

Chapter Five

Qualitative Research



Learning Objectives

- Define qualitative research – what it is, how it compares to quantitative research and when/where it is used
- Learn about different types of qualitative research and their respective pros & cons
- Workflow of a qualitative project
- Learn about focus groups, how to conduct them

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research

Quantitative Research aims to answer ‘*what?*’

- Research that uses **mathematical analysis** to come to a conclusion. It is typically done using measurable and numeric standards.

For example: *Which new features are most likely to encourage customers to change consider using the product*

Qualitative Research aims to answer ‘*why?*’

- **Exploratory** in nature and helpful in gaining insight to motives, attitudes and perceptions; however, unlike quantitative research, results are NOT statistically significant and are used to provide general direction

For example: *Why are those new features of most interest and in which way do customers see using the product?*

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Sample Size	Big (>100)	Small (16 – 36)
Types of Questions	Closed (yes / no)	Open (<i>why? in which way?</i>)
Administration	Typically self guided; often online	Moderated by an interviewer with specific skills
Tools of Trade	Panels, Questionnaires, Statistical Analysis Programs	Screeners, Discussion Guides, Recordings, Videos
Type of Research	Causal Relational	Exploratory Voice of the Customer Directional
Type of Analysis	Statistical, summation	Subjective, interpretive

Qualitative Research Limitations

It is directional and not easily measured: Attitudinal, perceptual, and belief differences revealed during qualitative research are not easily measured. Quantitative research will more precisely measure differences.

It is not statistically representative. Although qualitative results might give you a good idea about the segment, they do not allow you to precisely gauge that populations' responses based on the limited sample typical of qualitative research.

However, these quantitative & qualitative research are often used in tandem and at different points in the product development, message development life cycles

In general, qualitative research happens earlier in the product / messaging life cycle

1. Idea Generation / brain storming

2. Early idea prototyping / idea screening

3. Feature Specification (for products)

4. Development

6. Launch

7. In Market Evaluation

Qualitative Research, is good at offering direction early on in the life cycle

Quantitative Research: As the product design / messaging is more clearly defined, product owners want / need measurable results (i.e., for sales forecasts, final design)

Examples of qualitative research ...

1. Idea Generation / brain storming

- **Contemplating entering a new market** – *is there a gap in credit cards offered to a certain kind of business owner?*
- **Exploratory research with a new segment** – *who are they? What do they want? How do they do things now? How can they be serviced?*
- **Gaining an understanding of why are clients not doing what we want them to?**

2. Early idea prototyping / idea screening

- Determining how to **position** a product
- The Creative Agency (i.e., ad agency) has created three ads– what resonates / what doesn't? why? Which one best represents the product?
- **Early web design** does the proposed flow work?

Qualitative Research Tools

While Focus Groups are the traditional tool in the qualitative researchers tool kit qualitative researchers use range of tools

Focus Groups (in person and virtual): 6-8 respondents / group who are led by a moderator through a discussion; groups conducted in multiple markets

Bulletin Boards: an online forum where respondents read / answer questions & interact digitally; moderator probes for further details; 20-30 respondents

In-Depth Interviews (IDI): 1-on-1 interviews often with executives or experts; in-person, phone, online

Ethnographies: Similar to IDIs, however conducted in the respondents native environment (i.e., home, office, car, shop alongs)

Web / Mobile Usability: Respondent is given a set of tasks to complete on the website and observed to see where confusion arises.

Pros & Cons of different types of research

	Pros	Cons
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interactive – respondents build on each other's ideas• Good for idea generation• Opportunities for clients to observe client	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive• Time consuming• Geographically narrow
Bulletin Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports deep discussions• Asynchronous of time & place• Lower cost• Longitudinal Insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Little top of mind feedback as respondents have time to think and read• Limited probing• Less respondent interaction
IDIs (phone, in person, online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detailed• Good for technical discussions with industry experts (medical, financial)• Group pressure is eliminated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time intensive• Not effective for brainstorming / idea generation

Techniques for delving into the respondents thoughts, feelings, and experiences

A **major challenge** for qualitative researchers is getting respondents to open up to share attitudes & motivations, especially with a stranger(s).

In many cases, **respondents may not even be aware** that they have certain beliefs nor can they articulate why they make certain decisions.

Techniques that are used to help respondents open up and allow the moderator to dig deeper include:

- Prework (aka homework): assignments that set the stage for the research and get respondents thinking of the topic of interest.
 - *For example: map out a recent travel experience, create a collage illustrating feeling about something*
- Creative Exercises: Projective techniques to get to deeper feelings that are otherwise hard for respondents to articulate
 - *Image associations, Brand Personification, Fill in the Blank, Laddering*

Techniques in action...

1. **Brand Personification** (Nike vs Adidas): Think of these two brands and imagine that they walk through the door, describe them ...
 - *How old are they?*
 - *What gender?*
 - *What are they wearing?*
 - *What kind of car do they drive?*
 - *What actor would play them in a movie*
2. **Laddering:** *What do you feel are the key benefits of taking vitamins?*
 - *Why is that important to you?*
 - *How does that make you feel?*
 -
 - *Uncovering the underlying emotion*

Lifecycle of a Qualitative Research Project

Defining the objective:
Understanding what the client wants to learn is key

Recruiting: screening for respondents & making sure that the appropriate audience is targeted

Reporting: Written reports, toplines, video reports to bring the clients to life

Discussion Guide:
Flow of questions that are covered → Start broad, then narrow it down

Field the Research:
Gather feedback from respondents; when in person, this is usually done across multiple markets

A focus on Focus Groups...

Dilbert



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Conducting Focus Groups

Respondents

- Respondents must be screened for relevance to the topic
- Segmentation study results are often used to determine desired respondent characteristics

Location

- Typically a focus group facility consisting of a conference room or living room setting and a separate observation room with a one-way mirror or live audiovisual feed.

Research Vendor and Moderator

- A person hired by the client to lead the focus group
- Has specialized training / experience in leading group conversations and on specific research methodologies and techniques

The moderator's juggling act

Manage the **group dynamic** & keep the group on task and focused; demonstrate “invisible” leadership.



Show respect for **respondents** - make them feel welcome and create a safe environment for diverse opinions



Move things along without rushing the discussion; seamlessly move from broad to more specific questions as the group progresses



Show creativity and adaptability to reach the key questions; probes effectively at every opportunity



Manage client demands and both for what is going on in the front room but also in the facility

Qualitative Project Demo

1. Define the objective

TCNJ Career Office wants to gain a better understanding of what sort of resources students are looking for and find most useful in their job searches. They also wish to identify possible service gaps

2. Recruit

TCNJ juniors and seniors with experience in looking in job hunting as well as experience with the TCNJ career center

3. Discussion Guide:

See next page
Home work

Let's get started...

4. Field the Research

Discussion Guide

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND		(10 MIN)
A. Warm-Up		
B. Respondent Profile		
1. Name, which year you are in at TCNJ, and what you are studying?		
2. What did you do this past summer? – <i>If working, how did they find that job?</i>		
SECTION 2: CURRENT JOB SEARCHING BEHAVIOR		(20 MINS)
1. What tools do you currently use for your job searches? Why those? – How long have you been using these tools? – Do you use the same tools regardless of what type of job? – Are the tools more online or in person? – Are you open to paying for these services? If so, which ones?		
2. How do you stay organized when it comes to your job search? – What does your planning look like? – What tools do you use?		
3. What role, if any does networking play in your job search? – How often do they try to network? – With whom? Where?		
SECTION 3: IMPRESSIONS OF TCNJ CAREER SERVICES		(10 MINS)
1. Do you use TCNJ Career Services? How long have you been using it? – What do you like most about it?		
2. Do you use TCNJ for ALL your job search need? – When do you use them? For what types of jobs? – What drives you to use TCNJ Career Services vs. all the other options available like LinkedIn? – Is there anything that would make you want to use TCNJ Career Services <i>more often</i> ?		
4. When do you NOT use TCNJ Career Services? Why? (<i>Probe to understand if there are certain types of scenarios where TCNJ services don't apply</i>) – Is there anything you don't like – or feel hasn't met your expectations? What & why?		
5. In your experience, how does TCNJ compare to other career sites? – In your own words, how would you describe TCNJ to a friend?		

The Future of Qualitative Research

Brands and product managers want to better understand how to emotionally connect to their customers because the payoff can be huge.

Going forward, qualitative research will continue to play an important role in understanding emotional and subconscious aspect of consumer behavior.

Key Terms & Definitions

- [Qualitative Research](#)
- [Quantitative Research](#)
- [Focus Group](#)
- [Group Dynamics](#)
- [Focus Group Facility](#)
- [Focus Group Moderator](#)
- [Discussion Guide](#)
- [Instant Analysis](#)
- [Individual Depth Interviews](#)
- [Hermeneutic Research](#)
- [Delphi Technique](#)
- [Projective Test](#)
- [Word Association Test](#)
- [Analogies](#)
- [Personification](#)
- [Sentence and Story Completion Tests](#)
- [Cartoon Test](#)
- [Photo sorts](#)
- [Consumer Drawings](#)
- [Storytelling](#)
- [Third Person Technique](#)

Links and Key Terms & Definitions button are active when in “Slide Show Mode”