***V*ariables and Research Questions**

A variable is something that we want to measure in a survey. Usually, each question on a survey measures one variable. Most **research questions (RQ)** for marketing research projects can be divided into three types, which are described below.

***1) Descriptive analysis****:* Most research questions in your project will be this type. You will simply describe some characteristics of your respondents such as how often they eat out at a restaurant, where they usually shop for groceries, how much they would pay for a Valentine’s Day bouquet, or which of several promotional packages they prefer.

***2) Difference analysis****:* In this type of research question, you are examining whether subgroups of your sample differ on some characteristics. For example, you might want to know if on- and off-campus students differ in how often they want pizza delivered. A differences analysis RQ has both a grouping variable and a comparison variable.

a. The grouping variable divides your sample into subgroups, such as on- and off-campus

students (2 subgroups), class level (freshman, sophomore, etc., which is 4 subgroups), employment status (not working, working part time, working full time, which is 3 subgroups).

b. The analysis variable is what you compare your subgroups on.

Examples:

RQ 1: Do Greek and non-Greek students differ in their favorite place to buy clothes in Columbia? The grouping variable is Greek vs. non-Greek; the analysis variable is the favorite place to buy clothes.

RQ 2: Do residents of the three main zip codes in Columbia differ in the frequency with which they shop in downtown Columbia? The grouping variable is zip code of residence; the analysis variable is the frequency of shopping in downtown Columbia.

**3*)* As*sociation analysis***: This type of research question asks if there's a relationship or association between two variables. For example, we might want to know if income is correlated with how many vacations a person takes. Or our research question might ask if family size is associated with how often a family eats out. Or we might want to know if hours per week studying is correlated with the grades students get. An association RQ always involves two variables and requires two separate questions on a questionnaire (one to measure each variable).

Association analysis might sound similar to difference analysis. The major difference is that association analysis’s both variables have order/rank such as small family size, medium family size, and large family size. The frequency of eating out can be infrequent, medium frequent, and frequent. Then you can say if family size increases, the frequency of eating out decreases or vice versa. Thus, association analysis is a special case of difference analysis.

Textbook material on variable:

