

Move Over Quant?

Barbara Gassaway, Master Moderator, The Research Group, Inc.

When we revisit Market Research 101, quantitative research is the predominant academic discipline taught, and among many continues to define our industry. A primary premise of quant market research is: "the 4 P's - Product, Price, Place, and Promotion." Quant provides invaluable statistical guidance that fuels many market research decisions. As we yearn to understand our clients' decision drivers, understanding how qualitative is perceived can guide our own marketing and communication paths.

Over the past year, we participated in multi-disciplinary industry conferences, seminars, roundtable discussions, and forums, as well as online webinars and subscribed to electronic feeds on industry news. Further, our studies have taken us to and from "The Hill" in Washington, urban and suburban healthcare and focus group facilities, consumer homes on the West Coast - New England to Southern Pan Handle, and beyond. Through all of these adventures, we have observed an exciting trend: increased prominence of and client dependence on qualitative research!

Virtually every agenda included presentations using qualitative research. Even among quant presentations, qualitative seems to play a significant role. Qualitative's prominence in social research is evident, and online qualitative hybrid methodologies are more common. Further, with economy-sensitive research budgets, the use of qualitative is gaining ground as a comparatively less expensive tool of discovery. One fact is certain, clients are deepening their appreciation of our science and, importantly, valuing our professional contributions as critical to knowledgeable decisions.

Move over quantitative, not step aside. We highly respect and value the quantitative intelligence fueling our qualitative projects and appreciate our partnerships. I must admit that considerable satisfaction is felt, in my humble opinion, that qualitative is finally gaining traction along side a historic quantitative prominence in the market research landscape!

