



Five Considerations: When You Need an Integrated Approach to Qualitative and Quantitative Research

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RESEARCH BRIEF

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In our 25+ years as a market research firm, there has never been a time – until today – in which our clients have experienced more disruption in the industries we serve.

Whether they work in insurance, healthcare, financial services, publishing or digital media, researchers are besieged on all sides by upheaval in the marketplace, as well as rapid social and political change. Not only do researchers feel they may not have all of the answers, they aren't sure they know all the questions. And nowhere is this uncertainty more prevalent than the decision to incorporate qual and quant research, and at what levels.

An important research tool to consider applying in this disruptive environment is an integrated (Qual/Quant method) approach for your research project. An integrated approach involves using both qualitative and quantitative research methods to satisfy your needs for information. We're increasingly observing that openness to fluidity between these methods within a research project can move unclear or incomplete discovery forward, yielding rewarding and often unexpected results.



There are clearly circumstances when using both Qual and Quant is vital to the success of your research project plan

- You may not know the full scope of the problem, let alone which approach will provide the solution.
- Or a Quantitative study may yield surprising findings, which you might want to enrich with individual follow-up interviews.
- Or you may want to combine Qual and Quant in a segmentation study: Qual to identify the criteria for a segmentation analysis; then Quant methods to identify the key differences between the emerging segments.

It's important to understand, and accept, that where you start with your research plan is not necessarily where you will finish.



Chicken or Egg...which comes first?

Like the classic riddle, the answer is “it depends.” Either can be used first; the structure of your project and your specific research goals can help define what the order should be, and even determine whether both are needed. Research teams experienced in the use and methods of both Qual and Quant can be most helpful in guiding this process.



When an integrated approach to Qual and Quant can be vital to your research plan.

While integrated Qual and Quant research methods can add critical value to many research initiatives, you may wonder where and when they are best applied. We’ve identified five key circumstances that should guide you to consider an integrated Qual/Quant approach:

1. When you have both a Phase 1 and a Phase 2 planned
2. When you have a research plan but want to remain open to the follow-up Phases based upon the initial findings
3. When you know very little about the topic/issue you are exploring and want to be able to quickly pivot to the right option when it crystalizes
4. When your internal client is asking you to understand the depth and breadth of a particular issue
5. When you have no idea how to tackle a particular issue and want to remain open to all options

The good news is that there are research firms with individual research teams capable of executing both methodologies – and Zeldis is one of them.

[See some examples...](#)



Here are a few examples from our experiences using an integrated Qual and Quant approach:

Young Affluent Professionals

In our study of Young Affluent Professionals and their Attitudes About Life Insurance, we conducted an online survey of 500 young professionals. This formed the basis of a segmentation analysis to better understand how young affluents differ in their attitudes and behaviors. Then, to bring the segments to life, we did individual follow-up video interviews with some survey respondents.

See study excerpts [HERE](#).

Major Educational Publisher

In a study we conducted for a major publisher of higher education materials, we began by conducting online bulletin board focus groups among Instructors to understand the market landscape as well as to identify potential profiling differences for our follow-up segmentation study. After we completed the segmentation, we felt the findings required a bit more probing to enable a distinctive understanding of the segment differences regarding selection behaviors so that marketing could pinpoint their communications. Because we required a deeper understanding of behaviors for this phase, we chose to pivot to in-depth telephone interviews for the final phase rather than the video diaries originally planned.

Digital Consumer Product

We began by conducting bulletin board focus groups among consumers for a new digital recipe tool soon to be released for a major magazine publisher. Timing was of the essence, as always. While the data regarding the wish list features and functions were being collected in the bulletin board, the online survey was being developed and actually launched one week after the close of the board.