Chapter Six

Exploratory Research

Design:

Qualitative Research
### Focus of This Chapter

- Qualitative Research
- Focus Groups
- Depth Interviews
- Projective Techniques

### Relationship to Previous Chapter

- The Marketing Research Process (Chapter 1)
- Tasks Involved in Problem Definition & Developing an Approach (Chapter 2)
- Exploratory Research Design (Chapter 3)

### Relationship to Marketing Research Process

1. Problem Definition
2. Approach to Problem
3. Research Design
4. Field Work
5. Data Preparation and Analysis
6. Report Preparation and Presentation

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Figure 6.2 Qualitative Research: An Overview
Figure 6.3
A Classification of Marketing Research Data

Marketing Research Data
- Secondary Data
  - Qualitative Data
    - Descriptive
    - Causal
  - Quantitative Data
    - Observational & Other Data
    - Experimental Data
- Primary Data
  - Survey Data
Qualitative Research Procedures

**Direct (Nondisguised)**
- Focus Groups
- Depth Interviews

**Indirect (Disguised)**
- Projective Techniques
  - Association Techniques
  - Completion Techniques
  - Construction Techniques
  - Expressive Techniques
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td>To gain a qualitative understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations</td>
<td>To quantify the data and generalize the results from the sample to the population of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample</strong></td>
<td>Small number of non-representative cases</td>
<td>Large number of representative cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection</strong></td>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td>Structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Nonstatistical</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
<td>Develop an initial understanding</td>
<td>Recommend a final course of action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group size</td>
<td>8 – 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group composition</td>
<td>Homogeneous; respondents prescreened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical setting</td>
<td>Relaxed, informal atmosphere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time duration</td>
<td>1 – 3 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording</td>
<td>Use of audio- and video-recording</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator</td>
<td>Observational, interpersonal, and communication skills of the moderator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Baltimore Research: Facility Overview
Source:  
http://www.baltimoreresearch.com/marketing_research_facility.php?sPage=Facility
Layout of focus group room and viewing room

The Pittsburgh Room

One-way mirror
Viewing room looking into the focus group room through one-way mirror

Source: www.campos.com/focusgs.htm
Select a Moderator

Recruit and Select Focus Group Participants

Design the Focus Group Environment

Prepare the Discussion Guide

Conduct the Group Interview

Prepare the Focus Group Report
## Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Synergism</td>
<td>1. Misuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Snowballing</td>
<td>2. Misjudge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Spontaneity</td>
<td>5. Misrepresentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Serendipity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Specialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Scientific scrutiny</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Speed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advantages of Online Focus Groups

- Geographical constraints are removed and time constraints are lessened.

- Unique opportunity to re-contact group participants at a later date.

- Can recruit people not interested in traditional focus groups: doctors, lawyers, etc.

- Moderators can carry on side conversations with individual respondents.

- There is no travel, video taping, or facilities to arrange, so the cost is much lower.
Disadvantages of Online Focus Groups

- Only people that have access to the Internet can participate.
- Verifying that a respondent is a member of a target group is difficult.
- There is lack of general control over the respondent's environment.
- Only audio and visual stimuli can be tested. Products cannot be touched (e.g., clothing) or smelled (e.g., perfumes).
- It is difficult to capture body language and emotions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Online Focus Groups</th>
<th>Traditional Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group size</td>
<td>4 – 6</td>
<td>8 – 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group composition</td>
<td>Anywhere in the world</td>
<td>Drawn from the local area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time duration</td>
<td>1 – 1.5 hours</td>
<td>1 – 3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical setting</td>
<td>Researcher has little control</td>
<td>Under researcher’s control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent identity</td>
<td>Difficult to verify</td>
<td>Can be easily verified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent attentiveness</td>
<td>Can engage in other tasks</td>
<td>Attentiveness monitored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent recruiting</td>
<td>Easier. Flexible.</td>
<td>By traditional means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group dynamics</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Synergistic effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness of respondents</td>
<td>Respondents more candid</td>
<td>Respondents candid, except for sensitive topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3 Online versus Traditional Focus Groups

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Online Focus Groups</th>
<th>Traditional Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal communication</td>
<td>Body language not observed</td>
<td>Body language and emotions observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symbols used for emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of physical stimuli</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Variety of stimuli can be used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts</td>
<td>Available immediately</td>
<td>Time consuming, expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observers’ communication with moderator</td>
<td>Can communicate on a split-screen</td>
<td>Can manually send notes to the focus group room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique moderator skills</td>
<td>Typing, computer, familiar with chat room slang</td>
<td>Observational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnaround time</td>
<td>A few days</td>
<td>Many days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client travel costs</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Can be expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic focus group costs</td>
<td>Much less expensive</td>
<td>More expensive: facility, food, recording, and transcripts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Depth Interviews

- Like focus groups, depth interviews are an unstructured and direct way of obtaining information.

- Unlike focus groups, however, depth interviews are conducted on a one-on-one basis.

- These interviews typically last from 30 minutes to more than an hour.

- They attempt to uncover underlying motives, prejudices, or attitudes toward sensitive issues.
Depth Interviews (Cont.)

- Substantial probing is done to surface underlying motives, beliefs, and attitudes.

- Probing is done by asking such questions as:
  > “Why do you say that?”
  > “That's interesting, can you tell me more?”
  > “Would you like to add anything else?”
Advantages of Depth Interviews

- Can uncover deeper insights about underlying motives than focus groups.

- Can attribute the responses directly to the respondent, unlike focus groups.

- Result in a free exchange of information and there is no social pressure to conform.

- As a result of probing, it is possible to get at real issues when the topic is complex.
Disadvantages of Depth Interviews

- Skilled interviewers capable of conducting depth interviews are expensive and difficult to find.
- The quality and completeness of the results depend heavily on the interviewer's skills.
- The data obtained are difficult to analyze and interpret.
- The length of the interview combined with high costs limits the number of depth interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Depth Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group synergy and dynamics</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure/group influence</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client involvement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation of innovative ideas</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth probing of individuals</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncovering hidden motives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of sensitive topics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing respondents who are competitors</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing respondents who are professionals</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling of respondents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of information</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bias in moderation and interpretation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per respondent</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A + indicates a relative advantage over the other procedure, a - indicates a relative disadvantage.
Definition of Projective Techniques

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

- In projective techniques, respondents are asked to interpret the behavior of others.

- In interpreting the behavior of others, respondents indirectly project their own motivations, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings into the situation.
Word Association

In word association, respondents are presented with a list of words, one at a time and asked to respond to each with the first word that comes to mind. 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;
3. the number of respondents who do not respond at all to a test word within a reasonable period of time.
Completion Techniques

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.

A person who wears Tommy Hilfiger shirts is ____________________________________________

As compared to Polo, Gant, and Eddie Bauer, Tommy Hilfiger shirts are ____________________________________________

Tommy Hilfiger shirts are most liked by ____________________________________________

A variation of sentence completion is paragraph completion, in which the respondent completes a paragraph beginning with the stimulus phrase.
Completion Techniques

In *story completion*, respondents are given part of a story – enough to direct attention to a particular topic but not to hint at the ending. They are required to give the conclusion in their own words.
Construction Techniques

With a **picture response**, the respondents are asked to describe a series of pictures of ordinary as well as unusual events. The respondent's interpretation of the pictures gives indications of that individual's personality.

In **cartoon tests**, cartoon characters are shown in a specific situation related to the problem. The respondents are asked to indicate what one cartoon character might say in response to the comments of another character. Cartoon tests are simpler to administer and analyze than picture response techniques.
Let's get some clothes from Macy's!
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.

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

**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.
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.
Guidelines for Using Projective Techniques

- Projective techniques should be used because the required information cannot be accurately obtained by direct methods.
- Projective techniques should be used for exploratory research to gain initial insights and understanding.
- Given their complexity, projective techniques should not be used naively.
Figure 6.7 A Concept Map for Qualitative Research

Marketing Research Data

Secondary

Primary

Qualitative

may be direct procedures

may be indirect procedures

Focus Groups

In-depth Interviews

Projective Techniques

Quantitative

may be

may be

consist of

Expressive Techniques

Association Techniques

Completion Techniques

Construction Techniques
International Marketing Research

- Qualitative research might reveal the differences between foreign and domestic markets.
- Focus groups can be used in many settings, particularly in industrialized countries, but professional standards and practices might vary from those in the United States.
- The moderator should not only be trained in focus-group methodology, but should also be familiar with the language, culture, and patterns of social interaction prevailing in that country.
In some countries, such as those in the Middle and Far East, people are hesitant to discuss their feelings in a group setting. In these cases, depth interviews should be used.

The use of projective techniques should be carefully considered, because the responses that these techniques generate can reflect deeply rooted cultural influences.
Focus Groups and Depth Interviews

- Just being a part of different types of social media and analyzing what people are talking about can yield a basic understanding of customers.
- Companies are creating private online communities, which can play the role of extended focus groups. The members are carefully recruited and membership is only by invitation.
Focus Groups and Depth Interviews (Cont.)

- Another way to conduct focus group type of research involves participant blogs. The general approach is to define a specific topic and then recruit participants to blog about that topic. Each participant is given his/her own blog to maintain. The number of participants typically range from 8 to 60. Blog projects tend to last from one to four weeks.

- Depth interviews can be conducted by engaging individual respondents in one-on-on e-conversations.
Marketing Research & Social Media (Cont.)

Projective Techniques

- The unstructured and indirect form of questioning on social media has consumers willing to project their underlying thoughts, motivations and feelings regarding the issues of concern.

- Sentence Completion can be implemented by asking Community members to complete sentences like, “When you talk to yourself, you refer to yourself as ……..”
Marketing Research & Social Media (Cont.)

Projective Techniques (Cont.)

- Picture-Response Technique can be implemented by analyzing photos posted on photo sharing sites include Flickr, a leader in this category, PhotoBucket, Shutterfly, Smugmug, and Snapfish. When analyzing these photos, look for tags, descriptive labels applied by photographers to their own work as well as the work of others.

- Role Playing can be implemented by asking consumers to play various roles, e.g., to play the role of a TV commercial producer and post the commercials they have created.
Some of the salient ethical issues relate to misleading or deceiving respondents, not maintaining their anonymity, and embarrassing or harming the respondents. An additional issue with wider ramifications is the use of research results in an unethical manner.

Deception, such as introducing clients as co-researchers, raises ethical concerns and generates mistrust.

Whether or not they are initially told of the hidden camera, the respondents should be informed about the focus group recording at the end of the meeting and their written consent obtained.
Ethics in Marketing Research (Cont.)

- To use social media monitoring techniques without adverse impact, consumers should be adequately informed about such stealthy activities. Moreover, firms can act ethically by only extracting the keywords that they are looking for without looking for more than necessary information.

- The researcher has an obligation to make the respondents feel comfortable. If a respondent is experiencing discomfort or stress, the interviewer should show restraint and should not aggressively probe any further.
Ethics in Marketing Research (Cont.)

- At the end of the interview, respondents should be allowed to reflect on all they have said and be allowed to ask questions. This helps reduce their stress and return them to their preinterview emotional state.
The key characteristics of a focus group may be described by the acronym FOCUS GROUPS:

F ocused on a particular topic
O utline prepared for discussion
C haracteristics of the moderator
U nstructured
S ize: 8 to 12 participants
G roup composition: homogeneous
R ecorded: audio- and video-recording
O bservation: one-way mirror
U ndisguised
P hysical setting: relaxed
S everal sessions needed: One to three hours each
Acronym: **Depth**

The main features of a depth interview may be summarized by the acronym DEPTH:

- **D**epth of coverage
- **E**ach respondent individually interviewed
- **P**robe the respondent
- **T**alented interviewer required
- **H**idden motives may be uncovered