Chapter 3
Research Methodology

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ABSTRACT

Considering the large number of participants and the heterogeneity of the group, the research methodology of COBEREN has been defined in a very specific way. The authors implemented a mixed methodological approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, and they used a various range of numerical, verbal, and even pictorial measurements. The scope for covering different dimensions of the consumer culture was made as open as possible but had to remain acceptable from the point of view of the survey response process. Finally, they successfully combined some a priori instructions/guidelines and some a posteriori adjustments/adaptations. This chapter introduces the data collection method, the sampling aspects, the questionnaire design and translation, implemented according to the general principles of the COBEREN methodology.

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3.1.1. Drinking Consumption and Culture

It is now largely admitted that consumption is not only a matter of functional behaviour. Consumption is also a matter of culture. A double bind links market and society: the use of goods influences social representations and meanings as it also is influenced by them. Fernand Braudel (1979) has taught us that the consumption of rice or corn was at the basis of rice or corn civilization and culture. Roland Barthes (1967) has introduced fashion and clothes consumption as a symbolic system, and Jean Baudrillard (1970) has theorized the consumption society.

The beverage market is also a place where cultural shifts can be clearly observed. Those many changes regarding for example water or wine marketing result from new behaviours among youngsters, women etc. Advertisement –or marketing in general– uses traditional beliefs or stereotypes for promoting new beverages or brands, as well as new ways of drinking. Thus the marketing of beverages has to be understood within the double bind between consumption and culture (see Figure 1). It is a necessary condition to cope with the complexity of drinking mechanisms. Therefore, the traditional approach of consumer behaviour has to be widened for capturing cultural changes in a globalized market.

3.1.2. A Mixed Qualitative and Quantitative Approach

Traditional market research protocols are based on models, measurements and tests of hypotheses, which are appropriated to solve quantitative questions (how much, how important, what correlations etc.) and adapt resultant marketing strategies. To explore new meanings, and to cope with emerging trends in a multicultural and

*Figure 1. The overall consumption culture framework in the Coberen survey*
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