

User Research by Interview

Example

- How would you answer the following research questions:
 1. What is the most popular search engine?
 2. What types of people are satisfied with the Amazon.com website?
 3. What do people like about the Irish Rail website?
 4. What makes people choose one website (e.g. entertainment.ie) over another (odeon.ie) when checking cinema times?
 5. What makes users happy?

Types of Research

- **Qualitative research** is based on “words”
- **Quantitative research** is based on “numbers”

Types of Research

- Quantitative - Objective
 - Speed - reaction time
 - Accuracy - number and types of errors
 - Learning Curve - change over time
 - Process - how they did task
- Qualitative - Subjective
 - Attitude - like/dislike
 - Opinions - what is good/bad?

Types of Research

- Quantitative Methods
 - Analytics
 - Laboratory measurement
 - Questionnaire
- Qualitative - Subjective
 - Interview
 - Observation

Types of Research

- Quantitative Bias (from researcher)
 - What tasks examined?
 - What measurements used?
 - How measurements taken?
 - What subjects covered?
- Qualitative Bias
 - From experimenter
 - From subjects

Qualitative Research Strategies

Observations
Interviews

Step 1

These often involve face-to-face interactions between researcher and participant

The researchers need to be flexible and sensitive to the social context within which the data is obtained.

Step 2

The data is then analysed and interpreted to look for themes.

Strengths of Qualitative Research

- Provide **rich data** – that is, in-depth descriptions of individual experiences
- Particularly useful for investigating **complex issues**
- Explain phenomena – that is, go beyond mere observation to understand **what lies behind** them (e.g. why do people use online dating)
- Generate **new ideas** and theories to explain and overcome problems
- People are studied in their **own environment**

Limitations of Qualitative Research

- Can be very **time-consuming** and generate a huge amount of data.
- **Data analysis** can be difficult because of the amount of data and no clear strategy for analysis.
- Interpretation of data may be **subjective**

Sampling for Qualitative Research

- The sampling numbers are **smaller** than in quantitative research
- To get random, representative samples from target population is seldom possible of qualitative research.
- A sample is chosen because it represents **important characteristics of a population** – characteristics that are the main concern in evaluation of research.

Purposive Sampling

- Participants are chosen on the basis of **particular characteristics** that will help the researcher to explore the research topic.
- The sample might be biased but this is lessened if the criteria on which participants were chosen are clearly documented

A Way of Understanding

“If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.”

- Henry Ford (attributed)

Interviewing

Qualitative Interviews

“...attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world...”

Interviewing

- Conversations in which responses are the main source of raw data
- Participant's responses are open-ended and not restricted to choices provided by the researcher

Interviewing

- Unstructured interviews
 - Interviews in which neither the question nor the answer are predetermined and rely on social interaction between the researcher and informant to elicit information
- **Semi-structured interviews**
 - **Allow open-ended responses. Deliberately set up. Follow certain rules and procedures.**
- Structured interviews
 - Interviewer adheres to a strict script. Interviewers can be less experienced or knowledgeable. Easier to compare or analyse data.

Interviewing

- Semi-Structured Interviews
 - The researcher has an **outline of topics** (interview guide) or issues to be covered, but is free to vary the wording and order of the questions to some extent
 - Data somewhat more systematic and comprehensive than in the informal conversational interview
 - Tone of the interview still remains fairly conversational and informal

Interviewing

- **Beginning**

- Choose a comfortable setting for the interview that is free from distractions
- Open the interview with easy questions that the interviewee can answer confidently, or even begin with friendly, off-topic conversation
- Explain in broad terms the goals of the research, particularly if you can frame it in terms of solving a problem that is important to the interviewee

Interviewing

- Interviews should be structured around **several focal questions** designed to cover the main aspects of the research question.

Interviewing

- Questions should be designed to elicit an individual's experiences and understanding. Use questions about **specific experiences** where possible.
- E.g. "Can you tell me about the last time you voted in person in a general election, from when you got to the polling site until you left?"

Interviewing

- Questions should be **open-ended**, rather than tailored for a specific type of answer.
 - Avoid questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no”
 - Do not use emotional or biased language
 - Be careful about what your behaviour conveys to participants (e.g., expressions of surprise, jumping to take notes).

Interviewing

- **Follow-up questions** should be used to encourage expansion of ideas deemed most relevant to the research question
 - Used to elaborate on themes, clarify concepts
 - “What do you mean by... ?”
 - “Can you tell me more about ... ?”

Interviewing

- **Probes** are standardised ways to get more depth and detail.
 - For continuation: “Then what happened?”
 - For elaboration: “Can you give me an example?”
 - For steering the conversation: “You mentioned that...”
 - Probes can be non-verbal as well, such as using silence to encourage elaboration, or leaning forward to indicate interest
 - Be careful to vary the probes and not to overuse them

Interviewing

- It may be helpful to **summarise key ideas** and themes back to the interviewee to ensure you have a proper understanding of their meaning

Interviewing

- Steps:
 - Identify your research question (what you are trying to find out)
 - Identify focal questions for the interview (sub-questions which expand on your research question)
 - Develop an interview guide (what you want to cover in the interview)
 - Carry out the interview, recording or note taking as you go
 - Analyse the data for the themes you're investigating

Task

- Break your group into two pairs
- Develop a research question, focal questions and an interview guide based on your need to collect data for personas for your task from last week
- Pick one person from each pair as interviewer and one person as interviewee
- Carry out an interview