

MBA 5652
Research Methods
Unit III:
Qualitative Research Methods

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Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

- Discuss the importance of research-based decision making in a company.
 - Summarize how qualitative methods of research aid in decision making of a discipline.
- Describe how qualitative research methods are used.
 - Describe specific qualitative methods that could be used within a discipline.
 - Explain the effectiveness of qualitative methods of research within a discipline.
- Appraise current research tools used in business and industry.

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What is Qualitative Research?

- Focuses on qualities rather than quantities (Babin & Zikmund, 2016)
- Not subject to quantification or quantitative analysis
- Examines feelings, attitudes, motivations, and deeper thoughts
- Allows the researcher to make subjective interpretations of the responses provided by the respondents (McDaniel & Gates, 2015)

Qualitative research suggests that the researcher is interested in qualities rather than quantities (Babin & Zikmund, 2016).

Another perspective is that of McDaniel and Gates (2015), who define qualitative research as research whose findings are not subject to quantification or quantitative analysis.

They point out that qualitative research can be used to examine feelings, attitudes, motivations, and deeper thoughts than a more quantitative approach.

A pure definition of qualitative research is research that addresses the overall objectives of the research project, allowing the researcher to make vast subjective interpretations of the responses provided by the respondents.

What is Qualitative Research?

- Includes open-ended questions and probing questions
- Allows respondents to express feelings and beliefs
- Detects things not indicated in a quantitative research study



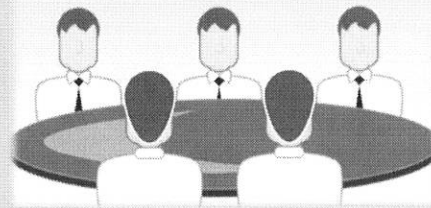
(warszawianka, 2010)

Qualitative techniques utilize open-ended questions and probing questions, allowing the respondents to express their feelings and beliefs; this provides the researcher with a better understanding of the responses given. Because of this, qualitative research can detect things that are not demonstrated in a quantitative research study.

Qualitative Research Methods

- Focus groups

- Eight to twelve people guided by a moderator
- Allows respondents to expand on their responses
- Moderator is important
 - Allows everyone to speak freely
 - Avoids groupthink
- Reduce subjectivity with two-way mirrors
- Can be implemented fairly quickly



(neocreo, 2007)

Focus groups are one method used in qualitative research analysis. A focus group typically consists of eight to twelve members who are guided by a moderator in discussion on a specific predesignated topic.

The overall goal of said research is to enable and encourage the respondents to elaborate on their responses. Comparing this to survey analysis, one can understand how this might provide a huge advantage in understanding the true feelings of the respondents.

An important dimension of the success of focus groups is that the moderator is able to control the group dynamics in such a way that everyone in the group feels as if they are able to honestly respond to the researcher's questions and not feel pressure to respond like the balance of the group. These groups allow for a free exchange of information where everyone feels as if their input is important, valuable, and actually essential to the success of the study.

Groupthink is a concept in which everyone in the group believes or thinks in the same way. This is a concept that the researcher or moderator would attempt to avoid.

Advantages of using focus groups include the fact that the interactions between members of the focus group can actually stimulate new ideas and thoughts that provide valuable insight into the research.

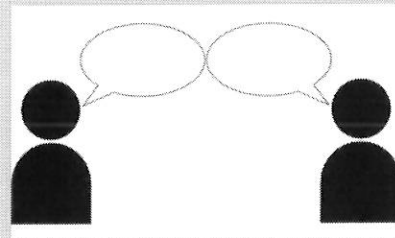
Additionally, focus groups can be observed by other members of the research team from behind a two-way mirror, which can decrease the amount of subjectivity involved with only one researcher.

A final advantage would be the fact that focus group studies can usually be put together and implemented faster relative to other research studies.

Qualitative Research Methods

- Individual Depth Interviews (IDI)

- One-on-one interviews with the purpose of getting detailed responses
- Direct and indirect questioning used to discover motivations
- Advantages include:
 - Groupthink or peer pressure is removed
 - Respondents' attentiveness is heightened
 - Sensitive information can be kept confidential



(palomaironique, 2011)

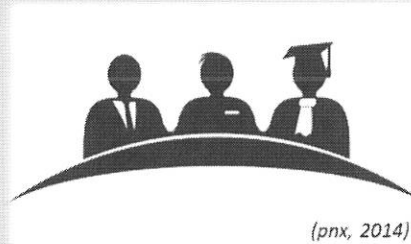
Another qualitative technique used by researchers is *individual depth interviews* (IDI). These are basically one-on-one interviews conducted by a skilled interviewer with the purpose of pulling out detailed responses to the questions. This is accomplished using a combination of direct questioning as well as indirect questioning that uncovers hidden motivations for the responses.

Advantages of using the IDI approach include the fact that any possibility of groupthink or group peer pressure is removed. The fact that this is an individual interview in a venue for detailed questioning presents itself as an advantage. Since respondents are constantly being probed, their attentiveness is heightened. This type of research is also particularly useful if the content of the study is of sensitive or confidential nature.

Qualitative Research Methods

- The Delphi Method

- Similar to a focus group
- Group consisting of experts in the topic area
- Consists of rounds of data that are revisited in the next round by the same group
- Provides for expertise and anonymity

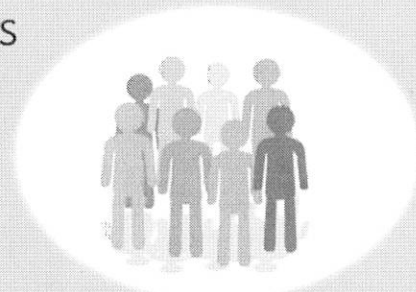


The *Delphi method* is another form of qualitative research that is popular today. This method is similar to a focus group study, but the premise is that the group consists of experts in the topic area. Additionally, this method consists of rounds of data collection that are then revisited in the next round by the same group. This provides for expertise within the study while also providing for some level of anonymity.

Qualitative Research Methods

- Projective testing

- Based on the fact that respondents may not reveal their true response to the study
- Respondents given situations that do not ask them to respond directly to the question at hand
- Examples include word-association tests, story-completion tests, analogies, or responses to a statement or visual
- Also used in job interviews



(netalloy, 2010)

Projective testing is another qualitative research method.

This method has its roots in the clinical psychological research area where respondents may not be willing or able to reveal their true response to the study. As human beings, we have a certain level of defenses engrained in us, such as socially acceptable responses. Possibly, the respondent may feel his response is not relevant or even logical. Because of this, the response might be suppressed, thus degrading the integrity of the study.

The use of projective tests suggests that the interviewer will provide situations that do not ask the respondents to respond directly to the question at hand.

Examples of this might be word-association tests, story-completion tests, analogies, or responses to a seemingly random statement or visual.

While these techniques are used in qualitative research, they are also used in job interviews where the interviewer is attempting to obtain the inner thoughts of the interviewee.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research Methods

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Less expensive • Provides the feelings and rationale of the respondents • Can aid in explaining the results of quantitative studies	• May not represent enough of the overall population • Data collected is based upon the subjective opinion of the researcher

In summary, the use of qualitative research has multiple advantages and disadvantages that need to be realized by the researcher as he is analyzing whether to incorporate a qualitative or quantitative approach to his research.

Advantages of qualitative research include the following:

- Qualitative research tends to be less expensive simply because the sample size tends to be smaller.
- Qualitative research provides the feelings and rationale of the respondents within the research, providing for an in-depth understanding of the rationale for their responses. This can provide a deeper understanding of the research results.
- Qualitative research, when combined with quantitative research, can actually aid in explaining the results of the quantitative studies.

Disadvantages of qualitative research include the following:

- Because of the smaller sample sizes, the qualitative study may not represent enough

of the overall population. A larger sample size will normally provide more credibility of the results.

- The data collected in a qualitative study is, to a large degree, based upon the subjective opinion of the researcher.

Additional Uses

- Also used in exploratory research designs, where broad-based ideas from the respondents are being sought
- Can be a useful first step by helping the researcher to formulate the overall objectives of the study

Another broad use of qualitative research is in exploratory research designs, where the researcher is interested in obtaining broad-based ideas from the respondents. This can be a useful first step in a more structured and rigorous study as it can provide the researcher with additional insight to more clearly formulate the overall objectives of the forthcoming study.

Conclusion

- Qualitative research methods focus on the beliefs and feelings of respondents.
- There are several different qualitative methods.
- Advantages include lower costs, a deeper understanding of the responses, and further explanation of quantitative results.
- Disadvantages include small sample sizes and researcher subjectivity.

To summarize, qualitative research methods focus on the feelings, attitudes, motivations, and deeper responses of those participating in the study. There are several different methods of qualitative research including focus groups, individual in-depth interviews, the Delphi method, and projective testing. Advantages of qualitative methods include lower costs, the ability to more deeply understand respondents' answers, and when combined with quantitative studies, a better understanding of the results. Disadvantages are smaller sample sizes and the subjectivity of the researcher involved.