Qualitative market researchers are analyzing “Big Data” numbers to increasingly give marketers answers to “how” and “why” questions. These insights help marketers develop or launch successful new products, understand a brand or category and gain competitive intelligence.

Qualitative Research Consultants Association members Dorrie Paynter, Jennifer Dale and Kris Hodges are presenting their detailed study of social media market research at the 2013 QRCA Conference. The three volunteered to head a committee established by QRCA to analyze qualitative researchers’ evolving opportunities related to social media and Big Data. They’ve found that the Big Data collected through social media research is quantitative in volume, but that the actual participant responses gathered are statements or opinions that need to be interpreted by qualitative researchers to provide accurate insights.

“We’re connecting all these dots out there and creating one big picture, providing the background and detail behind the quantitative side of research,” Hodges said. “We’re listening to conversations regardless of how they’re generated.”

Although QRCA members face new challenges with the vast amount of social media research tools available and increasing mobile usage by participants, they serve the same function – to gather insights that reveal why a situation is a certain way.

“We’re entering a new era, but qualitative research is no different than it always has been. What we’re trying to do is the same. We just have the data coming at us differently,” Dale said.

Qualitative research increasingly defines the deeper meaning behind the numbers that Big Data offers, providing marketers with a more complete understanding.

“The qualitative perspective is an important component of analyzing Big Data,” Paynter said. “Qualitative researchers are embracing this and evolving their services to provide clients with a well-rounded, deeper understanding of data.”

More views will be shared on upcoming must-know trends at QRCA’s annual conference Oct. 16-18 in San Diego. This year’s theme, “Mission Exploration,” focuses on ideas and perspectives that will transform attendees personally and professionally. The conference is the largest gathering of professional qualitative research decision-makers in the industry, combining cutting edge educational sessions, as well as engaging social activities. For more information, visit QRCA’s website: www.qrca.org/events.

About QRCA
QRCA (www.qrca.org) is a vibrant global organization of qualitative researchers immersed in the most exciting work being done in the field. Our nearly 1,000 global members apply their passion, creativity and experience to help clients tap into the power of qualitative marketing research. QRCA’s award-winning quarterly magazine VIEWS, is now available online, featuring the latest trends in qualitative research from experts and QRCA members around the world. QRCA is celebrating 30 years of leadership in Qualitative Research, 1983-2013.

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