School of Marketing  
Faculty of Commerce and Economics  
University of New South Wales  

Session 2 2006  

MARK7213 and MARK8998  
CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH METHODS IN MARKETING  

Thursdays 10:00 - 12:00, Marketing Seminar Room  

Course Leader: Ian Wilkinson  
Consultation Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00 - 4:00 PM; location: JG 301  
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Objectives:  
The focus of the course is on some of the research methods and issues that are not covered in other courses for research students in marketing and which are reflected in contemporary research in marketing. The aim is to critically examine the nature and limits of these methods in terms of the kind of knowledge they can provide and how this relates to general issues underlying the scientific process. More specifically, the aim is to increase students' knowledge, skills, and insights in scientific research methods in marketing with an emphasis on qualitative/interpretive methodologies, sequence methods, social network analysis and complexity. The aim of the course is not to train you to carry out research using such methods, although references to texts and other readings that provide more detail about the methods involved are provided. The aim is to develop a critical appreciation of their nature and potential role in research in marketing.

Overview  
To begin with we examine my perspective on the subject matter of marketing and compare this to other perspectives. We then turn to the nature of the scientific research process and the kinds of understanding we seek. Science is a social process and we look at some of the issues that arise because of the nature of this process in terms of what we choose to study, how we study it. From there we move on to examine examples of various kinds of what may be loosely categorised as qualitative and interpretive research methods that have been used to study marketing phenomena. Here we seek to understand not only the methods themselves but the kinds of phenomena they seek to understand and the kinds of explanations or knowledge they seek. You should be able to relate the discussion back to a process model of scientific method introduced at the beginning. We should at all times ask whether the methods we are considering are attempting to get at different types of explanatory phenomena or the same types in different ways, compared to say more traditional quantitative methods. There are various methods covered here which go by the names of case studies, ethnography, hermeneutics, narrative methods, postmodernism, grounded theory etc. These tend to shade into one another so we need to try to find some way of thinking about them in a meaningful way – are they simply different names for the same or similar approaches?

The final weeks of the course look at issues and approaches that are less appreciated in marketing but that will play, I believe, an important role in the future. We examine a different view of the nature of causation in terms of a process taking place over time that involves sequences of events.
rather than casual relations among variables, as is typified in the general linear model underlying much of quantitative research. We look at social network analysis, which focuses on the direct and indirect connections between an actor’s behaviour or indeed any phenomena and other actors or phenomena. It introduces new kinds of explanatory possibilities that go beyond the individual actor or general environment and adds additional meaning to the nature of the situation or context in which action takes place.

Finally, we look at the area of complexity and agent based models, which focus attention on the process, dynamics and evolution of behaviour and organisation. The computer is a new kind of microscope that allows us to “see” and conduct experiments regarding process, dynamics and evolution through modelling it. All we see around us are the bits and pieces nature happens to have left for us to study. If we could start again, run the tape of life or whatever again, would things turn out differently? Are there just a limited number of possible outcomes? Now, with modern programming and computer technology we are able to create would-be worlds, including artificial social and economic worlds, that allow us to study the processes of change and evolution in ways that were impossible before. Modelling and simulations are tools we have used in the past but the modern rendition is different. It focuses on the way large scale or macro order emerges from ongoing micro processes of action and interaction in local environments. This includes the way firms and business networks are continually reproduced over time or the way past patterns are eroded and new forms emerge. Software modelling tools, particularly agent based models, are becoming available that make it possible to do this kind of research without being a trained programmer – much like SPSS, AMOS and PLS and other statistical packages made complex statistical analysis more generally possible. The names of these programs include SWARM, STELLA, MATHMATICA, MASON, NETLOGO and REPAST. Stephen Wolfram in his recent book *A New Kind of Science* argues that these new approaches to science replace prior methods based on traditional mathematics. We are beginning to see the emergence of research incorporating these kinds of methodologies in marketing but they are considerably more advanced in other disciplines such as economics and the physical and biological sciences. We will finish the course by taking a look at some of the ways this kind of research is finding its way into marketing and contemplate its future.

**Learning Method:**
Weekly assignments include reading by all students of three to four articles from the scientific literature. One or two students will be assigned to be the discussion leader for each reading. Discussion leaders need to prepare a 2-3 page summary/critique of the main points of the reading. The paper included in the readings "Reading Academic Papers Critically" may be used as a guide here. Please distribute a copy of your summary/critique to each member of the class at the start of the discussion of the reading. Our weekly meetings follow a workshop format: all students are expected to have completed the assigned weekly readings before the scheduled class meeting and participate during the discussions with questions, criticisms, and constructive insights.

**Semester Essay Assignment**

Your semester essay assignment is designed to make you reflect upon and organise your understanding of the course material and to use it to consider the nature of research related to whatever you happen to be examining for your own research.

**Question:** “Interpretation is everything.” Consider the role and importance interpretation in all types of research methods especially in regard to qualitative versus quantitative research. Use material from the course readings to illustrate and support your arguments as well as additional material and as far as possible relate the arguments to your own research area.
Length: approx 3000 words

Assessment:
Best 3 of 5 written summary/critiques and presentations: 12% each = 36%
Class participation: = 12%
Semester Assignment = 50%

Course Outline

Week, Topic and Readings

Ray Hyman “How to Critique a published article” Psychological Bulletin 118:2 1995, 178-182

1) Introduction: The nature of marketing according to me.


Additional Reading


2) Nature of Scientific Method and Marketing 1


Ian Wilkinson “On Generalising: seeing the general in the particular and the particular in the general” ANZMAC Conference, University of South Australia, December 2004


H. Mintzberg “Developing a theory about the Development of Theory” in Great Minds of Management


**Additional Reading:**

A. Chalmers *What is this Thing Called Science?* University of Sydney Press 1999 (3rd Edition)

3) **Issues in Scientific Method and Marketing 1**

William D. Wells “The Perils of N=1” *Journal of Consumer Research* December 2001 494-499


Murray S. Davis “That’s Interesting” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* I 1971 309-344 (b)

4) **Issues in Scientific Method and Marketing 2**


John Hunter “The Desperate Need for Replication” JCR June 2001 149-158


M. Bazeman “Consumer Research for Consumers” JCR March 2001

5) **Measurement Issues**


Ian F. Wilkinson “When do Managers think their firm is Market Oriented?” Paper for ANZMAC Perth December 2005

**Additional Reading**

6) Nature and Role of Case Studies


Lars-Erik Gadde and Anna Dubois “Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research” Journal of Business Research 55, 2002 553-560

G. Easton “One case study is enough” Working Paper University of Lancaster 2003

Additional References:

Arch G Woodside; Elizabeth J Wilson “Case study research methods for theory building” The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing Volume 18, Number 6/7

A. L. George and A. Bennett Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, MIT Press 2005


7) Case Studies: Applications


8). Nature and Role of Interpretive Research


N. Denzin “The Seventh Moment: Qualitative Enquiry” JCR Sept 2001

Evert Gummesson “All research is interpretive!” The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing Volume 18, Number 6/7

Merlin Donald “Cognitive Evolution and the Definition of Human Nature”. Philosophy of Science Monographs, Morris Foundation, Little Rock, Arkansas, 2000,

Additional References
Denzin, N. and Y. Lincoln “Entering the Field of Qualitative Research” *Handbook of Qualitative Research* 1-17 (see also introduction to second edition of the Handbook)


Norbert Schwarz “Self Reports: How the Questions Shape the Answers” *American Psychologist*, Feb 1999 93-105


Patton, M. Q. “Qualitative Interviewing” ch 7 in *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*

Wengraf, Tom *Qualitative Research Interviewing* Sage 2001

Wilkinson Ian F. and Young Louise “Conducting interviews in foreign markets as part of international business research” in *C. Welch Teaching and Learning Qualitative Interviewing Techniques* Edward Elgar, chapter 4 (2004)

9) Issues in Interpretive Approaches

Thomas Schwandt “Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Enquiry” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* 2nd Edition 189-213


Richard Wilk “The impossibility and necessity of re-inquiry: Finding Middle Ground in Social Science” JCR Sept 2001 308-312

Craig Thomson “A reinquiry of reinquiries – postmodern proposal for critical reflective research” JCR June 2002, 142-146

Additional References


10) Applications of Interpretive Approaches 1

Gillian Hopkinson “Stories from the front-line: how they construct the organisation” *Journal of Management Studies* (Forthcoming)


Swan John E and Bowers Michael R. “Services Quality and Satisfaction: The process of people doing things together” *J of services marketing* 12, 1 1998, 59-72

**Additional References**

A Muniz and T. O’Guin “Brand Community” JCR March 2001

Torsten Ringberg; Susan Forquer Gupta “The importance of understanding the symbolic world of customers in asymmetric business-to-business relationships” *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 18, 6/7

S. Fournier and J. L. Yao, "Reviving Brand Loyalty...,” *IJRM* 1997


11) Process and Sequence Methods

*Key Questions:* (a) Can and Should Variance based and Event Based Models be reconcilable? (b) How are events indentified? Can events be identified in isolation from other events?

Andrew Abbott “From Causes to Events” *Sociological Methods Research* 20 1992 428-55


Gary Buttriss and Ian F. Wilkinson “From Variables to Event Based Models of Business” *Journal of International Entrepreneurship,* forthcoming

12) Network Analysis


**Additional Reading**

Deirdre M. Kirke “Chain reactions in adolescents’ cigarette, alcohol and drug use: similarity through peer influence or the patterning of ties in peer networks?” Social Networks 26 (2004) 3–28

B. Wellman “Network Analysis: Some Basic Principles” in PV Marsden and N. Lin eds *Social Structure and Network Analysis* Sage 198?

13) **Agent Based Models and Complexity Theory 1**


**Additional References**


Mitchell Waldrop *Complexity* (a delightful and readable account of the development of the are and the people involved)

14 **Agent Based Models and Complexity Theory 2**


Ian F. Wilkinson, James B. Wiley and Aizhong Lin ”Modelling the Structural Dynamics of Industrial Networks” *Interjournal of Complex Systems*, Article #409 2001

www.interjournal.org