Chapter 10
Qualitative Communication Research Methods and Techniques

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the multi-method research design of qualitative communication research methodology associated with a case study from Greece for the European Youth Card (EYCA) for people under 30 years old. The data gathering technique included group interviews with focus groups and consumers' online communication, namely Facebook, the most important social medium that the EYCA uses. The interpretative phenomenological methodological approach and content analysis for Greek speaking people took place for a well-defined period of 4 years after the initiation of the EYCA in Greece and the creation of its Facebook profile. The research methods and tools were also used for the analysis of the EYCA's official website and its printed promotional material. Triangulation of research results and issues of validity and reliability are discussed. These data may lead to communication that can provide valuable information to the enterprises that will then have an in-depth knowledge of customers for advertising and marketing.

INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND E-CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Customer relationship management which is the core of relationship marketing is a strategy depending on the development of relations with customers. The implementation of new technologies may contribute so that enterprises may gather information on a data basis about consumer behaviour and purchase intentions (Bulut, Tugba, & Kurtulus, 2013). Collecting data about customers' profile, their preferences and their needs may provide insight and valuable information to the company in order to support business applications

such as customer relationship marketing and the implementation of an e-customer relationship management with customers; the aim is the emphasis on the customers and the creation of a long term communication and relationship with them (Tomaras, 2009: 151-152).

The low cost of communication on the internet and the interactivity existing since there is a two-way communication available, allows for data mining of information for customers which can be systematically gathered and collected in a consistent way regarding personal exchange of information, complaints, suggestions leading to homogeneous groups and prediction of consumers' profiles. These may take place with the use of online interviews, emails, the use of internet and social media, regarding current consumer behaviour since communication can be targeted to specific groups (Perner, 2013; Xu & Walton, 2005). Therefore, interactivity exists since the enterprise may gather information from consumers, creating a data base-data warehouse (Buchnowska, 2011: 27; Tomaras, 2009: 164).

Companies' awareness of the need for knowledge and information sharing with their consumers is significant and needs to be in an organisable way (Wilde, 2011: 4). Data mining is related with the knowledge that is channeled to organizations which receive from their customers, their ideas and recommendations concerning the improvement of the products, ideas, and consumers' experience with products and this communication may be channeled back to the enterprises (Buchnowska, 2011: 27; Tomaras, 2009: 167).

Relationship marketing may target loyal customers but also cross selling may be achieved, opening the ground for advertising and marketing a variety of products to the customers (Tomaras, 2009: 153) since their needs and preferences about the price, knowledge about the characteristics of the product, its distribution will be available information and will take into consideration customers' needs. Continues buying or rebuying intentions and their categorization with compu-

tational techniques and tools may contribute in extracting useful information and 'knowledge' as Bulut et al. (2013: 194) refer with the discovery of associations that can help enterprises develop marketing strategies based on customers' purchase behaviour and supporting a variety of business related applications such as customer relationship marketing and management (Bulut et al. 2013).

Thus, businesses and organisations may adopt market research tools that would contribute to the collection of information about the customers, potential and existing, in order to be able to communicate in an effective two-way with them. Gathering of information from different sources using similar coding systems of market research analysis, in regard to the customers' point of view and their consumer behaviour, may strengthen decisions taken for relationship marketing and management in the real and on-line environment. Customers may become the interviewees of such market research since they are the ones who are mostly and directly concerned with the products, services on offer and their insight is of significance.

Interviews and online customers' participation in focus groups provide an in-depth knowledge of customers; at the same time, analysis of the printed and electronic promotional material of an organisation or a company which communicates its messages is a valuable technique to support customer relationship marketing as a two-way communication. The enterprise gets feedback from the frequency of contact with the customers which is associated with communication, marketing and advertising issues about the product or service (Tomaras, 2009: 166) via the use of social media and online networks such as facebook and twitter; replies to comments made by customers is also significant to take place and social media may be used for online provision of valuable information (Alison, 2011).

The employment of qualitative research methodology will be presented in this chapter. According to Rubin, Rubin and Piele (1992: 186) "message -or artifact- oriented research looks at

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