CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The overall purpose of this project was to demonstrate how companies operating in emerging markets can successfully organize activities related to event marketing. On the one hand, this included an investigation on companies’ possibilities for making event marketing an efficient instrument of Integrated Marketing Communication. On the other hand, it involved research on how companies can deal with challenges related to emerging market conditions, especially with institutional voids.

The specific research questions were formulated in Chapter one. These are restated:

1. How important is event marketing as a tool of integrated communications?
2. What are critical factors in event management?
3. What are common planning/ organization errors in event management?
4. a) What are the major challenges/ problems that companies face in event management?
   b) Which role do institutional voids play?
5. a) How could event management be organized/ reorganized in order to make it an efficient instrument of integrated communications?
   b) How could event management be adapted to emerging market conditions?

This chapter presents the research design, data collection and data analysis procedures that were decided to be most suitable for addressing the formulated research questions. Not only will practical procedures be presented, but their theoretical fundaments will also be discussed in the following.
3.2. Research Design

3.2.1. Qualitative vs. quantitative research

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted”
(A. Einstein)

As stated by Sayre (2001, p.4), “gathering intelligence about the marketplace is the purpose of conducting research of all types”. However, while quantitative methods focus on obtaining market data by means of numbers and statistics, qualitative research methods aim at providing an answer to why things are how they are, thus emphasizing market understanding.

Qualitative data is generally difficult to measure and quantify; it can yet reveal valuable attitudes and perspectives that can hardly be accessed through a traditional quantitative approach. The exploratory character of qualitative market research permits the gathering of new information on specific areas of research, very often through an intensive dialogue between the interviewer and the respondent (Broda, 2006; Naderer & Balzer, 2007).

Since fieldwork is done without predetermined categories of analysis, qualitative studies provide depth and detail. In contrast to quantitative methods, which can statistically measure and evaluate the reactions of a great number of people thanks to a limited set of questions and standardized answer categories, a qualitative study can yet never reach the same breadth due to the reduced number of cases (Patton, 2002). Sayre (2001) provides an overview of the main differences between quantitative and qualitative research (see Table 3.1).
Table 3.1: Quantitative vs. qualitative research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Quantitative research</th>
<th>Qualitative research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions about the market</td>
<td>Reality based on objectivity (etic view)</td>
<td>Insider’s perspective (emic view)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the research</td>
<td>Concrete answers to market questions</td>
<td>Contextualized approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to conducting research</td>
<td>Form hypotheses that can be applied in multiple situations (deductive approach)</td>
<td>Move from particular to more general statements (inductive approach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the researcher</td>
<td>Strive for objectivity and impartiality</td>
<td>Personal involvement and partiality; researchers become instrument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Self-elaboration, adapted from Sayre, 2001

In contrast to quantitative research, where hypotheses are formed and are then applied to various specific cases (deduction), qualitative research uses inductive reasoning, proceeding from particular to more general statements. To do this, qualitative research borrows methods from humanistic (e.g., from the social sciences) researchers, who believe in multiple realities and focus on interpreting the interaction between researcher and phenomenon (Sayre, 2001).

The discussion of quantitative vs. qualitative as two opposed paradigms has a long tradition and cannot be exhaustively explained here. Naderer & Balzer (2007) summarize the status of quantitative and qualitative methods as equally academic and recognized, under the condition that research is conducted systematically and follows established rules. What differs is the degree of abstraction of data which is increasing as one is moving towards quantitative data (see Table 3.2)
Table 3.2: The academic status of qualitative and quantitative research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of abstraction</th>
<th>Form of data</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Academic status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstraction increasing</td>
<td>Quantitative data</td>
<td>Abstracts quantities on the basis of qualitatively grouped data, systematically and following established rules</td>
<td>Academic/Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative data</td>
<td>Abstracts qualities on the basis of daily data, systematically and following established rules</td>
<td>Academic/Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily data</td>
<td>Spontaneous, based on situations, changeable, unsystematically, not following any established rules</td>
<td>Not academic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Naderer & Balzer (2007)

3.2.2. Why to choose a qualitative approach in this particular study?

The answer to this question is quite pragmatic: because the research questions of this study could not be answered applying quantitative methods. This is due to two reasons: (1) they are largely exploratory in nature, and (2) their purpose is to gain general insight into a topic on which little literature exists. In fact, the character of the study required access to profound expert information on the topic of event management which could not be acquired through a standardized questionnaire with predetermined answer categories as used in quantitative research. The aim was not to measure or quantify something, but to improve understanding of the phenomenon by obtaining information from experts on personal experiences and critical incidents.
3.2.3. Preliminary considerations on theory building

Before discussing in detail the research model applied in this study, as well as data collection and analysis procedures, some reflections on theory building will be made that are based on Carlile’s (2005) paper on theory building in management research. Carlile (2005) distinguishes two levels of theory building, namely a descriptive and a normative stage. The first is preliminary and needs to be gone through in order to pass on to the latter.

Figure 3.1: From descriptive theory to normative theory

As Figure 3.1 demonstrates, descriptive theory-building is carried out in three steps: the first is observation of certain attributes of a phenomenon; the second is classification of identified attributes into categories or a framework; the third is the identification and determination of correlations between the different categories. As we can observe in Figure 3.1, theory building in qualitative research generally starts with induction, moving from
particular to more general statements. Once researchers have gone through the descriptive stage of theory building, they can move on to normative theory, where they focus on the categorization of circumstances (and not attributes), and are searching for causal statements (and not correlations). The improvement of an existing theory generally occurs when researchers detect anomalies in existing theories, because the discovery of an anomaly permits the identification and improvement of categorization schemes. According to Carlile (2005), research needs to go through the whole cycle presented in Figure 3.1 in order to be complete and valuable.

This project on events management in emerging markets, since it deals with a topic on which little literature has been published, remains in the descriptive stage of theory building. The focus was on the identification of relationships among different categories of attributes of the studied phenomenon. Further research should concentrate on passing on to the normative stage of theory-building (see Chapter five, Recommendations for future research).

3.2.4. Research Model

Many qualitative research models are rooted in social sciences disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology or psychology. The model applied in this study is denominated as phenomenology, with origins in the philosophical tradition. Phenomenology focuses on exploring the very nature of a phenomenon by learning about the lived experiences of the people under investigation in relation to a specific phenomenon or concept (Sayre, 2001; Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), phenomenology gives answer to the following question: "What is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?" Hence, finding out about the essential or
underlying meaning of lived experience is the main objective of this approach. As described by Patton (2002), phenomenology focuses on two different aspects: first, on describing the subjective perspective of how people experience the world (the descriptive part), and second, on analyzing what this experience means to them (the analytical part). The idea is to discover essences of shared experiences among the studied group of people. The phenomenon on which research is done can be an emotion or a relationship, but it can as well be an organization or a culture (Sayre, 2001; Patton, 2002).

As described, this study focused on the issue of event management in emerging markets. The purpose was thus to find out about the subjective lived experiences of event managers that provide valuable insight into the topic. By comparing the experiences of different event managers, shared experiences were identified and categorized.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Sampling in qualitative research

*Sample size.* Whereas quantitative research works with random probability sampling, there are no specific rules for the determination of sample sizes in qualitative research. Sample size rather depends on considerations of the researcher related to the purpose of the study, the usefulness and the credibility of the selected cases and, last but not least, on the available time and resources (Sayre, 2001; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) describes the different approaches of quantitative and qualitative research regarding sample size as a trade off between breadth and depth.

*Breadth vs. depth.* Quantitative instruments limit responses to predetermined categories by means of standardized questions. Hence, quantitative researchers are able to measure the reactions of many respondents and this way can increase data and breadth. On
the contrary, qualitative studies generally permit the inquiry of only a few selected cases, but in great depth and with attention to detail and context, thus enhancing the depth of the study. Whereas quantitative research will hardly be able to provide depth, the breadth or number of people that might be interviewed or observed in qualitative research is limited. Purposeful sampling (defined in the following paragraph), as used in qualitative research designs, is an approach towards sampling aimed at limiting this trade off (Patton, 2002).

*Purposeful sampling.* Purposeful sampling is a term used to describe the “strategic and purposeful selection of information-rich cases”, with the goal of making sure that the selected sample provides the necessary depth, but at the same time meets the goal of a preferably high degree of breadth (Patton, 2002). Still, the specific type and number of the selected cases depend on the study purpose and on other factors mentioned before (i.e. resources). The selected cases will be judged according to the purpose of the study and to their relevance in answering the research questions on the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2002). In the following, the sampling procedure as applied in this particular study on events marketing will be explained in detail.

### 3.3.2. Sampling procedure

*Resources.* Five variables could be identified as the most important restrictions in sampling: (1) *limited time frame*, (2) *financial restrictions*, (3) *geographic restrictions*, (4) a *limited number of interviewers*, and (5) *limited access to confidential company information*. The time frame for conducting in-depth interviews was roughly 2 months, with no budget available. Research was geographically limited to the regions of Puebla and Mexico City. Only one interviewer needed to conduct all expert interviews, challenged by the constraint of limited access to confidential company information.
Sampling strategy. Initially, an approach of homogenous sampling was followed. The idea of homogenous sampling is the focus on a particular set of similar cases, which reduces variation and simplifies analysis. The basic idea was to conduct interviews on events management with a number of multinational companies with operations in Mexico. The notion of multinational was of particular importance since the goal was to identify institutional voids, which could not be detected easily through interviews with local companies. It was decided to select companies which organize a significant number of events throughout the year and thus have a certain expertise in the field of events management. Since the automotive industry, e.g. in the context of product launches, is known for organizing manifold big events, the marketing/communication departments of various automotive companies were contacted for expert interviews. This approach was also based on the assumption that problems related to institutional voids might be greater and more complex with a growing size of events. Hence, considering the purpose of the study and the constraints mentioned before, it was decided to focus research on automotive multinational companies based in Puebla and Mexico City.

Later on, with the first interviews having been conducted, it became clear that in order to fully explore the phenomenon under investigation, especially the organizational part of events management as well as the challenges related to the collaboration with the government, event agencies needed to be included in the sample. Patton (2002) refers to the act of following new leads during fieldwork and taking advantage of the unexpected as emergent sampling. So in order to get a two-way perspective of the phenomenon, event agencies, especially suppliers of the selected companies, were included in the sample. All the selected event agencies have experience with event organization in the automotive industry.
Strengths and weaknesses of the sampling procedure. The conception of the study allowed insight into how internationally operating companies use event marketing as a communication instrument and how important it is for them. Moreover, in-depth interviews were likely to reveal valuable information on institutional voids and other challenges in event management due to three reasons: First, automotive companies’ events tend to be big in size and are likely to encounter difficulties in organization and implementation. Second, the design of the study allowed obtaining the perspectives from both companies and event agencies. Third, it could be examined how the companies and the agencies collaborate in order to make event marketing an efficient instrument of communication and to manage organization and implementation challenges.

However, due to the nature of the sampling strategy, this study does not give a broad range of perspectives as far as the companies’ side is concerned, since it is focused on one sector. Moreover, because of restricted resources, the study is limited to investigation in Mexico and can thus not claim validity in other emerging markets. Nevertheless, some important insights could be obtained that are common also to other emerging markets.

Effects of sample on findings. Most importantly, the results of interviewing reflect the perspective of and the experiences made by the automotive industry. The companies’ perspective is limited as only big multinational companies with world-wide operations and reputation were interviewed, excluding local and small businesses from investigation. There are no specific restrictions as far as the agencies’ perspective is concerned, since sizes of agencies vary and since the selected event agencies have an important range of clients, from small and local businesses to big and multinational companies.
3.3.3. Interview technique

Characteristics. The interview can be described as a communicative process through which the investigator extracts information from a person or informant. The extracted information will be strongly influenced by the respondent, who acts and interprets his environment on the basis of his previous experiences. So every interview generates a subjective informative product shaped by the interviewees’ experiences (Delgado & Gutierrez, 2007).

Based on these considerations, it becomes clear that the goal of qualitative interviewing is to provide understanding of things that cannot directly be observed, such as feelings, thoughts, opinions, attitudes or behaviors of interviewees. Since qualitative interviewing is based on the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful and knowable, entering into their perspective becomes a major objective for the qualitative researcher. The tools of observation and interviewing are often used in a complementary way (Sayre, 2001; Patton, 2002).

Interview forms. Qualitative researchers have proposed different classification systems for interview types. Sayre (2001), for example, distinguishes the unstructured field interview from the more formal structured interview working with a predetermined set of open-ended questions. Patton (2002) provides a more detailed classification of open-ended interviews, differentiating three basic approaches: (1) the informational conversational interview, (2) the interview guide approach, and (3) the standardized open-ended interview. The most important features of each interview approach are presented in Table 3.3.
Table 3.3: Approaches of open-ended interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The informational conversational interview</th>
<th>The interview guide</th>
<th>The standardized open-ended interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions flow from immediate context; no predetermination of questions, topic or wording</td>
<td>The interview guide provides topics or subject areas in advance, in outline form</td>
<td>The exact wording of questions and their sequence are predetermined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Conversational flow as a major tool of fieldwork</td>
<td>→ Within the framework of the guide, the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions</td>
<td>→ Each respondent gets to answer the same questions in the same way and in the same order, including standard probes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data gathered will be different for each person interviewed</td>
<td>Data collection more systematic</td>
<td>Enhanced comparability of data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Patton (2002)

All three formats have open-ended questions, meaning that the phrases or answer categories used by respondents are not predetermined, as this is the case in closed, fixed-response interviews in quantitative studies. What varies is the extent to which wording and sequencing of the questions that will be asked during the interview are predetermined. The format that was applied in this project is the interview guide approach, with the wording of the questions predetermined, but the sequence determined during the conversational flow. The advantage of this approach is that it makes data collection more systematic and ensures that certain topics and issues of interest will be covered (Patton (2002)).
**Explorative expert interview.** The company interviews that were conducted can be classified as explorative expert interviews. Explorative interviews are unstructured or semi-structured conversations, which primarily focus on gathering detailed and complete information on specific topics or issues of interest. Their major goal is to obtain relevant information and opinions on the research topic. Broda (2006) cites this characteristic as the major criterion used to distinguish explorative from in depth interviews, which are aimed at revealing unconscious motives and attitudes that are difficult to find out about. So in in-depth interviews the psychological aspect is prevalent, whereas explorative interviews focus more on the informational aspect (Broda, 2006).

### 3.3.4. Interview guide

An interview guide specifies important issues and topics related to the formulated research questions that will have to be covered during the interview. In qualitative research, questions need to be open-ended, neutral, singular and clear. There are a number of different question categories, from experience questions to background/demographic questions (Patton, 2002). The interview guide developed for this study mainly consists of experience and behavior questions as well as opinion questions. Part of the expert interview also focuses on so-called critical incidents in event management. Critical incidents have far-reaching consequences – so for example a critical planning error can have important consequences for the quality of an event. The critical incident technique, originally developed by Flanagan (1964), was particularly useful to find out about the major challenges of companies and agencies in event management (Buber & Holzmüller, 2007). The interview guide can be found in Appendices A.1 and A.2.
3.3.5. *Interview respondents*

In total, ten qualitative interviews were conducted in a period of roughly four months (November 2008 – February 2009). Four multinational companies in the automotive sector with operations in Mexico were interviewed: Volkswagen de México, Porsche de México, Seat de México and Audi de México. Respondents are responsible for the respective marketing or communications departments or are directly working in events management. The four brands, although organized separately, are integrated into the Volkswagen Concern, and coordinated by the Volkswagen Corporate Communications department, which was also interviewed.

Moreover, four interviews were conducted with local event agencies, of which three are suppliers of Volkswagen de México. Those were Creatti, Dynamics and SinLimite Pro. The fourth interview was conducted with Imagina Puebla, which also has expertise in working with automotive companies. Each company is described briefly in Appendix B; interview transcripts can be found in Appendices C to L.

3.4. Data analysis

3.4.1. *Quality of data*

*Philosophical bases.* The paradigm of quantitative vs. qualitative research can be traced back to the philosophical perspectives the methodologies are based on: positivism and interpretivism, respectively. *Positivism,* the basis of quantitative inquiry, believes in an objective reality or real world which exists independently of people’s perspectives or opinions. To base inquiry on this approach means employing what Lee & Baskerville (2003, p.229) refer to as “hypothetico-deductive” logic, proceeding from general hypotheses to particulars with the objective of explaining the “real world”. *Interpretivism,* on the contrary,
believes that a theory will always belong to the specific setting and circumstances where and under which it was developed. This approach, the basis of qualitative inquiry, does not strive for universal laws, as it recognizes that the subjective meaning of people’s experiences is what matters and shapes reality (Lee & Baskerville, 2003). With these different philosophical approaches in mind, the alternative criteria for ensuring the quality of a qualitative study can now be discussed.

Alternative criteria for judging quality. Patton (2002) mentions five contrasting sets of criteria, of which only two are presented in Table 3.4, since they are of particular importance for this project: (1) traditional scientific research criteria, and (2) social construction and constructivist criteria.

Table 3.4: Alternative criteria for judging the quality of qualitative studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional scientific research criteria</th>
<th>Objectivity of the inquirer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Validity of the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systematic rigor of fieldwork procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Triangulation (across methods and data sources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliability of coding and pattern analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence of findings to reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generalizability (external validity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strength of evidence supporting causal hypotheses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social construction and constructivist criteria</th>
<th>Subjectivity acknowledged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Triangulation (multiple perspectives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Particularity (doing justice to the integrity of a unique case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced and deepened understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contributions to dialogue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Patton (2002)
Traditional scientific criteria are based on the philosophical approach of positivism, the basis of quantitative methods. So when applying those criteria to qualitative studies, the researcher needs to be as neutral as possible, apply systematic data collection procedures, and strive for causal explanations and generalizability through hypothesis testing. The aim is to describe phenomena as accurately and precisely as possible in order to provide knowledge on how the “real world” is.

Traditionally, the quality of research studies has been evaluated based on internal validity, external validity and reliability. Internal validity refers to the extent to which a theory’s conclusions are unambiguously drawn from its premises; external validity describes the extent to which the findings in one context can be applied in a context different from the first; reliability finally is the degree to which another researcher could draw the same conclusions from the same observations (Carlile, 2005). These criteria are crucial for researchers applying traditional scientific criteria.

As to the generalizability or external validity of data, Lee & Baskerville (2003) offer an interesting discussion. Based on findings of the Scottish philosopher David Hume, they argue that induction (as applied in quantitative research) is never fully justified logically since inductive conclusions are always based on certain premises. Therefore, an increase in sample size might be beneficial, but the benefits refer to the improved reliability of the sampling procedure and not to the improved generalizability of a sample to its population. For this reason, so Lee & Baskerville (2003), statistical generalizability hardly represents a general model for all forms of generalizability.

Since the goal of this project was not to statistically measure market data, but to provide the understanding of a specific phenomenon, traditional scientific research criteria do not provide an adequate framework for the judgment of the quality of this study. More
suitable for the nature of this study are social constructivist research criteria (as described in the next section) that correspond to internal and external validity as well as to reliability. Those will be explained in the next paragraphs.

Social construction and constructivist criteria, from its interpretivist perspective, recognize that the world is a construction – be it a social, political, or psychological one. Researchers supporting this point of view are rather interested in a deep understanding of specific cases within a particular context than in the creation of hypotheses and generalization.

Social constructivist researchers have established a number of variables for the judgment of qualitative studies: Credibility, as the equivalent to internal validity, is the extent to which the multiple realities of the people under investigation are accurately presented. Transferability, corresponding to external validity, is the ability of one manifestation of the phenomenon to a second manifestation of the phenomenon in a different setting. Dependability, as analogue to reliability, recognizes that two construals of the same phenomenon will never be identical. And finally confirmability, analogue to neutrality and objectivity in quantitative inquiry, refers to that data should represent “a logical set of conclusions, and to be non-prejudiced and non-judgmental renderings of observed reality” (Sayre, 2001, p.46; Patton, 2002). Based on Sayre (2001), we can conclude that qualitative inquiry needs to focus on authenticity, e.g. avoiding biased questions and responses, or using informants to confirm assumptions.

As described earlier, this study recognizes the different constructions of reality and thus the different perspectives of people regarding a certain phenomenon. Social constructivist research criteria therefore constitute a suitable framework for this study. The
next paragraphs will explain how quality was ensured in this project, according to social constructivist criteria, with a special focus on credibility and confirmability.

How to ensure quality. Patton (2002) mentions rigorous methods as the most important element on which the credibility of an inquiry depends. The use of rigorous methods starts with the employment of systematic data collection during fieldwork, e.g. through interviewing as described before, and ends with systematic analysis strategies of the collected data. The latter includes what Patton (2002) calls integrity in analysis: generating and assessing alternative explanations of the phenomenon studied. It also includes the analysis of negative cases, is to say cases and instances that do not fit within the identified patterns. And, last but not least, the method of triangulation, or the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis to authenticate data gathering and analysis tactics. Table 3.5 summarizes the different forms of triangulation.

Table 3.5 Triangulation in qualitative research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of triangulation</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methods triangulation</td>
<td>Using different data collection methods, e.g. a combination of qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data triangulation</td>
<td>Using multiple sources of data e.g. checking interviews against written documents e.g. comparing the perspectives of people from different points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator/ Analyst triangulation</td>
<td>Using multiple investigators of analysts of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory triangulation</td>
<td>Using different perspectives for interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sayre, 2001; Patton (2002)
This project primarily focused on data triangulation (comparing different data sources and points of view) and on theory triangulation (interpreting data from different perspectives). Due to resources restrictions, analyst and investigator triangulation could not be realized. Methods triangulation was not applied, since the nature of the study did not permit quantitative data collection. Moreover, quality was ensured through the use of systematic coding and pattern analysis as well as systematic data interpretation procedures, which enhanced the credibility, the confirmability and the transferability of the study.

**Final considerations on the quality of qualitative data.** To sum up the discussions on the quality of the data of a qualitative inquiry vs. a quantitative study, a statement of Carlile (2005, p.17) will be cited here: “The healthiest and most accurate mindset for researchers is that nearly all data – whether presented in the form of large data sample analysis on one extreme, or an ethnographic description of behavior on the other – are subjective…the only way we can judge the value of data is by their usefulness in helping us understand how the world works, identifying categories, making predictions and surfacing anomalies.”

**3.4.2. Data interpretation procedures**

*Frameworks for organizing descriptive data.* Once qualitative data has been collected, in the case of this project through explorative expert interviews, the gathered information needs to be organized within a certain framework. Of the three approaches proposed by Patton (2002), -storytelling approach, case study approach, and analytical framework approach-, the latter is of particular interest for this study. *Analytical frameworks* can be processes (e.g. decision-making, communication), key issues, interview questions and sensitizing concepts (categories that the analyst defines based on the data). Indigenous concepts, -key phrases and terms used by the people in the setting-, very often form the
basis for sensitizing concepts. This implies that qualitative researchers capture the key phrases most important to the respondents (indigenous concepts), and use those key phrases to build categories and to orient fieldwork (sensitizing concept). Although the analyst defines the categories, it still remains important how people actually experience and describe their reality (Patton, 2002).

For this project, the interview guide that was conceived constituted a descriptive analytical framework for analysis. The answers from different respondents were grouped by topics from the guide; however, since the sequence of questions differed from interview to interview, the relevant data was dispersed throughout the respective interviews.

**Content analysis.** The idea of qualitative interpretation, according to Patton (2002), needs to focus on three aspects: (1) making the obvious obvious, or confirming what is already known about the subject, (2) making the obvious dubious, or identifying misconceptions, and (3) making the hidden obvious, or discovering important things that have not yet been illuminated by others. Content analysis is one of the most important instruments of qualitative data interpretation analysis.

The phenomenological approach, as described earlier in this chapter, yields statements of meanings and groups of statements or meaning units (Sayre, 2001). Content analysis, an instrument of qualitative data reduction and categorization based on core consistencies and meanings, serves to identify the most important meaning units. The core meanings found throughout such content analysis are also referred to as patterns or themes. Delgado & Gutierrez (2007) distinguish the epistemological context of content analysis from pure textual analysis like that: whereas textual analysis focuses on the context of the text itself, in content analysis the text is seen as an instrument by which analysts can access the content of
what has been said or written. According to Delgado & Gutierrez (2007, p.230), the content analysis is conceived as a number of procedures aimed at the “production of an analytical meta-text” in which the actual analyzed text is represented in a transformed manner.

**Strategies for content analysis.** The first step in organizing content analysis is the definition of the pragmatic objectives pursued by the investigation. Those have been presented at the beginning of this chapter. On the basis of this pragmatic level, the theoretical level needs to be determined, including the different analysis strategies.

The first decision to be made is the level of content analysis pursued: (1) *syntactic*, (2) *pragmatic*, (3) *semantic* level. A syntactic analysis examines the form of a text, with a focus on the use of words, grammar and the type of expressions used. The pragmatic analysis focuses on the process of communication. Of greater importance for this study is the semantic approach, or the analysis of meanings. The goal of a semantic analysis is to examine how expressions are used in order to describe and evaluate reality. The semantic level was crucial for the analysis of this study, since the objective was to identify attributes and units of meanings that would best describe the phenomenon of events management in emerging markets.

Then, the researcher has to decide between an *extensive strategy*, which tries to reduce the considered elements to a maximum while discussing these selected number of elements exhaustively, and an *intensive strategy*, which tries to integrate all elements present in the text into analysis. This study followed the extensive strategy approach, trying to filter the most important elements and discussing them in detail.

Finally, the researcher has two alternatives for comparison of detected elements: the *inter-textual strategy* determines the sense and meaning of a text in comparison to other
texts, while the *extra-textual strategy* establishes sense and meaning in relation to other considerations not related to the text. This study combined both strategies making inter-textual comparisons between the different interviews and comparing the considered elements to relevant literature (Delgado & Gutierrez, 2007).

**Coding.** The most important instrument of content or thematic analysis is coding, the process of breaking down and reducing text into manageable units of analysis (Patton, 2002). The analyst, by reading over all collected text, first needs to identify key words to form meaning units, which can later be classified into categories. During this process of preliminary coding, when researchers are trying to identify those meaning units, they need to rely on textual or extra-textual criteria and also need to decide on an extensive or intensive strategy. Later on, in the process of identifying categorization units, the different levels of communication (syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic) play a major role (Delgado & Gutierrez, 2007). The analyst must constantly face decisions between convergence (what fits together?) and divergence (what to eliminate?) (Patton, 2002). The coding categories applied in this study can be found in Appendix M.

### 3.5. Conclusion

The empirical study of this project followed a qualitative research approach, based on the model of phenomenology. This model implies a focus on the lived experiences of the respondents forming part of the sample. By means of homogenous and emergent sampling procedures, ten event managers of both multinational companies and local event agencies were selected for semi-structured expert interviews. Interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide that covered the major topics of the research questions. On the basis
of the interview transcripts, a content analysis was conducted with the help of a systematic coding procedure. Quality was ensured through data triangulation and through the application of systematic pattern and content analysis. The next chapter will now present the results of the empirical investigation.