**Qualitative research: data collection and analysis**

**A. Qualitative data collection**

Qualitative data collection allows collecting data that is non-numeric and helps us to explore how decisions are made and provide us with detailed insight. For reaching such conclusions the data that is collected should be holistic, rich, and nuanced and findings to emerge through careful analysis.

1. Whatever method a researcher chooses for collecting qualitative data, one aspect is very clear the process will generate a large amount of data. In addition to the variety of methods available, there are also different methods of collecting and recording the data.

For example, if the qualitative data is collected through a focus group or one-to-one discussion, there will be handwritten notes or video recorded tapes. If there are recording they should be transcribed and before the process of data analysis can begin.

2. As a rough guide, it can take a seasoned researcher 8-10 hours to transcribe the recordings of an interview, which can generate roughly 20-30 pages of dialogues. Many researchers also like to maintain separate folders to maintain the recording collected from the different focus group. This helps them compartmentalize the data collected.

3. In case there are running notes taken, which are also known as field notes, they are helpful in maintaining comments, environmental contexts, nonverbal cues etc. These filed notes are helpful and can be compared while transcribing audio-recorded data. Such notes are usually informal but should be secured in a similar manner as the video recordings or the audio tapes.

**B. Qualitative data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis such as notes, videos, audio recordings images, and text documents. One of the most used methods for qualitative data analysis is text analysis.

Text analysis is a data analysis method that is distinctly different from all other qualitative research methods, where researchers analyze the social life of the participants in the research study and decode the words, actions, etc.

There are images also that are used in this research study and the researchers analyze the context in which the images are used and draw inferences from them. In the last decade, text analysis through what is shared on social media platforms has gained supreme popularity.

**Characteristics of qualitative research methods**

1. Qualitative research methods usually collect data at the sight, where the participants are experiencing issues or problems. These are real-time data and rarely bring the participants out of the geographic locations to collect information.

2. Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source.

3. This type of research method works towards solving complex issues by breaking down into meaningful inferences, that is easily readable and understood by all.

4. Since it’s a more communicative method, people can build their trust on the researcher and the information thus obtained is raw and unadulterated.

**Qualitative research method case study**

Let’s take the example of a bookstore owner who is looking for ways to improve their sales and customer outreach. An online community of members who were the loyal patrons of the bookstore were interviewed and related questions were asked and the questions were answered by them.

At the end of the interview, it was realized that most of the books in the stores were suitable for adults and there were not enough options for children or teenagers.

By conducting this qualitative research the bookstore owner realized what the shortcomings were and what were the feelings of the readers. Through this research now the bookstore owner can now keep books for different age categories and can improve his sales and customer outreach.

Such qualitative research method examples can serve as the basis to indulge in further quantitative research, which provides remedies.

The **use qualitative research**

Researchers make use of qualitative research techniques when they need to capture accurate, in-depth insights. It is very useful to capture “factual data”. Here are some examples of when to use qualitative research.

· Developing a new product or generating an idea.

· Studying your product/brand or service to strengthen your marketing strategy.

· To understand your strengths and weaknesses.

· Understanding purchase behavior.

· To study the reactions of your audience to marketing campaigns and other communications.

· Exploring market demographics, segments, and customer groups.

· Gathering perception data of a brand, company, or product.

**4-Qualitative research methods vs quantitative research methods**

The basic differences between qualitative research methods and quantitative research methods are simple and straightforward. They differ in:

· Their analytical objectives

· Types of questions asked

· Types of data collection instruments

· Forms of data they produce

· Degree of flexibility

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| **Attributes** | **Qualitative research methods** | **Quantitative research methods** |
| Analytical objectives | This research method focuses on describing individual experiences and beliefs. | Quantitative research method focuses on describing the characteristics of a population. |
| Types of questions asked | Open-ended questions | Closed-ended questions |
| Data collection Instrument | Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation | Use highly structured methods such as structured observation using questionnaires and surveys |
| Form of data produced | Descriptive data | Numerical data |
| Degree of flexibility | Participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next | Participant responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next |