

A call for more mixed methods in sport management research

Andy Rudd, Florida State University

**Other
Session 22**

**Saturday, May 31, 2008
10:00 AM - 10:25 AM**

**Presentation (25-minute)
Abstract 368**

Many social and behavioral science researchers have promoted the efficacy of using mixed method approaches (combining quantitative and qualitative methods) to strengthen the validity of research results (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson & Turner, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003). Generally, it has been suggested that no single method is infallible. Rather, each method possesses its own strengths and weaknesses. Combining methods can help overcome a single method's validity weaknesses by producing a set of data that has complementary strengths and non overlapping weaknesses (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson & Turner, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Convergence across multiple forms of data (quantitative and qualitative), that are believed to have complementary strengths thus allows the researcher to have more confidence in the validity of their results (e.g., fewer rival hypotheses). Additionally, mixing methods can also be beneficial for the purposes of initiation (discovering contradictions), expansion (attaining a deeper and broader understanding), complementarity (examining overlapping parts of a phenomenon), and development (using results from one method to inform the use of a second method) (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989).

The potential benefits of using mixed-method approaches has stimulated its adoption in a variety of fields including sociology, nursing, psychology, management, health sciences, evaluation, and education (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Yet, despite the popularity and strong advocacy for combining quantitative and qualitative methods, few mixed methods approaches can be found amid extant sport management research. As evidence, empirical articles were reviewed by the author for the presence of mixed-method approaches in three major sport management journals: *Journal of Sport Management (JSM)*, *International Journal of Sport Management (IJSM)*, and *Sport Management Review (SMR)* during the period of 2000-2007. The analysis identified the following number of mixed method articles: JSM (10), IJSM (15), and SMR (2). Comparatively, Quarterman et al. (2006) reviewed 299 articles (conceptual and empirical) published in the *Journal of Sport Management* from 1987 to 2004. From their analysis, only 6 of the 299 articles (2%) employed a mixed-method approach, 27 out of 299 (9%) were qualitative, 165 of the 299 (55%) were quantitative, and 101 of the 299 (34%) were conceptual. As well, Barber, Parkhouse, and Tedrick (2001) assayed 42 empirical articles published in the *Journal of Sport Management* during the period of 1991-1995 finding the majority of articles to be survey research (73%). Other types of methods employed included content analysis (19%) and mixed-methods (9%). Overall, these analyses suggest that when it comes to empirical studies the majority employ quantitative monomethods (a single method).

Additionally, although there are many different types of mixed-method designs (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), many of the mixed method articles uncovered in the author's analysis involved limited use of mixed methods. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), research methodology can be viewed on a continuum ranging from monomethods (far left of the continuum) to fully mixed studies (far right of the continuum). Many of the mixed-studies observed in sport management journals would arguably fall to the left of the research continuum. That is, weak to moderate use of combining quantitative and qualitative methods. For example, 10 of the 15 mixed method articles found in IJSM simply involved a questionnaire with open and closed questions. Other examples of moderate use included content analysis (7 articles) and instrument development (i.e., using qualitative data from interviews or focus groups to develop items for a questionnaire) (2 articles).

In sum, the results from our analysis as well others (Barber et al., 2001; Quarterman et al., 1999) suggest that few employ mixed-method approaches and when they do, they are not strongly mixed designs (i.e., a substantial amount of both quantitative and qualitative data). The purpose of this presentation, then, is to demonstrate additional, more fully mixed method approaches that can be beneficial to the sport management researcher. In particular, this presentation will focus on mixed-methods that can be used in studies dealing with causation. For example, in the area of sport marketing, researchers are often interested in the factors that affect sport fans purchasing behavior. Or, concerning organizational behavior, studies have examined variables that influence organizational commitment or turnover intention. To ascertain cause and effect relationships many of these studies typically employ the use of structural equation modeling rather than using experimental or quasi-experimental designs (e.g., Cunningham & Sagas, 2007; Kwon, Trail, & James, 2007). This is presumably because it is difficult to control or manipulate the likes of naturally occurring variables such as team identity or person-organization fit.

Whether one employs experimental designs or statistical modeling to study cause and effect relationships, an important consideration is the distinction between causal description and causal explanation. The former simply allows one to suggest that there is a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variable. The latter allows the researcher to explain the

2008 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2008)

mediating and moderating effects that are responsible for a particular causal relationship (Cook, 2002; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Obtaining this knowledge allows researchers to make more accurate conclusions (increases internal and external validity) and provides clearer applicability and utility to practitioners.

Although structural equation models take into consideration mediating and moderating variables that may help explain a causal relationship, these models may fail to capture additional important mediating or moderating factors. For example, Kwon, et al. (2007) examined the mediating effect of perceived value in the relationship between team identification and intent to purchase team-licensed apparel. In their discussion they acknowledge that they were surprised to not find a direct significant relationship between team identification and purchase intention. They surmised that the failed relationship may have been related to not including the price of the t-shirt (used as a stimulus to measure perceived value and purchase intention) in similar past studies. Further, they theorized that perhaps price sensitivity has a moderating effect on team identification. This is a prime example of how the addition of qualitative data may strengthen causal explanation. In the case of Kwon et al., qualitative methods including focus groups or one-on-one interviews could have been used to enrich their understanding of various unanticipated moderating or mediating factors. This presentation will therefore provide specific strategies for adding qualitative data to quantitative data to increase causal explanation. Methods will include in-depth interviews, field observations, and controlled comparisons as well as validation techniques such as triangulation, and the use of negative cases (Maxwell, 2004; Patton, 1987; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).