

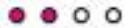
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chapter

8



## **Exploratory Designs: In-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups**

# **Value of Qualitative Research Info**

# Value of Qualitative Research Info

- ✓ Management is quite often faced with problem situations where questions can not be adequately resolved merely with secondary info;
  - ✓ **Meaningful insight** into some problem situations will be gained only through the collection of pertinent primary data.
- ✓ Collecting only **quantitative data** structures does not guarantee that management will gain a complete understanding of the problem situation.
  - ✓ Collecting **qualitative data** might be necessary as well.
- ✓ The research objectives & specific info requirements are keys to determining the appropriate research design.



# **An Overview of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods**



# An Overview of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods

- ❖ **Quantitative Research Methods** place heavy emphasis on using formalized standard questions & predetermined response options in questionnaires or surveys administered to large number of respondents.
  - ✓ The info research problems & opportunities are specific & well defined.
  - ✓ They are more directly related to descriptive & causal research designs.

# An Overview of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods

- ✓ The main goal of quantitative research;
  1. To make accurate predictions between market factors & behaviors,
  2. To gain meaningful insights into those relationships, &
  3. Verify or validate the existing relationships

# An Overview of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods

- ✓ **Qualitative Research Methods** refer to selected research methods used in exploratory research designs.
  1. Its aim is to gain **preliminary insights** into decision problems & opportunities.
  2. They tend to focus on the collection of detailed amounts of primary data from relatively small samples by asking questions or observing behaviors.



## EXHIBIT 8.1 Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Factors/Characteristics	Qualitative Methods	Quantitative Methods
Research Goals/Objectives	Discovery and identification of new ideas, thoughts, feelings; preliminary insights on and understanding of ideas and objects	Validation of facts, estimates, relationships, predictions
Type of Research	Normally exploratory designs	Descriptive and causal designs
Type of Questions	Open-ended, semistructured, unstructured, deep probing	Mostly structured
Time of Execution	Relatively short time frames	Usually significantly longer time frames
Representativeness	Small samples, limited to the sampled respondents	Large samples, normally good representation of target populations
Type of Analyses	Debriefing, subjective, content, interpretive, semiotic analyses	Statistical, descriptive, causal predictions and relationships
Researcher Skills	Interpersonal communications, observations, interpretive skills	Scientific, statistical procedure, and translation skills; and some subjective interpretive skills
Generalizability of Results	Very limited; only preliminary insights and understanding	Usually very good; inferences about facts, estimates of relationships

# An Overview of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods

Qualitative research methods are appropriate when decision makers/researchers are;

1. In the process of correctly identifying a business problem or opportunity situation or establishing info requirements
2. Interested in obtaining some preliminary insights into the motivation, emotional, attitudinal, & personality factors that influence marketplace behaviors.
3. In the process of building theories & models to explain marketplace behaviors or relationships between two or more constructs.

# An Overview of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods

4. Attempting to develop reliable & valid scale measurements for investigating specific market factors, consumer qualities—attitudes, emotional feelings, preferences, beliefs, perceptions--& behavioral outcomes.
5. Trying to determine the preliminary effectiveness of their marketing strategies on actual marketplace behaviors.
6. Interested in new product or service development or repositioning current product or service images.

# An Overview of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods

## Advantage & Disadvantage of Qualitative Research Methods

### Advantage

1. Economical & timely data collection
2. Richness of the data
3. Accuracy of recording marketplace behaviors
4. Preliminary insights into building models & scale measurements

# An Overview of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods

## Advantage & Disadvantage of Qualitative Research Methods ...

### Disadvantages

1. Lack of generalizability
2. Inability to distinguish small differences
3. Lack of reliability & validity
4. Difficulty finding well-trained investigators, interviewers, & observers



# **Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research**

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

- ✓ Observation & interviewing techniques play important roles in exploratory research designs.
  - ✓ Observation method employs activities that have the ability to capture both qualitative & quantitative data structure (discussed in next chapter).

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

- ❖ There is a distinct “family” of interviewing approaches that could be used to collect primary qualitative data.
  - 1) Experience Survey
  - 2) Protocol Interviews
  - 3) Projective Interviewing Techniques
  - 4) Role-playing Interviews
  - 5) In-depth Interviews
  - 6) Focus-group Interviews

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## Experience Surveys

- ✓ They refer to the **informally** gathered opinions & insights from people who are considered to be knowledgeable on the issues surrounding the defined research problem.
  - ✓ For example, if a research problem focuses on the difficulties in purchasing books online from Amazon.com, the surveys of **dissatisfied online Amazon purchasers** might be conducted.
- ✓ There is no serious attempt to ensure that the resulting data structures are representative of any overall defined group of subjects.

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## Protocol Interviews

- ✓ Protocol interviewing places a person in a specified decision-making situation & asks the person to verbally express the process & activities that are considered in making a decision.
  - ❖ It is useful when the research problem focuses on selected aspects—e.g. motivational or procedural—of making a purchase decision within either long or short time frames.



# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## Projective Interviewing Techniques

- ✓ Projective techniques constitute a “family” of qualitative data collection methods where subjects are asked to project themselves into specified buying situations, then asked questions about the situations.
- ✓ The objective is to learn more about the subjects in situations where they might not reveal their true thoughts under a direct questioning process.

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

✓ They include:

- 1) Word Association Tests
- 2) Sentence Completion Tests
- 3) Picture Tests
- 4) Cartoon & Balloon Tests

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## 1. Word Association Tests

- ✓ The subject is read a preselected set of words, one at a time, & asked to respond with the first thing that comes to her/his mind regarding that word.
  - ✓ After completing the list words, researchers then look for hidden meanings & associations between the responses & the words being tested on the original list.
  - ✓ Used by advertising research agencies to develop ad copy

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## 2. Sentence Completion Test

- ✓ In the interview, respondents are given incomplete sentences & asked to complete them in their own words in hopes that the respondents will reveal some hidden aspects about their thoughts & feelings towards the investigated object.

For example, an Indian restaurant wants to find out what modifications to its current image are needed to attract a larger portion of the college students.

People who eat at Chili's are \_\_\_\_\_.

Chili's reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_.

Chili's is the place to be when \_\_\_\_\_.

College students go to Chili's to \_\_\_\_\_.

My friends think Chili's is \_\_\_\_\_.

From the data collected, researchers interpret the completed sentence in efforts to identify meaningful themes or concepts.

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## 3. Picture Test

- ✓ The respondent is given a picture & instructed to describe his/her reactions by writing a short narrative story about the picture.



# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## 4. Cartoon or Balloon Test

- ✓ It involves the use of cartoon figures or strips, arranged in a setting sometimes pre-described, other time ambiguous in nature.
  - ✓ An empty balloon is placed one or both of the characters & instruct respondents to write in the balloons what they believe or feel the characters are saying.
  - ✓ The researcher then interprets these written thoughts to identify the respondents' latent feelings about the situation being portrayed in the cartoon.

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research



# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## Role-playing Interviews

- ✓ The participants are asked to take on the identity of a third person, such as a neighbor or a friend, placed into a specific, predetermined situation, & then asked to verbalize how they would act in the situation.
  - ✓ In some cases, the research interest lies in how the subject would respond to a specific statement, rather than asking the respondents directly what they think, the statement is phrased in terms of “your neighbors” or “most people” or other third party format.

# **In-depth Interviews**



# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## In-depth Interviews

- ✓ It represents a formalized process in which a well-trained interviewer asks a subject a set of semistructured, probing questions, usually in a face-to-face setting.
- ✓ It allows the researcher to collect both attitudinal & behavioral data from the subject that spans all time frames.



# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

- ✓ The interviewer uses **probing questions** as the mechanism to get more data on the topic from the subject.
  - ✓ Probing questions are questions that result when an interviewer takes the subject's initial response to a question & uses that response as a framework for the next question (the probing question) to gain more detailed responses.

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## Main Research Objectives of In-depth Interviewing

- ✓ To discover preliminary insights of **what** the subject thinks or believes about the topic of concern or **why** the subject exhibits certain behavior.
- ✓ To obtain unrestricted & detailed comments that include feelings, beliefs, or opinions that can help better understand the different elements of the subject's thoughts & the reasons why they exist.
- ✓ To have the respondent communicate as much detail as possible about his knowledge & behavior towards a given topic or subject.

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## Skills Required for Conducting In-depth Interviews

- ✓ **Interpersonal Communication Skills** relate to the interviewer's ability to articulate the questions in a direct & clear manner so that the subject understand what he is responding to.
- ✓ **Listening Skills** include the ability to accurately hear, record, & interpret the subject's responses.

# **Focus Group Interviews**

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## Focus Group Interviews

### Nature of focus group interviews

- ✓ It involves a formalized process of bringing a small group of people together for an interactive & spontaneous discussion of one particular topic or concept.
  - ✓ It consists of 6 to 12 participants who are guided by one or two professional facilitators, called moderators, through an unstructured discussion that typically lasts between 90 minutes & two hours.
  - ✓ By getting the group members to talk at length & in detail about a topic, the moderator draws out as many ideas, attitudes, feelings, & experiences as possible about the specified issue.



# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

Focus group interviews success relies on

- 1) The group dynamics,
- 2) The willingness of members to engage in an interactive dialogue, &
- 3) The professional moderator's ability to keep the discussion on track

# Questioning Techniques in Qualitative Research

## Focus Group Research Objectives

- 1) To provide data for defining & redefining marketing problems
- 2) To identify specific hidden info requirements
- 3) To provide data for better understanding the results from other quantitative survey studies
- 4) To reveal consumers' hidden needs, wants, attitudes, feelings, behaviors, perceptions, & motives regarding services, products, or practices
- 5) To generate new ideas about products, services, or delivery methods
- 6) To discover new constructs & measurement methods
- 7) To help explain changing consumer preferences

# **Conducting Focus Group Interviews**

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

- ✓ Focus group interviews can be viewed as a process divided into three logical phases;
  1. Planning the study
  2. Conducting the focus group discussions, &
  3. Analyzing & reporting the results

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## 1. Phase I; Planning the Focus Group Study

Researchers & decision makers must have a clear understanding of the purpose of the study, a precise definition of the problem, & specific data requirements.

There must be agreements to such questions as follows;

- 1) Why should such a study be conducted?
- 2) What kinds of info will be produced?
- 3) What types of info are of particular importance?
- 4) How will the info be used? &
- 5) Who wants the info?



# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

Issues to be considered in this step are;

- 1) Focus group participants,
- 2) Selection & recruitment of participants,
- 3) Size of the focus group,
- 4) Focus group locations.

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## The focus group participants

- ✓ The focus group must be as homogeneous as possible, but with enough variation to allow for contrasting opinions.

## ❖ Central factors for selection process are

- 1) The group dynamics, &
- 2) The willingness of members to engage in dialogues.

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

✓ Desirable commonalities among participants may include

- 1) Occupation,
- 2) Past use of product, or service, or program,
- 3) Educational level,
- 4) Age,
- 5) Gender, or
- 6) Family structure

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## General Rules for the Selection of the Participants

### 1) Specify Exact Selection Criteria

- ✓ Interacting with the decision maker, the researcher needs to identify, as precisely as possible, all the desired characteristics of the group members.

### 2) Maintain Control of the Selection Process

- ✓ The researcher must maintain control of the selection process; a screening mechanism that contains the key demographic or socioeconomic characteristics must be developed & used to ensure consistency in the selection process.
- ✓ In those situations where the researcher allows someone else to do the selection, precise instructions & training must be given to that individual.

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## 3. Beware of the Potential Selection Biases

- ✓ Biases can develop in subtle ways & seriously erode the quality of the data collected; beware of participants picked from memory, or because they expressed an interest or concern about the topic, or because they are clones of the person doing the selection.

## 4. Incorporate Randomization

- ✓ Whenever possible, randomize the process; it will help ensure a non-biased cross section of prospective participants.
- ✓ This will work only if the pool of respondents meets the established selection criteria.



# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## 5. Check Respondent's knowledge & Experience

- ✓ For any given topic, prospective participants may differ in knowledge & experience.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge may directly affect respondents' abilities to engage in spontaneous topical discussions.

## 6. Keep in Mind that no Process is Perfect

- ✓ Researchers have to make the best choices they can with the knowledge they have at the time of selection.
- ✓ The process may overlook certain aspects of the problem & inadvertently neglect individuals with unique points of view.

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## 2. Phase II; Conducting the Focus Group Discussions

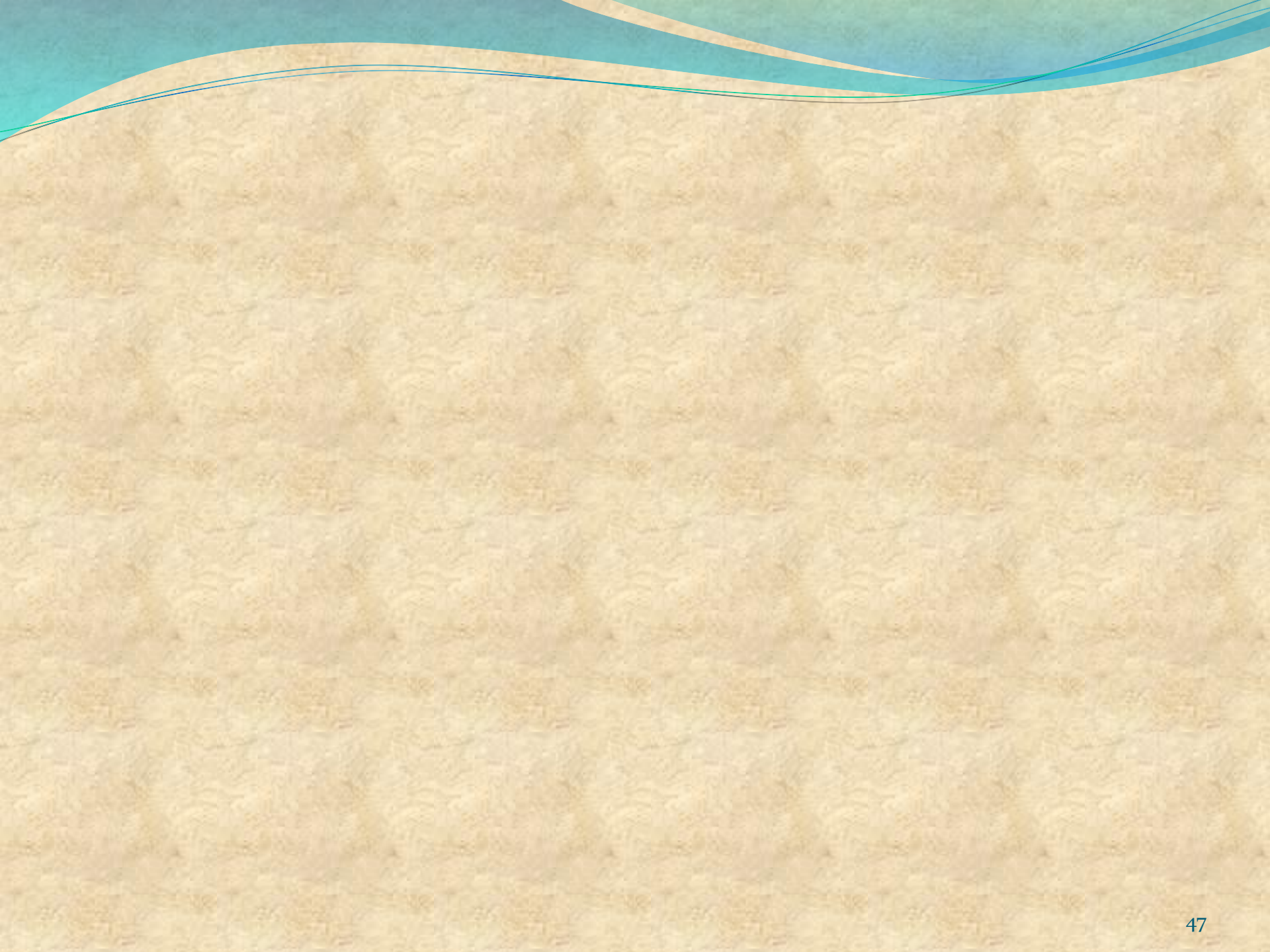
- ✓ The success of actual focus group sessions depends heavily on the moderator & his communication, interpersonal, probing, observation, & interpretive skills.
- ✓ **Focus Group Moderator** is a special person who is well trained in interpersonal communication skills & professional manners.

## 8.10 Important Traits of a Focus Group Moderator

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The following descriptions represent some of the important traits that a researcher must consider in the selection of an excellent moderator for the focus group session:

1. The person must be well trained in *interpersonal communications* and have excellent *listening, observation, and interpretive* skills.
2. The moderator must display *professional mannerisms* and *personality*, have a *good memory for names*, create positive *group dynamics* and a *comfort zone* for spontaneous and interactive dialogue.
3. The moderator must be *comfortable* and *familiar* with *group dynamics* and *processes*, and must be able to exercise *mild, unobtrusive control* over participants.
4. The moderator must have *good understanding* and *background knowledge* of the specified *topics* and *questions* and the *ability to guide* the participants from one topic to the next.
5. The person must be *well trained* in asking *follow-up probing questions*, and must demonstrate *respect* and *sensitivity* for the participants and their expressed *opinions* and *feelings*.
6. The moderator must be able to *communicate clearly* and *precisely* both in *writing and verbally*, and must be *objective, self-disciplined, and focused*.
7. The person should exhibit a *friendly, courteous, enthusiastic, and adaptive personality*, along with a *sense of humor*.
8. The person should be *experienced* in focus group research.
9. The moderator must have a *quick mind* capable of *noting* new ideas that come from the group.
10. The moderator must *know how and when to bring closure* to one topic and move the discussion to the next.



# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## 3. Phase III; Analyzing & Reporting the Results

### Debriefing Analysis

- ✓ If the researcher or the sponsoring client's representatives are present, he & the moderator should conduct a **debriefing analysis** & wrap up activities immediately after the focus group members leave the sessions.
- ❖ These activities give the researcher, client, and moderator a chance to compare notes.
  - ❖ The key players who have heard the discussion need to know how their impressions compare to those of the moderator.



# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## Advantages of Debriefing Analysis

- 1) It provides an opportunity to include the opinions of marketing experts with those of the moderator.
- 2) It allows the sponsoring client's representative or the researcher to learn, understand, & react to the moderator's top-of-mind perceptions & feelings about what was said in the group discussion, &
- 3) It can offer opportunities for brainstorming new ideas & implications of the main points expressed in the discussion.

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## Disadvantages of Debriefing Analysis

1. Possibility of creating interpretive bias,
2. Faulty recall on the part of the moderator due to recency or limited memory capabilities, &
3. Misconceptions due to lack of time for reflecting on what was actually said by the participants.

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

**Content Analysis** is a systematic procedure of taking individual responses & categorizing them into larger theme categories or patterns.

- ❖ Depending on how the group discussion was recorded and translated (e.g., transcript, audiotape, videotape, session notes), the researcher reviews the participants' raw comments and creates data structures according to common themes or patterns.





## EXHIBIT 8.11 Important Analysis and Interpretive Factors When Analyzing Focus Group Data

### Analysis/Interpretive Factors

### Description and Comments

#### Consider the words

Thought must be given to both the words used by the participants and the meanings of those words. Because there will be a variety of words and phrases used by the group members, the researcher will have to determine the degree of similarity and classify them accordingly. It should be remembered that editing messy quotations is a difficult but necessary task.

#### Consider the context

The researcher will have to gain an understanding of the context in which participants expressed key words and phrases. The context includes the actual words as well as their tone and intensity (voice inflection). It must be remembered that nonverbal communication (body language) can also provide meaningful bits of data worth analyzing.

#### Consider the frequency of comments

In most situations, some of the topics presented in the session will be discussed by more participants (extensiveness) and some comments made more often (frequency) than others. The researcher should not assume that extensiveness and frequency of comments are directly related to their importance.

#### Consider the intensity of comments

Sometimes group members will talk about specific aspects of a topic with passion or deep feelings. While left undetected in transcripts alone, the intensity factor can be uncovered in audio- or videotapes by changes in voice tone, talking speed, and emphasis placed on certain words or phrases.

#### Consider the specificity of responses

Those responses that are associated with some emotional firsthand experience probably are more intense than responses that are vague and impersonal. For example, "I feel that the new McArch burger is a ripoff because I ate one and it tasted just terrible, especially at the price they are charging" should be given more weight than "The new McArch burger does not taste very good, considering what it costs."

#### Consider the big picture

Because data from focus groups come in many different forms (words, body language, intensity, etc.), the researcher needs to construct an aggregate theme or message of what is being portrayed. Painting a bigger picture of what group members are actually saying can provide preliminary insights into how consumers view the specified product, service, or program. Caution should be used when trying to quantify the data. Use of numbers can inappropriately convey the impression that the results can be projected to a target population, which is not within the capabilities of qualitative data.

Source: Adapted from Richard A. Krueger, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 149–51.

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## Reporting Focus Group Results

- ✓ In situations where some type of final report is requested, the researcher must understand
  - 1) The audience,
  - 2) The purpose of the report, &
  - 3) The expected format
- ✓ The researcher must have a strong understanding of the people who will be using the results;
  - 1) Their preferences in receiving info, &
  - 2) Their demographic profile, like educational levels, occupation, age, etc.



## EXHIBIT 8.12 Components of a Written Focus Group Research Report

Components of the Report	Description and Comments
Cover page	The front cover should include the title, the names of people receiving or commissioning the report, the names of the researchers, and the date the report is submitted.
Executive summary	A brief, well-written executive summary should describe why the focus group session was conducted and list the major insights and recommendations. It should be limited to two pages and be able to stand alone.
Table of contents	This section provides the reader with information on how the report is organized and where various parts can be located. (It is optional for short reports.)
Statement of the problem, critical questions, and methods	This section describes the purpose of the study and includes a brief description of the focus interviews, the number of focus group sessions, the methods of selecting participants, and the number of people included in each session.
Results and findings	The results are most often organized by critical questions or overall ideas. The results can be presented in a number of ways using bulleted lists or narrative formats, listing raw data, summarizing the discussion, or using an interpretative approach.
Summary of themes	Statements in this section are not limited to specific questions but rather connect several questions into a larger picture.
Limitations and alternative explanations	This section can be placed within the results section, if it is brief. Limitations reflect those aspects of the study that reduce the application of the findings or affect different interpretations of the findings.
Recommendations	This optional section is not automatically included in all focus group reports. The recommendations suggest what might be done with the results.
Appendix	The appendix should include any additional materials that might be helpful to the reader. Most often a copy of the moderator's guide, screening form, or other relevant material would go into the appendix.

Source: Adapted from R. A. Krueger, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 165–66.

# Conducting Focus Group Interviews

## Advantages of Focus Group Interviews

1. New Ideas
2. Underlying reasons of Behavior
3. Client Participation
4. Breadth of Topics Covered
5. Special Market Segment

## Disadvantages of Focus Group Interviews

1. Low Generalizability of Results
2. Questions of Data Reliability
3. Subjective of Interpretations
4. High Cost per Participants



*The End*