart rate, galvanic skin response and eye tracking) (Szentesi 2017). Whether it is measuring brain signals, heart rate or eye movement this demonstrates how each method measures different consumer reactions and can, therefore, produce different knowledge (Szentesi 2017). In comparison, qualitative data collection tools also take many forms: for instance, in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations and open-ended questionnaires (Bryman and Bell 2015; Chandler 2013; Guest et al 2017). This demonstrates how neuromarketing and qualitative research both shed light on different aspects of consumer behaviour.

The scholarship surrounding neuromarketing is divided as to whether this method is qualitative or quantitative (Bercea 2013). Consequently, neuromarketing is most effective when used in a triangulation of research methods (Romano 2017). This refers to combining multiple methods and approaching the research through different assessments (Mays and Pope 2000; Chandra and Shang 2016). Romano (2017) maintains that

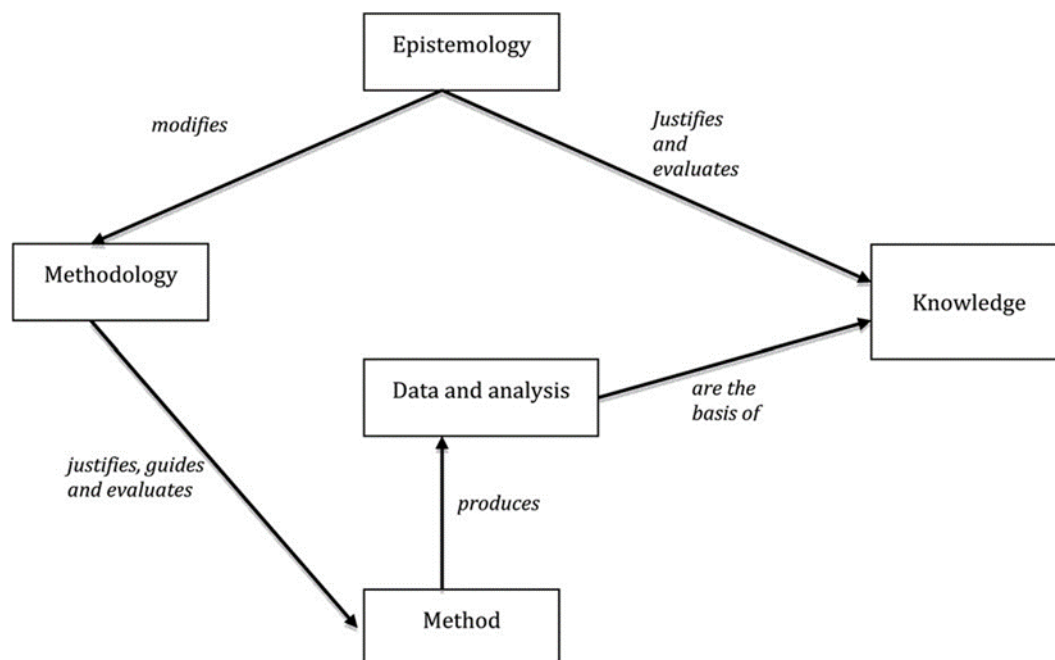
“traditional marketing analyses the conscious part of the decision-making process and neuromarketing is capable of measuring the non-conscious part of it, together they make the perfect combination” (p.15).

To exemplify, Neilson conducted an advertising effectiveness study using a triangulation of methods including social intelligence, facial coding and neuromarketing. This enabled Neilson to understand the data from multiple perspectives (Precourt 2017). That aside, is neuromarketing considered qualitative or quantitative? Through a topographic comparison of both methodologies, Bercea (2013) concluded that neuromarketing shared similarities with both qualitative and quantitative research. On one hand, these studies are invasive and require small samples, yet on the other hand, the data can be statistical and be generalised across the population. In contrast to Romano (2017), this implies that neuromarketing is a triangulation of methods in itself and therefore would not need to be used in conjunction with other methods. Also, this reiterates the importance bestowed upon the researcher to select the correct data collection tool. This is because, even within the same methodology, data collection methods produce different knowledge (Guest et al 2017). To illustrate, Cascio et al. (2015) and Pozharliev et al. (2015) both studied social influence, using two different neuromarketing methods to achieve their results (fMRI and EEG). Both produced different knowledge, which highlights a gap in the literature surrounding the methodological ambiguity of neuromarketing and the impact this has on its results.

Whilst the knowledge produced is influenced by the entire research process, Carter and Little (2007) maintain that it is justified by the epistemological position of the study (see Figure 2). An epistemology is how knowledge, or the creation of knowledge, is justified to be true (Rubin and Rubin 1995; Petty et al. 2012; Bowleg 2017). Petty et al. (2012), for example, compare the knowledge produced from a positivist and interpretivist epistemology; positivism relies on objective and verifiable truths, whereas interpretivism adopts an a-posteriori approach (Chandra and Shang 2016). The question here is what warrants selecting a neuromarketing method over another: the needs of the study or the type of knowledge the method produces? In contrast to Carter and Little's (2007) model, this suggests that the unique data produced by neuromarketing simultaneously justifies the knowledge

produced, regardless of its epistemology. This highlights a conflict of epistemologies and is an area that requires more research to provide clarity.

Figure 2: Relationship between epistemology, methodology and methods to create knowledge (Carter and Little 2007).



Neuromarketing

Academic researchers consider neuromarketing to depreciate the skills of qualitative researchers (Daughtery and Hoffman 2017; Rice 2017), whereas, qualitative market researchers maintain that neuromarketing will enhance their own skill-set. To exemplify;

“neuromarketing is described as the science of seeking to apply the principles, the methodologies and the discoveries from neuroscience to understand the neurological and psychological foundations of human behaviour” (Daughtery and Hoffman 2017, p.920).

This implies that a prerequisite for using neuromarketing as a data collection tool is a detailed understanding of neuroscience, restricting the qualitative market researchers that do not possess this knowledge. Alternatively, applying these methods, and in turn “the principles, methodologies and the discoveries from neuroscience” (Daughtery and Hoffman 2017, p.920), could enrich the research findings from a new perspective. Nevertheless, whilst the responsibility of eliciting insight may have shifted from the researcher to the technology, the researcher is still required to analyse the findings:

“there will always remain a need for the human touch, the enquiring mind, the thinking that will deliver the ‘why’ at both a strategic and tactical level” (Baron and White 2015)

This positions neuromarketing as unthreatening since the skills of the qualitative researcher are still imperative to the analysis and contextualisation of data (Seidman 1998).

Where Baron and White (2015) assert that the role of researchers is exclusively in the analysis of neuromarketing data, Thomas et al. (2017) argue that, ethically, the researcher should be involved in every aspect of the neuromarketing research process: from recruitment to data-collection and analysis. To exemplify, neuromarketing promises to elicit additional data that market researchers would not be able to achieve (Sebastian 2014). This implies that the respondent is also unaware of their hidden motivations; raising ethical considerations surrounding the participants ability to provide consent, their lack of autonomy and invasion of privacy (Ducu 2017). Furthermore, the respondents may be left in the dark with regards to what the data means and how it will be used. Consequently, to remain ethical, Bercea (2015) puts forth that in neuromarketing studies, it is the duty of researcher to remain honest and transparent about the research objectives. Therefore, for ethical reasons, the researcher should be involved in the recruitment and interaction of research participants (Bercea 2015). Alternatively, Hensel et al. (2017) argues that companies using neuromarketing data to enhance their services need to behave ethically. This is because they are manipulating consumers unconscious thoughts for their own economic benefit. Building on this, Clark (2017) acknowledges that the adoption of neuromarketing is inevitable therefore a code of conduct should be in place. This code of conduct stresses the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the data is not being used unethically by the research buyer (Clark 2017). This suggests that the researcher should be involved beyond the research process, and that there is a need for a qualitative researcher throughout the entire neuromarketing research process.

While neuromarketing can reveal detailed data regarding consumers subconscious behaviours (Sebastian 2014; Camerer and Yoon 2015; Stipp; 2015; Szentesi 2017; Thomas et al 2017), the question is: is this due to the technology or the skills of the researcher? With this in mind, technological developments may threaten the market research industry and the qualitative skills of researchers (Trettel et al 2017), rather than enhance them (Ćoisić 2016). Within the market research industry, there is a need to adopt new technology in order to truly understand consumers (Baron and White 2015):

“as technology has advanced and become more prolific in consumer everyday lives the focus is shifting research approaches which puts the respondents at the heart of the research process” (WARC 2018)

Contrastingly, the literature also expresses concern surrounding the synergy of technology and qualitative research methods. Whilst the innovation of the research process is appealing, Baron and White (2015) assert that

“even with the best technologies in place, not all innovation transpires to stealing or building share, or more importantly, the bottom line” (Baron and White 2015)

This implies that consumer researchers should be wary of using technology since it may not be economically beneficial. In short, the tendency appears to be that consumer researchers are invested in developing new research methods, whilst academic scholars maintain that technology-heavy research methods may not be beneficial at all, illustrating a literary parallel between academic and market research. As such, does neuromarketing benefit qualitative research, or does it pose a threat to the qualitative researcher?

In summary, there is a significant number of scholarly articles surrounding the implications and uses of neuroscience in market research practices. This being said, there is little knowledge on neuromarketing affects (or will affect) the researcher. Moreover, looking at neuromarketing as a marketing research method, there are inconsistencies as to how the technology should be used and what kind of knowledge it produces. Plus, it is unclear as to whether this method is considered qualitative or quantitative. Drawing parallels between the qualitative research process (Bryman and Bell 2015; Meloy 2001; Smith et al. 2009) and how neuromarketing is used as a research method, this conceptual framework will use qualitative theory to induce whether neuromarketing affects the role of the qualitative market researchers. Consequently, this research will focus on how qualitative market researchers will be affected by the use of neuromarketing and provide clarity as to how this method should be used in qualitative practice.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of how neuromarketing will impact the role of qualitative market researchers, from a qualitative market researchers' perspective. Drawing from the literature review, four research questions have been developed in order to address the aim of this research:

1. How do qualitative market researchers feel about neuromarketing research methods?
2. How does neuromarketing affect the qualitative research process?
3. How do qualitative researchers express their responsibilities as a researcher, in comparison to neuromarketing methods?
4. How do qualitative researchers envision neuromarketing being used in qualitative research?

The scholarship is divided as to how neuromarketing compares to traditional qualitative research methods. On one hand, neuromarketing could elicit unconscious insights previously unattainable by researchers (Stipp 2015; Camerer and Yoon 2015; Ćoisić 2016; Thomas et al. 2017; Trettel et al. 2017). Then, on the other hand, scholars and industry professionals defend the need for the 'human touch' in qualitative research in order to contextualise data (Seidman 1998; Baron and White 2015; Ćoisić 2016). The first research question clarifies this conflict by inquiring into how neuromarketing research methods could be used in the market research process and its potential effect on qualitative research. Another gap deduced from the literature is to gain an understanding of how neuromarketing affects the responsibilities of qualitative researchers; debating whether neuromarketing would deplete or foster the skills of qualitative researchers (Baron and White 2015; Ćoisić 2016; Thomas et al. 2017; Trettel et al. 2017). This is addressed by the second research question by asking how researchers, themselves, think they would be impacted by this technology. Lastly, from the literature review, Bercea (2013) was at a loss to neuromarketing's methodological position. As such, the third research question clarifies the suitability of neuromarketing within a qualitative methodology by asking qualitative market researchers how they imagine the technology being used in qualitative research.

According to Brannen (2005), a research project begins by determining its philosophical position: “first, a logic of enquiry drives the study” (p.13). Rather than positivist, this research adopts an interpretivist philosophy in order to understand how qualitative market researchers perceive neuromarketing. Interpretivism is defined as the

“epistemological position that respects the differences between people and objects of natural sciences” (Bryman and Bell 2015, p. 26).

In contrast, positivists believe in the absolute justification of phenomena (Chandra and Shang 2016). Although the scholarship provides a clear definition of neuromarketing, this research is interested in how market researchers believe this research method affects the duty of qualitative researchers. As such, this study appreciates the axiology of each participant in order to explore how they conceptualise neuromarketing, which in turn makes an interpretivist philosophy the best approach.

Naturally, this research assumes an inductive approach. To induce means to “draw generalizable inferences out of observations” (Bryman and Bell 2015, p.22) and produce new concepts from conducting research, rather than test theories and hypotheses. Since this research addresses and explores a gap in knowledge working from existing scholarship, an inductive approach was deemed most appropriate by the researcher. Accordingly, a qualitative methodology was employed due to the exploratory nature of the research’s aim and chosen philosophy. Rubin and Rubin (1995) advise that qualitative research is “achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms” (p.2). This research aims to understand the perspectives of qualitative market researchers, therefore a quantitative approach of “standardisation of data” (Madrigal and McClain 2012, p.3) would not suit this study. This is because the participants have different understandings of, and experiences with, neuromarketing technology. Benefitting from a qualitative methodology, this study aims to capture the differences in these experiences and gain a holistic view of the given phenomenon.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are being used to conduct this research, either through Skype, face-to-face or over the phone. This method allowed respondents to feel comfortable talking about certain aspects of the topic and be flexible in their answers. A benefit of this is that the respondents often raised additional points that the researcher had initially overlooked (Bryman and Bell 2015). In addition, in-depth interviews are typically used when discussing sensitive topics (Saunders et al. 2009). Although neuromarketing and consumer research are not necessarily considered personal, this research does inquire to the respondents own professional experiences. As a result, there is a degree of confidentiality which must be withheld in what they disclose. Therefore, in comparison to focus groups, which encourages a group conversation (Bryman and Bell 2015), the respondent would feel more comfortable talking about their employment history in a one-on-one environment. The semi structured interview also has the tendency to go off-topic onto unrelated issues, but discursive tangents benefit the analysis as it provides “insight into what the interviewee sees as relevant and important” (Bryman and Bell 2015, p.471). Nevertheless, to ensure the in-depth interviews addressed the research questions thoroughly an interview guide has been developed (see Appendix A). The researcher will use the guide as a prompt (Bryman and Bell 2015)

to talk about certain aspects of neuromarketing. Also, the guide would contribute to the smooth-running of the interview (Bryman and Bell 2015).

Also, as mentioned previously, some in-depth interviews were conducted over the phone or via the internet application, Skype. The reasons for, and advantages of, doing it this way is because the sample are not local to the researcher (Bryman and Bell 2015). Therefore, this allows the researcher to interview each participant in their own time. As a result, this method was less timely and more convenient for both the researcher and participant (Bryman and Bell 2015). In spite of this, all the interviews do rely on either a strong phone signal or Wi-Fi connection and are therefore prone to technical difficulties that could affect the flow of the interview and ability to transcribe the audio files accurately (Saunders et al. 2009).

Pilot Study

In order to gain experience of conducting qualitative research, Bryman and Bell (2015) recommend first time researchers to complete a pilot study. A pilot study was conducted prior to the data collection process. Accordingly, adjustments were made to the sample, interview guide and the data analysis technique. After completing the pilot, the researcher realised that he had wrongfully assumed that the participants would have a good knowledge of neuromarketing research methods. In response, the researcher made a note to clearly define and explain what is meant by neuromarketing at the beginning of the interview guide. In addition, the pilot highlighted possible flaws with the researcher's initial choice of data analytical method: narrative analysis. Since the research questions inquired to participants' own professional experiences, a narrative analysis would capture personal and contextual dimensions of experience by asking participants to share stories (Polkinghorne 1995). However, the pilot identified that the participants experience of neuromarketing would vary considerably, therefore their 'stories' would not be comparable. Accordingly, the proposed analytical method was adjusted (as below) to accommodate and understand the different experiences each participant had with neuromarketing.

Data Collection and Analysis

All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and produced a sum of 7 hours 45 minutes' worth of data. A thematic analysis sought to the construction of themes and sub-themes within the transcribed interviews (Bryman and Bell 2015). This highlighted to the researcher, through the relationships between repetitive data, what aspects of neuromarketing would affect the responsibilities of qualitative researchers. To analyse the data, all the transcribed interviews were coded and organised into themes. Then, the research used the themes to answer the four main research questions. The interviews were conducted in different ways (face-to-face, over the phone and via Skype), which meant that some interviews offered extra information, such as body behaviour (Bryman and Bell 2015), and some did not. The scope of this research is to use the content of the interviews (what the participants said) to gain an understanding of how qualitative market researchers conceptualise neuromarketing. As such, this analytical method established consistency in the analysis of data. In addition, the participants of this research had a varied understanding and, in some instances, limited experience of neuromarketing. An advantage of thematic analysis is that it provides flexibility when analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006). The freedom that comes with this

analytical method therefore benefited the research by highlighting common themes amongst a varied and complicated data set.

Sampling

A non-random purposive sampling method was used followed by a snowballing technique. Saunders et al. (2009) advised that a study's research questions "should give an indication of what units should be sampled" (p.416). Thus, the participants asked to take part in this study were experienced qualitative market researchers. The researcher relied on their own professional network of market researchers, having previously worked with each member of the sample. However, the lack of the researcher's own professional connections in this field and the studies short time-scale resulted in a small sample size. Plus, the sample was difficult to recruit since the researcher had to consider and accommodate to the interests and restricted timescales of working professionals (Newman 2000; Smith et al. 2009). In response, a snowballing technique was deployed, using the existing participants' networks, as means to attain a larger, final sample size of eight participants (Bryman and Bell 2015).

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Typically, reliability and validity are the chosen criteria to evaluate quantitative data (Bryman and Bell 2015; Guba and Lincoln 1994). Consequently, for this qualitative study, the significant criteria include trustworthiness and authenticity. Bryman and Bell (2015) assert that trustworthiness consists of four concepts: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Likewise, authenticity is contingent to fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity and catalytic authenticity (Bryman and Bell 2015). Throughout the data collection and analytical processes, the researcher was actively reflexive (i.e. aware of their own personal bias and others' biases) and kept all records to ensure dependability and credibility of the data and the research findings. An auditing process was completed to allow this research to be replicated in the future. To ensure authenticity, the recorded audio files of the interview were kept till the end of the research process and the respondents were each sent a copy of the findings. This made the researcher aware of any inaccuracies or misinterpretations in the analysis of data.

The limitations to this research exist within the methodological approach. To exemplify, a qualitative methodology was chosen because it best addressed the research aim, however, due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, the coding process may have misinterpreted by the researcher (Saunders et al. 2009). Also, in relation to the social desirability bias (Fisher 1993), the respondents may not have disclosed particular thoughts in case it reflected poorly on them or their career. Alternatively, due to the time-scale and lack of budget, the sample size was small (n=8) and may not necessarily be representative of the population. Additionally, the researcher knew all the respondents prior to this study which could have affected the interviewer-interviewee dynamic and, by extension, the findings. However, the current research benefited from this relationship as it put the participant at ease (Bryman and Bell 2015).

FINDINGS

The Qualitative Market Research Triangle

The research revealed that the qualitative market research process is affected by three, linking factors: the researcher, the client and neuromarketing itself. This was highlighted by three themes (dichotomy of interest, authority and buzzword) which refer to the relationships between neuromarketing and the researcher, the client and the researcher, and the client and the research (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The qualitative market research triangle and corresponding themes (from findings).



The first theme, 'dichotomy of interest', demonstrates the mixed feelings qualitative market researchers have about the use of neuromarketing in qualitative research.

Penny (Research Director) states:

"It's not my expertise and I would steer them towards doing it in combination with pure qual. I think it's very valuable in its own right, to see the unconscious and emotional response, but does it mean anything on its own? I'm not sure".

This suggests that the purpose of using neuromarketing is to support traditional qualitative research. In addition, the suitability of neuromarketing within a qualitative methodology depends on the researchers own skill-set and ability, as well as the needs of the research; exemplifying a dichotomy of interest. Alternatively, a second theme of 'authority' reveals how much power clients have over a project's methodology. For example, Iain (Managing Director) observes how:

"a lot more media owners, when they're approaching agencies and specking out projects, they're looking to use these techniques".

This implies that clients have ownership over the research process and can influence the researcher's decisions. Building upon Bryman and Bell's (2015) qualitative research process, which emphasises the importance of the researcher in qualitative studies, the use of neuromarketing in qualitative research shares the responsibility of qualitative market researchers between the researcher and the client. Nevertheless, in an academic context, the qualitative research process does not consider researcher bias and external influences like client needs (Bryman and Bell 2015).

The third theme, 'buzzword', describes how neuromarketing is perceived by clients and the impact this has on the research being conducted (Ariely and Berns 2010; Sebastian 2014). However, this does not contribute to the aim of this study: to understand how neuromarketing affects the role of the qualitative market researcher. Therefore, the subsequent sections will discuss the Client-Researcher and Neuromarketing-Researcher relationships further, looking into the sub-themes that constitute the main themes found in the data.

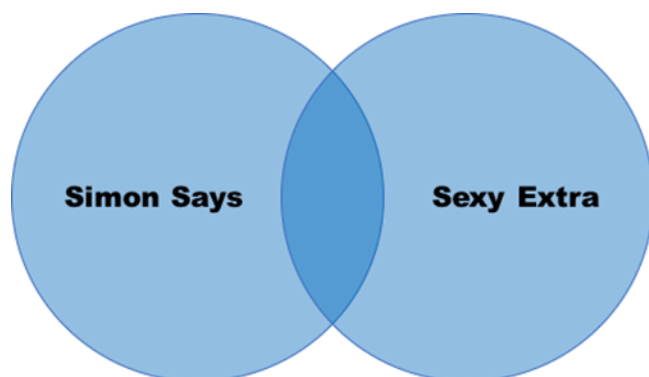
Authority (The Client - Researcher Relationship)

Neuromarketing's increased accessibility and cost-effectiveness have popularised its use in the market research industry (Ariely and Berns 2010; Sebastian 2014; Noble 2017; Szentesi 2017). Yet, the theme 'authority' provides an alternative explanation, suggesting that clients encourage the use of neuromarketing to the researcher. When asked what value neuromarketing has in market research, Lucy (Associate Director) explained how "clients love them, they're supposed to be more objective in some ways than the researcher". Therefore, the aforementioned benefits of neuromarketing appeal to the client and are used as rationale in a study's methodology. This supports the argument that clients contribute to the research design. The question is, why do clients have control over the researcher? Within this theme exists two sub-themes, 'Simon-says' and 'sexy-extra' (figure 4), which may explain why clients have a degree of responsibility in the market research process. Among the participants, neuromarketing was commonly referred to as a unique-selling-point of the research proposal. To exemplify, Penny (Research Director) admits that she would

"use it to win the project - some clients get bored with traditional qual and I'd use it as a sexy-extra to get their attention".

Likewise, Harry (CEO) is "always thinking about winning the brief". This sheds light on why qualitative market researchers choose certain methodologies, suggesting that neuromarketing is used to grab the client's attention. Accordingly, the qualitative market researcher is willing to do what the client wants in order to win their business. This reveals new information into how neuromarketing impacts the research design, in addition to the research findings. To exemplify, Carter and Little's (2007) model explains how the research findings are justified by the study's epistemology. Alternatively, this suggests that the choice of method is determined by the client, rather the needs of the study. Consequently, neuromarketing research methods simultaneously produce and justify the knowledge they create.

Figure 4: Venn diagram depicting the two sub-themes that form the main theme: authority.



Dichotomy of Interest (Neuromarketer - Researcher Relationship)

The theme, 'dichotomy of interest', highlights conflicting insight onto how neuromarketing is used with traditional qualitative research and how qualitative market researchers feel towards these methods. Despite neuromarketing providing objective data that complements the qualitative findings (Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Belk 2017; Noble 2017; Romano 2017), qualitative market researchers feel frustrated by this research method and consequently avoid using it if they can. This frustration stems from being unable to sufficiently use the technology, depicted by sub-themes 'existing skill-set' and 'distance' (figure 5). To exemplify, Susie (Research Director) notes that

"a barrier is my lack of knowledge, experience and skill with these methods. I lack the confidence to recommend and implement them".

Daughtery and Hoffman (2017) argued that an understanding of neuroscience is essential in order to use neuromarketing effectively, neglecting qualitative market researchers that do not have this knowledge. These findings support this argument: "a barrier is my lack of knowledge" (Susie, Research Director). Also, the literature implies that market researchers advocate the use of neuromarketing (Baron and White 2015), however, this research suggests otherwise. When asked if neuromarketing evoked any particular feelings Penny (Research Director) bemoans:

"to be honest, I probably do grimace. It's not my expertise and I would steer them towards doing it in combination with pure qual".

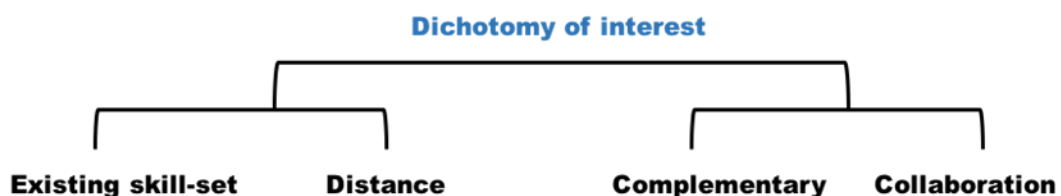
Nonetheless, qualitative market researchers are not fully deterred from using neuromarketing and view it as part of the qualitative methodology, typifying a 'dichotomy of interest'.

Neuromarketing does not rely on participant introspection (Graves 2010; Trettel et al. 2017) and qualitative market researchers recognise this as an opportunity to improve the qualitative methodology. When asked how they would integrate neuromarketing technology into a qualitative study the participants understood that "they both have their benefits and their drawbacks" (Lucy, Associate Director). Furthermore, Gabriella (Senior Executive) explains how neuromarketing "is a cleaner way to understand what someone means without them having to say anything". This shows that qualitative market researchers are aware of the

limitations that exist within traditional qualitative research, such as participant bias (Fisher 1993; Bryman and Bell 2015). The sub-theme (figure 5), ‘complementary’, illustrates how neuromarketing can be used alongside traditional qualitative research methods. Accordingly, qualitative market researchers perceive neuromarketing as a solution to said weakness. These findings support Romano’s (2017) argument, that neuromarketing should be used in triangulation with traditional methods. Also, the literary discourse pits neuromarketing against traditional research methods, promising to elicit greater, objective data (Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Belk 2017; Noble 2017; Romano 2017). This research, however, suggests that the two should be used together in order to gain a truer understanding of the consumer: “I can see how [neuromarketing] can benefit and add another piece to the jigsaw” (Penny, Research Director).

In addition, another sub-theme titled ‘collaboration’ (figure 5) reveals how qualitative market researchers express their responsibilities with neuromarketing methods and provided insight on working with external partners to conduct qualitative market research. Across each interview it was clear that the sample did not have much hands-on experience using neuromarketing techniques. Consequently, when questioned about the skills required to do so a popular response was: “I haven’t used it much personally, but I know companies that provide the whole get-up (Lucy, Associate Director). Additionally, some participants had “only ever had a third-party administer that part of the methodology, the reliance was on them to provide the data” (Iain, Managing Director). So, where Romano (2017) asserts that neuromarketing should be triangulated with traditional qualitative methods, this suggests that qualitative market researchers should also share their skills - to triangulate in a practical context, rather than methodologically. Also, this sub-theme introduces a third-party to the qualitative research process, previously unacknowledged by Bryman and Bell’s (2015) model, and implies that neuromarketing is not the responsibility of the qualitative market researcher at all, but the external partners. So, what are the responsibilities of the qualitative market researchers?

Figure 5: Chart depicting the sub-themes that form the main theme: dichotomy of interest.



Neuromarketing and Qualitative Market Researchers: Obstacle or Opportunity?
 When asked how neuromarketing would affect their ability to conduct qualitative market research two themes emerged, ‘participant protection’ and ‘outside’. ‘Participant protection’ sheds light onto one of the main duties qualitative market researchers feel they have, the participant’s welfare. In the context of neuromarketing they were worried that the equipment would disturb their sample. To exemplify,

“it’s intrusive and I’m yet to see anything subtle. When I was studying, I wore an EEG head piece, it was so uncomfortable and I felt like a lab-rat which is bound to have a big impact on state of mind” (Annie, CEO) and,

“It’d make it so much harder to recruit, some people don’t want to be hooked up to a machine. I reckon you’d get a lot more walk-outs” (Ben, Associate Director)

In contrast to the literature, which argues that neuromarketing can be used in triangulation with traditional qualitative methods, this highlights how neuromarketing can be a barrier to recruitment and disrupt the well-being of participants. The theme ‘outside’, however, refers to the external parties involved in the research process, similar to the previous sub-theme ‘collaboration’. Nevertheless, this theme specifically refers to how qualitative market researchers feel about themselves and their skills, rather than third-parties’ involvement in the market research process. Penny (Research Director), for example, distinguishes herself from the neuromarketing research process:

“for neuromarketing I’d need the whole kit, I’d need more than just me. I would have to bring in that expertise from a third party. I’d need to organise that in addition to what I’m already doing”.

This suggests that qualitative market researchers see themselves, and their abilities, as significantly separate and different to neuromarketing research. So, on one hand, they have less responsibility in the research process as they are unable to conduct the neuromarketing section of the methodology. Yet, on the other hand, they are still responsible for organising and managing the neuromarketing process, despite not conducting it. The previous literature emphasised the need for qualitative researchers to be reflexive and recursive throughout the qualitative research process (Bryman and Bell 2015). Accordingly, this draws attention to the additional organisational and logistical skills required of researchers. With this in mind, neuromarketing decentralises the traditional duties of qualitative market researchers (recruitment) and blurs the line of responsibility, sharing the workload amongst those involved in the process. Nevertheless, although neuromarketing could be perceived as an obstacle to conducting qualitative research, it could also stress and accentuate the need for a qualitative market researcher to be present.

The themes ‘human-to-human’ and ‘tool’ reveal the need for a qualitative market researcher to conduct qualitative market research and conceptualises the role of the qualitative market researcher in a new way. Annie (CEO), for example, believes that the qualitative researcher is essential in order to achieve a deep understanding of the consumer story:

“the benefit of the qual researcher is that they can probe, explore, read emotion and delve a bit deeper and with neuro methods you might see the ‘what’ but you might not know the ‘why’”.

Likewise, Ben (Associate Director) explains:

“if you want to be a builder you need to like working with your hands. As a qualitative researcher, you need to be interested in understanding people”.

This reasserts the importance of being human and engaging with consumers in an inquiring manner (Seidman 1998; Baron and White 2015; Ćoisić 2016). Moreover, there is a need for a qualitative market researcher to explain the neuromarketing data and put it into context. Also, the theme ‘tool’ offers insight into how qualitative

market researchers picture themselves as researchers. To exemplify, Penny (Research Director) declares: "I'm the tool, I'm the person that builds rapport, builds trust and sets the scene". Qualitative market researchers, therefore, depict themselves as the data collection tool, as opposed to a moderator, interviewer or observer. In support of the scholars Seidman (1998), Baron and White (2015) and Čoisić (2016), there is a need for the 'human touch' in order to contextualise data. Also, the self-conceptualisation as the data collection tool implies that the 'human touch' is essential to collect qualitative data too. This positions the qualitative market researcher at the centre of the research process and highlights their duty as a human that can extract, interpret and contextualise the data. As a result, neuromarketing methods within a qualitative study demand a qualitative market researcher in order to recruit, ease and engage with participants, and tell the consumer story in a meaningful way.

CONCLUSION

To surmise, the existing scholarship rivals neuromarketing against traditional qualitative research as an objective and more desirable data collection tool (Sebastian 2014; Stipp 2015; Belk 2017; Noble 2017; Romano 2017). The implication being that the use of these methods would threaten the role, and responsibilities of, the qualitative market researcher. As a result, this research presents a dialogue that embraces neuromarketing and traditional qualitative research methods under the qualitative methodology. By interviewing eight qualitative market researchers the findings revealed that qualitative market researchers have mixed feelings surrounding neuromarketing research. On one hand, they appreciate the objectivity of the data it produces. Yet, on the other hand, they argue that it does not explain human behaviour and only describes it. Additionally, qualitative market researchers felt controlled by their clients to implement this method due its hackneyed desirability in industry. Also, this research shed light on the third-parties that are used to conduct neuromarketing research and offered insight into the other responsibilities of the qualitative market researcher. In conclusion, the use of neuromarketing provides qualitative market researchers with an opportunity. This is because qualitative market researchers conceptualise themselves, as human beings, as an enquiring and contextualising data collection tool. As a result, the responsibilities of qualitative market researchers are shared across the research process with the client, external party and neuromarketing technology.

Currently, the qualitative research process is noted as a recursive and repetitive process (Seidman 1998; Bryman and Bell 2012). However, the extant literature does not acknowledge the external factors, such as third-party researchers and research buyers (the client), that impact the research process. This views qualitative research from an alternative perspective, making qualitative researchers aware of the what they are doing, as well as others, and why they are doing it. Also, this research contributes to the academic conversation that debates neuromarketing's methodological ambiguity. Bercea (2013) maintains that neuromarketing research shares similarities to both methodologies. Building upon this, when discussed being used in a qualitative methodology, neuromarketing is perceived as qualitative research method that sheds light onto a different, yet still important, aspect of consumer behaviour.

This research identified two relationships that impacted the role of the qualitative market researchers: the client-researcher relationship and neuromarketing-researcher relationship. The client-researcher relationship highlighted the power clients have over the research design, and consequently, the research findings. This calls for a more rigorous understanding of traditional qualitative research methods within the market research industry. This is to avoid using research methods, in this case neuromarketing, uncritically.

Future research to be conducted should attempt to resolve the methodological limitations of this study. For example, the research could be repeated but on a larger scale with a bigger sample size. Alternatively, future research could build upon these findings through a quantitative study to test what specific responsibilities of qualitative market researchers are shared.

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