**Qualitative Research: Definition, Types, Methods and Examples**

**1-What is qualitative research?**

Qualitative research is defined as a [market research](https://www.questionpro.com/research-platform.html) method that focuses on obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication.

This method is not only about “what” people think but also “why” they think so. For example, consider a convenience store looking to improve its patronage. A systematic observation concludes that the number of men visiting this store are more. One good method to determine why women were not visiting the store is to conduct an in-depth interview of potential customers in the category.

**For example**, on successfully interviewing female customers, visiting the nearby stores and malls, and selecting them through random sampling, it was known that the store doesn’t have enough items for women and so there were fewer women visiting the store, which was understood only by personally interacting with them and understanding why they didn’t visit the store, because there were more male products than female ones.

Qualitative research is based on the disciplines of social sciences like psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Therefore, the qualitative research methods allow for in-depth and further probing and questioning of respondents based on their responses, where the interviewer/researcher also tries to understand their motivation and feelings. Understanding how your audience takes decisions can help derive conclusions in market research.

**2-Types of qualitative research methods with examples**

Qualitative research methods are designed in a manner that help reveal the behavior and perception of a target audience with reference to a particular topic. There are different types of qualitative research methods like an in-depth interview, focus groups, ethnographic research, content analysis, case study research that are usually used.

The results of qualitative methods are more descriptive and the inferences can be drawn quite easily from the data that is obtained.

Qualitative research methods originated in the social and behavioral sciences. Today our world is more complicated and it is difficult to understand what people think and perceive. Online qualitative research methods make it easier to understand that as it is more communicative and descriptive.

The following are the qualitative research methods that are frequently used. Also, read about qualitative research examples:

**1. One-on-one interview:**

Conducting in-depth interviews is one of the most common qualitative research methods. It is a personal interview that is carried out with one respondent at a time. This is purely a conversational method and invites opportunities to get details in depth from the respondent.

One of the advantages of this method provides a great opportunity to gather precise data about what people believe and what their motivations are. If the researcher is well experienced asking the right questions can help him/her collect meaningful data. If they should need more information the researchers should ask such follow up questions that will help them collect more information.

These interviews can be performed face-to-face or on phone and usually can last between half an hour to two hours or even more. When the in-depth interview is conducted face to face it gives a better opportunity to read the body language of the respondents and match the responses.

**2. Focus groups:** A focus group is also one of the commonly used qualitative research methods, used in data collection. A focus group usually includes a limited number of respondents (6-10) from within your target market.

The main aim of the focus group is to find answers to the “why” “what” and “how” questions. One advantage of focus groups is, you don’t necessarily need to interact with the group in person. Nowadays focus groups can be sent an online survey on various devices and responses can be collected at the click of a button.

Focus groups are an expensive method as compared to the other online qualitative research methods. Typically they are used to explain complex processes. This method is very useful when it comes to market research on new products and testing new concepts.

**3. Ethnographic research:** Ethnographic research is the most in-depth observational method that studies people in their naturally occurring environment.

This method requires the researchers to adapt to the target audiences’ environments which could be anywhere from an organization to a city or any remote location. Here geographical constraints can be an issue while collecting data.

This research design aims to understand the cultures, challenges, motivations, and settings that occur. Instead of relying on interviews and discussions, you experience the natural settings first hand.

This type of research method can last from a few days to a few years, as it involves in-depth observation and collecting data on those grounds. It’s a challenging and a time-consuming method and solely depends on the expertise of the researcher to be able to analyze, observe and infer the data.

**4. Case study research:** The case study method has evolved over the past few years and developed into a valuable qual research method. As the name suggests it is used for explaining an organization or an entity.

This type of research method is used within a number of areas like education, social sciences and similar. This method may look difficult to operate, however, it is one of the simplest ways of conducting research as it involves a deep dive and thorough understanding of the data collection methods and inferring the data.

**5. Record keeping:** This method makes use of the already existing reliable documents and similar sources of information as the data source. This data can be used in new research. This is similar to going to a library. There one can go over books and other reference material to collect relevant data that can likely be used in the research.

**6. Process of observation:**

Qualitative Observation is a process of research that uses subjective methodologies to gather systematic information or data. Since, the focus on qualitative observation is the research process of using subjective methodologies to gather information or data. Qualitative observation is primarily used to equate quality differences.

Qualitative observation deals with the 5 major sensory organs and their functioning – sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. This doesn’t involve measurements or numbers but instead characteristics.