

About this Book

The purpose of this volume is to provide a descriptive ‘overture’ to the rest of the series. It forms an introduction to the whole series and provides a contextual description of qualitative market research. Detailed analysis and description of current practice, and of the theory that does or could underpin that practice, is provided in the other volumes of the series.

In the following chapters the reader will find a ‘big picture’ introduction to that which will be found in greater detail in the other books, including:

- Definitions of qualitative market research, indications of its theoretical roots, comparisons with academic qualitative research and exploration of its relationship with other forms of market research.
- A descriptive overview of the qualitative market research business in the UK – how it works, the kinds of business or organisational questions it deals with, how in practice projects are designed and run.

This volume also raises some issues that are not made explicit in any of the other books, specifically discussion of:

- **An organisational perspective on qualitative market research:** Whilst the rest of the series focuses on the activities of commercial qualitative market researchers, this volume includes some contextual detail as to *why* organisations might use qualitative market research and its role within organisational decision-making.
- **Planning and designing projects:** This book looks specifically at the processes whereby client and supplier work together to define the research problem and design a suitable qualitative research project, along with detailed coverage of the factors that have to be considered.
- **‘The life of a project’:** For those who have no first-hand experience of commercial qualitative market research, this volume includes an illustrative description of typical qualitative market research projects – who does what, when and how.
- **Ethics and professionalism:** These are issues that underpin all aspects and all stages of qualitative market research. This volume includes a discussion and description of ethical and professional issues from both a respondent/ social ethical perspective and the different perspectives of commercial ethics and professional standards.

This volume has been written for all readers of the series, to provide a general reference and orientation for qualitative market research. It is perhaps of

particular interest to those without first-hand experience of the practice of commercial qualitative market research – students, those new to the industry and academics. However, some of the issues raised, such as distinctions between commercial qualitative market research and other forms of market research, and between commercial qualitative market research and other forms of qualitative research may well also provide fresh insights for practitioners.

This volume is somewhat different from the other books in the series in both style and approach, having an emphasis on description rather than theorising of practice. Quite complex issues have had to be simplified in order to give this overview; these are explored in depth in the other volumes. The book draws in a general way on the few existing texts about qualitative market research described in the Appendix, but the material in this volume is experience-based and reflects what we believe to be current mainstream practice in the UK. It is informed by the authors' own experience but also by the thinking, skills and knowledge of the many practitioners and clients with whom they have worked.

Finally, we draw your attention to the Appendix to this volume, which sets out additional information sources for those who want to find out more about qualitative market research.