**MR2300 Unit 3 (Chapter 5) : Qualitative Research**

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

* 3.1 Define Qualitative Research
* Define Exploratory Research
* 3.2 Know why exploratory research is conducted
* 3.3 Define the basic categories of Exploratory Research
* 3.4 Know the limits of Exploratory Research

**Learning Materials:**

Read: Chapter 5 Essentials of Marketing Research, 2nd or 3rd edition William G. Zikmund, Thompson.

**Overview of this Unit**

In this unit you will learn about what is usually the first stage of any research initiative - the building of a basic understanding of the research topic through what is known as exploratory research. Among other things, Exploratory research helps to frame the problem so more detailed research can be conducted, it helps to screen alternative approaches, it allows basic concepts to be tested and it generates new ideas.

Exploratory Research is usually conducted in the form of experience surveys, reviews of secondary data, case study analysis, and pilot studies.

This unit concludes with a discussion of some of the potential limitations of exploratory research.

**Learning Activities**

This unit will require you to complete the following:

* Read the Learning Objectives for this Unit: These learning objectives direct you to the key material in this unit. When reading the assigned chapters, consider the learning objectives and focus your study on developing a strong understanding of these objectives. Further - the questions on the tests will reflect the Learning Objectives.
* Read Chapter 5 - Exploratory Research.
* Look at/review the internet links in Applying the Concepts - Internet Links for Further Reading.

**Qualitative Research Defined**

Qualitative Research is research conducted that describe qualities and provide interpretation of a market phenomenon without depending on numbers to measure that phenomena. Qualitative research is less structured than traditional quantitative (numbers based) research techniques. The researcher’s job is to extract meaning from responses.

Qualitative research is a form of early stage Exploratory research.

Qualitative research is most useful when:

* There is a less specific research objective with less specific and actionable decision statements.
* The research objective is to develop an understanding of some phenomena in great detail and in depth
* The research objective is to learn how consumers use the product in a natural setting or how to express a concept in “common Language” terms.
* The research is context dependent
* A fresh approach to studying a problem is required

**Exploratory Research Defined**

Exploratory research helps ensure that a rigorous and conclusive study will not begin with an inadequate understanding of the nature of the marketing problem. Most exploratory research designs provide qualitative data that provide greater understanding of a concept. In contrast, quantitative data provide precise measurement.

Exploratory research may be a single research investigation or it may be a series of informal studies; both methods provide background information. Researchers must be creative in the choice of information sources. They should explore all appropriate inexpensive sources before embarking on expensive research of their own. However, they should still be systematic and careful at all times.

**Purpose of Conducting Exploratory/Qualitative Research**

There are four broad categories of Qualitative Research: philosophy based **Phenomenology;** anthropology based **Ethnography;** sociology based **Grounded theory** and psychology based **Case Studies**

**Phenomenology**

Relies on discovery of how a persons is shaped by the physical environment, objects, people and situations – seeks to describe, reflect upon and interpret experiences

**Ethnography**

Relies on studying the culture and how the person interacts with it- observation is critical

**Grounded theory**

Relies on asking respondents to elaborate on their responses or elaborate on historical records – seeks to discover what is happening.

**Case Studies**

The purpose of a case study is to obtain information from one or a few situations that are similar to the researcher's situation.

**Categories of Exploratory Research - Pilot Studies**

A 'pilot study is a term that is used to describe a number of basic research techniques that are conducted on a relatively small scale. Thus, a pilot study is a research project that generates primary data from consumers, or other subjects of ultimate concern. Key Pilot Study formats include:

**Focus Group Interviews.**

Focus groups are unstructured, free flowing interviews with a small group (6-10) people. Focus groups are led with a trained and experienced moderator. Without an experienced moderator, a self-appointed leader will dominate the session, resulting in an abnormal halo effect on the interview there may be sampling problems

A focus group typically consists of 6-10 participants and a moderator. The discussion that takes place are usually free-flowing and informal. The flexible format allows for the discussion of anything from brand to a product itself.

The moderators role is to introduce a topic and to encourage the group to discuss it among themselves. There are four primary advantages of the focus group:

it allows people to discuss their true feelings and convictions.

it is relatively fast.

it is easy to execute and very flexible.

it is inexpensive.

synergism: the combined effort of the group will produce a wider range of information, insights, and ideas than will the cumulating of separately secured responses.

snowballing: a bandwagon effect occurs. One individual often triggers a chain of responses from the other participants.

stimulation: respondents want to express their ideas and expose their opinions as the general level of excitement over the topic increases.

security: the participants are more likely to be candid because they soon realize that the things said are not being identified with any one individual.

spontaneity: people speak only when they have definite feelings about a subject, not because a question requires an answer.

serendipity: an idea may drop out of the blue, and the group affords the opportunity to develop such an idea to its full significance.

specialization: the group interview allows the use of a more highly trained moderator because there are certain economies of scale when a large number of people are interviewed simultaneously.

scientific scrutiny: the group interview can be taped or even videotaped for observation. This affords closer scrutiny and allows the researchers to check for consistency in the interpretations.

structure: the moderator, being one of the group, can control the topics the group discusses.

speed: a number of interviews are, in effect, being conducted at one time.

**The focus group technique has two shortcomings:**

Effective focus group moderators prepare discussion guides to help ensure that the groups cover all topics of interest. The discussion guide begins with a written statement of the prefatory remarks to inform the group about the nature of the focus group, then it outlines topics or questions to be addressed in the group session.

**Projective Techniques.**

Individuals may be more likely to give a true answer if the question is disguised. If respondents are presented with unstructured and ambiguous stimuli and are allowed considerable freedom to respond, they are more likely to express their true feelings.

A projective technique is an indirect means of questioning that enables respondents to project their beliefs onto a third party, thus allowing the respondents to express emotions and opinions that would normally be hidden from others and even hidden from themselves. Common techniques are as follows:

* word association: the subject is presented with a list of words, one at a time, and asked to respond with the first word that comes to mind. Both verbal and nonverbal responses are recorded. Word association should reveal each individuals true feelings about the subject. Interpreting the results is difficult; the researcher should avoid subjective interpretations and should consider both what the subject said and what was not said (e.g. hesitations).
* sentence completion method: this technique is also based on the assumption of free association. Respondents are required to complete a number of partial sentences with the first word or phrase that comes to mind. Answers tend to be more complete than in word association; however, the intention of the study is more apparent.
* third-person technique and role playing: providing a mask is the basic idea behind the third person technique. Respondents are asked why a third person does what he or she does, or what a third person thinks of a product. The respondent can transfer his or her attitudes onto the third person. Role playing is a dynamic reenactment of the third-person technique in a given situation. This techn2:50 PM 10/26/2007ique requires the subject to act out someone elses behavior in a particular setting.
* thematic apperception test (TAT): this test consists of a series of pictures in which consumers and products are the center of attention. The investigator asks the subject what is happening in the picture and what the people might do next. Theses (thematic) are elicited on the basis of the perceptual-interpretive (apperception) use of the pictures. The researcher then analyzes the content of the stories that the subjects relate. The picture should present a familiar,interesting, and well-defined problem, but the solution should be ambiguous. A cartoon test, or picture frustration version of TAT, uses a cartoon drawing for which the respondent suggests dialogue that the cartoon characters might make. Construction techniques request that the consumer draw a picture, construct a collage, or write a short story to express their perceptions or feelings.

**In-Depth Interviews.**

Depth interviews are similar to the client interviews of a clinical psychiatrist. The researcher asks many questions and probes for additional elaboration after the subject answers; the subject matter is usually disguised. Depth interviews have lost their popularity recently because they are time-consuming and expensive, as they require the services of a skilled interviewer.

**The Limitations of Exploratory Research**

Exploratory research techniques have their limitations. Most of them are qualitative, and the interpretation of their results is judgmental. Thus, they cannot take the place of quantitative, conclusive research.

Because of certain problems, such as interpreter bias or sample size, exploratory findings should be treated as preliminary. The major benefit of exploratory research is that it generates insights and clarifies the marketing problems for testing in future research.

If the findings of exploratory research are very negative then no further research should probably be conducted. However, the researcher should proceed with caution because there is a possibility that a potentially good idea could be rejected because of unfavorable results at the exploratory stage.

In other situations, when everything looks positive in the exploratory stage, there is a temptation to market the product without further research. In this situation, marketing managers should determine the benefit of further information versus the cost of additional research. When a major commitment of resources is involved, it is often well worth conducting a quantitative study.

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| **Applying the Concepts - Internet Links for Further Reading** |
| ***Exploratory Research defined:***   * ***See:*** [**Models in the Research Process**](http://www2.uiah.fi/projects/metodi/177.htm)   ***Experience Surveys:***  ***Secondary Data Analysis:***   * [**Secondary Data Analysis**: Methods and Considerations](http://www.livelihoods.org/info/pcdl/docs/work/SL%20Nepal/Reference%20Sheets/Tips%20for%20Using%20Secondary%20Data.doc)   [**Secondary Data Analysis**](http://www.srl.uic.edu/seminars/Analysis/2ndanalysis03-04.PDF)   * [Social Research Update](http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/) * [**SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS**](http://www.uiowa.edu/~c07b176/SECONDARY_DATA_ANALYSIS.htm) * [**Secondary Data** Research](http://www.disc.wisc.edu/types/secondary.htm)   ***The Case Study Method:***   * [Application of a **Case Study** Methodology](http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-3/tellis2.html) * [Introduction to **Case Study**](http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-2/tellis1.html) * [**Case study** - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Case_study) * ***See: Case Study Research: Design and Methods (3rd ed) by Robert K. Yin,*** Sage Publications Inc, 2003 ISBN 0761925538   ***The Pilot Study:***  **Focus Group Interviews**   * [**Focus group interviews**](http://www2.fhs.usyd.edu.au/arow/arer/002.htm) * [Using **Focus Group Interviews** for Evaluating Extension Programs](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PD036) * [conducting **focus group interviews**](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/pnaby233.pdf) * [Community Engagement - When to use **focus** goups](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communityeng/needs/focus.html) * [**Focus groups** and **interviews**](http://www.chronicpoverty.org/CPToolbox/Focusgroupsinterviews.htm)   **Projective Techniques**   * [**Projective** test - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projective_test) * [**Projective Techniques**: Eliciting Deeper Thoughts](http://www.customerinput.com/journal/projective_techniques_eliciting_deeper_thoughts.asp) * [**Projective techniques** in consumer research](http://www.up.ac.za/academic/acadorgs/saafecs/vol28/donoghue.html)   **Depth interviews**   * [Conducting an In-**depth Interview**](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY393) * [CONDUCTING IN-**DEPTH INTERVIEWS**: A Guide for Designing and **...**](http://www.pathfind.org/site/DocServer/m_e_tool_series_indepth_interviews.pdf?docID=6301) |

MR2300 Business Research - Unit 3.  Getting Started with Exploratory Research -    Unit 3 Self Test

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| Note: | This topic is a link to a website. Navigate to the site specified below to print desired content. |
| URL: | [/d2l/tools/LMS/quicklink.asp?ou=18713&type=quiz&rCode=CNA\_Prod-13116](https://d2l.cna.nl.ca/d2l/tools/LMS/quicklink.asp?ou=18713&type=quiz&rCode=CNA_Prod-13116) |

MR2300 Business Research - Unit 3.  Getting Started with Exploratory Research -    Flashcards

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| **Unit 3 Flashcards** (Click the Link) |

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| **Chapter 5** |
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MR2300 Business Research - Unit 3.  Getting Started with Exploratory Research -    Glossary

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| **Unit 3 Glossary of Terms** |
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| **Chapter 5** |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Case studies** | The documented history of a particular person, group, organization, or event. | | **Concept testing** | A frequently performed type of exploratory research representing many similar research procedures all having the same purpose: to screen new, revised, or repositioned ideas. | | **Depth interview** | A one-on-one interview between a professional researcher and a research respondent conducted about some relevant business or social topic. | | **Discussion guide** | A focus group outline that includes written introductory comments informing the group about the focus group purpose and rules and then outlines topics or questions to be addressed in the group session. | | **experience survey** | An exploratory research technique in which individuals who are knowledgeable about a particular research problem are questioned. | | **Field notes** | The researcher’s descriptions of what actually happens in the field; these notes then become the text from which meaning is extracted. | | **Focus blog** | A type of informal, “continuous” focus group established as an Internet blog for the purpose of collecting qualitative data from participant comments. | | **Focus group interview** | An unstructured, free-flowing interview with a small group of around six to ten people. Focus groups are led by a trained moderator who follows a flexible format encouraging dialogue among respondents. | | **Free-association techniques** | Record respondents’ first (top-of-mind) cognitive reactions to some stimulus. | | **Laddering** | A particular approach to probing, asking respondents to compare differences between brands at different levels that produces distinctions at the attribute level, the benefit level, and the value or motivation level. | | **Moderator** | A person who leads a focus group interview and ensures that everyone gets a chance to speak and contribute to the discussion. | | **Online focus group** | A qualitative research effort in which a group of individuals provides unstructured comments by entering their remarks into an electronic Internet display board of some type. | | **Picture frustration** | A version of the TAT using a cartoon drawing in which the respondent suggests a dialogue in which the characters might engage. | | **Piggyback** | An interplay in which one respondent stimulates thought among the others; as this process continues, increasingly creative insights are possible. | | **Pilot study** | A collective term for any small-scale exploratory research project that uses sampling but does not apply rigorous standards. | | **Projective technique** | An indirect means of questioning that enables a respondent to project beliefs and feelings onto a third party or an inanimate object or into a task situation. | | **Qualitative data** | Data that are not characterized by numbers, and instead are textual, visual, or oral; focus is on stories, visual portrayals, meaningful characterizations, interpretations, and other expressive descriptions. | | **Qualitative marketing research** | Research that addresses marketing objectives through techniques that allow the researcher to provide elaborate interpretations of market phenomena without depending on numerical measurement; its focus is on discovering true inner meanings and new insights. | | **Quantitative data** | Represent phenomena by assigning numbers in an ordered and meaningful way. | | **Quantitative marketing research** | Marketing research that addresses research objectives through empirical assessments that involve numerical measurement and analysis. | | **Replicable** | When the same conclusion is reached based on another researcher’s interpretation. | | **Researcher-dependent** | Research in which the researcher must extract meaning from unstructured responses such as text from a recorded interview or a collage representing the meaning of some experience. | | **Streaming media** | Consist of multimedia content such as audio or video that is made available in real time over the Internet or a corporate Intranet. | | **Subjective** | Results are researcher-dependent, meaning different researchers may reach different conclusions based on the same interview. | | **Thematic apperception test (TAT)** | A test that presents subjects with an ambiguous picture(s) in which consumers and products are the center of attention; the investigator asks the subject to tell what is happening in the picture(s) now and what might happen next. | |