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DATA COMPLETION AND VERIFICATION IN SOCIAL RESEARCH PROJECTS BASED ON THE THIRD METHODOLOGICAL PATH

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Purpose: The main goal of the paper is to provide an overview of possible applications of the integration of methodological approaches in research projects that aim to complete and verify data.
Design/methodology/approach: The paper is methodological. Critical literature analysis was used. The range of possibilities of methodological integration was based on the achievements of Creswell & Plano Clark and Harrison & Reilly. The authors' own research experience allowed outlining the ways of data integration, both in parallel procedures of data collection, where quantitative research in the positivist trend and qualitative research in the interpretative trend were conducted separately and in sequential research, where quantitative research was first carried out, then the results were interpreted and designed, and qualitative research was carried out. The embedded approach was also illustrated, where quantitative data constituted a valuable extension and confirmation of conclusions obtained in qualitative research.
Findings: Methodological analysis shows that the third path allows the accumulation of broader and deeper knowledge in research projects than using a single methodological approach. Considering various ways of integrating research approaches, the authors show that the best results in completing and verifying data are achieved using a sequential approach.
Practical implications: The article is a methodological guide to the application of an integrated approach in research practice in social sciences, particularly in consumer behavior.
Originality/value: The third methodological path is beyond the dominant research trend in social sciences, and in the field of consumer behavior, it is a niche approach. The possible use of this approach is the original contribution of the authors.

Keywords: data completion; data verification; third methodological path; mixed methods.

Category of the paper: General review.

1. Introduction

The core aim of this paper is to draw up the possibilities of the usage of integrated methodology in conducting a research project in social sciences. The referenced idea of integration methodologies is presented in literature on social research studies and is called the third research paradigm (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie 2004), the third methodological movement research paradigm (Teddlie, Tashakkori 2009), the third path (Gorard, Taylor 2004) and most commonly mixed methods research (Creswell, Plano Clark, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Leech, Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Tashakkori, Teddlie, 2010; Plow-Right, 2011).

The paper uses the phrase the third methodological path, because, according to the authors, the name mixed methods does not reflect the broad spectrum of integration possibilities. However, due to the substantive content presented in the literature, all these terms should be treated as synonyms. Regardless of the terminology used, the idea of methodological integration covers combining approaches, concepts, methods, techniques, or language into a single study (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The issues of integration of research methodologies for data verification, which are important from the point of view of the topic of this paper, are also taken up within the scope of mixed methods (De Leeuw 2005; De Leeuw, Hox, 2008).

Joining methodological approaches is a way to complete and verify data. The mixed data collected in the integrated methodological research process helps to gain deeper and wider knowledge compared to a single methodological attitude, so it enriches the cognition perspective. Integration of methodological approaches enables the development of data obtained in the research project. Using different methodologies in one project is a way of improving research efficiency. This is particularly important in the social sciences, based on inductive, empirical cognition. Social science has a different character from that of natural science, which is based on experimentation and observation to provide some hard evidence. The specificity of social sciences is such that a much wider range of re-search methods is used, and the task of many of them is to provide data for interpretation, sometimes even only to describe the reality under study. The nature of the evidence and theorems in sociology, economics, management and marketing sciences can never be as precise and formalized as in the natural sciences. However, the rich methodological range allows for choices in terms of methodological approaches and their integration (Burrell, Morgan, 2005; Martens, 2007).

Integration of methodologies is a proposal aimed at improving the efficiency of re-search processes. The concept of integrated research methodologies in social sciences de-rives from the limitations of each separate methodology of data gathering. There are no perfect methods of cognition, therefore one methodological approach should use the possibilities of different approaches. Integrating methodological approaches has many limitations discussed in the next

part, but this option is worth considering as the quality of data in social research is crucial for creating constructs and building theories.

In the first part, the paper focuses on the methodological issue. It presents assumptions underlying of data integration according to the third methodological path. In the second part, empirical examples of data completion and verification are provided. The authors illustrate this issue based on their research projects on the integrated methodology. This way, the scope and methods of completion and verifying data are shown. Own experiences are the basis for formulating conclusions in the field of data integration in social research. In the discussion, the advantages and limitations of data completion and verification in the third methodological path were compared.

2. Data completion and verification - methodological insight

The use of the third methodological path as a way to verify and complete data is an important and current issue. The idea of combining methodological approaches has been presented in literature over the past three decades (Bazeley, 2017; Bergman, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Creswell, Plano Clark, 2007; Gorard, Taylor, 2004; Plano Clark, Creswell, 2008; Teddlie, Tashakkori, 2009; Tashakkori, Teddlie, 2010).

Despite significant theoretical and methodological achievements, the third methodological path is treated as a new methodological paradigm. As shown by the analyses of research carried out in the field of social sciences, the practice of integrated research is much less frequently used than research using a single methodological path. The positivist approach remains a meaningful approach to learning about reality, and it is often the dominant orientation when the integrated methodology is used. (Grimmer and Hannson 2009; Hanson and Grimmer 2007; Harrison and Reilly 2011; Snelson, 2016).

In the analysis and evaluation of the application of the integrated research procedure in research projects in social sciences, the main methodological assumptions and an overview of the scope and level of data integration were presented.

2.1. Concept of integrated methodological approaches in social research

The main assumption of the third methodological path is that each methodology of cognition is limited. The social researcher can use different methodological approaches, so the disadvantages of one methodology could be reduced by another. One of the manifestations of combining methodology in social research is triangulation. This concept was taken from navigation and military strategy, where it was applied to using many points to accurately determine the position of an object (Jick, 1979). Triangulation assumes the combination of approaches, orientation, or research methods and techniques in different stages of

research. The essence of triangulation is to look at issues from different, at least two points of view (Flick, 2011). The term triangulation used in social studies differs from that used in navigation. The meaning of this concept is not fully identical to its origin (Blaikie, 2008; Hammersley, 2008).

Triangulation is a broad concept, related to the research's general concepts, paradigms, and approaches strategy, but also research procedures, methods, and techniques of studies, sources of information (Perlesz, Lindsay 2003). Each type of triangulation that goes beyond one methodological orientation in the research project can be thought of as an illustration of the methodological integration in research. Triangulation aims to expand and supplement knowledge by transcending the epistemological limitations of each method of research.

Combining methodologies can involve different approaches from a wide variety of cognitive possibilities in social research (Burrell, Morgan, 2005). However, in the literature on mixed methods, the issues of methodological integration are most often reduced to combining quantitative and qualitative research and two cognitive paradigms in one research project: positivist or post-positivist and constructivist or interpretivist (Newman et al., 2003; Mertens, 2007; Teddlie, Tashakkori, 2009).

Combining different methodologies in one research project may give valuable effects in the form of reducing the limitations of individual methodologies, however, research integration is associated with significant restrictions. In the third methodological path, no new cognition methods were developed, but an attempt was made to combine opposing views on the creation of a research project, information gathering, analysis, interpretation, and presentation. It is an attempt to base the research on completely different methodological trends with different axiological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. The advantage of mixed methods is the ability to create knowledge of a diverse nature, broad and deep, although it should be remembered that not every type of integration of approaches and data broadens the research perspective and knowledge. Methodological integration is a valid assumption at the level of the general concept but raises practical difficulties in its implementation (Hammersley, 2008). Choosing a methodology based on the third methodological path in a research project creates many difficulties for the re-searcher because the issues of research integration at the operational level are not de-scribed in detail or are ignored. This is the case, for example, in the field of surveys. Methodological publications on how to secure methodological quality in mixed-mode surveys are scarce, and most handbooks do not even discuss mixed-mode designs (de Leeuw, 2005). The problem with choosing an integrated methodology is that there are significant antagonisms between quantitative and qualitative researchers (Silverman, 2001). Many quantitative researchers do not consider qualitative information gathering as equivalent, and vice versa. Decisions regarding the choice of research methodology are not limited to the forms of integrating the methodology, but also, in many cases, to opting for research in one methodological path: quantitative or qualitative (Flick, 2011).

The use of an integrated methodology requires an approach based on pluralism, syncretism, i.e. a constant compromise and balancing between facts and values, knowledge and wisdom, rationality and emotional approach, idealism and materialism, etc. (Johnson, Gray, 2010). There are no clear guidelines and procedures for the application of fully integrated social research, which is why the broad horizons of the researcher, both in theoretical, methodological, and practical aspects, are so important.

2.2. Essence, levels, and scope of data integration in the third methodological path

The essence of the integration of methodological approaches in a research project is the acquisition of more comprehensive and reliable knowledge than in a single methodological path. This assumption, while correct, cannot be treated completely indiscriminately. The issues of assessing the precision of research methods and sources of information obtained in various methodological paths raise difficulties. The accuracy of the sources varies, and the method validation process is uncertain and speculative. It is im-possible to assume that one data source is completely independent of another, and the problem of conflicting data arises. It is practically impossible to answer the question of which data are reliable and which are not (Hammersley, 2008). In this sense, repeatedly collating data with information from other sources is a never-ending procedure.

In terms of the problems of triangulation and research accuracy, it is pointed out that it is not easy, and sometimes impossible, to achieve a broader perspective than in the case of using one research method. The collection of data from various sources does not yet mean that a more comprehensive picture of reality will be obtained (Hammersley, Atkinson, 1995). Even in the case of data consistency from different methods, it cannot be definitively certain that all datasets of data are not erroneous. Triangulation is not about verifying the quality of the empirical material from various sources, but about determining which conclusions drawn from these data are accurate. As a result, the desire to create general universal truths should be limited, adopting different perspectives and points of reference for the created knowledge (Silverman, 2009). Triangulation is also not favoured by the fact that when using different methods embedded in different epistemological approaches, researchers use different systems of concepts and categories that are difficult to reduce to a common denominator (Hammersley, 2008).

Due to the use of various methodological approaches in the project, two basic functions can be fulfilled, which can be described as controlling and synergistic. The control function allows verifying the knowledge gathered in one research procedure with data collected in a separate research procedure. Regarding the critique of the possibility of verifying the accuracy and reliability of data presented above, it should be stated that this verification may partially take place and that it is not the main task of social research. Certainly, there are examples of situations in which a control function can be successfully implemented:

- Finding discrepancies between the results collected in the positivist and interpretative research (e.g., the results of observations are inconsistent with the declarations of the survey respondents) does not have to mean the elimination of data – the statement which data is incorrect is risky and may be biased; it may, however, lead to decisions on further research to identify sources of data discrepancies and make the correct interpretation.
- Each dichotomy of data from different research methods prompts the researcher to ask additional questions, verify the process of obtaining data, and seek explanations as to how the respondents answered.
- Confronting the research results of various research methods may favour the assessment of the possibilities and limitations of these methods. However, conclusions should be drawn in the long term, based on the analysis of many completed research projects, as the conclusions of single studies may be misleading.

In the third methodological path, apart from the control function, the synergistic function is important. It consists of broadening the research horizon and enriching knowledge. Knowledge built based on the integration of methodological approaches goes beyond the knowledge acquired in only one research procedure. Knowledge integration skills are important to build a coherent and extended picture of reality.

There are different levels and scopes of data integration in the third methodological path. The mixed methodology most often involves combining procedures at the design stage and during the processing of results. The research subjects (researchers) and objects could be integrated. Despite the diverse nomenclature, the presented approach means joining the methodology of qualitative research with quantitative research at different levels. Understood in this way, the methodology is an alternative for research conducted according to the assumptions of one methodological approach: positivism or interpretation-ism. However, when considering the problem of data integration, one should look through the prism of integration in research of various philosophies, orientations, and values.

Data integration under the third methodological path is based on The Transformative Paradigm of Research, covering ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological assumptions (Mertens, 2007). The levels of integration include various philosophical and methodological orientations and methods, which has been called mixed method research integration trilogy (Greene, 2015; Fetters, Molina-Azorin, 2017). Within the triad, there is an integration of philosophy, theory, and various aspects related to the re-search procedure, including sample selection, and the integration of researchers. Considering the subject of this paper, it is worth focusing on two dimensions of integration, which are data collection and data analysis. Data from different research procedures are integrated using different integration strategies of data collection, e.g., comparing, matching, diffracting, expanding, constructing a case, connecting, building, generating, and validating a model, or embedding, and data analysis, e.g. qualitative to quantitative data transformation, quantitative to qualitative data transformation, creating joint displays, social network analysis, qualitative comparative

analysis, repertory grid/other scale development techniques, geographic information systems mapping techniques, and iterative and longitudinal queries of the data (Fetters, Molina-Azorin, 2017).

According to Molina-Azorin (2016), two key factors facilitate the determination of the type of mixed methods design that is best suited to their study: priority and implementation of data collection. As far as priority is concerned, the mixed methods researcher can give equal priority to both quantitative and qualitative parts, emphasize qualitative more, or emphasize quantitative more. The options consist of gathering the information at the same time (concurrent design) or introducing the information in phases (sequential de-sign). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) have presented the Qualitative – Mixed Method – Quantitative Continuum depicting priority of data collection. They distinguished two separate, independent poles corresponding to qualitative or quantitative research. They also presented the sphere of integration of approaches on the continuum. It comes in three versions:

- primarily qualitative research with some quantitative components,
- fully integrated mixed method research,
- primarily quantitative research with some qualitative components.

Creswell (2003) has distinguished three forms of mixed method design implementation referring to data collection:

- phase designs in which qualitative and quantitative methods are applied separately, one after the other. Order is not important in this kind of integration. Such designs can include two or more phases;
- dominant/less-dominant design, which is mainly committed to one of the approaches and uses the other only marginally;
- mixed methodology designs, which link the two approaches in all phases of the research process.

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) have distinguished three dimensions of mixed methods research designs:

- mixing dimension, which explains the degree of integration (partially mixed methods or fully mixed methods),
- time dimension (concurrent or sequential),
- emphasis dimension (equal status or dominant status).

Combining these variables gives eight integration solutions, from partially mixed concurrent equal status designs up to fully mixed sequential dominant status designs.

Regardless of the terminology used by the above-mentioned authors, combining methodological approaches consists of planning to spread integrated research over time, which gives the possibility of simultaneous or sequential research and the degree of linking the methodological paths, from small to full integration. The time and scope of integration depend on research funding and research issues, but also on the researchers' approach to integration.

The dominance of approaches is very often a derivative of the re-searcher's experiences and preferences. Table 1 presents the main types of integration strategies, which summarizes the considerations.

Table 1.
Major mixed methods design types

Design type	Variants	Timing	Weighting	Mixing	Notation[1]
Concurrent	Convergence	Concurrent: quantitative and qualitative at the same time	Usually equal	Merging of data during interpretation and analysis	QUAN + QUAL
Embedded	Embedded experimental Embedded correlation	Concurrent or sequential	Unequal	Embedded one type of data within the larger design using the other type of data	QUAN (qual) or QUAL (quan)
Explanatory	Follow-up explanations	Sequential: quantitative followed by qualitative	Usually quantitative	Connect the data between the two phases	QUAN → qual
Exploratory	Instrument development Taxonomy	Sequential: qualitative followed by quantitative	Usually qualitative	Connect the data between the two phases	QUAL → quan

1 Legend:
QUAL - qualitative research
QUAN - quantitative research
→ sequential test procedure
+ parallel research procedure
QUAL / qual - the importance of research: uppercase letters indicate dominant approach, lowercase letters - complementary approach

Source: based on (Creswell, Plano Clark, 2007; Harrison, Reilly, 2011).

When considering the time and depth of integration, most integration models use sequential procedures as well as limited scope of integration. Typically, there is one dominant approach, the other being complementary. This applies to all situations in Table 1, except for the named converged integration. Convergent integration distinguishes between the unification type, which aims to reduce the quantitative and qualitative data to a "common denominator" to enable their interpretation, and the transformative type, in which the qualitative data are transformed into quantitative data to allow the application of statistical analysis.

The embedded research design has two types of integration: experimental and correlation. The experimental type concerns research using the experimental or quasi-experimental methods belonging to the quantitative methodological attitude. These studies are supplemented with qualitative studies at various stages of the process: at the time of designing the first measurement (pre-test), after the second measurement (post-test), or during the experiment. The goals of supporting experimental research by qualitative research can be different: helping in the construction of a measurement questionnaire, explaining the answers, or explaining the behavior of the respondents during the operation of the experimental stimulus. Embedded correlation is the use of qualitative data in the process of explaining explanatory variables in quantitative research or interpreting the results. In exploratory model, quantitative research is carried out first, scientists first collect and analyze quantitative data, and then, based on research

result, qualitative research is conducted to provide a better understanding of the quantitative results. Building can involve using quantitative data to select cases or identifying questions that require further research in the qualitative phase. In the exploratory model, the instrument development variant has the following sequence of activities: qualitative research is conducted to create research categories and to create research tools for quantitative research. The taxonomic type is that conducting qualitative research based on quantitative research aimed at verifying the theoretical model, searching for variables that classify specific categories.

3. Data completion and verification – empirical insight

The empirical exemplification of data completion and verification issues has been presented in two parts. The first one presents selected research projects showing major mixed methods design types, described in Table 1. The projects were selected from those that were used in methodological integration analyses by Harrison and Reilly (2011) and Chlipała (2018). The selected projects illustrate well the different ways of combining methodological approaches. The second part presents original research projects that illustrate the completion and verification of the data. Research experience in the field of methodological integration allows us to formulate conclusions about the possibilities and limitations of integrating methodological approaches in social research and indicate future areas of research.

3.1. Essence, levels, and scope of data integration in the third methodological path

Figures 1 and 2 present models of convergent integration of market research methods. Both examples illustrate the relationship between quantitative and qualitative research. Due to the separateness of both types of tests, both test procedures were performed separately. Integration took place at the stage of compiling the knowledge obtained from both methodological approaches. There is an apparent contradiction in the nomenclature of the model of both research projects, which requires explanation. Both research projects were classified as convergent. In such a model of integration, it is assumed that the research approaches used have an equivalent status. The description shows that in the first example of convergent integration, the qualitative approach was dominant, and in the second - the quantitative one. Indeed, in each of these projects it is possible to indicate the dominant research orientation, but the structure of the research and the way of combining data correspond best with the convergent model. Based on the descriptions of the research methodology, it can also be concluded that both research procedures (positivistic and interpretative) were carried out in accordance with the assumptions of a given methodology. In terms of research assumptions and the manner of conducting research, both paths were treated equal.

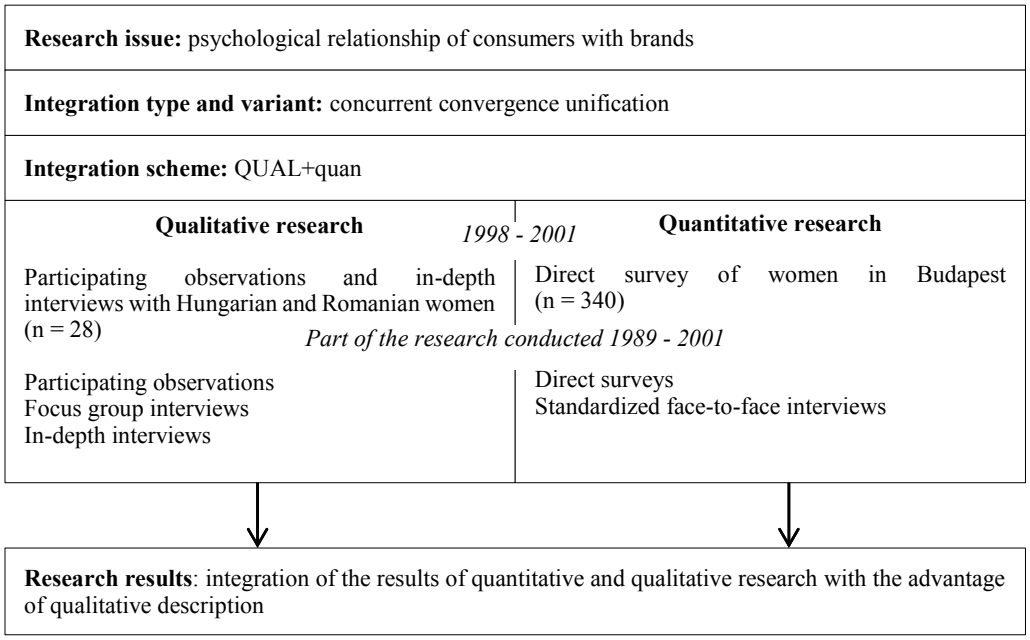

Figure 1. Methodological integration – an example of convergence unification model.
Source: based on (Coulter et al., 2003).

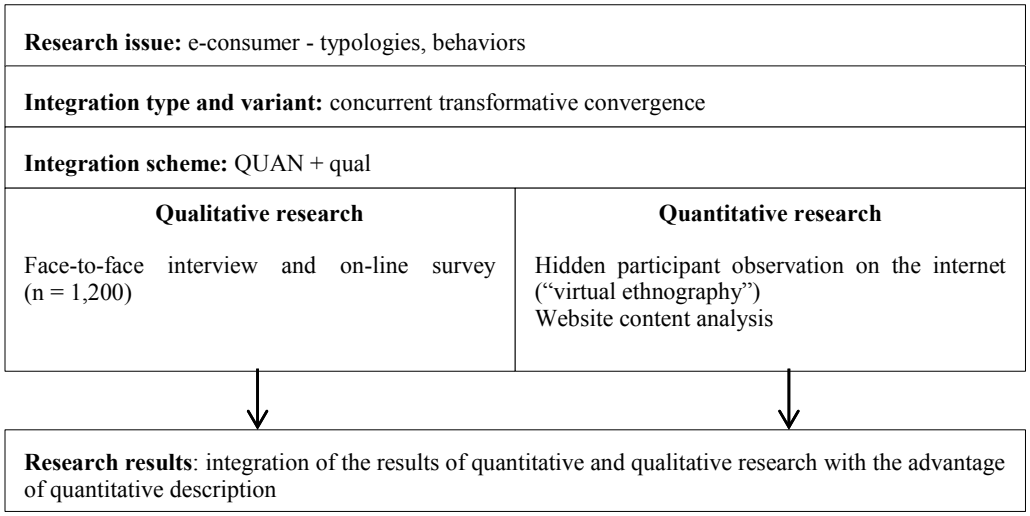

Figure 2. Methodological integration – an example of convergence transformative model
Source: based on (Jaciow, 2011).

In the studies by Coulter et al. (2003) the interpretative approach was dominant. Throughout the project, the qualitative research consumed more time and cost. The research adopted the concept of the consumer as an interpreter of reality, it was recognized that his personal history, environment, undertaken life activities and lifestyle determine the way he assesses reality. This concept is characteristic of interpretive research. Transformative convergence integration was used in the study of e-consumer behavior (Jaciow, Wolny, 2011). The data collected in ethnographic research have been recorded in a form that allows for their statistical analysis and presentation with the dominant features of a description characteristic of research carried out in the positivist trend. It is worth emphasizing once again that the occurrence of the dominant approach in the examples discussed is a derivative of the adopted research assumptions and the

methodological orientation of researchers. The research procedure using two different methodological paths in both cases (Figures 1 and 2) makes it possible to characterize the research results in a completely equivalent manner.

Figures 3 and 4 show embedded integration models. The first example was based on the sequential test procedure, the second was a parallel test. In both, the dominance of the positivist approach can be indicated. In the study by Dahl and Moreau (2007), in-depth interviews were performed in the first stage, and experiments in the next two. Due to the sequencing of subsequent studies within the framework of the discussed project, this research scheme can be compared to integrated exploratory studies, however, some differences resulted in a different assignment. Firstly, due to the way of interpreting empirical material and drawing conclusions, qualitative research was subordinated to quantitative. Secondly, despite the sequence, the relationships of quantitative research in the construction of research tools are limited (that is why the arrows in Figure 3 are drawn with a broken line). This relationship manifested itself in the formulation of some research hypotheses. Qualitative research was used to find out about the motives of consumer behavior purchasing goods and services that require creation from consumers (artistic, hobby products, etc.), which were confronted with the results of experimental research, seeking to draw general conclusions about consumer attitudes, behaviors and preferences in terms of the autonomy of creation.

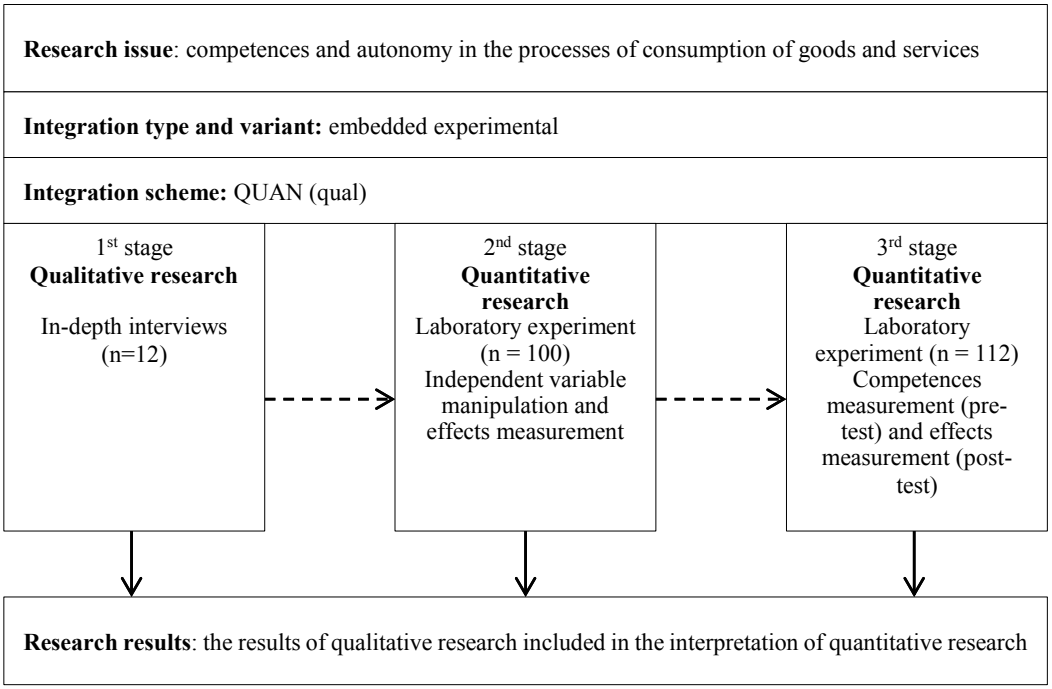

Figure 3. Methodological integration – an example of embedded experimental model.
Source: based on (Jaciow, 2011).

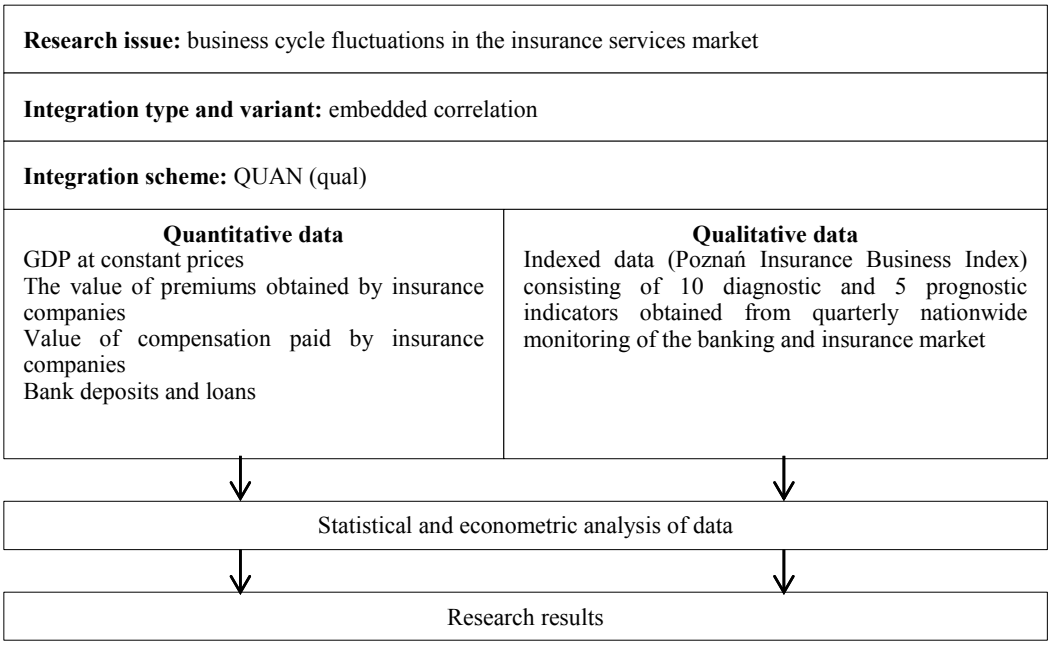

Figure 4. Methodological integration – an example of the embedded correlation model.
Source: based on (Garczarczyk, Mocek, 2014).

Figure 4 illustrates a parallel immersion model of methodological integration. Garczarczyk and Mocek (2014) applied the methodology of researching business fluctuations in the banking and insurance services market. Methodological integration takes place by linking various sources in a research project. The qualitative data were processed in such a way as to be able to subject them to statistical and econometric analysis together with the quantitative data. Thus, qualitative data are used to diagnose and forecast economic phenomena. In this way, they were included in the current analysis and interpretation characteristic of positivist research.

Figure 5 shows an example of sequential explanatory studies. In the research by Hewett et al. (2006) on the relationship between national culture and the quality and strength of relations on the industrial goods market, in the first stage of the project, questionnaire studies were carried out using the survey method or face-to-face interview, and then in the second stage individual in-depth interviews were conducted. The research was dominated by a positivist approach, and this dominance was manifested in the approach to the research material. The authors' task was not to create local knowledge, they did not carry out in-depth studies of anthropological problems, the material from in-depth interviews was used to better understand or explain the conclusions of the survey study, therefore, the type of integration used was defined as follow-up explanations. For example, in these studies, the data presenting the verification of the hypotheses regarding the dependence of the durability of the relationship on organizational culture were supplemented with statements from managers from Latin America and the United States. This integration was a way of confirming the validity of the categorization made by the authors in previous quantitative studies.

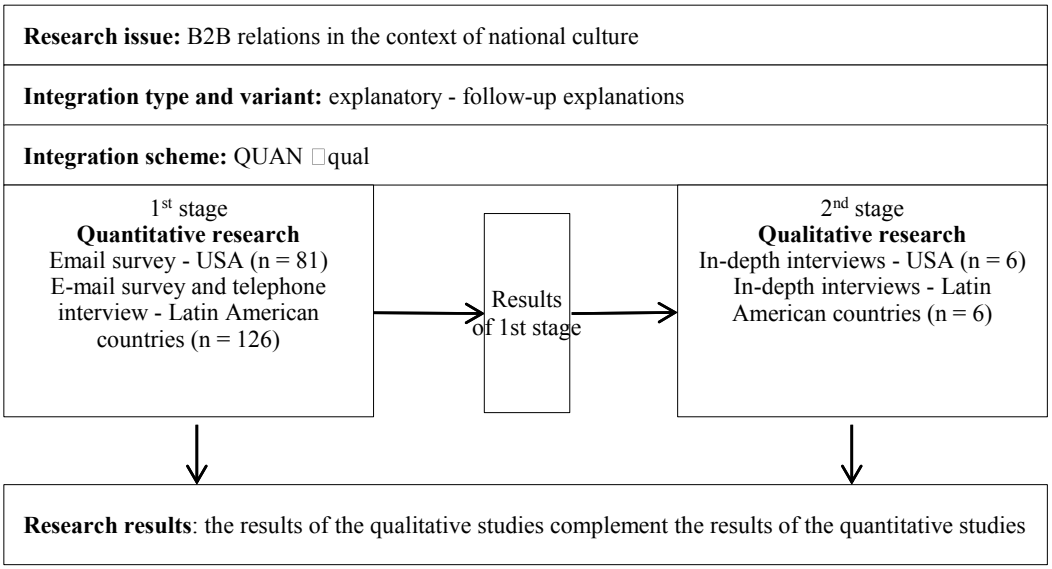

Figure 5. Methodological integration – an example of follow up explanations model.
Source: based on (Hewett et al., 2006).

Figures 6 and 7 show two interesting exploratory research designs. In a study by Walsh & Beatty (2007) on the identification and operationalization of the components of service company reputation, qualitative research was used to develop research tools for further quantitative research. In the first stage of the research, survey methods with open questions were used to identify as many features of the problem as possible. Then the material was analyzed and evaluated by experts. The qualitative material was used to build the survey questionnaire, which was tested in further stages of the research. In the studies by Gorbaniuk et al. (2014) on the shaping of consumers' perceptions of themselves under the influence of brand purchases, qualitative research identified the components of the categories under research for later use in quantitative research. In the first and second stages of the research, an identical research method and technique were used, which was a direct interview. However, it differed significantly in the degree of structuring.

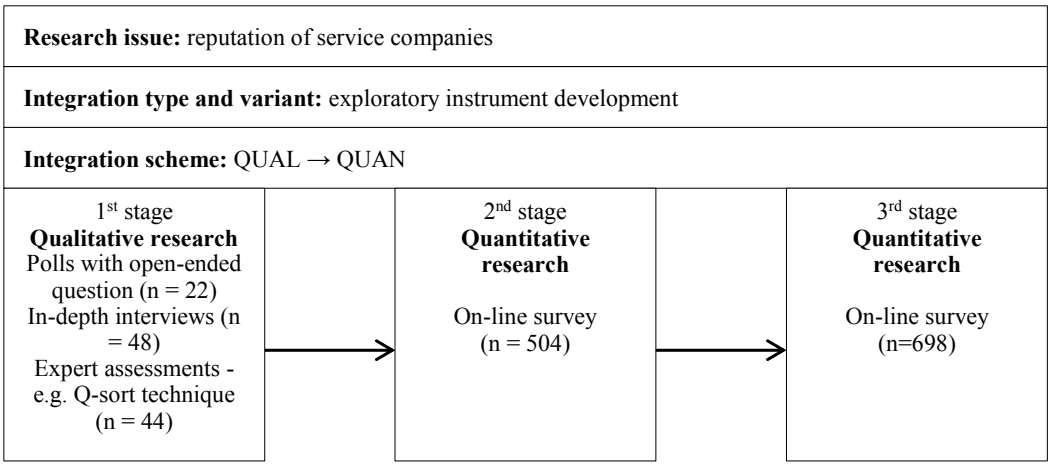

Figure 6. Methodological integration – an example of exploratory instrument development model.
Source: based on (Walsh, Beatty, 2007).

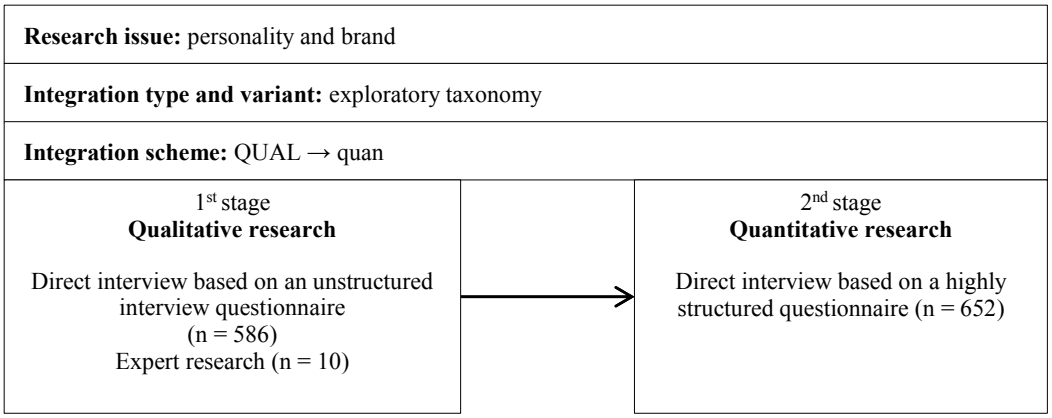

Figure 7. Methodological integration – an example of exploratory taxonomy model.
Source: based on (Gorbaniuk et al., 2014).

3.2. Data integration in the light of own research experience

Mixed methods issues are the subject of this paper authors' experience. Below is a description of the methodology of four proprietary research projects implemented in convergent, embedded, and explanatory models. Each of the descriptions presents a range of data integration. Two initial examples of parallel research with two independent methods are presented below. The data obtained with the use of various methods can be complementary and allow for a more complete picture of the reality under study. Integration takes place at the stage of combining the results. It should be noted that research paths lead to different data that can hardly be reduced to a common denominator. The data obtained by both methods describe the reality from completely different perspectives.

The first example of the use of various methodological approaches is a research project conducted by Czubała, Wiktor, Chlipała, Jonas, Smoleń, and Żbikowska (Wiktor, Chlipała, 2012). The authors analyzed the marketing strategies of Polish companies on international markets. The research was aimed at achieving cognitive, methodological and application objectives. In the cognitive context, an attempt was made to identify and assess the marketing strategies implemented by Polish exporters on international markets. Regarding methodology, the research objectives included the identification of methods for analysing marketing strategies in international markets, as well as a proposal for the methodology of research on marketing strategies of exporting companies. Studies indicate the absence of a multi-aspect and multidimensional methodological approach to the analysis of corporate international marketing strategies. Therefore, the authors suggested a different approach that combines two independent procedures based on positivist and interpretive research. The results of the research that allowed identifying the success factors in the process of implementing international marketing strategies and indicating possible areas for improvement had also the application purpose. This is because they have allowed the management of exporting companies to confront their international marketing strategies with the research in question.

The objective of the research studies based on the positivist approach was to create a general and overall picture of corporate marketing strategies in international markets and to define the rules and regularities in shaping the marketing strategy of Polish exporters. The interpretive study was to focus on the identification and good understanding of strategic choices in internationalization and corporate marketing strategies. Attention was also paid to the management of marketing instruments and activities in foreign markets. Since the study was designed to gain a complete understanding of the problem analyzed, it focused on selected areas that were interesting from a cognitive point of view. Detailed data on the research methodology in both approaches are presented in Figure 8.

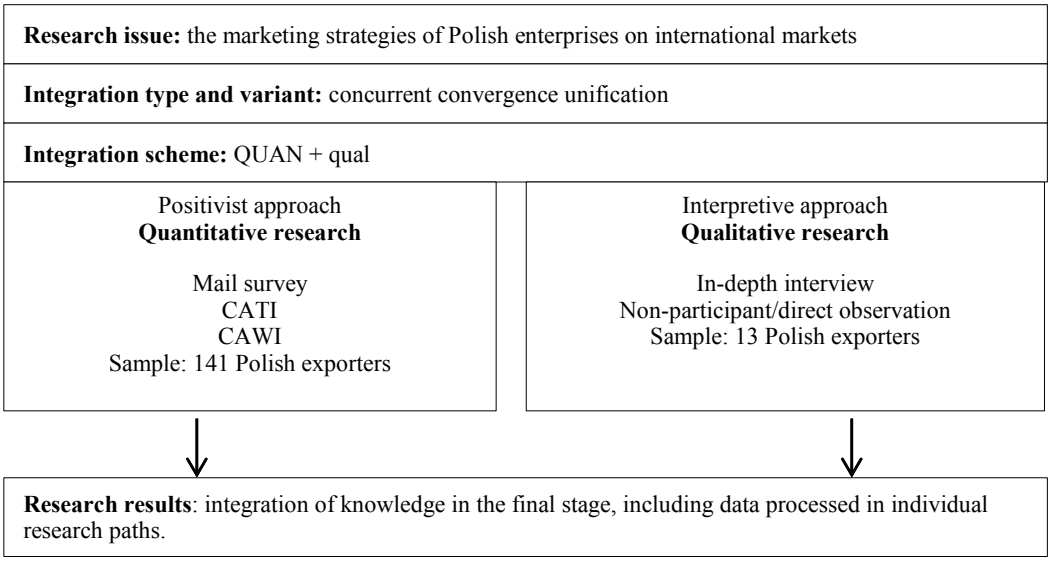

Figure 8. Methodology of analysing corporate strategies on international markets using the concurrent convergence unification model.

Source: based on (Wiktor, Chlipała, 2012).

Table 2 presents the results of research conducted with the use of two parallel research paths. Data obtained from quantitative and qualitative research are complementary.

Table 2.
Data completion by integration of positivist and interpretive approaches on the example of research on the internationalization of enterprises

Sources of competitive advantage on international markets – sample conclusions from positivist research
1. In the attainment of a strong competitive position requires having a wide range of advantages over the competition. On average, the respondents considered that the source of competitive advantage should be the simultaneous use of the as many as 7 of 15 proposed factors.
2. The surveyed exporters identified the following main sources of their competitive advantage in foreign markets: – high-quality products – 63.1% of responses, – products geared to customers' needs and expectations – 59.8%, – ability to respond to market stimuli quickly and flexibly – 56.0%, – favourable prices and terms of payment – 50.3%.
3. Firms recognized the ability to compete on different levels but concentrated on creating and developing only a few advantages.

Cont. table 2.

Sources of competitive advantage on international markets – an example of a thick description
The presidents and executives of companies A, B, C, and D are proud of their offerings. "I've never tasted such delicious, pickled cucumbers", says the president of company A, referring to an opinion expressed by one of their Russian clients. This is truly the best reference. The quality of the company's processed fruit and vegetable products is confirmed by traditional recipes, high quality materials, and pre-selected natural aroma spices. The labels placed on the products shipped to France stress their Polish origin. The president claims that the Polish origin of goods is a source of competitive advantage in the fruit and vegetable processing industry. Company D, on the other hand, which operates on the market of household goods, does not stress the Polish origin of its products. Our interviewee stresses that "it matters more to Russian customers that a given product is manufactured in the EU, in the West". The company's president, who has spent several years in Russia and still travels there in connection with the currently developed sales network, makes the following statement: "Many prospective clients in Russia do not have any association with Poland as a country". The offering of company D is a technical device, and in this context, the Polish origin of the goods is not considered one of the company's strengths. The company name is often associated with German origin and, consequently, its products with German 'reliability and accuracy' (the company does not make any official statements). Regarding quality, the equipment of company D is reliable and durable. It gives the company an edge on the Russian and Ukrainian markets. If the products break down, they are promptly repaired. The quality of company B's offering, wooden board games, is based on solid materials and good workmanship. A significant role is played by the type of wood and the drying and polishing processes. Good workmanship places these products among upper-market goods as compared with plastics and inferior competitive products (e.g. from China), but they do not match products manufactured in India. It is the raw materials, not the production process, that matter the most. Hard, nicely pained wood such as rosewood, commonly used in India for the manufacture of chessboards, does not require impregnation or painting. Company B's "figures" are painted, but it is an advantage from the point of view of customization. Black, brown, or white (cream) sets are earmarked for the Polish and Russian markets, while the French market prefers the blue and navy-blue colours. Company C manufactures traditional and natural products without preservatives, which is significant in the case of foodstuffs. In addition, they have lower prices than similar products offered on western European markets. No one should be ashamed of high quality and reasonably priced products. They can target middle-class customers. Currently, as our interviewee stressed, the company's main challenge is distribution and promotion. The products have the appropriate characteristics to be accepted in foreign markets.

Note. Company A. The core activity – fruit and vegetable processing. The company has 120 employees (seasonally up to 200). About 70% of the company's turnover is generated by export activities. The company operates in European markets, in Canada and the United States.
Company B. The company offers wooden board games to individual and institutional clients. The company is a family business with more than 100 employees; it operates its production facility which prepares raw materials and manufactures ready products. Most of the broad assortment of goods are destined for overseas markets, especially the Russian market.
Company C. The company's offering includes fruit and vegetable processed products, tinctures as well as bread and cold cuts. The company has been operating on the Polish market for several years, creating a recognisable brand. In the last two years, the company has made its first attempts to go international, and it has great expectations related to pursuing this policy in the future.
Company D. The company manufactures household goods. It has nearly 2,000 employees. Almost half of the company's sales volume is generated by export activities. The company has a well-established position in the Polish market and for the past few years, it has recorded a rapid increase in sales in overseas markets, especially in the CEE countries.

Source: based on (Wiktor, Chlipała, 2012; Żbikowska, 2012).

The data obtained as part of the positivist path was supplemented with data obtained during interpretative research. According to the example presented in Table 3, the distribution of answers to the questions about the competitive advantages of enterprises is enriched with the description of possible motives and reasons for gaining such and not another competitive advantage. This allows for a more complete knowledge of the marketing strategies of enterprises in international markets.

In the next example of convergent integration, Chlipała (2011) analyzed the process of creating value for the customer in the tourism services market. The research was conducted based on two independent methodological approaches: positivistic and interpretive. Research conducted with the use of both methodological paths was carried out on two samples: customers and companies (Figure 9).

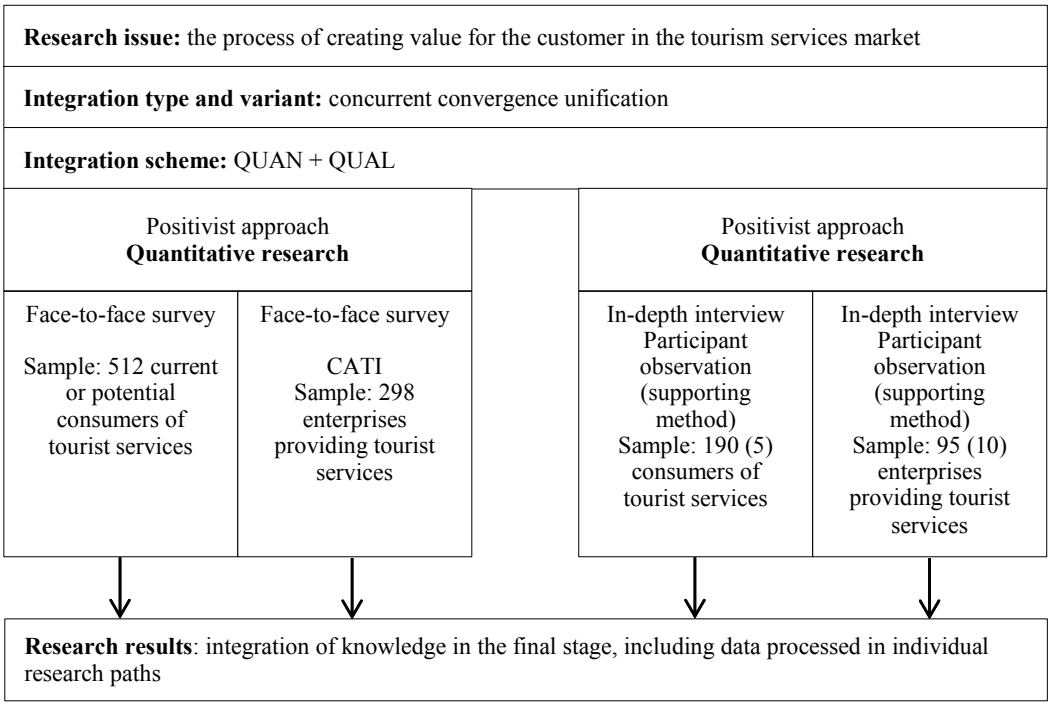

Figure 9. Methodology of analyzing value creation for the customer using the concurrent convergence integration model.

Source: based on (Chlipała, 2011).

Table 3 presents samples of the research results conducted with the use of the concurrent convergence integration model.

Table 3.
Data completion by integration of positivist and interpretive approaches on the example of research on value creation for the customer in the tourism service market

Benefits for the consumer resulting from the use of a tourist trip - sample conclusions from positivist research
According to consumers, the most important benefits of tourist trips were as follows: – the opportunity to meet new places, people, and culture – 70.8% of responses, – "Peace of mind" - detachment, carefree, relaxation – 52.1%, – being with people you love – 43.2% – the possibility of improving your physical condition and health – 34.6% – being an explorer – 26.8%.

Cont. table 3.

Buyer needs as the basis for differentiating the value for the consumer - an example of a thick description
The instructor working in the holiday center divided the clients into two groups: "fitness" and "slimming". People in the first group are athletic, active, live in harmony with nature, enjoy hiking in the mountains, are not so restrictive as to their diet, for example, they allow themselves to eat a delicious apple pie at the shelter, as a reward for the effort to reach the destination of the trip. Losing weight aims to lose weight. They want to achieve the desired effect at all costs, but they do not enjoy increased physical activity. Movement is only a way for them to lose unnecessary kilograms. Zuzanna can be included in the "condition" group. You can see it at first glance. This is evidenced by the silhouette - simple and shapely; gait and movements - spring and vigorous, good physical condition. When we climb the steepest slope, we don't change the pace, I struggle to keep pace and most of the group is left behind. Maybe she wants to show off a bit, but she is in good physical and mental shape. She jokes a lot; you can see that she feels good surrounded by mountains and forests. She devoted many days off from work to hiking in the mountains, taking, as she declares, great pleasure from it. Adrian represents the group of 'slimming' people. He is a law student at Jagiellonian University, spent a year mainly studying, and, as he admits, "I neglected to concentrate solely on learning". He has a lot of determination. He can climb the slope with great difficulty, he often rests, stresses that he does not like this type of activity. He says: "If it weren't for my overweight problem, I would have gone elsewhere". Where? "To Zakopane, but I wouldn't lose weight there".

Source: based on (Chlipała, 2011).

The embedded model is a valuable way to integrate methodology pathways into research. Quantitative research can supplement and explain the conclusions of qualitative research. Figure 10 presents the description of own research with the use of this integration. The research was methodical and its goal was to identify the possibilities and limitations of the implementation of "online" and "offline" in-depth interviews for both the interviewees and the interviewer.

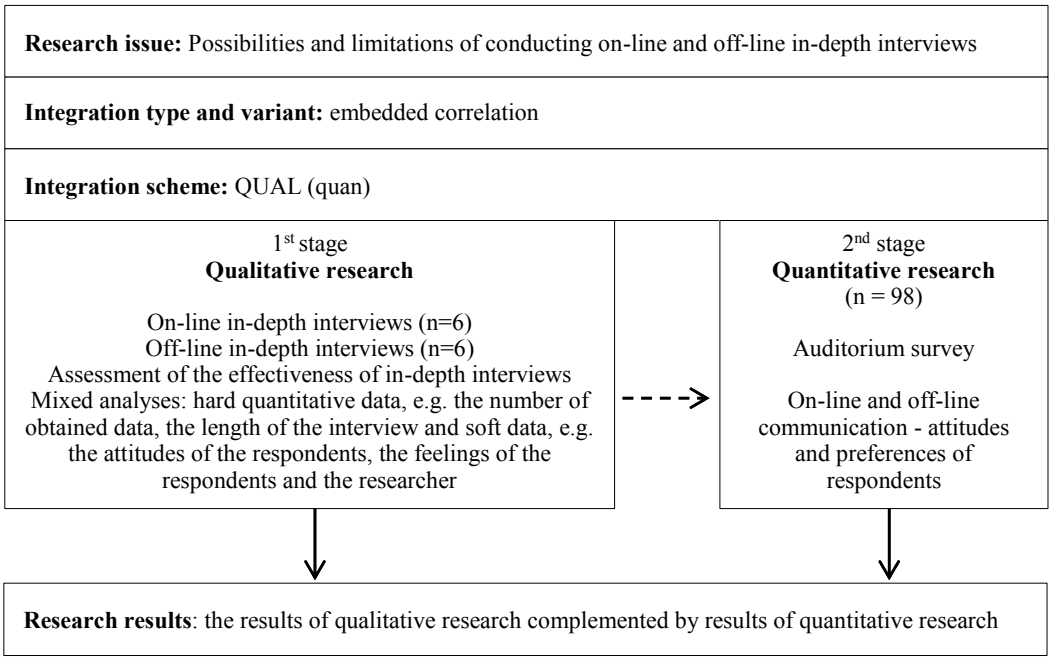

Figure 10. Methodology of studying possibilities and limitations of conducting online and off-line in-depth interviews using the embedded correlation integration model.

Source: based on (Chlipała, 2020).

The development of technology makes it possible to carry out in-depth interviews with the use of communication technologies based on VOIP (Voice-Over Internet Protocol). Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in-depth interview „face-to-face" is not a complete substitute for in-depth interview using the VOIP protocol. Decisions about the form of conducting an interview directly or on the Internet should be treated not so much as a dichotomous choice, but rather as a supplement to one way of talking to the respondents, to another. Combining "online" with "offline" was presented by Sade-Beck (2004) as a way to reach a wider group of respondents and build more complete results of in-depth qualitative studies. Leander and McKim (2003) posed the problem of whether it is correct to distinguish the Internet space from other spaces in which the respondent functions in social research. Virtual reality becomes an integral part of modern human life. Qualitative research in the "online" and "offline" versions has numerous advantages and disadvantages; it is important to pay attention to the human factor when choosing the method of conducting in-depth interviews. Conversation via communicator using the VOIP protocol is a natural environment for people who have skills in the use of equipment, positive experiences in conducting this type of conversation, and a positive attitude towards Internet communication. Many people cannot use technology efficiently. Also, among people who have such skills, many people do not like this form of communication. Thus, the predispositions and preferences of the interviewees should determine the choice of the interview form.

To determine the way of assessing the effectiveness of in-depth interviews in real and virtual space, research was designed. For empirical verification, in November and December 2019, 12 in-depth interviews were organized and conducted with 6 people. Each person was interviewed twice, one interview was conducted during a face-to-face meeting, the other via Skype. Each interview lasted 25 to 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted with students of the University of Economics in Krakow. The topics of the talks were the issues of the functioning of the individual in the times of consumerism, and the talks were inspired by the issues of the consumerist society in the times of "liquid life" and "liquid modernity", characterized by the postmodernist Bauman (2000; 2005; 2007). At the end of each second interview, both interviews were discussed and compared with each other. The interlocutor was asked to rate and explain his answers. The results of the interviews became an inspiration for designing questionnaires in which the preferences of potential respondents were implemented regarding the form of interviewing, in a virtual environment or under natural conditions. The research was carried out in January 2020 with 98 students. The results of the quantitative research embodied in the qualitative research are presented in Table 4. Considering the problem of the effectiveness of the in-depth interview, it can be concluded that it is determined by the scope and quality of the empirical material collected. This material should answer the research questions posed. The quality of the collected material is therefore very difficult to assess, it can only be done on the basis of the researcher's knowledge, experience, and intuition. Such an assessment will always be subjective. Certainly, however, the scope and depth of the material

are determined by the freedom of communication and the degree of the respondent's openness to the issues under consideration. These two parameters became the basis for the evaluation of real and virtual interviews.

Table 4.
Quantitative data embedded in the qualitative data on the example of a study of possibilities and limitations of conducting online and off-line in-depth interviews

Conducting online and off-line in-depth interviews – interviewees and interviewer perspective
When organizing the first research project, it was assumed that two in-depth interviews would be conducted with each respondent: during a face-to-face meeting and via an Internet messenger. This was not a condition, but all face-to-face interviews took place first. Certainly, such a sequence may influence the assessment of the interviews. In a broader study of the issues discussed, it should be ensured that some of the interviews be conducted in reverse order. Face-to-face meetings were held in a room where the conversation could be conducted freely and uninterrupted. In two cases, the conversation was conducted over coffee (the other participants did not take advantage of the offer), which was conducive to a good atmosphere of dialogue. In general, face-to-face interviews were shorter, but it should be noted that in addition to the content, the form was also discussed for a few minutes during the second interview. During the interviews in the Internet version, photos were sent to the respondents with a request for their interpretation. The photos can also be shown during the interviews "face to face", but in the Internet version, it seemed natural, somehow fitting into the interview. It should be noted that the interviews via Skype were conducted in two versions: with the use of the audio function, or also with video. In one case, the use of the camera was disturbed by technical problems - a too weak Internet connection of the interviewee. The choice of audio or audio-video communication during an in-depth interview, as can be seen in light of personal experience, has large consequences. The use of video options can sometimes interfere with the verbal communication process due to technical distortions. A purely verbal message makes it impossible to observe the subject but allows one to focus more on the content of the message. Much also depends on the preferences of the respondents. For Zuzanna and Maksymilian, as well as for Mikolaj, declaratively, the camera was not a problem. Agata and Józef pointed out that they would rather focus on the content of the interview than worry about how they appear, what they look like in front of the camera. A face-to-face meeting does not pose such a dilemma for them. It is probably related to the fact that in social media people build their image not necessarily consistent with their identity, which penetrates the general consciousness and leaves a mark on it. The evaluation of individual interviews by the teacher was determined by freedom of communication and degree of openness, which influenced the scope of the collected research material. These assessments can be confronted with the feelings of the respondents. They are in line with the interviewer's assessments. In four cases, the direct interview was rated higher than the indirect interview. In two cases it was the other way around. The results on the preferences regarding the form of the interview were a surprise to the author of the text and an inspiration to research a wider audience. 98 students, 73 women, and 36 men were examined. A survey of CUE's students showed that young people do not necessarily prefer indirect communication, and the virtual world is not their dominant environment. The claim that the virtual world is closer to them than the real one cannot be completely rejected. The responses show that the respondents long for natural, direct communication. Most of the respondents would prefer to conduct an in-depth interview directly, not through the Internet. It should be noted that the research was carried out before the Covid-19 pandemic, direct contact restrictions did not affect the responses.

Source: based on (Chlipała, 2020).

The main objective of the research was to identify changes in consumer behavior related to the consumption cycle (purchase, use, disposal of products) as a result of the epidemiological and socioeconomic crisis caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. The aim of the research was a derivative of the research problem expressed by the question: whether and how did consumer behavior change during the pandemic in the context of various variables: gender, age, income, changes in material and professional status.

The positivist research included an analysis of secondary sources of information (literature review on the subject, reports of research agencies, and the Central Statistical Office on consumer behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic) and an online survey. The analysis made it possible to gain knowledge about the distribution of attitudes, preferences, and behaviors of households and individual entities in terms of the scale and direction of changes in consumption. Interpretative research constituted the second stage of the study. Its purpose was to verify, supplement and explain consumer behavior, the situation of their households, professional situation, lifestyle, education, and most of all attitudes towards Covid-19 and personal experiences with the disease caused by the virus. In-depth interviews were conducted.

Research on changes in consumer behavior in light of the Covid-19 pandemic was conducted sequentially. The results of the first stage of the research, based on the assumptions of the positivist approach, were the starting point for qualitative research.

Research problems were set to supplement, explain, or confront the data obtained in qualitative research through the results of quantitative research. The research procedure is presented in Figure 11. The method of data completion and verification is presented in Table 5.

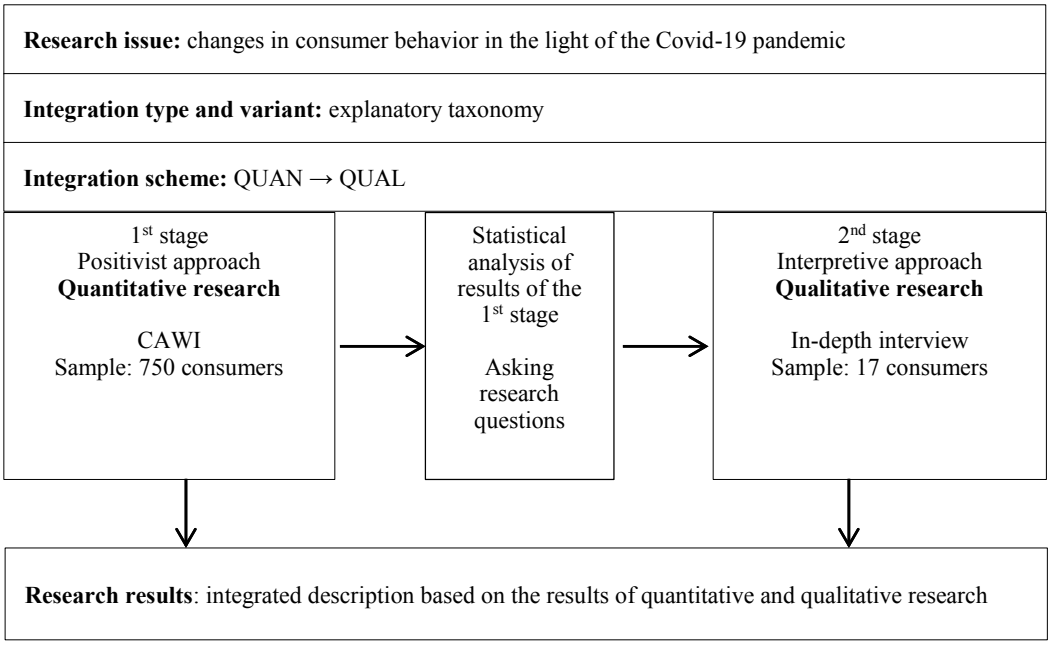

Figure 11. Methodology of analysing changes in consumer behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic – explanatory taxonomy model of integration.

Source: own research.

Table 5.
Data completion and verification by integration of positivist and interpretive approaches on the example of research on consumer behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic

Results of the 1st stage of research – examples of quantitative research results	
The respondents indicated whether they are thinking more about purchasing goods during the pandemic. Nearly 72% of consumers agreed that during the pandemic they wondered about the problem of overpurchasing and consuming goods (percentages of responses 'definitely yes' and 'probably yes'). More than 51% of consumers agreed that after the pandemic is over, they will buy fewer products than before the pandemic (percentages of answers 'definitely yes' and 'probably yes').	Significant changes in consumption occurred in a few assortment groups. Only in two product categories - clothing and footwear - consumers significantly reduced their purchases (62% and 57% of respondents, respectively). During the pandemic, the respondents did not significantly change the number of purchased products such as bread, cereals, and pasta, preserves and canned food, frozen food, meat and sausages, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, water and drinks, personal hygiene products and cleaning products.
Examples of research questions inspired by the results of the 1st stage of research	
What conclusions have consumers drawn when considering consumption during the pandemic? What are the reasons for changing consumer habits?	Is such a structure of expenditure and consumption a rule? What are the manifestations of cognitive consumer responses and affective consumer responses during the pandemic?
Source: based on (Chlipała, 2020).	
With the Covid-19 pandemic, the pace of life and the way consumers function have changed. Free time, breaking out of the daily routine caused reflection on the scale and manner of consumption. The need to give up habits has contributed to changes in consumer behavior, which is confirmed in the following descriptions. Weronika, a marketing student, who works professionally, said: I sleep more now, earlier, before the pandemic, I slept 4 hours a day. Now I eat more regularly – it happened that I ate one meal during the day – I live calmer, more consciously, in greater harmony – I have fewer health problems, I could take care of myself in a pandemic. Weronika makes careful purchases to strive for harmony. - Will it stay that way? I will try, I don't know if I can fully hold on to it, but I will fight. Magda, mother of two daughters, 55 years old: In the pandemic, I went to the countryside - I spent 3 months with my daughter, it was a completely different life that I had not known - greater harmony, peace - we baked bread, ate healthily - based on vegetables. Please believe me that recently, after a dozen or so months, I bought meat - previously I did it 2 or 3 times a week. - Will you put these changes into practice? I don't think too much about it, but something has changed, certain habits have involuntarily entered my behavior. Karol, a 40-year-old sales representative: we bought Termomix – I fulfil myself in the kitchen, now, even when we can, we give up restaurants and bars, e.g. I prepare and bake pizzas myself –	When evaluating the behavior of Polish consumers in quantitative research, it was found that statistically there were no significant changes in consumption, apart from the categories indicated above. However, it should be noted that the changes are evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Also, there are many exceptions to the rule. A 50-year-old accountant says that in the first stage of the pandemic, the family panicked a little, bought more rice, pasta - a few packages. They cut consumption because it was not known what the future held. Until now, they cooked a packet of pasta and then threw away half of it because the pasta is too cheap. Now he only cooks half a packet. He restricted himself from buying 'stupid things'. "I go to the market and buy a lot of unnecessary things, such as chocolate". However, he does not spend less on shopping, because he increased the internet shopping. He bought many Wólczanka shirts because he dresses more classically due to his age. These shirts previously cost 200 PLN, and during the pandemic, they were available for 39 PLN. He probably doesn't need as many shirts as he bought. "Ultimately, consumption increased a little during the pandemic". There was a moment of slowdown at the beginning of the pandemic, but "you click, and there is free shipping from 300 PLN, so I choose one more thing". Anna, a 29-year-old secretary: I do not have to limit myself; my situation has not changed - I go to work, I am single, I consume as before. - Didn't you wonder if this consumption is needed on such a scale? Didn't you come to the conclusion in Covid times that we needed much less to live on? No, I am a young person - you must enjoy life, although I am not very wasteful at all.

previously we used ready-made products, now we eat healthier and better – no improvers, preservatives – I still bake the bread myself and I don't think I will get bored of it. Gabriela, 36-year-old customer advisor at the bank: I walked through the gallery, but it did not give me pleasure as before; after all, I don't need any of this. - How will it be when business meetings come back, will you have to have something new for each one, as before? - It is hard to say, but it may not be the norm that you need something new for an appointment. Maybe these popular trends: second life of clothes, second-hand shops, etc. will make most of us change our approach. Sebastian, 47 years old supplier: I use fewer shoes and clothes, but not as much, maybe 80% of what I used to do before. I don't work much less, but I had a lot of clothes in stock. Currently, when I have to buy something, I ask myself whether I need it and I often answer that because what I have is enough for me I don't.	Adam, 34-year-old customer advisor at the bank: at the beginning we withheld from many purchases, we did not know what it would be like with work, in March I did not buy shoes - I decided that I do not need that many - I bought at a discount in a few months. Damian, a 35-year-old gym owner, although he had not planned it before, bought a very large TV during the pandemic, because the current 32-inch TV was too small. TV viewing, especially in winter, was one of the important accompanying entertainments every day. He spends every evening with his girlfriend in front of the TV.

Source: based on (Chlipała, 2020).

4. Research limitation, discussion, and conclusion

The presented paper is methodical. Data completion and verification inquiries in the third methodological path were carried out on the plane of considering methodological assumptions and the presentation of empirical projects. The data integration review is based on the achievements of Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) and Harrison & Reilly (2011). Each type of integration has been described using the procedures of various social studies conducted around the world. It was also based on original research, where the methodological description was deepened by illustrating the methods of data integration.

Based on four basic models of research integration: concurrent, embedded, explanatory, exploratory, has some advantages and limitations. It is a comprehensive proposal in terms of methodological integration, considering the purpose and scope of integration, research synchronization over time, and the dominance of methodological approaches. However, assigning a research project to one of the models is often difficult. For example, when a research procedure is classified as exploratory, it is difficult to assign one of the types: instrument development or taxonomy, because they interpenetrate. In this article, we searched for the dominant features for a given type of integration; this determined its classification. Hanson & Grimmer (2007) drew attention to the difficulties in unambiguous classification. The empirical part presents a review of projects that illustrate all types and variants of mixed methods,

but the review of the own research projects lacked exploratory integration, as none of the authors of this article has conducted this type of research yet.

The authors' own research experience allowed outlining the ways of data integration, both in parallel procedures of data collection, where quantitative research in the positivist trend and qualitative research in the interpretative trend were conducted separately and in sequential research, where quantitative research was first carried out, then the results were interpreted and designed, and qualitative research was carried out. The embedded approach was also illustrated, where quantitative data constituted a valuable extension and confirmation of conclusions obtained in qualitative research. In two of the four analysed projects, one of the research approaches was dominant, either positivist or interpretative, and in the other two, both research approaches were given equal status.

Parallel studies show that data integration is limited, reduced not so much to combining data, but to the results obtained on their basis. Although the methodological integration is not deep, this way of combining results from different research procedures is very valuable, as knowledge from different methodological approaches complements each other. The researcher may believe that the interpretative and positivist paradigms are so different that there is no possibility of their complete integration. According to Modell (2009), the connection of these paradigms is never complete; one must always opt for a methodology, which may be the cause of problems. For example, when conducting research dominated by assumptions embedded in positivism, one must give up presenting deep and multifaceted images of reality. These paradigms are compatible but always at the cost of a compromise.

In the last of the original research projects discussed, data integration was deeper and referred to the completion and verification of data from two methodological approaches. According to the authors, this method of integration produces the best outcomes. To successfully complete and verify the data, a sequential approach should be used. The conducted considerations allow outlining further areas of research. The authors will find it valuable to try to apply the types of integration that have not been implemented so far in the research. It would be worthwhile not to narrow the problem of data integration to the question of combining quantitative and qualitative data, but to try to integrate other methodological approaches, such as critical methodology. It is also worth focusing on integration within research approaches such as action research or grounded theory, where the assumptions themselves integrate research trends and approaches.

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