

The Critical Evaluation of Research Methodology based on the Starbucks Case Study

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Abstract

This study critically evaluates qualitative research methodologies through a Starbucks case study on the adoption of reusable containers. It analyzes methods of data collection and analysis, identifying five key variables influencing consumer behavior: attitudes, intentions, behavioral patterns, contextual factors and cultural influences. Questionnaires are highlighted as an effective tool for gathering scalable and quantifiable data, despite limitations in development time and potential respondent bias. The research provides practical insights for promoting sustainable consumption and enhancing brand loyalty, contributing to both academic and organizational practices in environmental sustainability.

Keywords

Research Methodology; Qualitative Research; Starbucks.

1. Introduction

This essay strives to elaborate a process of conducting a business research focused on Starbucks case study.

Business research [2] examines management-related topics through academic inquiry. It encompasses diverse areas including strategy, HRM, marketing, and organizational behavior. The aim of business research is to identify unresolved problems by reviewing existing literature on a topic or examining organizational issues. Such research serves as a foundation for both researchers and organizations to address these challenges. Business research is inherently connected to organizations, as it typically treats them as subjects of study. Through critical analysis of organizational case studies, this type of research facilitates the development of theoretical frameworks.

Starbucks' widespread use of disposable cups in-store has raised environmental concerns, including resource waste, deforestation, and pollution from disposal. Responding to consumer demand for sustainable practices, the company has implemented operational changes to reduce waste and promote eco-friendly consumption. Starbucks promotes reusable porcelain cups in-store by offering a "one-yuan discount" to customers who forego disposable cups. This incentive not only encourages eco-friendly behavior but has also influenced other businesses' sustainability practices. The company's commitment to green consumption has strengthened customer loyalty while advancing environmental goals.

The following analysis evaluates a research methodology focused on Starbucks, exploring consumer behavior and incentive-based approaches to increase reusable container adoption. The central research questions investigate effective strategies for encouraging reusable container usage and enhancing customer loyalty to the brand.

2. Methodology

Research design encompasses three methodological approaches, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.

Quantitative research designs [6] are typically conducted to generate statistical findings about a specific research subject. In quantitative studies, data are represented numerically. During the processing and analysis of these numerical values, it is essential to identify the type of scale on which the information is measured. Scales can be categorized into four types: nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio.

Qualitative research designs [7] are grounded in universal concepts, inferential logic and substantial historical evidence; they elaborate and explain the research object by examining points of contradiction. Conducting qualitative research relies on theoretical frameworks and experiential insight to identify the fundamental features of phenomena. It does not aim for precise numerical outcomes but seeks to understand issues and gain insightful knowledge, thus exhibiting exploratory, diagnostic, and predictive characteristics. Mixed methods integrate quantitative and qualitative approaches.

There are clear distinctions between quantitative and qualitative methods in practical application. The article will introduce the following aspects.

1) Role of the researcher

Quantitative researchers can perform objective analysis without direct data involvement. Qualitative researchers must integrate data for interpretation and become part of the research data themselves. For qualitative research, data cannot exist without the researchers' active engagement.

2) Research design

The research design in quantitative study is fixed prior to the study. In contrast, qualitative research planning evolves continuously and can be adjusted as the study progresses.

3) Research setting

Quantitative research employs empirical methods to control variables and emphasizes prediction and experimental verification. Qualitative research is conducted in natural settings and seeks to understand changes rather than control external variables.

4) Measurement

Quantitative research measurement [4] is independent of the researcher. In practice, researchers may not be directly involved in data collection. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the measurement instrument and cannot be replaced.

5) Theory building

The aim of quantitative research is to test theory validity, and results are used to verify hypotheses. Qualitative research theory develops throughout the research process, and data analysis generates this theory.

The research strategy [8], embedded within the research design, connects the philosophical stance with the research methodology. Quantitative approaches typically involve experiments and surveys. Qualitative strategies are often tied to action research, ethnography, grounded theory and narrative inquiry. Mixed methods incorporate techniques such as surveys, case studies and documentary analysis.

This essay adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the research questions using the Starbucks case study. The qualitative method is employed to explore how to encourage consumers to use reusable containers and to assess how to foster brand customer loyalty.

3. Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The essay will introduce five key data collection approaches, namely questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation and document analysis.

Questionnaires [9] collect qualitative data through a mix of open-ended and closed questions. Properly balanced question types, along with clear instructions and explanations, enhance response quality. Open-ended questions should be specific yet broad enough to elicit detailed, coherent answers. Questionnaire development involves defining scope, outlining content, crafting questions and drafting the instrument. Following pilot testing and revisions, the finalized questionnaire is distributed and collected for analysis. This method effectively captures opinions, attitudes, and beliefs within targeted populations.

Interviews [1] are a qualitative research method for gathering one-on-one data on predefined topics. They can be structured (following a strict script) or unstructured (guided by open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses). Typically recorded, interviews require active questioning and listening to obtain rich insights into participants' attitudes and reactions. Focus groups [5] employ structured group discussions to collect diverse perspectives, generating more reliable data than individual responses. Researchers analyze participant interactions and shared opinions, with group numbers varying by research scope. This exploratory method effectively evaluates user habits, attitudes, and patterns to guide product development decisions.

Observation involves gathering information through sight, hearing, smell, and touch. This multidimensional approach enables the recording of people's behavior and helps explore why they act in certain ways, going beyond mere recollection or assumption. The extent of observation depends on the research question and the overall methodology. This method is well-suited for documenting and comprehending activities and modes of action.

Document analysis [3] is a qualitative research method focused on specific themes or domains. It is employed to examine the experiences and viewpoints of a group through their written reflections. The choice and quantity of documents must align closely with the research question. These documents may include newspapers, research articles, government reports, organizational policies, letters, meeting minutes, lists, among others.

Regarding Starbucks' strategies to promote reusable container usage, five key variables influence consumer adoption, namely attitudes, intentions, behavioral patterns, contextual factors and cultural influences. Therefore, the qualitative method of data collection is suitable for this research topic. This study employs questionnaires as the primary data collection method, which offers three main advantages. Firstly, the approach demonstrates notable efficiency in terms of time, financial resources, and personnel requirements. Secondly, the survey effectively identifies five distinct variables influencing customers' reusable container usage while enabling broad geographical coverage. The quantifiable nature of responses facilitates efficient statistical analysis, making this method particularly suitable for collecting consumer opinions. Thirdly, the methodology's scalability accommodates large-scale investigations in expansive consumer markets. However, this approach has two key limitations. Initially, significant time and personnel are required for proper development. Additionally, respondent dishonesty may occur, resulting in data reliability issues due to information disparity.

4. Conclusion

This essay examines research methodology using the Starbucks case study and explores the adoption of reusable containers. The paper outlines the research purpose and its origins, followed by the relevance to the organization. Three methodological types are introduced.

Differences between quantitative and qualitative research designs are highlighted across five aspects: researcher role, research design, setting, measurement, and theory building. This study is suited to a qualitative approach.

Data collection and analysis methods include five categories: questionnaire, interview, focus group, observation, and document analysis. Various application contexts and operational methods are discussed, with the Starbucks case being appropriate for questionnaire-based data collection. Advantages and limitations are presented in the evaluation of data gathering methods.

This research employs a qualitative approach and questionnaires-a feasible method for studying consumer markets to gather feedback and opinions.

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