

## Qualitative research methods

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- **Finding the right people**

– Even if everything else is perfect get the wrong people and your research is useless

– Need to access the right people to get the right responses

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Where do I find the right people?

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## Questionnaires/Survey

- Self Completion
- Postal
- Group Administered
- Email
- Web
- Diary

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Advantages/Disadvantages?

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How do you get people to complete your questionnaire?

- Make it look nice!
- Professional
- Be clear about what you are trying to do.

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## Questionnaire / Screener

- Screener - filters out the people who will give you good responses from ones who match the demographic segment
  - Stick to 20 questions
  - Make it short
  - Be clear and specific
  - Never use jargon
  - Ask for exact dates, quantities and times

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- Every question should have a purpose
- Order questions from general to specific
- Your questions should be clear, succinct and unambiguous. The goal is to eliminate the chance that the question will mean different things to different people.
- Avoid unnecessary adjectives
- **Questions should not lead**

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- Clearly state the format of the research
- Build in flexibility
- Test your question for prestige bias
- Only ask one variable per question
- When you are querying the frequency of something you should quantify the scale.

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- Brevity
- Clarity and consistency
- Non-leading
- Double-barrelling
- Answer Categories

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- Categorical variables:
- Mutually exclusive and Exhaustive
- Religion:
  - Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Sikh

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- Open Questions
- Closed Questions
  - Fixed Choice

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- Relevance
- Comprehensiveness
- Feasibility
- Comprehensibility

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## Interviewing

Process of getting your respondents thoughts, feelings and experiences without filtering the those thoughts through the preconceptions of the interviewer

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## Advantages/Disadvantages

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## Where do you begin?

- Who you are and your role in the project
- The name of the organisation you are working for or studying with
- What the topic of the research is
- What kind of things the respondent will be asked about
- How long the interview is likely to take
- An offer to make it at a time at their convenience

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- Why you are approaching this person
- An indication that participation is voluntary and they can refuse to take part if they wish including during the interview if they change their mind
- Any arrangements to feedback the results to participants
- Contact details
- Finish by asking if they have any questions which you will try to answer

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- Non-directed Interviewing
  - Leading questions
  - Avoiding directed questioning is easier said than done
  - Constant vigilance on the part of the person asking the questions
  - Deeply held belief in the need to know the peoples thoughts unconditionally

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- You need to look at things in completely neutral light
- Ignore your gut feelings
- Everything you have ever thought or heard about something
- You are merely asking questions about something that you do not care about

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- This requires a lot of self imposed distance and a rigorously critical examination of your assumptions
- At first you will feel like you are expending a lot of energy not to ask the obvious questions
- With some practice your questioning will become less stilted and you will learn which questions lead people and how to phrase questions to get a natural response

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- Every question should be focused on the person answering it
- Our understanding of our own behaviour rarely corresponds with how we really behave
- Therefore when we try to put ourselves in other peoples shoes we can idealise and simplify

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- In composing your questions need to
  - Focus on experience
  - They should be focused in the now
- Avoid hypothetical questions
- Peoples current behaviour better predicts their future behaviour than their predictions
- Ask how not why

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- Questions need to be non-judgmental
  - Respondent should not think you are looking for a specific answer
- Be aware of embarrassing questions
- Focused on a single topic (no double barreled questions)
- Use simple language
- Open-ended
- Clear frame of reference

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- Running the Interview
  - Define terms
  - Don't force opinions
  - Restate answers
  - Follow up with examples but always wait for an undirected answer first
  - Use artefacts to keep people focused on the present and to trigger ideas
  - Be aware of your expectations
  - Never say the respondent is wrong

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- Listen carefully to the questions that are being asked of you
- Keep questions simple both in language and intent
- Problems don't always arise in the formulation of the questions

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#### Common Problems

- Close-ended questions that should be open ended
- Questions with complex posed as binary questions
- Loaded words or words with multiple meanings
- Asking people to predict the future
- Assuming you know the answer
- Assuming that they can answer the question

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- The interpretation of answers also relies on the way questions are asked
- Things to watch out for
  - People won't always say what they believe
  - They say yes to avoid conflict
  - Hesitant answers or answers that are inconsistent
  - People will sometimes answer a different question to the one asked
  - Listen carefully for what they are really saying

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- If it is off track, interrupt and ask the question again
- Don't be afraid to be persistent
- Be careful not to be too dry
- Don't be afraid to improvise
- You need to make your interviewee comfortable

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