Chapter Seven

Descriptive Research Design: Survey and Observation
Figure 7.1 Relationship of Survey and Observation to the Previous Chapters and the Marketing Research Process

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Focus of This Chapter</th>
<th>Relationship to Previous Chapter</th>
<th>Relationship to Marketing Research Process</th>
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<td>Survey Methods</td>
<td>Marketing Research Process (Chapter 1)</td>
<td>Problem Definition</td>
</tr>
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<td>Observation Methods</td>
<td>Descriptive Research Design (Chapter 3)</td>
<td>Approach to Problem</td>
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<td>Syndicated Survey Data (Chapter 5)</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
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<td>Field Work</td>
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<td>Data Preparation and Analysis</td>
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<td>Report Preparation and Presentation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 7.2 Survey and Observation: An Overview
Opening Vignette

Survey Methods: Advantages and Disadvantages (Fig 7.3)

Survey Methods Classified by Mode of Administration (Fig 7.4) (Tables 7.1, 7.2 & 7.3)

Criteria for Selecting a Survey Method

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Observation Methods

A Comparison of Survey and Observation Methods (Table 7.4)

Ethnographic Research

Other Methods of Descriptive Research

Application to Contemporary Issues (Fig 7.6)

International (Table 7.5) Social Media Ethics
Figure 7.3 Methods of Obtaining Quantitative Data in Descriptive Research

Quantitative Descriptive Research

SURVEY
Information Obtained by Questioning Respondents

OBSERVATION
Information Obtained by Observing Behavior/Phenomena
The survey method of obtaining information is based on questioning respondents.

Perhaps the biggest issue researchers face is how to motivate respondents to candidly answer their questions.

Questions regarding behavior, intentions, attitudes, awareness, motivations, and demographic and lifestyle characteristics all lend themselves to survey research.
Advantages of Survey Research

- **Ease:** Questionnaires are relatively easy to administer.

- **Reliability:** Using fixed-response (multiple-choice) questions reduces variability in the results that may be caused by differences in interviewers and enhances reliability of the responses.

- **Simplicity:** It also simplifies coding, analysis, and interpretation of data.
Disadvantages of Survey Research

- Respondents may be unable or unwilling to provide the desired information.

- Structured data collection involving a questionnaire with fixed-response choices may result in loss of validity for certain types of data, such as beliefs and feelings.

- Properly wording questions is not easy.
Figure 7.4  Classification of Survey Methods

Survey Methods

- Telephone
  - Traditional Telephone
  - Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing

- Personal
  - In-Home
  - Mall Intercept
  - Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing

- Mail
  - Mail Panel
  - Mail/Fax Interview

- Electronic
  - E-Mail
  - Internet
Traditional Telephone Interviews

- Involve phoning a sample of respondents and asking them a series of questions.

- The interviewer uses a paper questionnaire and records the responses with a pencil.

- Telephone interviews are generally conducted from centrally located research facilities.

- Field service supervisors can closely monitor the telephone conversations.
Computer-

- Uses a computerized questionnaire administered to respondents over the telephone.
- The interviewer sits in front of a computer screen and wears a mini-headset.
- Upon command, the computer dials the telephone number to be called.
Computer-

- When contact is made, the interviewer reads the questions posed on the CRT screen and records the respondent's answers directly into the computer.

- Interim and update reports can be compiled instantaneously, as the data are being collected.

- CATI software has built-in logic, which also enhances data accuracy.
Computer-

- Data quality is also enhanced with on-the-spot review of completed questionnaires.

- The program will personalize questions and control for logically incorrect answers, such as percentage answers that do not add up to 100 percent.

- The software has built-in branching logic, which will skip questions that are not applicable or will probe for more detail when warranted.
Personal In-Home Interviews

- Respondents are interviewed face-to-face in their homes.
- The interviewer's task is to contact the respondents, ask the questions, and record the responses.
- In recent years, the use of personal in-home interviews has declined.
Mall-Intercept Personal Interviews

- Respondents are intercepted in shopping malls.
- The process involves stopping the shoppers, screening them for appropriateness, and either administering the survey on the spot or inviting them to a research facility located in the mall to complete the interview.
- While not representative of the population in general, shopping mall customers do constitute a major share of the market for many products.
Computer-

- This method has been classified as a personal interview technique since an interviewer is usually present to serve as a host and to guide the respondent as needed.

- This approach is used in shopping malls, preceded by the intercept and screening process described earlier.

- It is also used to conduct business-to-business research at trade shows or conventions.
Computer-

- The respondent sits in front of a computer terminal and answers a questionnaire on the screen by using the keyboard or a mouse.

- Help screens and courteous error messages are provided.

- The colourful screens and on- and off-screen stimuli add to the respondent's interest and involvement in the task.
Mail Interviews

- A typical mail interview package consists of the outgoing envelope, cover letter, questionnaire, postage-paid return envelope, and possibly an incentive.

- Those individuals motivated to do so complete and return the questionnaire through the mail.

- There is no verbal interaction between the researcher and the respondent.
Mail Interviews (Cont.)

- Individuals are selected for cold surveys through mailing lists the client maintains internally or has purchased commercially.

- The type of envelope, the cover letter, the length of the questionnaire, and the incentive (if one is offered) all affect response rates.
Mail Panels

- Mail panels consist of a large and nationally representative sample of individuals who have agreed to participate in periodic survey research.
- Incentives in the form of cash or gifts are often offered to the individuals who agree to participate.
- Once the individuals have been admitted to the panel, detailed demographic and lifestyle data are collected on each household.
- The researcher uses this information to select targeted mailing lists within the panel based on client needs.
E-mail Surveys

- If the addresses are known, the survey can simply be mailed electronically to respondents included in the sample.

- Respondents key in their answers and send an e-mail reply.

- Typically, a computer program is used to prepare the questionnaire and email address list, and to prepare the data for analysis.
Email Surveys (Cont.)

- Respondent anonymity is difficult to maintain because a reply to an email message includes the sender’s address.

- E-mail surveys are especially suited to projects where the email lists are readily available, such as surveys of employees, institutional buyers, and consumers who frequently contact the organization via e-mail (e.g., frequent fliers of an airline).
Internet Surveys

- An Internet survey is a questionnaire posted on a Web site that is self administered by the respondent.

- The questions are displayed on the screen and the respondents provide answers by clicking an icon, keying in an answer, or highlighting a phrase.

- Web survey systems are available for constructing and posting Internet surveys.
Internet Surveys (Cont.)

- The researcher can obtain at any time survey completion statistics, descriptive statistics of the responses, and graphical display of the data.

- As compared to email surveys, Internet surveys offer more flexibility, greater interactivity, personalization, automatic skip patterns and visual appeal.

- Several Web sites, such as WebSurveyor (www.websurveyor.com), allow users to design surveys online without downloading the software.
### Table 7.1
Relative Advantages of Different Survey Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone</strong></td>
<td>- Fast</td>
<td>- No use of physical stimuli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- High sample control</td>
<td>- Limited to simple questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Good control of field force</td>
<td>- Quantity of data is low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Good response rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Moderate cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-Home</strong></td>
<td>- Complex questions can be asked</td>
<td>- Low control of field force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Good for physical stimuli</td>
<td>- High social desirability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very good sample control</td>
<td>- Potential for interviewer bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- High quantity of data</td>
<td>- Most expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very good response rate</td>
<td>- May take longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mall-intercept</strong></td>
<td>- Complex questions can be asked</td>
<td>- High social desirability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very good for physical stimuli</td>
<td>- Potential for interviewer bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very good control of environment</td>
<td>- Quantity of data is moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very good response rate</td>
<td>- High cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPI</td>
<td>- Complex questions can be asked</td>
<td>- High social desirability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very good for physical stimuli</td>
<td>- Quantity of data is moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very good control of environment</td>
<td>- High cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very good response rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Low potential for interviewer bias</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>- No field force problems</td>
<td>- Limited to simple questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No interviewer bias</td>
<td>- Low sample control for cold mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Moderate/High quantity of data</td>
<td>- No control of environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social desirability is low</td>
<td>- Low response rate for cold mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Low cost</td>
<td>- Low speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail Panel</td>
<td>- No field force problems</td>
<td>- Limited to simple questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No interviewer bias</td>
<td>- Low/moderate speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Low/moderate cost</td>
<td>- No control of environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- High quantity of data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Good sample control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Low social desirability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electronic:</strong></td>
<td><strong>E-mail</strong></td>
<td><strong>Moderate quantity of data</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Low cost</td>
<td>- Low sample control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No interviewer bias</td>
<td>- No control of environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- High speed</td>
<td>- Low response rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social desirability is low</td>
<td>- Security concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Contact hard-to-reach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Internet</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Visual appeal and interactivity</td>
<td><strong>Moderate quantity of data</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No interviewer bias</td>
<td>- Low sample control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Low cost</td>
<td>- No control of environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social desirability is low</td>
<td>- Low response rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very high speed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Personalized, flexible questioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Contact hard-to-reach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.2
Some Decisions Related to the Mail Interview Package

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Outgoing Envelope</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Outgoing Envelope: size, color, return address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Postage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Method of Addressing</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cover Letter</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Sponsorship</td>
<td>- Signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personalization</td>
<td>- Postscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Type of appeal</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Questionnaire</strong></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Length</td>
<td>- Layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Content</td>
<td>- Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Size</td>
<td>- Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reproduction</td>
<td>- Respondent anonymity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Return Envelope</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Type of envelope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Postage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Advantages/Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely Automated Telephone Surveys (CATS)</td>
<td>Shares the advantages and disadvantages of CATI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless Phone Interview (voice-based format)</td>
<td>Shares the advantages and disadvantages of CATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless Phone Interview (text-based format)</td>
<td>Shares the advantages and disadvantages of e-mail Interview but should be much shorter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-office Interview</td>
<td>Shares the advantages and disadvantages of in-home interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Advantages/Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Location Interview</td>
<td>Shares the advantages and disadvantages of mall intercepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiosk-based Computer Interview</td>
<td>Shares the advantages and disadvantages of CAPI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax Interview</td>
<td>Shares the advantages and disadvantages of mail survey except it is faster with higher response rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-of Survey</td>
<td>Shares the advantages and disadvantages of mail surveys with higher costs and higher response rates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criteria for Selecting a Survey Method

- When evaluating the various survey methods within the context of a specific research project, one has to consider the salient factors relevant to data collection.

- Often, certain factors dominate, leading to a particular survey method as the natural choice.

- If no method is clearly superior, the choice must be based on an overall consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods.

- Often, in large projects these methods are combined to enhance the quality of data in a cost-effective manner.
Criteria for Selecting a Survey Method (Cont.)

- If complex and diverse questions have to be asked, one of the personal methods (in-home, mall intercept, or CAPI) is preferable. Internet surveys are an option as well.
- From the perspective of the use of physical stimuli, personal methods (in-home, mall intercept, or CAPI) are preferable.
- If sample control is an issue, cold mail (but not mail panel), fax, and electronic methods might not be appropriate.
- Control of the data collection environment favors the use of central location (mall intercept and CAPI) interviewing.
- High quantity of data favors the use of in-home and mail panels and makes the use of telephone interviewing inappropriate.
Criteria for Selecting a Survey Method (Cont.)

- Low response rates make the use of cold mail and electronic methods disadvantageous. Low response rates make the use of cold mail and electronic methods disadvantageous.
- If social desirability is an issue, mail, mail-panel, fax, and Internet surveys are best.
- If interviewer bias is an issue, the use of mail (cold and panels), fax, and electronic interviewing (e-mail and Internet) is favored.
- Speed favors Internet, e-mail, telephone, and fax methods.
- Costs favor cold mail, fax, electronic (e-mail and Internet), mail panels, telephone, mall intercept, CAPI, and in-home methods, in that order (most favorable to least favorable).
Methods of Improving Response Rates

- Prior Notification
- Incentives
- Follow-up
- Other Facilitators

Monetary
- Prepaid

Nonmonetary
- Promised
Improving Survey Response Rates

- Prior notification consists of sending a letter or e-mail, or making a telephone call to potential respondents, thereby notifying them of the imminent mail, telephone, personal, or electronic survey.

- Offering monetary as well as nonmonetary incentives to potential respondents can increase response rates. The prepaid incentive is included with the survey or questionnaire. The promised incentive is sent to only those respondents who complete the survey. Prepaid incentives have been shown to increase response rates to a greater extent than promised incentives.
Follow-up, or contacting the nonrespondents periodically after the initial contact, is particularly effective in decreasing refusals in mail surveys. Follow-up can also be done by telephone, e-mail, or personal contact.

Personalization, or sending letters addressed to specific individuals, is effective in increasing response rates.
Observation Methods: Structured Versus Unstructured Observation

- For **structured observation**, the researcher specifies in detail what is to be observed and how the measurements are to be recorded, e.g., an auditor performing inventory analysis in a store.

- In **unstructured observation**, the observer monitors all aspects of the phenomenon that seem relevant to the problem at hand, e.g., observing children playing with new toys.
Observation Methods:
Disguised Versus Undisguised Observation

- In **disguised observation**, the respondents are unaware that they are being observed. Disguise may be accomplished by using one-way mirrors, hidden cameras, or inconspicuous mechanical devices. Observers may be disguised as shoppers or sales clerks.

- In **undisguised observation**, the respondents are aware that they are under observation.
Observation Methods: Natural Versus Contrived Observation

- **Natural observation** involves observing behavior as it takes places in the environment. For example, one could observe the behavior of respondents eating fast food in Burger King.

- In **contrived observation**, respondents' behavior is observed in an artificial environment, such as a test kitchen.
Observation Methods: Personal Observation

- A researcher observes actual behavior as it occurs.
- The observer does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon being observed but merely records what takes place.
- For example, a researcher might record traffic counts and observe traffic flows in a department store.
Observation Methods: Mechanical Observation

Do not require respondents' direct participation.

- the Nielsen audiometer
- turnstiles that record the number of people entering or leaving a building.
- on-site cameras (still, motion picture, or video)
- optical scanners in supermarkets

Do require respondent involvement.

- eye-tracking monitors, pupillometers
- psychogalvanometers
- voice pitch analyzers
- devices measuring response latency
Relative Advantages of Observation

- They permit measurement of actual behavior rather than reports of intended or preferred behavior.
- There is no reporting bias, and potential bias caused by the interviewer and the interviewing process is eliminated or reduced.
- Certain types of data can be collected only by observation.
- If the observed phenomenon occurs frequently or is of short duration, observational methods may be cheaper and faster than survey methods.
Relative Disadvantages of Observation

- The reasons for the observed behavior may not be determined, since little is known about the underlying motives, beliefs, attitudes, and preferences.

- Selective perception (bias in the researcher's perception) can bias the data.

- Observational data are often time-consuming and expensive, and it is difficult to observe certain forms of behavior.

- In some cases, the use of observational methods may be unethical, as in observing people without their knowledge or consent.

- It is best to view observation as a complement to survey methods, rather than as being in competition with them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Observation</td>
<td>- Most flexible</td>
<td>- High observation bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Highly suitable in natural Settings</td>
<td>- High analysis bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Observation</td>
<td>- Low observation bias</td>
<td>- Can be intrusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Low to medium analysis bias</td>
<td>- Not always suitable in natural settings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A survey that takes 20 minutes in the United States could take more than twice as long in Germany. The German language is not as concise as English, and Germans like to talk more than Americans do. For similar reasons, the interviewing time could be longer in other countries as well, such as in Brazil.

Telephone directories are unreliable in some countries (e.g., some African nations, such as Sierra Leone), because they are updated infrequently.
The incidence of unlisted telephones can vary widely across countries and across segments. For example, in Colombia, the numbers of some members of the elite and upper classes are never listed.

In some countries, such as Japan, China, Thailand, Malaysia, and those in Southeast Asia, telephone interviews are considered rude. In contrast, in some South American countries, such as Argentina and Peru, the response rates to telephone surveys is high given the low levels of telemarketing and the element of surprise in receiving an unexpected long-distance or local call.
Traditional personal interviewing methods remain popular in some European countries (e.g., Switzerland, Sweden, France), Asian countries (e.g., China, India, Hong Kong), African countries (e.g., Nigeria, Kenya), and South American countries (e.g., Colombia, Mexico) due to the prevalence of face-to-culture.

Low literacy rates and/or the lack of a reliable postal system in rural areas may make mail surveys infeasible in some countries such as in many African (e.g., Ghana, Ivory Coast) and Central and South American nations (e.g., El Salvador, Uruguay, Paraguay).
Table 7.5  Impact of Cultural & Environmental Factors on Survey Methods (Cont.)

- Mall interviews are limited due to the lack of shopping malls in many developing countries and some developed countries (e.g., Germany). In addition, domestic laws may prohibit or make it more difficult to interview people while shopping.

- Telephone penetration may be low in some countries, particularly in rural areas. In some countries, such as Cambodia, multiple families may be sharing a phone line because of high phone rates.
In countries with high cellular/mobile phone penetration and low hard/wired-line penetration (e.g., Thailand, Malaysia), the use of traditional phone surveys is unappealing.

Poor access to computers and the Internet may make the use of electronic interviewing infeasible in some countries (e.g., rural populations in Africa, Asia, and South America).
Figure 7.6 A Concept Map for Quantitative Descriptive Data

Quantitative Descriptive Data obtained by surveys and observations. The major types are personal and mechanical.

Personal may be traditional, telephone, or computer-assisted telephone interviewing.

Electronic may be mail, email, or internet.

Mail may be mail/fax or mail panel.

Computer-assisted personal interviewing may be in-home or mall intercept.
International Marketing Research

- Given the differences in the economic, structural, informational, technological, and sociocultural environments, the feasibility and popularity of the different interviewing methods vary widely across countries.

- In the United States and Canada, nearly all households have telephones and telephone interviewing is the dominant mode of administering questionnaires. This is also true in some European countries, such as Sweden.

- In-home personal interviews are the dominant mode of collecting survey data in many European countries, such as Switzerland, and in newly industrialized countries (NICs) or developing countries.
Although mall intercepts are being conducted in some European countries, such as Sweden, they are not popular in other European countries or in developing countries.

Central location/street interviews constitute the dominant method of collecting survey data in France and the Netherlands.

Due to their low cost, mail interviews continue to be used in most developed countries where literacy is high and the postal system is well developed. In Africa, Asia, and South America, however, the use of mail surveys and mail panels is low because of illiteracy and the large proportion of the population living in rural areas.
Access to the Web or e-mail is limited in many countries, particularly developing countries. Hence, the use of electronic surveys is not feasible, especially for interviewing households in rural areas.

Different incentives are more or less effective in improving response rates in different countries. In Japan, it is more appropriate to use gifts with business surveys rather than cash as incentives. The same is true for household surveys in Mexico.

When collecting data from different countries, it is desirable to use survey methods with equivalent levels of reliability rather than necessarily using the identical method.
Surveys

- Short surveys can be administered on the social media site itself, e.g., a Facebook page. For longer surveys, a link can be provided on the site that directs the user to the survey site.
Advantages of Social Media for conducting Surveys

Social media offer the following advantages for conducting surveys:

- Wider coverage through virtual nature of outreach
- Simplicity in implementing surveys due to easy to use social media tools
- Ability to field more complex questions with aid from interactive multimedia computing
- Responses are more candid due to the veil of anonymity and lack of physical interaction thus encouraging honest feedback
- Improved accessibility– Nature of Internet allows tags and URLs to be linked to other sites of interest, thus content of surveys are more accessible.
Advantages of Social Media for conducting Surveys (Cont.)

- Lower cost of research – no need to maintain large field force of interviewers and supervisors
- Ability to use multiple survey methods. For example, social media worlds such as Second Life allow one-to-one internet phone surveys to be made.
- No Interviewer Bias
- Low social desirability
- High-Speed, instantaneous results of polling
Disadvantages of Social Media for conducting Surveys

Social media offer the following disadvantages for conducting surveys:

- Surveys do not address the responses from nonusers of social media, especially the older consumers.
- Survey administration is difficult to control and content may be accessible to competitors.
- Response rate may be low because of the clutter involved through the use of virtual communities. Surveys may be dismissed as spam.
- Confidentiality is an issue to consumers because of the relatively insecure features of virtual media, thus discouraging the release of sensitive information.
Observation

- The comments, photos, videos, audio and other stimuli posted voluntarily by consumers on their social media sites are traces of their behaviors. An analysis of these constitutes a form of observation known as trace analysis.

- Some researchers consider participant blogs and online research communities to be examples of e-ethnography or netnography (ethnographic research online).

- It is also possible to more directly observe the behavior of interest to the researcher in the virtual world, e.g., Second Life.
Ethics in Marketing Research

- Surveys often are used as a cover for a targeted sales effort. This practice, called “sugging” in the trade language, is unethical.
- A similar unethical practice is “fruggling” and involves fundraising under the guise of research.
- Respondents’ anonymity, discussed in the context of qualitative research in Chapter 6, is an important issue also in survey as well as observational search.
- The researcher has the responsibility to use an appropriate survey method in an ethical and legal way.
Ethics in Marketing Research (Cont.)

- Researchers often observe people’s behavior without their consent, arguing that informing the respondents might alter their behavior. This can be considered an invasion of the respondents’ privacy. Such observation should only be conducted in places where people would expect to be observed by the public. After observing their behavior, the researcher is still obligated to obtain the necessary permission from the subjects.

- The common practice of serving cookies on the Internet raises ethical concerns.
Acronym: Methods

The classification of survey methods by mode of administration may be described by the acronym METHODS:

M - Mail panels
E - Electronic interviews
T - Telephone interviews
H - Home (in-home personal) interviewing
O - On-site mall interviews
D - Direct-mail interviews
S - Software for CATI/CAPI/electronic interviewing