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BTEC National 90 Credit Diploma in Creative Media Production

Unit 3: Research techniques

Research Techniques

# Research

Research is the gathering of information by studying materials and sources or asking people to retrieve facts, evidence and new conclusions. The reason research is so important to the games industry is because with it they can find out who their target market is meaning they know what age group they should market the game to and what gender they should market the game to as well.

The purpose of research is to learn and gather information, research is important when developing a game as you can see which genres have succeeded and failed in the past. This will inform the developers for example if first person shooter (FPS) games are popular and horror games are not the developers will know not make a horror game and think about making a first-person shooter.

Research allows for a developer to find out who their target market is. The target market is the specific audience for your game or product, so you would tailor your game or product to match the needs of your target market. For example, if your target market is aged from 4 to 6 you would ensure your game wasn’t a horror game or contained realistic guns or violence.

# Types of Research

## Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is the gathering of information usually a lot of it to make a graph or chart to easily represent the data gathered to the researcher or developers this is usually done in the early stages of development to find out what the developers should make. Quantitative research is important as it generalises results in a numerical format and allows the developer to find out what their target market or the public want in a video game through simple questions given to a lot of people. Quantitative questions are usually multiple choice and include tick boxes as shown in the example below. The person answering would tick as many boxes as they like and the information gathered would be recorded. From the chart we can see that he publics favourite genre of games are shooters this tells the developers that if they make a shooter genre of game it will get the biggest fan base and players out of all the other genres on the question.

|  |
| --- |
| What is your favourite genre of game?  (Tick all boxes that apply) |
| Platformer |  |
| Shooter |  |
| Racing |  |
| Rhythm |  |

### Advantages

Firstly, quantitative research is easy and fast to collect as well as analyse because it only takes a minute or two to collect the information and input it into a Microsoft Excel sheet and make a chart.

Secondly, the repeated information and the trusted set of statistics can give confidence to developers when making future plans for a game.

Thirdly, quantitative research can be anonymous which is useful for sensitive topics or shy people as this will give them the confidence to answer and complete the questions honestly.

### Disadvantages

Firstly, quantitative questions don’t give people much choice as if they disagree with the question or don’t like any of the genres for example with my question they can’t fill it in.

Secondly, quantitative research can be costly as you must print out the questions hundreds of times.

Thirdly, as quantitative questions are usually aimed at the public and not the developers target market people may share opinions that don’t apply to the audience creating a potential bias in the study and information.

Finally, quantitative research isn’t the most effective way of getting peoples true opinions leaving holes in the developers knowledge of the research.

## Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is the gathering of information from a developer target market through questions that ask for people’s opinions and allow for descriptive answers. Qualitative research is usually collected through focus groups containing the target market. Quantitative questions usually shape the developers target market whereas qualitative questions refine it and find out what their target market really wants in a game. Qualitative research like quantitative is also usually used in the early stages of development as well. Researchers and developers use qualitative research to find out what their potential fanbase would like in a video game and what entertains them about a specific genre. Unlike quantitative questions qualitative questions take a longer time to fill out which provides the researcher/developer with more detailed responses. Also answers to qualitative questions cannot be represented as a graph or chart because the questions ask for a person’s opinion and are meant to be read entirely making the process of getting the relevant information out of the answers tedious and long. An example of a qualitative question is the one down below, it looks the same as the quantitative question example but with the added “Why?” section, this is where the person answering would go in-depth about why they love that specific genre of game, because of this added “Why?” section this question would not be given to a large group of people as it would take too much time for the person answering that they might just skip that section and if they don’t that is too much work for the developers/researchers to read all of the answers.

|  |
| --- |
| What is your favourite genre of game? And why?  (Tick all boxes that apply) |
| Platformer |  |
| Shooter |  |
| Racing |  |
| Rhythm |  |
| Why: |

### Advantages

Qualitative questions allow for topics to be explored in more depth and detail than quantitative questions.

Qualitative research is often cheaper than quantitative research as less paper is needed to be printed out and less people are needed through recruitment.

Finally, qualitative research offers flexibility and is more convenient to collect as large groups are not needed to be interviewed at once.

### Disadvantages

As qualitative research is purely based on opinions it is hard to justify whether the people interviewed have the same opinion as others making it harder to get any type of solid statistic to base your actions off when developing a game.

Finally, because qualitative questions take quite a bit of time to fill out it is hard to find people who will fill in the questions making it harder to get any research at all.

# Methods of Research

## Primary Research

Primary research is research that has never been carried out before and involves gathering information for the developers/researchers. Primary research should meet the developer’s specific needs so that the information collected is unique to their investigation. Primary research does not have to be done by the researcher/developer as you can also hire a firm to carry the research out although this saves time and work for the developer it can also be costly, and the developer might not get the information he wanted back from the firm’s research. A perfect example of primary research is from the company Nintendo as they wanted to add a new character to their fighting game Super Smash Bros. for Nintendo 3DS and Wii U, but they didn’t know which character out of their many games to add so they asked their fanbase and got them to pick out one character they wanted added to the game of a list of characters on their website. This is primary research as the information was not previously out there on the internet, so they had to carry out the research themselves with the help of their fanbase the perfect target audience.

[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNXOVQibYYA)

### Advantages

The advantages of using primary research are that you can tailor the information specifically around your target market without having to use secondary research and read through a lot of useless information to your investigation. Also, as it is the developers/researchers specific research it can be changed to adapt with new information such as if you were going to advertise your game around the male demographic and you do some primary research and find out that your game has a big fanbase for the female demographic you can change the investigation to find out what woman would like in a game too.

### Disadvantages

### Firstly, as I’ve discussed previously primary research takes too long and is a very tedious task also in some cases the researcher/developer could come up blanc with the investigation and not learn anything new. Secondly, primary research can be very expensive depending on how big the task is, how many people are going to be interviewed and finally how long the investigation will continue for.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups are where you get a room of people usually people in your target market and ask them questions about your product or game.

Advantages:

You get to have a discussion with your target market and you can find out a lot of new information.

Disadvantages:

They can be hard and take time to set up.

Sometimes you could just not get any new information at all.

You could get the wrong people who don’t even play games.

### Beta Tests

These are where you let people play a nearly finished product of your game and get their opinions on the game. You can have a closed beta which is where only a select few get to play your game and you can have an open beta where the public can play your game, open betas are usually carried out through the internet.

Advantages:

You can increase your fan base and hype for the game

You can find new bugs with your game and fix them before it releases.

Disadvantages:

They can be expensive and take time to set up.

### Forum Feedback

This is when you previously have a game out and you create a forum for your fan base to post on.

Advantages:

You can find out if there are any new bugs and fix them.

You get to find out what your actual fans like about the game, so you can improve it.

Disadvantages:

They can cost money to run.

You could just get a lot of spam with no useful feedback.

### Questionnaires

These are sheets of paper with a bunch of questions on them, they can contain quantitative and qualitative questions which the public or your target market are expected to complete.

Advantages:

They are easy and fast to make

It is a way of achieving quick answers and research.

Disadvantages:

The equipment for the questionnaires such as paper and printing it out can be costly

You could get false research as some may just tick every box on the right to get it over with, so they can carry on with their day. Also, you will mainly be ignored by people unless they get a reward for finishing the questionnaire like with Google they have a Google Rewards app where if you finish questionnaires you get money for the app store.

### Surveys

Surveys are like questionnaires just done in different ways as you have telephone surveys which are questions asked over the phone usually to someone in your target market. The advantages of telephone surveys are that you can have a conversation with people and ask different questions which are not on the survey. However, the disadvantages of telephone surveys are that mainly people will just hang up on you or even if they do speak they might just say brief answers as they are rushed. Also the calls can be costly.

Another type of survey is postal surveys this is where you send out questions related to your product/game to people in your target market and then the receivers are meant to fill it out and send it back to the return address. The advantages of postal surveys are that the receivers of the survey can take their time to answer the survey unlike telephone surveys meaning the answers will be more in depth. The disadvantages of postal surveys are that most people will just throw the survey in the bin meaning you will lose money on postage making it just not worth it, also time and effort is wasted in making and sending them.

Another form of survey is email surveys this is where you send an email to people in your target market containing questions about your product for the receiver to fill out and send back. The advantages for email surveys is that they are fast and free to send, also as the receiver can take their time when answering meaning the answers will be more in depth. However, the disadvantages outweigh the few advantages. Firstly, people don’t trust these types of emails as they might contain viruses that will break their computer. Secondly with the advances in technology there are systems that will automatically delete emails like this or they will put them in the spam folder.

### Interviews

Interviews are when the developer/researcher talks one to one with someone or a small group and asks them questions about their product/game.

Advantages:

Interviews allow for in-depth responses from the participants.

The interview can be recorded to be played through later to get the information.

If the participant doesn’t understand a question they can ask the interviewer to clarify it making it, so the participant gives a more specific response to a question.

Disadvantages:

Interviews can take time, effort and money to set up things that researchers/developers cannot afford to waste as it is always a risk because the interviewer could just get no information from the participants.

### Observation

This is where someone will play your game or a demo of it while you watch him or her to see which parts he or she were stuck at also what he or she enjoyed and did not like.

Advantages:

You get to see which parts the testers like by seeing their first-hand play through experience. Also, you can see which parts of the game testers get stuck on. You get to see the testers honest opinion.

Disadvantages:

Testers feel like they have to say the game is good as they feel pressured. Opinion could be false.

Testers can’t enjoy the game to its full potential as the developers are watching over them.

If the game is challenging, you could just think people don’t like your game.

## Secondary Research

Secondary research is finding out information which is already out there such as in books or on the internet (research that has already been carried out). Secondary research is important to developers, as they need it to find out how to fix a bug in certain programs and learning how to use a specific coding language they will use the internet to find out how to do certain things in that coding language.

### Advantages

Secondary research is faster than collecting information for primary research. It is convenient to find different sources on the internet where all the research is finalised this save time energy and effort. Finally, most research on the internet is free unlike primary research.

### Disadvantages

Firstly, information on the internet can be unreliable especially with the well-known Wikipedia as anyone can put information on a Wikipedia page making it unreliable information. In addition, the information could be out of date for example a webpage saying, “platformers are the most popular games now” could be from 2002 making it incorrect as the most popular game franchise is likely to be shooters. Finally, as the information you are trying to find could be very far down in Google so by the time you get to the information you want you’ve already wasted a lot of time and energy. Also, secondary research can be biased, biased information is written to give only one opinion to influence people's views.

### Books/Journals/Newspapers

Advantages:

There are a lot of resources and information to retrieve from books.

You can have access to them anytime you want by going to a library.

If the power or internet goes out in your building, you can still work by reading a book.

Disadvantages:

Books can be quite expensive especially if you are buying multiple.

They are heavy and hard to carry around with you.

### Internet

The internet is a worldwide spread database with a lot of information in it.

Advantages:

It can be fast and effortless to obtain information.

Information from the internet is usually free.

Disadvantages:

Sometimes information on the internet can be incorrect and unreliable.

In certain occasions it can take hours to find the information you wanted.

You can become distracted on the internet quickly with Facebook and YouTube with one click away and the endless clickbait (An eye-catching link on a website which encourages people to read on. It is often paid for by the advertiser ("Paid" click bait) or generates income based on the number of clicks.) on webpages that contain the information you are looking for.

### Data from a Data Collection Agency

A data collection agency is a business that gets paid to find out certain information for a company or person.

Advantages:

The agency does all the work for you, so you don’t have to waste time finding information.

As there will be a lot of employees in the agency work gets done there quickly.

Disadvantages:

Sometimes the agency will not find the information you were looking for.

They can be quite expensive.

### TV/Radio

Advantages:

TV and radio shows are an up to date source of information.

You can multitask while listening to the radio or watching TV and do other work.

It can be less boring and tedious to perform this type of research making work more enjoyable which is motivating.

Disadvantages:

You can get easily distracted.

You might have to watch the full episode on TV or listen to the entire radio show to acquire useful information which can take a long time.

This form of information can be biased.

TV shows are usually created for entertainment and not facts.

### Internet Forums

Internet forums are online discussion websites where people across the world can have conversations about certain topics.

Advantages:

Firstly, in a forum there are people of different ages who all have unique points of view, backgrounds plus experience offering a wide range of information to be had.

Secondly, if the forum has good moderators they will block and delete all useless information and unwanted posts such as spam (irrelevant or unsolicited messages sent over the Internet, typically to many users, for the purposes of advertising, phishing, spreading malware, etc.).

Disadvantages:

Although some forums have good moderators most have bad ones who block people from posting on the forum as they may not like their opinion causing a bias in the forum.

Secondly, certain forums could not have a moderator at all as they became uninterested in the topic and left making it so that people can post anything maybe causing someone to get a virus on their computer from a hacker.

Lastly, posts could not be helpful at all and cause you more problems by making you think of more questions.

### Circulation/Sales Figures/Statistics

Statistics are information which is true displayed as numbers for example a statistic could be that 512,000-people played Mario Kart 8 Deluxe on the 17th of October 2017.

Advantages:

Statistics are quick and easy to interpret.

They can be represented as graphs and or charts.

Disadvantages:

It can be time consuming to get statistics.

Statistics can't show people’s opinions.

## Purpose of Research

### Audience Research

Audience research is when you find out what your potential fanbase/audience like and don't like for example if you are making a game you will want to find out what genre of game people like so you know if you make that game it will have potential customers as if you didn't do any audience research and made a game it could be a risk whether or not people will like it which could potentially cause a loss of money from the expenses from developing the game. Therefore, audience research is needed in the gaming industry.

### Market Research

Market research is when game companies are competing against each other, so they try to bring in a new audience for example with Sony and Microsoft with the Xbox One and the PlayStation 4. Sony projected the PlayStation 4 to "real gamers" this is seen from their slogan "This is for the players!" Whereas Microsoft initially marketed the Xbox one as a console for the family with it's new TV function or something like that. Microsoft knew they had to one up their direct competitor by targeting the console at the family which is a broader market meaning potentially a bigger audience meaning more sales. Although it didn't work out for the Xbox One because of its terrible game line-up with hardly any exclusive titles but it's still an example of market research.

### Production Research

Production research is finding out all the information you need when making something such as a video game, a developer would need to know his budget for the game and how much he needs to spend on things like equipment, coders and voice actor's etcetera. Production research can also be about finding places in the world to set the location of the game like with the game series Assassins Creed, Ubisoft would send out their game developers to scout out locations to put in the game.

### PEGI

PEGI stands for Pan European Game Information and is a video game content rating system and are labels which appear on the front and back of a games packaging which informs the purchaser what ages the game is suitable for which can protect underaged children from violence and gore. The PEGI system has five different rating systems: 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18.

PEGI 3:

This is rating is for games which contain comical violence such as Mario jumping on a Goomba. Also, the games should not contain any photo realistic characters getting hurt they have to be fantasy characters. The game should not scare the children playing and not contain any profanities.

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/320.gif

PEGI 7:

This is basically the PEGI 3 rating but with a bit more realistic violence and could contain some possibly scary scenes.

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/321.gif

PEGI 12:

This rating can contain little violence to photo realistic/human looking characters, minor swearing and a little bit of nudity such as a high skirt.

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/322.gif

PEGI 16:

This rating means the violence and or sexual activity has been raised to the point of realism and drug use can be shown in the game also criminal activities can be displayed and extreme bad language is prevalent. Games with this rating include Destiny 2, Uncharted 4 and W2K18.

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/323.gif

PEGI 18:

This rating is having the same qualities as PEGI 16 except with more revolting violence. A perfect example of this is with the game franchise Mortal Kombat.

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/324.gif

On the back of the packaging of a game also contains pictures dictating why a game is that specific PEGI rating. There are eight such pictures: violence, bad language, fear, drugs, sexual, discrimination, gambling and online gameplay with other people.

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/269.gif

Bad Language:  
Game contains profanities.

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/270.gif

Discrimination:  
Game contains depictions of, or material which may encourage, discrimination

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/271.gif

Drugs:  
Game shows drug use.

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/272.gif

Fear:  
Game may be frightening or scary for young children

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/273.gif

Gambling:  
Games that encourage or teach gambling

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/275.gif

Sex:  
Game depicts nudity and/or sexual behaviour or sexual references

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/276.gif

Violence:  
Game contains depictions of violence

http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/media/img/274.gif

Online gameplay:  
Game can be played online

## Conclusion

From this assignment I have learnt that there are two main types of research primary and secondary research, primary research is finding the information yourself and secondary research is using other people’s research to find information, and in these types of research are qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative is about finding more in-depth responses and people’s opinions. Whereas quantitative like the name suggests is about getting a bunch of simple answers and putting them in a chart to see the findings from the information usually from the population. Also, that there is a worldwide rating system for video games and that is called PEGI.

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