

MARK2052 EXAM NOTES

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W5 Qualitative research methods

5.1 Chapter 4: Interviews

Differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods

✓ Identify the fundamental differences between qualitative and quantitative research designs used in the collection of primary data and explain their appropriateness in creating useful managerial information.

- **Qualitative research methods** focus on generating **exploratory, preliminary insights** to decision problems and opportunities
 - Focus on collecting detailed amounts of data from relatively small samples by questioning/observing
 - Use open-ended or non-structured questioning formats
 - Can involve observation of research subjects without asking any questions
 - Can generate data quickly but difficult to analyse and generalise results
- **Quantitative research methods** place heavy emphasis on using formalised, standard, structured questioning practices administered to large numbers of respondents
 - Directly related to **descriptive** and **conclusive** (or **causal**) types of research projects.
 - Used to make more accurate **predictions** or **verify the existence** of relationships.

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Research goals/objectives	Discovery, identification, understanding of ideas	Validation of facts, estimates, relationships, predictions
Type of research	Usually exploratory designs	Descriptive and causal designs
Type of questions	Open-ended, semi structured, unstructured, deep probing	Mostly structured
Time of execution	Relatively short time frames	Longer time frames
Representativeness	Small samples, limited to sampled respondents	Large samples, normally good rep of target population
Researcher skills	Interpersonal communications, observations,	Scientific, statistical skills, some subjective

	interpretative skills	interpretative skills
Generalisability of results	Very limited; only preliminary insights and understanding	Usually very good; inference about facts, estimates of relationships

Qualitative research advantages and disadvantages

✓ Explain the basic pros and cons of using qualitative methods of data collection.

Advantages	Disadvantages
economy and timeliness of data collection*	lack of generalisability of data*
richness of data*	inability to distinguish small differences
accuracy of recording marketplace behaviours	lack of reliability
preliminary insights to building models and scale measurements	difficulty finding well-trained investigators, interviewers and observers *

* major advantage/disadvantage

In-depth interviews

✓ Describe and explain in-depth interviews.

- An **in-depth interview** is a **formalised** process of asking a subject a set of **semi-structured, probing questions** in a face-to-face setting.
- Have the following research objectives:
 - to provide data for defining and redefining the marketing problem or opportunity;
 - to identify specific hidden information requirements;
 - to provide data for better understanding the results from quantitative survey studies;
 - to reveal and understand consumers' hidden needs, wants, attitudes, feelings, behaviours, perceptions and motives regarding services, goods and practices;
 - to generate new ideas about goods, services, or delivery methods;
 - to discover new constructs and measurement methods; and
 - to better understand changing consumer preferences
- **Probing questions**: questions that result when an interviewer takes the subject's **initial response** to a question and uses that response as **the framework for the next question** (the probing question) in order to gain more detailed responses

- Probing questions are used in in-depth interviews
- **Interpersonal communication skills:** the interviewer's ability to articulate questions in a direct and clear manner
- **Listening skills:** the interviewer's ability to accurately interpret and record the subject's responses

Qualitative data collection methods

✓ Explain other qualitative data collection methods such as protocol interviews and projective interviewing techniques

- **Experience interviews:** informal gathering of information from individuals thought to be knowledgeable on the issues relevant to the research question
- **Protocol interviewing:** the subject is placed in a specified decision-making situation and asked to express verbally the process and activities that he/she would undertake to make a decision
 - useful where focus is on motivational or procedural aspects of making a purchase decision
- **Articulative interviews:** qualitative group interviews that focus on listening for and identifying key conflicts in a person's orientation values towards goods and services
 - Structured to elicit narratives as opposed to gaining factual truths; find out what the subjects find worthy/unworthy in their lives
- **Projective interviews:** indirect method of questioning that enables a subject to project beliefs and feelings onto a third party, into a task situation or an inanimate object.
 - Main objective is to learn more about the respondents in situations where they may not reveal their true thoughts in a direct questioning process.
 - Include role-play interviews and sentence completion tests.
- **Word association test:** a projection technique in which the subject is presented with a list of short phrases, one at a time and asked to respond with the first thing that comes to mind
- **Sentence completion tests:** a projective technique where subjects are given a set of incomplete sentences and asked to complete them in their own words
- **Picture tests:** a qualitative interviewing methods where subjects are given a picture and instructed to describe their reactions by writing a short story about the pictures
- **Thematic Appreciation Test:** a specific projective technique that presents the subjects with a series of

pictures and asks them to provide a description of or a story about the pictures

- **Cartoon or balloon test:** a qualitative data collection method in which the subject is given a cartoon drawing and suggests the dialogue in which the character/s may engage
- **Role-playing interview:** a subject is asked to act out someone else's behaviour in a specified setting
- **Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique:** a visual research technique used in in-depth interviewing that encourages research participants to share emotional and subconscious reactions to a particular topic

5.2 Chapter 5: Focus Groups

Focus groups in qualitative research

- **Focus group research:** a formalised process of bringing a small group of people together for an interactive, spontaneous discussion on one particular topic or concept.
- Ultimate goal of focus group research is to give researchers and decision-makers as much information as possible about how people regard the topic of interest.
- Not limited to interviewer interactions; reliance on group dynamics, willingness of members to engage in an interactive dialogue, and moderator's ability.

Focus group objectives

✓ Describe the objective of focus groups

- Focus groups share the same research objectives as interviewing techniques.
- **Focus group research objectives:**
 - to provide data for defining and redefining the marketing problem or opportunity;
 - to identify specific hidden information requirements;
 - to provide data for better understanding the results from quantitative survey studies;
 - to reveal and understand consumers' hidden needs, wants, attitudes, feelings, behaviours, perceptions and motives regarding services, goods and practices;
 - to generate new ideas about goods, services, or delivery methods;
 - to discover new constructs and measurement methods; and
 - to better understand changing consumer preferences

Three phases of focus group study

✓ Describe the three phases of conducting a focus group study

- A focus group is a small group of people (6 to 12) who participate in an interaction, spontaneous discussion
- There are three phases of a focus group study:
 - (1) planning the study;
 - (2) conducting the actual focus group discussions; and
 - (3) analysing and reporting the results

Focus group terminology

- **Focus group moderator:** a specially skilled person who is well versed and experienced in interpersonal communication, and able to conduct themselves in a professional manner during a focus group discussion
- **Moderator's guide:** a detailed outline of the topics, questions and sub questions to be used by the moderator to lead the focus group session
- **Debriefing analysis:** an interactive procedure in which the researcher and moderator discuss the subjects' responses to the topic that outlined the focus group session
- **Content analysis:** the systematic procedure of taking individual responses and grouping them into larger theme categories or patterns

✓ Understand what determines the success of a focus group

- The success of a focus group relies on:
 - group dynamics of the members;
 - willingness of members to engage in an interactive dialogue; and
 - moderator's ability to keep the discussion on track.

Advantages and disadvantages of focus group interviews

- **Advantages:**
 - Spontaneous, unrestricted interaction among focus groups can stimulate **new ideas**
 - Focus groups allow researchers to collect detailed information about the **underlying reasons** for people's actions in various situations
 - **Client participation:** allows the decision-makers to be involved from start to finish
 - Focus group interviews can cover a large **breadth of topics**
 - **Special market segments:** focus groups have a unique ability to bring hard-to-interview individuals together (e.g. doctors, lawyers and engineers)

- **Disadvantages:**

- **Inability to generalise results**
- **Questionable data reliability:** there is no way to substantiate data reliability or to distinguish small differences. There are also a number of biases that may arise
- **Subjectivity of interpretations**
- **High cost per participant:** average cost per participant is significantly greater than other qualitative research methods

Technology and focus groups

- **Online focus groups:** subjects are gathered in a centralised location and the session is carried in real time across the internet to clients and researchers at other locations.
- The greatest **differences to offline focus groups** are in the **analysing** and **reporting** of results phase: online focus group interviewing facilitates data manipulation, retrieval and reporting of the qualitative data results in real time, whereas offline methods typically take days to manipulate, understand, and report the data

✓ Understand the advantages and disadvantages of only focus groups

- Online advantages:
 - **Faster and cheaper**
- Online disadvantage
 - **Element of personal interaction is lost**

Additional notes

- Main reason for participation in focus groups is money
- Incentives should be viewed as a stimulus (not a reward)
- A socialising period is important to the success of a focus group:
 - A socialising period takes place before the formal start of the focus group. The purpose of this activity is to create a friendly, warm, comfortable environment in which the participants feel at ease. During the socialising period, the moderator should use his or her observation skills to notice how well group members interact and converse with one another.
- Desirable commonalities among participants, the potential group dynamics and the willingness of members to engage in dialogue are central factors in the selection process of focus group participants.