RESEARCH DESIGN AND EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

Exploratory Research
- How well is your problem defined?
- If not well defined:
  - Exploratory
    - Used to clarify/define a problem
    - Manager tells you “sales just aren’t what we expected for this kite”
    - Not meant to provide conclusive evidence

Descriptive Research
- Describes characteristics of a group in a given situation
- Some understanding of the nature of the problem
- If problem is partially defined
- Descriptive
  - What do children think of the size of the kite?
  - What do children think of the color?
  - Who uses the product, when, where, why, how

Descriptive Research Example
- Weight Watchers average customer
- Woman about 40 years old
- Household income of about $50,000
- At least some college education
- Trying to juggle children and a job
- Men’s fragrance market
- 1/3 size of women’s fragrance market
- Women buy 80% of men’s fragrances

Causal Research (Hypothesis Testing)
- Conducted to identify cause and effect relationships
- Change in color increase sales

Causal versus Correlational
- Does smoking cause cancer (Causal)
- Are smoking and cancer related? (Correlational)
Types of Research

- Exploratory
- Descriptive
- Causal

**Unit of Analysis**

Based on following examples:

- The problem statement focuses on how to raise the motivational levels of employees
  - Unit of analysis: individuals
- Studying two person interactions (such as husband-wife interactions in families)
  - Unit of analysis: dyads
- Comparing the different departments of an organization
  - Unit of analysis: groups
- **OUR RESEARCH QUESTION DETERMINES THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Problem Definition</th>
<th>Exploratory Research (Ambiguous Problem)</th>
<th>Descriptive Research (Partially Defined Problem)</th>
<th>Causal Research (Problem Clearly Defined)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible situation</td>
<td>“Our sales are declining and we don’t know why.”</td>
<td>“What kind of people are buying our product? Who is buying our competitor’s product?”</td>
<td>“Will buyers purchase more of our product in a new package?”</td>
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<td>“Would people be interested in our new product idea?”</td>
<td>“What features do buyers prefer in our product?”</td>
<td>“Which of two advertising campaigns is more effective?”</td>
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**Time horizon: Cross-sectional versus Longitudinal Studies**

- One-shot or cross-sectional studies
  - A study can be undertaken in which data are gathered just once, perhaps over a period of days, weeks or months, in order to answer the research questions
- Longitudinal Studies
  - A correlational research study that involves repeated observations of the same variables over long periods of time
  - More time, effort and cost

**EXERCISE**

- You want to investigate the specific effects of negative emotions on buying intention after a failed service encounter across industries
- Exploratory, descriptive or hypothesis-testing study? Why?
- A causal or a correlational study? Why?
- Unit of analysis?
- A cross-sectional or a longitudinal study? Why?

**Exploratory Research**

- Initial research conducted to clarify and define the nature of a problem
- Does not provide conclusive evidence
- Subsequent research expected

**What is Exploratory Research?**

- Quantitative data
- Qualitative data
Why Conduct Exploratory Research?

- Diagnose a situation
- Screening of alternatives
- Discover new ideas

Categories of Exploratory Research

- Experience surveys
- Secondary data analysis
- Case studies
- Pilot studies

Experience Surveys

- Ask knowledgeable individuals about a particular research problem - most are quite willing
- Reveal nothing conclusive, they may help define the problem more formally

Secondary Data

Data gathered and recorded by someone else prior to and for a purpose other than the current project
Is often:
- Historical
- Already assembled
- Needs no access to subjects

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<tr>
<th>Advantages of Secondary Data</th>
<th>Disadvantages of Secondary Data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inexpensive</td>
<td>Uncertain Accuracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obtained Rapidly</td>
<td>Data Not Consistent with Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information is not Otherwise Accessible</td>
<td>Inappropriate Units of Measurement</td>
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<td>Time Period Inappropriate (Dated)</td>
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Case Study Method

- Intensely investigates one or a few situations similar to the problem
  - Investigate in depth
  - Careful study
  - May require cooperation

Pilot Studies

- Any small scale exploratory study that uses sampling
- But does not apply rigorous standards

- **TYPES OF PILOT STUDIES**
  - Focus Group Interviews
  - Projective Techniques
  - In-Depth Interviews
Projective Techniques

• An indirect means of questioning that enables a respondent to project beliefs and feelings onto a third party, onto an object, or into a task situation

• **TYPES OF PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES**
  - Word association tests
  - Sentence completion method
  - Third-person technique
  - Role playing
  - T.A.T.
  - Picture frustration version of T.A.T.

Word Association

• An individual is given a clue or hint and asked to respond to the first thing that comes to mind.

• Or it is presented with a list of words to subject and it is asked to him/her the first word that comes to mind

**Holy Feasts Celebrations**

- Family
- Unity
- Peace
- Children
- Deserts

Sentence Completion

• Realized based on free-association

People who drink beer are ____________________________

A man who drinks light beer is ______________________

Imported beer is most liked by ______________________

A woman will drink beer when ______________________

Thematic Apperception Test (T.A.T.)

• It is presented a series of pictures to research subjects and asks them to provide a description of or a story about the pictures

• Researchers analyze the content of stories

Focus Group Interviews

• Unstructured
• Free flowing
• Group interview
• Start with broad topic and focus in on specific issues

Group Composition

• 6 to 10 people
• Relatively homogeneous
• Similar lifestyles, experiences or demographics
Outline for a Focus Group

- Establish a rapport
- Begin with broad topic
- Focus in on specific topic
- Generate discussion and interaction

The Moderator

- Develops rapport - helps people relax
- Interacts
- Listens to what people say
- Everyone gets a chance to speak
- Maintains the control and focuses discussion
- Stimulates spontaneous responses

Advantages and Disadvantages of Focus Groups

- **Advantages**
  - Fast
  - Inexpensive
  - Interaction between group members
  - Capability To Utilise Non-Verbal Behavior As A Research Input

- **Disadvantages**
  - Bring together many participants from wide-spread geographical areas can be difficult
  - Focus Groups Tend To Become Influenced By One or Two Dominant People In The Session Thus Making the Output Very Biased
  - Interpretation difficulties

In-Depth Interviews

- An in-depth interview is a dialogue between a skilled interviewer and an interviewee.
- Its goal is to elicit rich, detailed material that can be used in analysis
- Such interviews are best conducted face to face, although in some situations telephone interviewing can be successful
- **When do we have to prefer in-depth interviews?**
  - detailed information sought;
  - busy, high-status respondents; and
  - highly sensitive subject matter