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# FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MARKETING OF WOMEN TO SENIOR MANAGERIAL POSITIONS – PROPOSED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Original  
Research

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## Keywords

*Marketing of Women;  
Phenomenology;  
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Grounded theory*

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## Abstract

*This material is part of a doctoral thesis for which the impulse came from the author's experience in working with women and man employees, from working with pupils: boys and girls aged 12-18, as well as from the author's experience in the past 27 years of working in the Ministry of Education in Israel starting as a young teacher and progressing over time to director. Marketing women to senior managerial positions can lead to an economy that allows equal opportunities for both genders on the basis of qualifications alone, without gender bias. In recent years, this topic has been researched at a global level in various frameworks. Some of the interesting questions regarding this subject are: What are the factors influencing the marketing of women to managerial position? Is it a matter of age, education, culture, personality, or public awareness? Maybe it is a combination of these parameters? To answer these questions, it is worth examining them with mixed method research, wherein utilizing the advantages of qualitative research enables an in-depth, detailed and flexible examination of the subject under study.*

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN MARKETING

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marketing has emerged as a field of study and academic discipline, but marketing as a practice, and market data gathering, has existed far before then. Information about the market has been gathered far throughout history through, salesmen, census takers, and tax gatherers, to name a few (Belk, 2006). In the context of the subject of factors that influence marketing women to senior managerial positions, the existing research literature on women and labor provides a number of important points that will be the basis for this review.

In the 1990's, the economic reality was one of the factors that encouraged women to pursue careers. But for economic reasons, many women are not satisfied with marriage and motherhood as practices that understand their identity, between motherhood and career, a mechanism for personal development and integration into the "adult world". Belk (2006) refers to a "brand" as "...a system of signs and symbols that fulfill, in the imaginary/symbolic realm, consumer needs for intangibles such as an emotional experience, a sense of belonging or a relationship in an increasingly fragmented and confusing world" (Belk, 2006, p. 33). In other words, a brand is a compound symbolic representation, to which consumers associate non-physical attributes such as value and that may induce emotional experiences, thoughts, perceptions, etc.

In this sense, the question arises whether marketing women to a senior managerial position can be thought of or equated to marketing a brand. If not, what are the differences between the two and in what ways do they diverge?

In the context of working mothers, the optimal allocation of resources towards different fields of activity, would be by combining them, rather than by separation. Such a change requires willingness and involvement at the level of the individual (the mother) and the collective (society). Therefore, if researchers even today present findings that show students' desire to combine education or employment at the beginning of their careers as mothers, it is sensible to assume that women in general, who still experience difficulty in going into the workforce, will experience a similar difficulty in marketing them to senior managerial position. This issue is just one of many that are researched with the qualitative approach.

Researchers have identified several types of qualitative research or research 'traditions', among them are grounded theory, phenomenology, life stories, and case studies. Creswell (1998) offers five traditions in qualitative research, namely, the phenomenological, biographical, field-based,

ethnographic, and case study traditions. Merriam (1985) sorted the traditions in qualitative research according to their final product (the research report) into three main types: case study, ethnography, and field theory.

The term 'qualitative research' has different meanings in different and changing contexts. One definition of qualitative research is a situational activity that offers an observation point for those who are watching the world. Qualitative researchers explore things in their natural location, trying to find meaning or interpret the phenomena in terms that humans use.

In any type of research, the research methods used in a study should correspond to the general research approach (e.g. the qualitative approach). In qualitative research, the best fitting and commonly used methods are the open interviews, unstructured or semi-structured interviews, focus groups and various methods for analyzing observations, interviews, and documents. However, qualitative researchers may also use, although in a controlled manner, methods that are traditionally considered more suitable for positivistic quantitative research, such as pure observation, structured interviews, questionnaires, or content analysis processes.

People learn about their own or others' cultures by observing other people, listening to them and drawing conclusions. The qualitative ethnographic researcher, for example, makes inferences based on visual and auditory data (i.e., what they see and hear). Accordingly, what people say, how people behave and what objects people use are the three sources from which ethnographic fieldwork draws cultural conclusions. This highlights the importance of field techniques, such as field notes, participant observation, individual descriptions and in-depth interviews (Spradley, 1979; Patton, 1980; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998).

Creswell (1998) identifies five distinct strategies in qualitative research by the degree to which they use a-priori theories to guide research. According to Creswell, strategies could be placed at different points on a continuum that represents the extent to which theory plays a role – before researchers ask questions and collect data, or after collecting data and asking questions. In this sense, ethnography is a research strategy that uses theory before asking questions and collecting the data. Phenomenologists generally make a-priori theoretical decisions, examining the meaning of people's experiences. The phenomenological researchers begin their research with a preexisting philosophical framework that provides guidelines for their research. Ethnographers see their research through a strong cultural lens. On the other end of the continuum proposed by Creswell, in the case study and grounded theory designs, researchers only relate to the theory at a later stage, after

formulating questions and collecting data. Every constructivist qualitative research project usually begins with a review of the past and current literature. This literature review reflects the conceptual perspective of the researchers. Writing a review of the initial literature helps researchers crystalize their conceptual outlook for themselves and research colleagues. The literature review should be constantly updated in a manner similar to the procedure used in periodic examinations.

Qualitative constructivist and positivist quantitative studies share similar research stages such as presenting a problem, raising questions, collecting information relating to questions, analyzing the data and providing answers to questions. At the same time, the research process is very different. Qualitative constructivist research usually begins with a problem or a research issue that the researchers are interested in, rather than with theory and hypotheses. In order to understand this issue, the author asks open questions, listens to the participants in the research, and re-designs the questions. The author's focus shifts throughout the study to reflect the evolving understanding of the problem.

The constructivist qualitative researcher collects the data mainly in three methods: observations, interviews, and document review (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984). Some of the data are collected directly from the field, with minimal external intervention (e.g. observations, documents, informal conversations with the informants), and some are collected by special reference to information.

### **PHENOMENOLOGY AS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD**

Phenomenology is roughly translated from ancient Greek to mean the study (logos) of that which is perceived (phenomenon).

This refers to a phenomenon that the people perceive in their senses and represented in their minds, such as sights and sounds originating from the external world or reality, but also from the internal world or internal reality such as dreams, feelings and memories. Phenomenological observation is based on the study of sensory phenomena that consciousness can perceive in the here and now. The phenomenological approach advocates observing the experience as perceived by the senses and the subject, observing the subjective experience of humanity.

The origins of this concept are in Plato, who argued that objective reality is not accessible. The truth according to Plato is not known to us, there are assumptions and theories that people build as individuals or as a society, that are constructed from their sensory experience and interpretation.

In the twentieth century Edmund Husserl added to phenomenology another meaning argument that in order to answer the question of how people can acquire knowledge about the world, they should study how they experience the world. This argument comes from the idea that knowing comes through a state of consciousness, and that consciousness is always intentional – people are “conscious of” things in the world. Therefore, the presence of the conscious act towards an object – implies the simultaneous presence of the object. This intentional consciousness of- or about things in the world is what gives meaning to them, through constructing mental categories coming from sensory experiences, e.g., concepts, ideas, thoughts, images, etc. The essence of something does not come from its physical characteristics, but from the way people experience it and the meanings they assign to these experiences. In other words, people can only have definite knowledge about an object through the study of the conscious acts that relate with their object. The Phenomenological Method is a method of systematic analysis of the structures of consciousness developed by Husserl. This method was later adopted in psychology. The phenomenological philosophers developed much of the knowledge of human consciousness and its structures. Phenomenology offers a search for the essence of the experience (or the fundamental meaning of the experience) (Goulding, 2005). Phenomenological methods study experience through ‘reduction’ of the experience of the imprints to its central meaning or “essence”. The basic concepts in research are defined phenomenologically, that is, in terms of the meaning of ideas and actions for people in a given situation. In a phenomenological study, the data collection process focuses first and foremost on in-depth interviews and in the collection of personal diaries. The researchers collect data from those who have experienced the studied phenomenon from a first-person point of view. They strive to explore the meaning of the experience for individuals and their presence in their daily lives (Creswell, 1998). The phenomenological methods for data collection differ slightly from most other qualitative traditions. Phenomenological research is not a naturalistic investigation, in which the information is collected directly from the field, rather, the phenomenological researcher collects the information in informal and indirect ways through in-depth interviews and / or diaries, and also by instructing the interpreters to be reflective and to tell their stories.

## **ETHNOGRAPHIC QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Ethnography is a process of describing and interpreting cultures. It is the study of a culture or of a group or individual within a group based mainly on observations and the protracted presence of the researcher in the field. The ethnographer listens and records the culture that includes not only symbols but also the meanings people ascribe to symbols (Goulding, 2005).

In its essence, ethnography is preoccupied with the meanings of the actions and events of the culture that the author wishes to understand. To identify these patterns, the ethnographer deals with intensive field activity, termed 'fieldwork'. Fieldwork is the most characteristic aspect of any ethnographic study. The main aspect of fieldwork is the researcher's presence in the field in order to observe, ask questions and to write what they see and hear. Through fieldwork, a culture is interpreted through three sources of information: what people say, how they behave and what objects they use.

Qualitative research makes a distinction between explicit and implicit (hidden) knowledge. In relation to marketing, these terms implicitly express a belief that bias exists with some methods but not others (implying that there exists an objective truth), that data are collected and therefore can be accessed if one knows where to go, the subconscious is an objective reality, that truth is hiding somewhere under the surface, and that observations are 'transparent' in their implications on marketing (Belk, 2006). It can be interesting to research the topic of factors influencing marketing women to senior managerial position with use of this qualitative method from this point of view.

A distinction also exists between primary and secondary sources of information. Where the primary sources of information are directly related to the interpreters, mainly through interviews, focus groups and diaries; the secondary sources come mainly from observations and documents.

## **ACTION RESEARCH IN MARKETING**

Action research is a cyclical iterative process that consists of a number of steps: (A) Identifying a problem; (B) Gathering and organizing data on the problem; (C) Interpretation of the data; (D) Planning and performing an action based on the evidence; (E) Reflection, and back again.

The professional literature recognizes three main models of action research. The first is the technical model, which is an action study that supports existing theories and refines them, the knowledge it produces is mainly deductive (top-down), and it

defines the problem in advance. Technical action research is characterized by long-term reflectivity, it is dialectical and stems from findings in the field and it is unknown to the researcher where it will lead. The study should present different perspectives and research should lead to change.

The second mode of action research is cooperative action research, which aims to realize an educational ideal and seeks ways to give this ideal a pedagogical, practical expression. Cooperative action research focuses on changing the practices to move them closer to that ideal. It gathers evidence both of participants' learning and of how the practice corresponds or diverges from the ideal, and exposes hidden theories, beliefs and opinions whose truth is taken for granted by the workers in the field. The process of identifying a problem and examining it is shared with the workers in the field, followed by a cooperative examination of the ways in which a significant change can be made.

The critical action research contains all the characteristics that appeared in both models presented and is also adapted to lead changes and aims at responding critically to constraints of the organization.

## **GROUNDING THEORY**

The grounded theory approach was developed in the United States in the 1960s by Glaser and Strauss, and has since been considered one of the main approaches to qualitative research (Shkedi, 2003; Creswell, 2012). This approach is aimed at formulating conceptual explanations to complex social phenomena by careful and systematic analysis of data such as documentary analysis, field observations, interviews, documents and artifacts that can be collected in the field (Creswell, 1998). In grounded theory, theory formation is done by induction, where the theory emerges from the systematic analysis of data from various sources.

The founders of grounded theory speak in a mixed language taken from the post-positivist, the positivist, and the constructivist discourse. Like researchers in the post-positivist field, founders of grounded theory support the possibility of formation of scientific knowledge not only from top to bottom - from the theory to the field, but also from bottom up, from the field to the theory. But like positivists, they seek to produce objective knowledge.

Glaser created a system of eighteen "coding families", that is, groups of theoretical codes, such as causes, results, processes and developments. These families enable the researcher to understand, explain and simplify the theoretical terms and meanings emerging from the field by identifying and characterizing the different relationship types within and between phenomena. The declared

purpose of the codes was to develop the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher, and their ability to identify theoretical structures within the data from the field - Figure 1.

At the heart of the process of building grounded theory are the coding processes of data analysis and interpretation. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the coding must be carefully edited so that the research is credible and valid. The attentive analysis of the data is intended to enable the researcher to break the biases and assumptions.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest to ask again and again: What is the significance of these data? What are the dimensions of the phenomenon under study? What are the relationships within the social phenomenon under study? Glaser and Strauss note that these questions develop the theoretical sensitivity of the coder and help them to identify causality, patterns within the data.

Below are the eighteen theoretical coding families suggested by Glaser (1978) along with examples. The first fourteen families are associated with the attributes of the phenomena (Glaser, 1978, pp. 73-82):

1. *The Six C's*: Causes or factors, contexts, contingencies, consequences (outcomes), covariances, and conditions.
2. *Processes*: Stages, transitions, sequences.
3. *Degree*: Boundaries, limit, range, strengths, quantities, polarity, grades, grades, continuum, statistical average (mean, medium, mode), probability.
4. *Dimensions*: Divisions, attributes, segments, parts, layers, sectors.
5. *Type*: Type, form, kinds, styles, classes, genre.
6. *Strategies*: tactics, mechanisms of operation, ways, manipulations, techniques, means, etc.
7. *Interactions*: Mutual influences, reciprocity, mutual dependency, implications reciprocity, interdependence, shared change, etc.
8. *Identity-self*: Self-identity, self-image, self-perception, self-worth, social value, self-realization, identity change.
9. *Cutting Point*: Boundaries, turning point, cutting point, breaking point, landmark, polarization, point of no return.
10. *Means and purpose*: Goals, objectives, expected results, deliverables;
11. *Cultural*: Social norms, values, beliefs, attitudes.
12. *Consensus*: Agreements, cooperation, contracts, uniformities, consensus, as well as differential perception, homogeneity-heterogeneity, conformity, non-conformity, mutual expectation.
13. *Unit*: Human units such as group, with, collective, organization, cluster, family and society, and status units, such as class, role, group of people and class array.

14. *Mainline social process*: This coding family is perceived by many grounded theory researchers as the most essential family. It includes, for example, membership, recruitment, socialization, normalization, social control, stratification and social mobility - processes without which there was no society, and therefore almost identical to the concept of "society."

The next four families have nothing to do with coding the components or dimensions of the social phenomenon itself that grounded theory seeks to explain:

15. *Reading*: Concepts, problems, and hypotheses, the building blocks of the theoretical conceptualization process. When the researcher encodes the data, it is important to "read" the phenomenon, to discern where they can conceptualize what is happening in the phenomenon, where they encounter coding problems that occur and where they can imagine what is happening within the phenomenon.
16. *Models*: The model is a way to visualize and present a theory visually. The model can be linear, panoramic, meshed, fractal and more. Sometimes there is almost an identity between a model and a theory, and people tend to switch between these two concepts, since both are aimed at explaining the phenomena and logical organization of meanings;
17. *Theoretical*: Terms describing theory and its quality: Relationship to other theory or data, scope, integration, interpretive, explanatory, predictive power, relevance, conceptual level - all of these are used to describe the nature of theory in academic communities.
18. *Ordering/Elaboration*: Structural ordering (e.g. organization to division hierarchy), ordering in time, conceptual ordering (achievement orientation, institutional goal, organizational value, personal motivation).

The next step of the research is to conceptualize the ideas emerging from the text. The rhetoric typical of writing grounded theory is a neutral rhetoric, which does not involve the researcher (Goulding 2005). The Atlas software, (Archive of Technology, Life World and Language), which is considered by many as a prototype of software for analyzing qualitative data, is an example of software inspired by the grounded theory approach.

## CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Case study is an observation of human activity in a certain place and time (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2009). Hamel (1992) adds that observations and data collection, including the meanings that the researcher brings to the understanding of case study, construct epistemological forms and

knowledge about social life. This is a descriptive theory that is necessary for any explanation in the behavioral sciences. Sabar Ben-Yehoshua (1990) notes that a case study is not a specific technique: it is a method of organizing and examining social information and data in a way that maintains the unique nature of the phenomenon under study. In addition, the case study is limited to the time, place and participants that are determined by the researcher.

Case study can be seen to fulfil the three principles of the qualitative method: describing, explaining, and understanding. Therefore, the case study is an effective method of research that can be used as an explanatory device, provide in-depth description, understanding and explanation to a unique phenomenon under study. Furthermore, it can also generalize a conclusion to other cases and hence the status of the distinctions ranges from local to global. The explanation is inductively understood and valid until proven otherwise.

There are different types of case studies, such as *cumulative* case studies, which aggregates a collection of specific case studies that make it possible to formulate a common generalization and understanding of the cases under investigation. The collection of cases that are examined during a union and cross-referencing to reach research insights. With an *illustrative* case study the investigation is aimed at understanding the case through its descriptive level. For example, education research on reform processes allows to understand the role of different position holders in the process of change. The descriptive level allows to understand actions, behaviors and processes that underlie the phenomenon. An *exploratory* ('pilot') case study is usually aimed at helping the researcher to identify research questions prior to a main investigation.

Case studies as evaluation methods – as a result of increasing awareness for evaluation of educational and other projects, Yin (1984) discusses the practical application of case studies for evaluation of an intervention program or initiative, and not only for pure research.

Case study is one of the best research options for research culture across its many levels. For example, the culture of a religious or political organization, school or community volunteers. Research of this kind allows to examine the ways in which ideas, symbols, language and beliefs form a set of actions and behaviors.

Flyvbjerg (2006) discussed five common misunderstandings about case-study research: (a) theoretical knowledge is more valuable than practical knowledge; (b) one cannot generalize from a single case, therefore, the single-case study cannot contribute to scientific development; (c) the case study is most useful for creating and formulating hypotheses, whereas other methods are

more suitable for testing hypotheses and theory-building; (d) the case study is biased toward verification of the researcher's predetermined notions; and (e) it is often difficult to summarize and develop general statements and theories on the basis of specific case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The stages of qualitative research are: determining boundaries, asking questions, cross-checking data when finding an existing pattern, sampling, purpose and interpretation (Merriam, 1998). After the data collection stage, the data is analyzed and the report is written. Qualitative research does not use the term reliability, but rather credibility. To validate the study, the data is used for cross-referencing.

### ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA - CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is a method for analyzing the content of a variety of data, such as visual and verbal data. It enables the reduction of phenomena or events into defined categories in order to better analyze and interpret them (Harwood & Garry, 2003).

Since the early 1920s, the methodology of content analysis has been developing in areas such as communication studies, political science, and psychology.

Content analysis investigates textual data in order to identify patterns and structures, selecting the key features that are of interest to the researchers, developing categories, and collecting them into noticeable constructs so as to pick up text meaning (Vitouladiti, 2014).

The strengths of content analysis arise from its different features:

- **Applicative value:** it can be used for examining various types of situations, written documents, images (pictures), and videos; it can help in decoding group and individual trends; can be used for analyzing archival material;
- **Scope:** it is widely used and understood;
- **Practical value:** it is not invasive and does not require contact with the studied population; inexpensive – it is easily repeated if necessary due to its low cost;
- **Quality assurance:** reliability can easily be established, in a straightforward way; replication is easy to conduct by other researchers, the research materials are usually available.

Although not many, the weaknesses of content analysis arise from its nature as a purely descriptive method. It is limited in its ability to reveal the underlying reasons for the pattern under observation. In other words, it easily answers 'what' but not 'why'. Furthermore, the analysis is limited by availability of material (Vitouladiti, 2014).

Qualitative research methods in the context of the study: Factors influencing the marketing of women to senior managerial positions

In Israel, the rate of participation of women in the Israeli labor market and their level of education have been steadily rising in recent decades. The gender disparity in labor force participation rates has nearly closed in the Jewish population, where today, the participation rate of women is only slightly lower than that of men (Atudot Le'Israel, 2016). At the same time, there are still gender gaps in the main employment characteristics and quality of employment, including gaps in the number of weekly work hours, promotion possibilities and wage levels, although these gaps have also narrowed among the Jewish population.

In the Arab sector, however, there is still a significant gender gap in the participation rates of Arab women, which are still lower than those of Jewish women and Arab men. All these despite the continuing rise in the level of education of Arab women.

In addition, there are still significant gaps between men and women in terms of salary, employment conditions and promotion to senior positions and management positions.

Moreover, certain groups of women find it particularly difficult to integrate into the labor market, such as women over the age of 45, women after maternity leave, mothers of small children, and women from populations with traditional characteristics. These phenomena stem from the fact that the labor market is not suited to women in general and to parents in particular.

As a result, and despite the high willingness of women in Israel to work, they are still far from realizing their potential in the labor market, especially in certain areas of work that are considered masculine, such as industry, transportation, communications and infrastructure.

Against the backdrop of the above, the Encouragement of Integration and Advancement of Women in Work and Adaptation of Women's Workplaces Law, was passed in 2008. The purpose of the law is to bring about a change in the business culture and to foster public awareness in order to encourage the integration and advancement of women in work and the adjustment of workplaces for women, as well as parenting.

On the basis of the desire of women to be part of the labor market and on the basis of the lack of realization of their existing potential in the labor market, since the market is dynamic and renewed, it is of great importance to research on the factors that affect the marketing of women to senior management positions. The data presented here reinforces the importance of continuing research on the marketing of women to senior managerial positions in particular, going beyond the general issue of women's participation in the workforce.

The appropriate methodology for research on the factors that affect the marketing of women to senior managerial positions is the mixed methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research, the qualitative portion of the research will include methods discussed in this paper.

The study population will comprise of women of different ages, different education levels, marital status (married, single), with or without children, different number of children of various ages, and possibly from different cultures, Arabs and Jewish. In addition, including men in the sample might also add value to the research.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this article, a literature review was conducted on the subject of qualitative research methods and data analysis. The qualitative research dimensions, differences, and basic concept were presented. In the research, the author will investigate the factors influencing marketing of women to senior managerial positions. The research will use the mixed methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

The same research stages will be present in both the qualitative and the quantitative portions of the mixed methods study, namely, presenting a problem, raising questions, collecting information relating to the questions, analyzing the data, and providing answers to questions.

In the qualitative portion of the research, one or more of the methods presented above can be used, such as action research, grounded theory, or case study in order to collect data and use statistical tools to analyze the data. Using statistical tools, one can examine scientific hypotheses, build predictive models and possibly use action research to predict market behavior or trends, infer the nature of a user from the actions they have performed ("recommendation systems"), and produce additional insights. Given that a large amount of data will be collected, the resulting information will be analyzed with statistical tools for the purpose of drawing conclusions. In order to find the influencing factors on the marketing of women to senior managerial positions, the study population will include women from different cultures, for example: it is possible to study different sectors (Jewish women, Arab women), religious women, secular women, women of different ages and different statuses (married, single, with or without children, etc.).

In the future it will be possible to determine a preferred index that will be represented by a bell curve. In other words, a recommendation in which the author aspires to reach a situation where the proportion of women in senior management

positions will be in accordance to their proportion in the population, and in any case a situation in which representation of all genders in managerial positions at a rate of over 61% will be the maximum possible rate in the index.

The research tools for the study will be chosen in a motivated and justified manner, such that meaningful data could be collected and analyzed. The appropriate statistical methods will be selected for the data analysis, and the results will be validated for the purpose of drawing the appropriate and meaningful conclusions.

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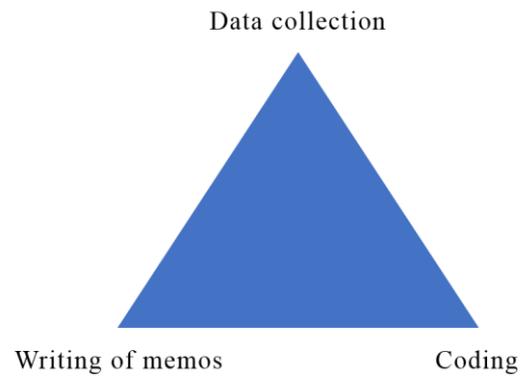


Figure No. 1  
**Grounded field theory as a triadic and circular process**