

Questionnaire



A questionnaire is a very commonly used method of collecting primary data. It is kind of research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. These questions relate to the problem of inquiry directly or indirectly. Questionnaires can be thought of as a kind of written interview. They can be carried out face to face, by telephone, computer or post.

Questionnaires provide a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people.

Data can be collected relatively quickly because the researcher would not need to be present when the questionnaires were completed. This is useful for large populations when interviews would be impractical.

Types of Questionnaire

The questionnaire can be of following types:

Computer Questionnaire

Respondents are asked to answer the questionnaire which is sent by mail. The advantages of the computer questionnaires include their inexpensive price, time-efficiency, and respondents do not feel pressured, therefore can answer when they have time, giving more accurate answers. However, the main shortcoming of the mail questionnaires is that sometimes respondents do not bother answering them and they can just ignore the questionnaire.

Telephone Questionnaire

Researcher may choose to call potential respondents with the aim of getting them to answer the questionnaire. The advantage of the telephone questionnaire is that, it can be completed during the short amount of time. The main disadvantage of the phone questionnaire is that it is expensive most of the time. Moreover, most people do not feel comfortable to answer many questions asked through the phone and it is difficult to get sample group to answer questionnaire over the phone.

In-house survey

This type of questionnaire involves the researcher visiting respondents in their houses or workplaces. The advantage of in-house survey is that more focus towards the questions can be gained from respondents. However, in-house surveys also have a range of disadvantages which include being time consuming, more expensive and respondents may not wish to have the researcher in their houses or workplaces for various reasons.

Mail Questionnaire

These sorts of questionnaires involve the researcher to send the questionnaire list to respondents through post, often attaching pre-paid envelope. Mail questionnaires have an advantage of providing more accurate answer, because respondents can answer the questionnaire in their spare time. The disadvantages associated with mail questionnaires include them being expensive, time consuming and sometimes they end up in the bin put by respondents.

Open Question Questionnaires

Open questions differ from other types of questions used in questionnaires in a way that open questions may produce unexpected results, which can make the research more original and valuable. However, it is difficult to analyze the results of the findings when the data is obtained through the questionnaire with open questions.

Multiple Choice Questions

Respondents are offered a set of answers they have to choose from. The downside of questionnaire with multiple choice questions is that, if there are too many answers to choose from, it makes the questionnaire, confusing and boring, and discourages the respondent to answer the questionnaire.

Dichotomous Questions

This type of questions gives two options to respondents – yes or no, to choose from. It is the easiest form of questionnaire for the respondent in terms of responding it.

Scaling Questions

Also referred to as ranking questions, they present an option for respondents to rank the available answers to the questions on the scale of given range of values (for example from 1 to 10).

Schedule

A schedule is a structure of a set of questions on a given topic which are asked by the interviewer or investigator personally. The order of questions, the language of the questions and the arrangement of parts of the schedule are not changed. However, the investigator can explain the questions if the respondent faces any difficulty. It contains direct questions as well as questions in tabular form.

Schedule includes open-ended questions and close-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow the respondent considerable freedom in answering. However, questions are answered in details. Close-ended questions have to be answered by the respondent by choosing an answer from the set of answers given under a question just by ticking.

Following are the different types of schedules used by social scientists and anthropologists.

- ***Village or community schedule:*** It is used by census researchers who collect general information on populations, occupations, etc.
- ***Family or Household schedule:*** It gives full demographic details of households, the status of individuals, data on education, age, family relations, etc.
- ***Opinion or attitude schedule:*** To schedule the views of the population regarding an issue.

Similarities between Schedule and Questionnaire

- Both are set of related items having questions relating to central problems.

- Both use mainly structured questions and these questions are so phased and interlocked that they have a built in mechanism for testing the reliability and validity of the response.
- In both the same set of questions is administered to all the respondents and comparable results are obtained.
- Both these instruments have to be used with the same general principles of designs and have to take into account the same problems and basic difficulties they have to be limited in length.
- In both, the central problem has to be concentrated upon the following considerations involved in the problem of evolving the questionnaire and a schedule as a unit.
 1. Drawing the respondent into a situation through awake and interest.
 2. Proceeding from simple to complex questions.
 3. No early and sudden request for information of a personal and embracing intimate nature.
 4. Not asking embarrassing questions without giving the respondent an opportunity to explain himself.
 5. Moving smoothly from one item to another.
- In both certain types of questions have to be eliminated such as vague and ambiguous questions, emotionally charged questions, loaded and leading questions, questions eliciting no response and questions having structured response to the queries, violence to the existing facts.
- In both pilot studies and pre-tests are necessary for formulating the instrument and for bringing them to the final form. They have to go through the same stages of development.