



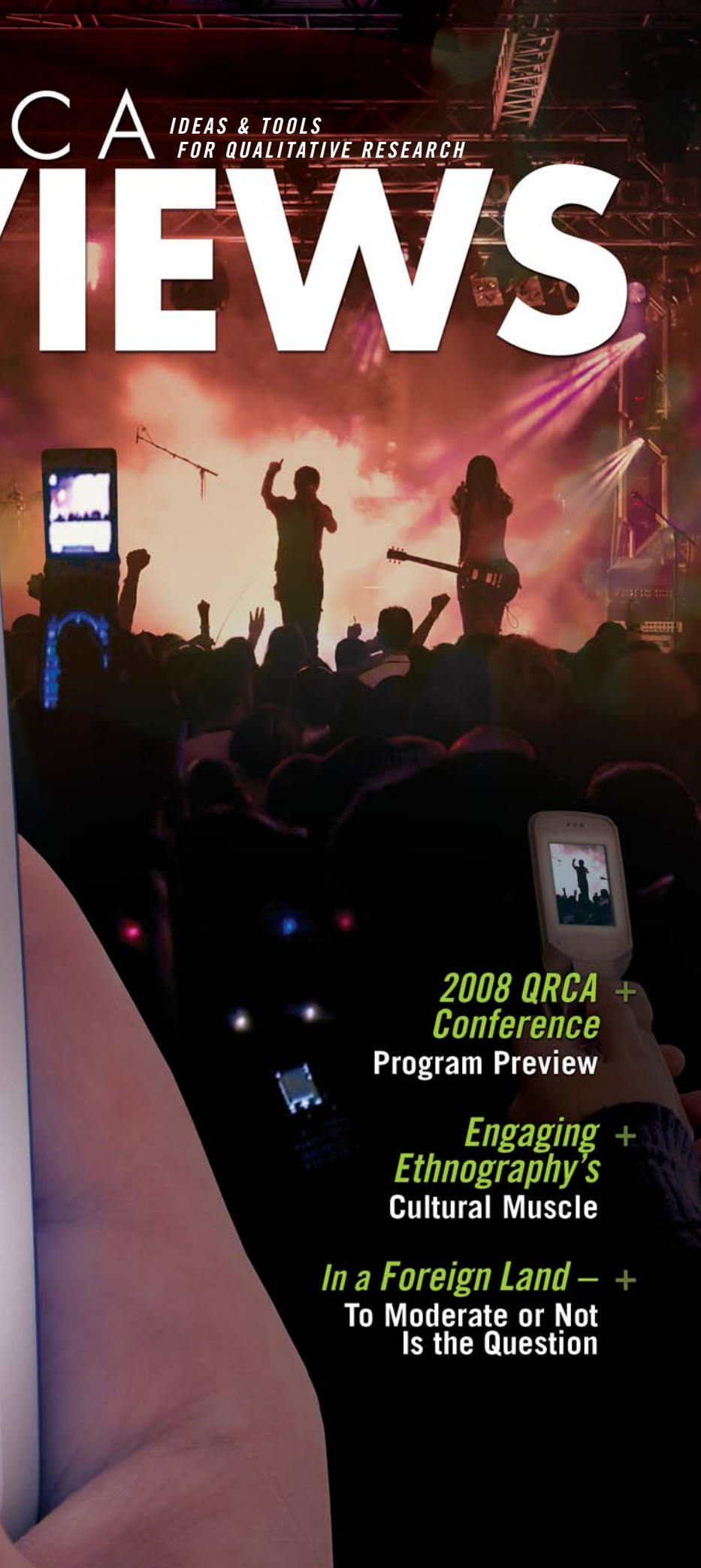
QRCA IDEAS & TOOLS
FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

VIEWS

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The Trend
of Texting:
Mobile Market Research



**2008 QRCA +
Conference**
Program Preview

**Engaging +
Ethnography's**
Cultural Muscle

**In a Foreign Land — +
To Moderate or Not
Is the Question**



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The idea of immersion strikes me as a particularly juicy concept because it captures the growing desire of contemporary researchers to engage with respondents in a much more collaborative and close-to-the-bone discovery process.

Different Aspects of *Immersive Research*

“Immersive research” is a term I have heard more and more often of late. The idea of immersion strikes me as a particularly juicy concept because it captures the growing desire of contemporary researchers to engage with respondents in a much more collaborative and close-to-the-bone discovery process. Two of the articles in this issue of *QRCA VIEWS* bear upon different aspects of immersion, providing both food for thought and practical direction.

In recent years, ethnographic research has grown in popularity to such an extent that “ethnography” has become something of a buzzword. The rush to ethnographic research reflects the desire of client and researcher, alike, to be immersed in the world of the consumer. It is driven by the perception of some that the focus group room is too removed from the rough-and-tumble hubbub of actual daily life in which purchase decisions and the relation to brands are lived out.

Rita Denny and Patricia Sunderland are authors of the book *Doing Anthropology in Consumer Research*, and in our Schools of Thought section, they grace us with their article entitled “Engaging Ethnography’s Cultural Muscle.” Here, they point out the need for some sort of standards and/or benchmarks by which to judge the claims of the many research suppliers who seek to distinguish themselves by jumping on the ethnography bandwagon.

These authors take us back to the anthropological roots of “ethnography,” informing us that originally the word referred to a document rather than a research process. Strictly speaking, Margaret Mead’s book, *Growing Up In Samoa*, was the ethnography. Her actual approach to her research is not the ethnography but is “anthropological fieldwork.”

Rita and Patricia also point out that traditional anthropological research “has been about creating theoretically informed analyses of sociocultural life, which take into account the participants’ point of view.” I think the bit about “creating theoretically informed analyses” may give us all something to ponder. They underscore that it is not about outsider observation of everyday life but rather an immersion in the world of the participants. The authors would also have us shift from individual, psychological analysis to a cultural, contextual analysis. Warning: This article may challenge some of your preconceptions. Approach with caution.

Shaili Bhatt, the editor of our Trends section, profiles another sort of immersive research — the use of texting as a tool for gathering research data from consumers, *in situ*, whether they are at a sporting event, rock concert, shopping mall or supermarket. If you can’t actually be there with them, texting might be one of the next best things. Mobile phones with texting capability have become ubiquitous, which means that millions of consumers are walking around, most of the time, with mobile research data-collection devices.

Moreover, the advent of Apple’s iPhone has raised the bar considerably in terms of ease-of-use and web-browser accessibility. We can only assume that handheld mobile devices will continue to evolve in the direction of user-friendliness and internet functionality.

Initially, text messaging was in far greater use outside the U.S. While it has been slower to take off in the U.S. than elsewhere, that gap is closing, especially among younger people. Who among us has not been amazed by today’s kids who are able to rapidly text on these tiny keyboards without any need to look at the keys and who can do it under a desk, behind their back or while holding a conversation at the same time?

Shaili points out that a number of innovative companies have been taking advantage of text messaging capabilities to gather research data from live events. In fact, she presents a case study of a survey conducted in this manner among 7,000 panelists at a major soccer match in Athens, Greece. While that particular case study refers to quantitative survey research, there is no reason why this same approach cannot be employed as part of an overall qualitative strategy, and Shaili goes on to suggest possible applications and a list of potential infrastructure suppliers for this type of research. And, of course, the capability for respondents to submit cell-phone photos taken in the field adds additional immersive richness.

Speaking of cell phones, text messaging and the internet, I imagine many of our readers have a love/hate relationship with the technology upon which we all have become so dependent. Lee Siegel amply explores the hate side of the equation in his book, *Against The Machine: Being Human in The Age of The Electronic Mob*, which is reviewed here by QRCA member Francesca Moscatelli. According to Moscatelli, the book is written in a very entertaining style, yet it calls attention to the dangers of our falling too far under the thrall of technology.

You'll find a lot more in this issue to educate, stimulate and entertain you. I would be remiss, however, if I did not point out that **this is also our pre-Conference issue**. It was

not until I attended my first annual QRCA Conference, more than 10 years ago, that I really fell in love with this organization. QRCA conferences are unrivaled, not only for their educational content but especially for the warmth of welcome, socializing, networking and mutual support they embody. This year's conference will be held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Travel Editor Mary Beth Solomon gives us a wonderful introduction to that city's history and delightful amenities. In addition, you will notice other pages herein describing the Conference and its program. I hope to see you all there.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce the addition of our new International Research Editor. Based in South Africa, Jean Green ran her own research company for many years. She currently owns and runs the website, Marketing and Research for Africa (www.marfa.co.za). We are very pleased to welcome her onto the *VIEWS* editorial board, and we look forward to her contributions. Potential authors for our International section should contact Jean directly at jog@mweb.co.za. For this area, we try to include an article that either has a global focus or shares insights that relate to working on a global level (or with international agencies and brands). We have savvy, global practitioners among us, and for that reason, case studies showcasing projects conducted across multiple countries and cultures are also welcome. 📧



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