



Observation, Focus Groups, and Other Qualitative Measures

Categories of Research

- **Quantitative research:** research involving the use of structured questions in which response options have been predetermined and a large number of respondents involved
- **Qualitative research:** research involving collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say

Categories of Research

- **Pluralistic research:** combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to gain the advantages of both

Observation Techniques

- **Observation methods:** techniques in which the researcher relies on his or her powers of observation rather than communicating with a person in order to obtain information

Observation Techniques

- Types of observation:
 - Direct versus indirect
 - Disguised versus undisguised
 - Structured versus unstructured
 - Human versus mechanical

Observation Techniques

Direct versus Indirect

- **Direct observation:** observing behavior as it occurs
- **Indirect observation:** observing the effects or results of the behavior rather than the behavior itself
 - Archives
 - Physical traces
 - Structured versus unstructured
 - Human versus mechanical

Observation Techniques

Disguised versus Undisguised

- **Disguised observation:** subject is unaware that he or she is being observed
- **Undisguised observation:** respondent is aware of observation

Observation Techniques

Structured versus Unstructured

- **Structured observation:** researcher identifies beforehand which behaviors are to be observed and recorded
- **Unstructured observation:** no restriction is placed on what the observer would note: all behavior in the episode under study is monitored

Observation Techniques

Human versus Mechanical

- **Human observation:** observer is a person hired by the researcher, or, perhaps the observer is the researcher
- **Mechanical observation:** human observer is replaced with some form of static observing device

Observation Techniques

Limitations of Observational Data

- Small number of subjects
- Subjective interpretations
- Inability to pry beneath the behavior observed
- Motivations, attitudes, and other internal conditions are unobserved...we don't know why?

Home Depot: An Example of Direct Observation

Shopper/Store Use Profile

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Average time in store: | 32.4 (minutes) |
| Customer party size: | 1.2 (persons) |
| Average expenditures: | 57.34 (dollars) |
| Payment method | 73.0% (credit card) |
| Number of aisles traveled: | 5.7 |
| Requests for assistance: | 0.5 |
| Stops and looks at items | 5.4 |
| Items handled per stop | 2.1 |
| Total items handled | 9.3 |
| Items purchased | 2.5 |

Product Categories of Purchases

| | |
|------------|-----|
| Appliances | 10% |
| Hand tools | 22% |
| Electrical | 31% |
| Plumbing | 14% |
| Roofing | 3% |
| Garden | 35% |
| Other | 26% |

We know **WHAT**

BUT, We don't know WHY!

Focus Groups

- **Focus groups** are small groups of people brought together and guided by a moderator through an unstructured, spontaneous discussion for the purpose of gaining information relevant to the research problem.

Focus Groups

- The moderator's task is to ensure that open discussion is "focused" on some area of interest.
- Focus groups are used to generate ideas, to learn the respondents' "vocabulary," to gain some insights into basic needs and attitudes.

Types of Focus Groups

- **Traditional:** Select 6 to 12 persons and meet in a dedicated room with one-way mirror for client viewing, for about two hours.

Types of Focus Groups

- **Nontraditional:** Online with client viewing from distant locations; may have 25 or even 50 respondents; allow client interaction; may take place in nontraditional locations.
- Online focus groups are a form of nontraditional focus groups.

Focus Groups

Online Focus Groups

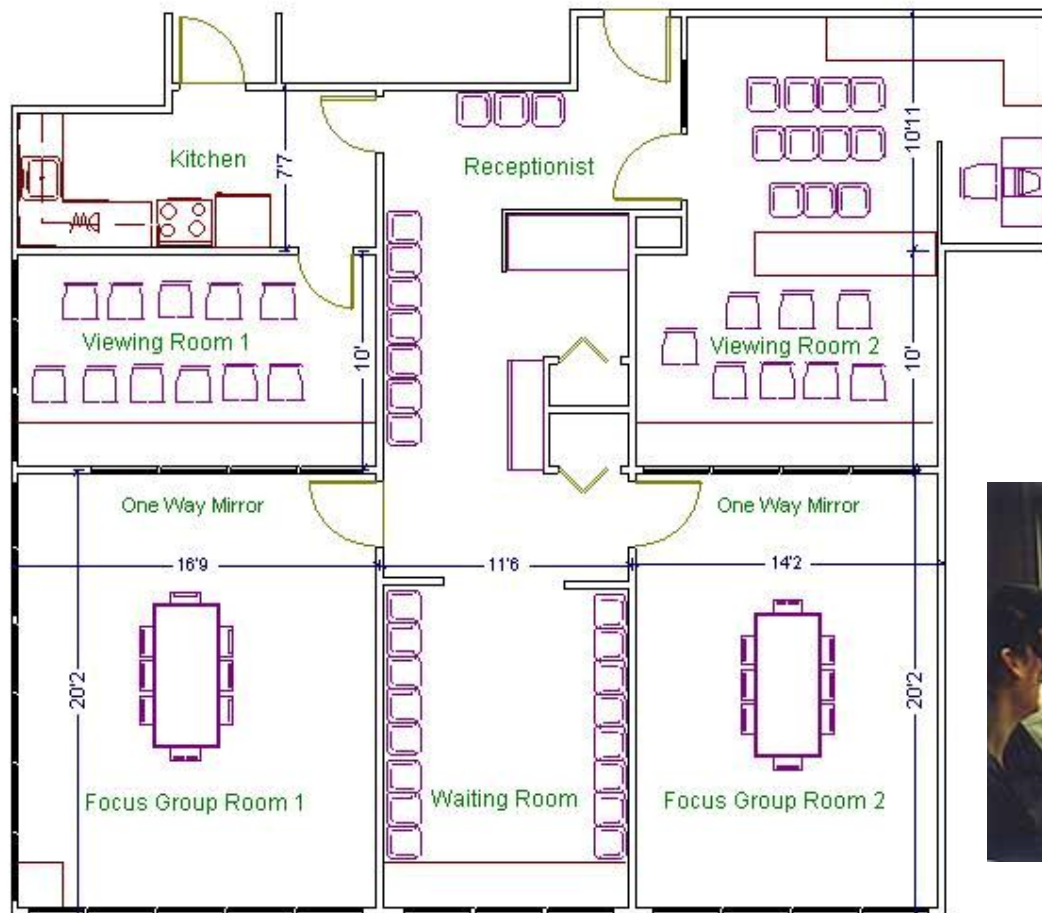
- **Online focus group:** one in which the respondents and/or clients communicate and/or observe by use of the Internet

Focus Groups

Online Focus Groups

- Advantages:
 - No physical setup is necessary
 - Transcripts are captured on file in real time
 - Participants can be in widely separated geographical areas
 - Participants are comfortable in their home or office environments
 - The moderator can exchange private messages with individual participants

Focus Group Facility Floor Plan



Source: Market Trends (www.marketrends.com)

Pros of Focus Groups

- Generate fresh ideas
- Allow clients to observe their participants
- May be directed at understanding a wide variety of issues
- Allow fairly easy access to special respondent groups

Cons of Focus Groups

- Representativeness of participants
- Interpretation sometimes difficult
- High cost per participant

The Proper Use of Focus Groups

- Focus groups should not be used when the research objective is to predict a specific number based upon sample data.

The Proper Use of Focus Groups

- Focus groups should be used when the research objective is to describe rather than predict.
 - How do consumers describe a better package?
 - How would they describe their satisfaction with our service?
 - How could they describe their ideas for an ad campaign?

Focus Groups

Reporting and Use of Results

- A focus group's analysis should identify major themes as well as salient areas of disagreement among the participants

Other Qualitative Techniques

- **Depth interview** is a set of probing questions posed one-on-one to a subject by a trained interviewer so as to gain an idea of what the subject thinks about something or why he or she behaves a certain way.
- **Protocol analysis** involves placing a person in a decision-making situation and asking him or her to verbalize everything he or she considers when making a decision.

Other Qualitative Techniques

- **Projective techniques** involve situations in which participants are placed in (projected into) simulated activities in the hopes that they will divulge things about themselves that they might not reveal under direct questioning
 - Word association test
 - Sentence completion
 - Picture test
 - Cartoon test
 - Role-playing activity

Sentence Completion Example

INSTRUCTIONS. Write in words to complete each of the sentences below.

For college students, credit cards are...

College students use credit cards to...

When a college freshman gets a new credit card application, he/she...

When a college student reaches the limit of his/her credit card he/she...

When a college senior gets a new credit card application, he/she...

If parents of college students learned about their children's credit card situations, they would...

Physiological Measurements

- **Physiological measurements:**
involves monitoring a respondent's involuntary responses to marketing stimulus via the use of electrodes and other equipment
 - Pupilometer
 - Galvanometer