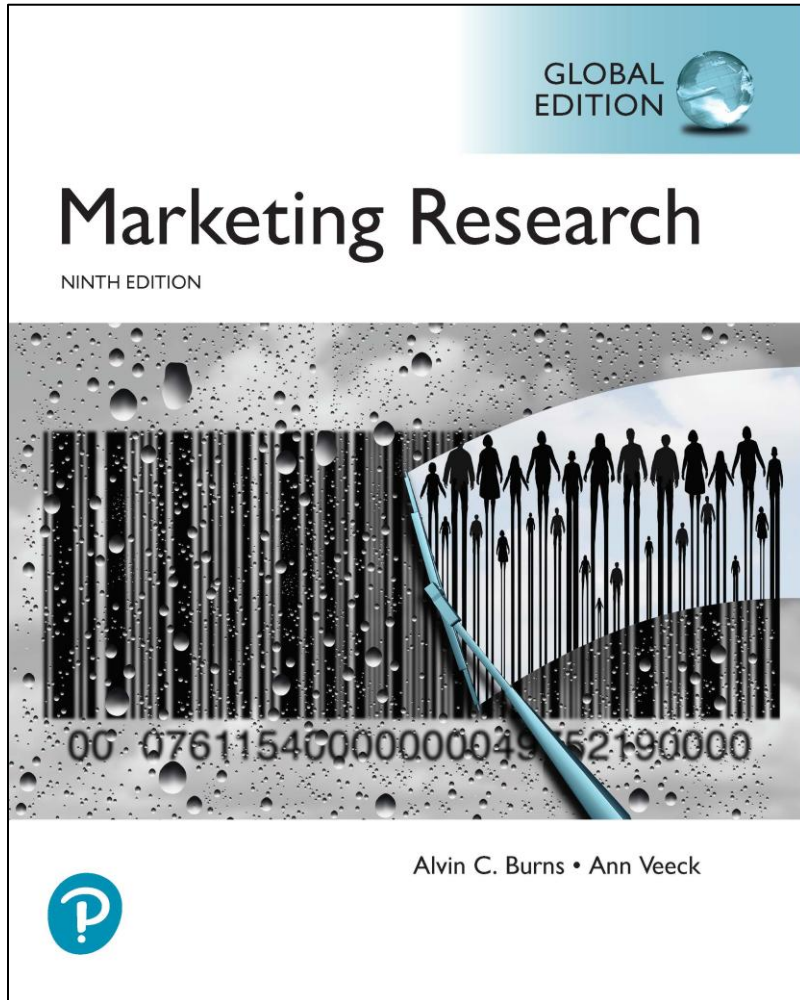


Marketing Research

Ninth Edition, Global Edition



Chapter 6

Qualitative Research Techniques

Learning Objectives

In this chapter you will learn

- 6.1** The differences between quantitative and qualitative research techniques
- 6.2** The pros and cons of using observation as a means of gathering data
- 6.3** What focus groups are and how they are conducted and analyzed
- 6.4** What ethnographic research is and its strengths and weaknesses
- 6.5** Other qualitative methods used by marketing researchers, including in-depth interviews, protocol analysis, projective techniques, and neuromarketing
- 6.6** How to analyze qualitative data

Categories of Research (1 of 3)

- **Quantitative research:** research involving the use of structured questions in which response options have been predetermined and a large number of respondents involved

Categories of Research (2 of 3)

- **Qualitative research:** research involving collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say
 - **Thick data** is a term used to emphasize the importance of gaining qualitative insights of phenomena to complement the quantitative knowledge provided by big data.

Categories of Research (3 of 3)

- **Mixed method research:** integration of both quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to gain the advantages of both
- Three types of mixed methods research include:
 - qualitative before quantitative
 - quantitative before qualitative
 - qualitative and quantitative concurrently

Observation Techniques (1 of 9)

- **Observation methods:** techniques in which phenomena of interest involving people, objects, and/or activities are systematically observed and documented.

Observation Techniques (2 of 9)

- Types of observation:
 - Direct versus indirect
 - Overt versus covert
 - Structured versus unstructured
 - In situ versus invented

Observation Techniques (3 of 9)

- **Direct** observation: observing behavior as it occurs
- **Indirect** observation: observing the effects or results of the behavior rather than the behavior itself
 - Archives: secondary sources, such as historical records, that can be applied to the present problem
 - Physical traces: tangible evidence of some past event

Observation Techniques (4 of 9)

- **Covert** observation: subject is unaware that he or she is being observed, mystery shopping, as an example
- **Overt** observation: respondent is aware of observation, Nielsen's People Meters to monitor media to which a consumer is exposed, as an example

Observation Techniques (5 of 9)

- **Structured** – researcher identifies beforehand which behaviors are to be observed and recorded. Often there is a checklist.
- **Unstructured** – all behavior is observed and the observer determines what is to be recorded (with no predetermined restrictions).

Observation Techniques (6 of 9)

- **In situ** observation: the researcher observes the behavior exactly as it happens
- **Invented** observation: the researcher creates a simulated situation

Observation Techniques (7 of 9)

Appropriate conditions for use of observation:

- Short time interval ...event must begin and end in a reasonably short time. You cannot “observe” a process of purchasing that lasts months.
- Public behavior ...cannot observe private behaviors.
- Faulty recall conditions ...behaviors are so “automatic” that consumer cannot recall them.

Observation Techniques (8 of 9)

Advantages of observational data

- Insight into actual, not reported, behaviors
- No chance for recall error
- Better accuracy
- Less costly

Observation Techniques (9 of 9)

Limitations of observational data

- Small number of subjects
- Subjective interpretations
- Inability to pry beneath the behavior observed
- Motivations, attitudes, and other internal conditions are unobserved

Focus Groups

- **Focus groups** are small groups of people brought together and guided by a moderator through an unstructured, spontaneous discussion for the purpose of gaining information relevant to the research problem.
- Information from focus groups can be used to generate ideas, to learn the respondents' "vocabulary" when relating to a product, or to gain some insight into basic consumer needs and attitudes.

Types of Focus Groups

- **Traditional focus group:** Select 6 to 12 persons and meet in a dedicated room with one-way mirror for client viewing.

How a Focus Group Works

- **Moderator:** responsible for creating the correct atmosphere in the group and guiding discussion
- **Focus group report:** summarizes the information provided by the focus group participants relative to the research questions

Newer Focus Groups

- **Online focus group:** the respondents and/or clients communicate and/or observe by use of the Internet. Clients can observe the virtual chat.

Online Focus Groups (1 of 2)

Advantages:

- No physical setup is necessary
- Transcripts are captured on file in real time
- Participants can be in widely separated geographical areas
- Participants are comfortable in their home or office environments
- The moderator can exchange private messages with individual participants

Online Focus Groups (2 of 2)

Disadvantages:

- Observation of participants' body language is not possible
- Participants cannot physically inspect products or taste food items
- Participants can lose interest or become distracted

Advantages of Focus Groups

- Can generate fresh ideas
- Allow clients to observe their participants
- May be directed at understanding a wide variety of issues
- Allow fairly easy access to special respondent groups

Disadvantages of Focus Groups

- Representativeness of participants
- Dependence on the moderator
- Interpretation sometimes difficult

When Should Focus Groups Be Used?

- Focus groups should be used when the research objective is to describe rather than predict.
 - How do consumers describe a better package?
 - How would they describe their satisfaction with our service?
 - How could they describe their ideas for an ad campaign?

When Should Focus Groups Not Be Used?

- Focus groups should not be used when the research questions require a prediction or when a major decision affecting the company's livelihood rests on the research results.

Some Objectives of Focus Groups

- To generate ideas
- To understand consumer vocabulary
- To reveal consumer goods, motives, perceptions, and attitudes about products or services
- To understand findings from quantitative studies

Operational Aspects of Traditional Focus Groups (1 of 2)

- How many people should be in a focus group?
- Who should be in the focus group?
- How many focus groups should be conducted?
- How should focus group participants be recruited and selected?

Operational Aspects of Traditional Focus Groups (2 of 2)

- Where should a focus group meet?
- When should the moderator become involved in the research project?
- How are focus group results reported and used?
- What other benefits do focus groups offer?

Ethnographic Research

- Ethnographic research is a term borrowed from anthropology to describe a detailed, descriptive study of a group and its behavior, characteristics, culture, and so on.

Examples

- **Shopalongs** are a types of research in which a researcher accompanies a shopper (with permission) on a shopping trip and observes and records the shopper's activities
- **Mobile ethnography** is a type of marketing research in which respondents document their own experiences through their mobile phones
- **Netnography** is the name for the ethnographic study of online activities.

Marketing Research Online Communities

- Marketing research online communities (MROCs) are groups of people that are brought together online to interact, provide ideas and opinions, and complete tasks.

Table 6.1 Comparisons of Traditional Focus Groups, Online Focus Groups, and Marketing Research Online Communities (MROCs)

	In-Person Focus Groups	Online Focus Groups	MROCs
Interactivity among participants	✓	✓	✓
Real-time client viewing	✓	✓	✓
High-quality viewing experience	✓		
Full view of body language/facial expressions	✓		
High-quality audio-video recording	✓		
Video accessibility (e.g., archiving, clipping, replay)	✓		
Reduced travel for clients		✓	✓
Reduced travel for moderators		✓	✓
Regional diversity of participants		✓	✓
Communication through computer, tablet, or smartphone		✓	✓
Longitudinal perspective allowed			✓
Opinion and insights shared anywhere			✓
Multiple segments can be represented simultaneously and compared			✓
Flexible timing			✓

Other Qualitative Techniques (1 of 3)

- **In-depth interview** (IDI) is a set of probing questions posed one-on-one to a subject by a trained interviewer so as to gain an idea of what the subject thinks about something or why he or she behaves a certain way.
- **Laddering** attempts to discover how product attributes are associated with consumer values.

Other Qualitative Techniques (2 of 3)

- **Protocol analysis** involves placing a person in a decision-making situation and asking him or her to verbalize everything he or she considers when making a decision.

Other Qualitative Techniques (3 of 3)

- **Projective techniques** involve situations in which participants are placed in (projected into) simulated activities in the hopes that they will divulge things about themselves that they might not reveal under direct questioning

Five Common Projective Techniques

- Word-association test
- Sentence completion test
- Picture test
- Cartoon or balloon test
- Role-playing

Table 6.2 Projective Techniques That Can Be Used with Focus Groups⁶²

Technique Name	Description	Application
Sort Me Up	Respondents are given products (or cards with product names) and asked to sort them into groups and provide a descriptive name for each group	Reveals competitive sets of products and brands Offers segmentation implications Shows how consumers perceive products and brands
Sort Me Straight	For each attribute, respondents rank cards with brand names from most to least	Identifies how the target brand performs on specific attributes with respect to competing brands
Picture This, Picture That	Respondents are given several pictures that represent a wide range of emotions and asked to select pictures that represent specific brand/category/situations	Reveals images and emotions that are associated with specific brand/category/situations
Color My World	Respondents are given several color swatches (paint chips) and asked to select color(s) that represent specific brand/category/situations	Offers insight into positive and negative imagery and associations for specific brand/category/ Situations
Dot, Dot, Dot	Respondents are given 10 dot-shaped stickers or tokens and asked to allocate them across flavors, brands, advertisements, etc.	Provides a relative ranking for each of the alternatives; follow-up probing reveals why certain alternatives are favored

Neuromarketing

- Neuromarketing is the study of an individual's involuntary responses to marketing stimuli, including eye movement, heart rate, skin conductance, breathing, and brain activity.

Example of Neuromarketing

- **Neuroimaging**, or viewing brain activity, may aid marketing researchers to better understand consumers' unconscious emotions.
- **Eye tracking** is a technique for measuring eye positions and eye movement.
- **Facial coding** is a system that is used to measure universal expressions of emotions, such as happiness, sadness, fear, and surprise, by their appearance on faces.

Thematic Analysis

- Thematic analysis involves examining qualitative data to uncover themes or patterns which relate to the objectives of the research.
- A **theme** is a pattern that is found across data when conducting qualitative analysis that relates to the objectives of the research.
- A **substantiating example** is an example from qualitative data that provides evidence for a theme.
- A **verbatim** is a quote from a research participant that is used as a substantiating example of findings from qualitative research.
- A **word cloud** is a visual display of words and phrases in a text, with the size of the words and phrases representing the frequency of their occurrence in the text.

