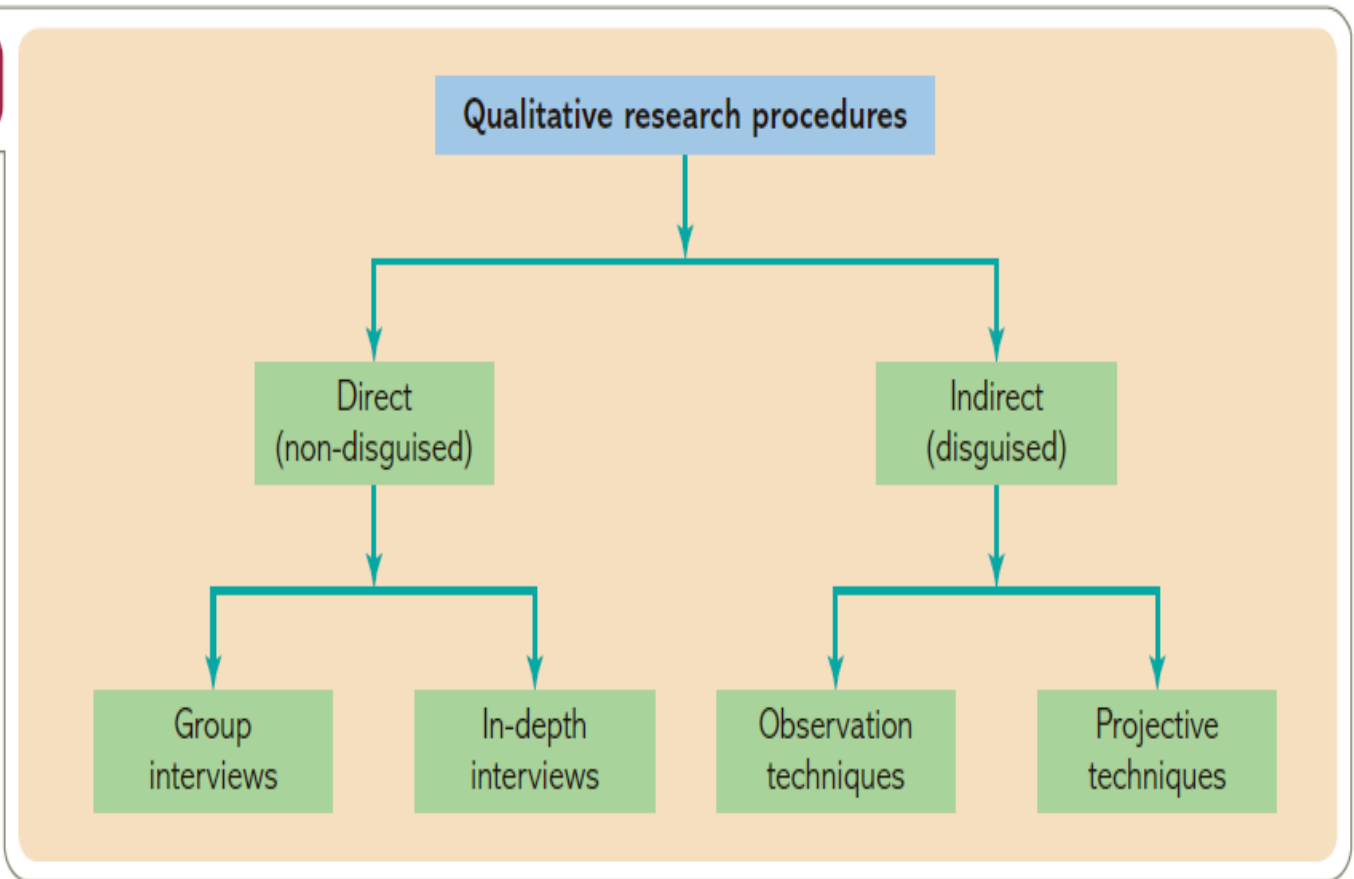# Chapter 6- Qualitative Research

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Chapter outline

- Focus group
- In-depth interviews
- The interviewer
- Advantages and disadvantages of Interviews
- Projective techniques

Classifying qualitative research techniques

Figure 7.1

A classification of qualitative research techniques

- These techniques are classified as either ***direct or indirect***, based on whether *the true purpose of the project* is known to the participants.

- A **direct approach** is not disguised. The purpose of the project is disclosed to the participants or is otherwise obvious to them from the questions asked.

- *Focus groups and in-depth interviews* are the major direct techniques.

- Even though the purpose of the project is disclosed, the extent to which *the purpose* of the research is revealed ***at the start of a focus group or in-depth interviews*** *may vary*

- an **indirect approach** *totally disguises* the purpose of the project.
- In an indirect approach, the researcher wants *participants to behave as naturally* as possible *without any impediment* of research purposes
- In *observation or ethnographic* techniques, consumers may be seen shopping, choosing products, using products and interacting with other people, hopefully in *a natural environment and a natural manner*.
- The participants may not know that they are being observed, or they know but don't know why

Importance of qualitative methods

- **Reaction of consumer incase of quantitative methods may be as follows;**
- ❑ Refuse
- ❑ Deceive interviewer
- ❑ Consumer does not know his real behavior.

Thus, the structured method are not suitable to study consumer behavior while, unstructured method is more appropriate to study consumer behavior through open discussion.

Focus group discussion

- A **focus group** is a discussion conducted by *a trained moderator* in a *non-structured and natural manner* with a small group of participants.

- A **moderator** leads and develops the discussion.

- The main purpose of focus groups is ***to gain insights*** by ***creating a forum*** *where participants feel sufficiently comfortable and relaxed.*

- In such a forum, participants can *reflect and portray their feelings and behavior*, at their pace and using their language, means of expression and logic.

- purpose of the focus group is to bridge social and cultural differences between researchers and their target participants.

- The value of the technique lies in ***discovering unexpected findings***, often obtained from *a free-flowing discussion.*

Focus group Characteristics

- Key benefits is that Group members 'feed' off each other and creatively reveal ideas that the researcher may not have thought of or dared to tackle.

- Using their **intuition and imagination**, group members can explain how they feel or behave, in *words or other forms of expression* that they are comfortable with and using logic that is meaningful to them.

- The key drawback lies in that Group members may feel intimidated or shy and may not reveal anything of significance

- A focus group is generally made *up of 6 to 10 members*. Groups of fewer than six are unlikely to generate the momentum and group dynamics necessary for a successful session. Likewise, groups of more than 10 may be too crowded and may not be conducive to a cohesive and natural discussion.

- A focus group generally should be homogeneous in terms of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Commonality among group members avoids interactions and conflicts among group members.

- Participants should be carefully screened to meet stated criteria.

- These *criteria are set by the researcher* to ensure that participants **have had adequate experience** with the object or issue being discussed.

- *Common demographic characteristics* for determining group composition are: gender, ethnicity, age, household location, education level, occupation, income etc.

Planning and conducting focus groups

1. Examination of the marketing research problem(s) and objectives.
2. The objectives of using focus groups should be clarified
3. Specify a list of issues, or topic guide, that are to be tackled in the focus groups.
4. The types of group members to take part in the discussions are then specified
5. Specify the location of the focus groups
6. recruitment of group members
7. Run an experimental group
8. Conduct focus group
9. Analyze data and present findings

Summing up,

Focus group Interview

Best to be used for formulating hypothesis.

An interviewer "moderator" and limited number of interviewees at the same time 6-10 to encourage participation.

Conclusion cannot be quantified as it depends on sample. Depends mainly on **qualitative analysis** to represent what actually happen.

Interviewer is known as moderator.

No Questionnaire "**Open discussion**"

Un structured

Summing up,

❑ Focus group interview depend on a principle called "snow-balling". The discussion will depend on what is said by others "Chain".

❑ For the moderator to integrate the opinions of the group effectively, he record the discussion after taking permission.

❑ **Focus group design-** unstructured non disguised.

- Un structured: open discussion (no questionnaire)

- Non disguised: the interviewee (respondent) know the objective of the research.

- Focus group may provide incentive system (financial and nonfinancial) to interviewees to encourage their participation.

❑ Moderator should encourage all members in the group to participate.

Online Focus Group

- Known as e-groups
- Online focus groups is by invitation only.
- The participants are pre-recruited and generally comes from lists of individuals who have expressed interest in particular products, services, or issues.
- A screening questionnaire can be administered online to qualify participants

- Those who qualify are invited to participate in the online focus group, they receive a URL, a time, a password via email.

- Participants can also preview information about the discussion topic by visiting a given website, and reading information

Online versus traditional focus group

Characteristics	Online focus group	Traditional focus group
size	4 to 8	6 to 10
composition	Anywhere in the world	From a targeted location
Time duration	1 to 1.5 hours	1.5 to 6 hours
Physical setting	Researcher has little control	Under the control of researcher
Participant identity	Can be difficult to verify	Can be easily verified
Participant attentiveness	Participants can engage in other tasks	Attentiveness can be monitored
Non verbal communication	Body language and facial expressions cannot be observed	Easy to observe body language and facial expressions
transcript	Available immediately	Time consuming and expensive to obtain
Basic focus group cost	Much less expensive	More expensive

B)In depth interviews

❑ One interviewer and one interviewee

❑ No Questionnaire "open discussion"

❑ Un structured

❑ Depth interview and focus group are qualitative used in studies of "Consumer behavior Science";

Attitudes (agree-disagree)

Image (perception about product, person,..)

Personality (passive-shy-aggressive)

Motives

The Design for both focus group and depth interview is classified as"**un structured non disguised".**

B) In-depth interviews

- It is an <u>unstructured, direct, personal interview</u> in which a single participant is probed by an experienced interviewer to *uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a topic*.

- It is a qualitative interview.

- The purpose of most qualitative interviews is to *derive meaning through interpretations*. The emphasis should be upon ***a full interaction*** to understand the meaning of the participant's experiences and life worlds.

- In order to be *effective and useful*, in-depth interviews develop and build upon **intimacy**; in this respect, they resemble the forms of talking one finds among close friends. They can resemble friendship, and may even lead to longterm friendship

Procedure

- **_A scenario_** is set whereby the researcher is interviewing *an interviewee*.
- The in-depth interview may ***take from 30 minutes to well over an hour***. It may occur on *a one-off basis* or it may *unfold over a number of meetings* as more understanding is developed.
- Once the interviewer has gained access to the *interviewee*, the interviewer should *begin by explaining the purpose of the interview*, showing what both will get out of taking part in the interview and explaining what the process will be like.

- *Beyond the introduction*, the interviewer may ask the *interviewee* a general introductory question.
- After asking the initial question, the interviewer uses ***an unstructured format,*** guided by a topic guide as a reminder of important subject areas to cover.
- The subsequent direction of the interview is determined by the ***participant's initial reply***.

The interviewer should

- Do their utmost to develop empathy with the participant

- Make sure the participant is relaxed and comfortable.

- Be personable to encourage and motivate participants.

- Note issues that interest the participant and develop questions around these issues.

- Not be happy to accept brief 'yes' or 'no' answers.

- Note where participants have not explained clearly enough issues that need probing.

Advantages

1. Uncover a greater depth of insights than focus groups. In the group scenario, interesting and knowledgeable individuals cannot be solely concentrated upon.

2. Attribute the responses directly to the participant, unlike focus groups where it is often difficult to determine which participant made a particular response.

3. Result in a free exchange of information that may not be possible in focus groups.

4. Be easier to arrange than the focus group as there are not so many individuals to coordinate

Disadvantages

1. Skilled interviewers capable of conducting depth interviews are expensive and difficult to find.

2. The lack of structure makes the results susceptible to the interviewer's influence.

3. The length of the interview, combined with high costs, means that the number of in-depth interviews in a project tends to be few.

4. The data obtained can be difficult to analyze and interpret.

Projective techniques

- **They** are a category of exercises designed ***to provoke imagination and creativity*** that can be used in in-depth interviews

- "An unstructured, indirect form of questioning that encourages respondents to project their underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings regarding the issues of concern"

- They are *subject-oriented, non-verbal and indirect self-reporting* techniques that have the ability to capture responses from participants in a less structured and more imaginative way than direct questioning.

- In projective techniques, participants are asked ***to interpret the behavior of others rather than to describe their own behavior.***

- In interpreting the behavior of others, it is contended that participants *indirectly project their own motivations, beliefs, attitudes or feelings onto the situation*.

- These techniques are classified as association, completion, construction and expressive.

Association techniques
- Word association is the best *known of these techniques*. In **word association**, respondents are presented with a <u>list of words,</u> one at a time, and asked <u>to respond to each </u>with the <u>first word that comes to mind</u>. The words of interest, called test words, are interspersed throughout the list which also contains some neutral, or filler words to disguise the purpose of the study.

Responses are analyzed by calculating:

(1) the frequency with which any word is given as a response;

(2) the amount of time that elapses before a response is given; and

(3) the number of respondents who do not respond at all to a test word within a reasonable period of time.

Example on a detergent product

Stimulus	Mrs. M	Mrs. C
Fresh smell	sweets	flowers
pure	air	appearance
bubbles	bath	soap and water
family	entertainment	children
towels	colorful	white

Completion techniques

- Participants are *asked to complete an incomplete stimulus situation*.
- Common completion techniques in marketing research are *sentence completion and story completion.*
- In **sentence completion**, respondents are given incomplete sentences and asked to complete them. Generally, they are asked to use the first word or phrase that comes to mind.

E.g.

✓ A person who shops at H&M is_____

✓ When I think of shopping in a department store, I ____

- Sentence completion ***is not as disguised*** as word association, however, and many participants may be able to guess the purpose of the study.

- In **story completion**, respondents are given part of a story – enough to direct attention to a particular topic. Then, they are required to give the conclusion in their own words

Expressive techniques

In **expressive techniques**, respondents are presented with a verbal or visual situation and asked to relate the feelings and attitudes of other people to the situation.

a. Role playing. Respondents are asked to play the role or assume the behavior of someone else.

b. Third-person technique. The respondent is presented with a verbal or visual situation and the respondent is asked to relate the beliefs and attitudes of a third person rather than directly expressing personal beliefs and attitudes. This third person may be a friend, neighbor, colleague, or a "typical" person.

- the researcher assumes that the participants will reveal personal beliefs and attitudes while describing the reactions of a third party.
- Asking an individual to respond in the third person reduces the social pressure to give an acceptable answer.

c. personification technique, participants <u>imagine</u> that <u>*the brand is a person*</u> and then describe characteristics of that person, e.g. their lifestyle, status, demographics, home(s).

- They can build up layers of this description using words and images from a variety of sources. These descriptions help to uncover and develop the perceived nature of a brand's personality.

Advantages of Projective Techniques

- They may elicit responses that subjects would be unwilling or unable to give if they knew the purpose of the study.

- Helpful when the issues to be addressed are personal, sensitive, or subject to strong social norms.

- Helpful when underlying motivations, beliefs, and attitudes are operating at a subconscious level.

Disadvantages of Projective Techniques

- Suffer from many of the disadvantages of unstructured direct techniques, but to a greater extent.
- Require highly-trained interviewers.
- Skilled interpreters are also required to analyze the responses.
- There is a serious risk of interpretation bias.
- They tend to be expensive.
- May require respondents to engage in unusual behavior.

End of Chapter