

# Research and Research Methods

---

What we will cover:

- Formal vs. Informal
- Qualitative vs. Quantitative
- Primary vs. Secondary
- Focus Groups
- In-Depth Interviews
- Intercept Interviews



# Research and Research Methods

---

- Survey Research
- Survey Advantages
- Survey Disadvantages
- Telephone Survey
- Mail Survey
- Online/Email Survey



# Research and Research Methods

---

- Population
- Sampling
- Confidence Level
- Types of Samples
- Non-Probability Samples
- Determining Random Sample Size
- Reporting Survey Results



# Research and Research Methods

---

- Content Analysis
- Communications Audit
- Public Relations Audit
- Research in the Planning Process
- Clarifying the Problem
- Seven Parts to a Research Statement



# Research and Research Methods

---

- Identify types of research methods, and advantages and disadvantages to these methods.
- Be familiar with research terminology.
- We are not scientists!



# Formal Research

---

- Formal research uses the principles of scientific investigation, such as the rules of random sampling in surveys, in order to replicate results.



# Formal Research

---

- If a sample is used, and it is a true random sample, results can be projected to the larger universe.
- Example is a phone survey based on random sampling.



# Informal Research

---

- Informal research (or nonscientific research) can look at values or qualities; is subjective.
- Informal research is good for pre-testing formal strategies.





# Informal Research

---

- Findings cannot be projected to represent an entire audience or population.
- Examples are personal interviews and focus groups.



# Qualitative Research

---

- Qualitative research is somewhat subjective.
- Uses a problem or open-ended, free response format to investigate the value of programs or probe other questions (usually informal).



# Qualitative Research

---

- Qualitative research is descriptive, but not measurable.
- Looks at how and why.
- Yields an in-depth understanding of an issue.
- Example is a focus group.



# Quantitative Research

---

- Quantitative research can be numerically stated or compared; may use statistical standards.
- Is highly objective and projectable.



# Quantitative Research

---

- Quantitative research uses closed-end or forced-choice questions.
- Factual, numerical questions with short responses that have precise and conclusive outcomes.



# Primary Research

---

- Primary research is an investigation or the collection of data firsthand, or by a third party contracted specifically for the firsthand party.
- Research you do yourself that has not been done before.



# Secondary Research

---

- Secondary research uses the research findings of others, or collects information secondhand.
- The examination of research previously conducted by others.



# Focus Groups

---

- Informal, primary research.
- Advantage: Allows respondents to react to one another.





# Focus Groups

---

- Disadvantage: High cost; requires multiple sessions; not scientifically valid; subjective information.
- Do not apply the scientific method and are not statistically reliable.



# In-Depth Interviews

---

- Informal, primary research.
- Advantages: Ability to collect unobtrusive information; best method for highly paid professionals and busy people.
- Disadvantages: Very expensive; slow to complete; geographic limitations; access limitations.



# Intercept Interviews

---

- Informal, primary research.
- Advantage: Ability to target a geographic location or demographic group.
- Disadvantage: Limited in length and scope.



# Survey Research

---

- Quantitative method that uses a series of written or oral questions to sample a desired population or “universe” (group of people).



# Survey Advantages

---

- Planned correctly, a survey makes it easy for people to participate.
- Participants can remain anonymous.
- Same questions can be asked in several ways to double-check for accuracy and consistency.



# Survey Disadvantages

---

- People surveyed may not answer all questions.
- People who respond may not be part of the universe you intend to sample.
- It is easy for people to give habitual responses.



# Survey Disadvantages

---

- Low response rate is common.
- People can and do lie.
- Can't test knowledge with mailed surveys.



# Telephone Surveys (Based on Random Sampling)

---

- Formal, primary research.
- Advantages: Speed of administration; no geographic limitations; accepted as industry standard.
- Disadvantages: Requires professional phone bank; cost; limited in length and scope.





# Mail Survey

---

- Formal, primary research.
- Advantages: Can use rankings, comparisons; can do message evaluations; convenient for respondent.
- Disadvantages: Considerable time/labor commitment; limited control over who completes; cost can be high if response rates are low.



# Online/Email Survey

---

- Most often informal, primary research.
- Advantages: Lower cost of administration; excellent for known populations with access to technology.
- Disadvantages: Best with known populations; may be difficult to generalize to larger groups or populations.



# Population

---

- Individuals whose opinions are sought in a survey. The population can be as broad as every adult in the United States or as focused as females who voted in the last election.
- The sample is drawn to reflect the population; is sometimes called the universe.



# Sampling

---

A sample is a portion of a larger whole. How large does the sample need to be?

- That depends on how accurate you wish to be.
- Most scientific surveys aim at a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent.



# Confidence Level

---

- Most scientific surveys aim at a “reasonable” confidence level of 95 percent.
- If you did the same survey with the same audience 100 times, in 95 of them, the results would be similar to what you got the first time.



# Types of Samples

---

- Census – A 100 percent sample.
- Identify all the people in your population and give each one an opportunity to respond.
- Especially useful with small, well-defined populations. If your universe is under 300, consider a census.



# Types of Samples

---

- Probability samples – A scientific sample drawn in such a way that the probability of being chosen is equal or is known – for example, a random sample.

# Non-Probability Samples

---

Informal selection of persons to be interviewed.

- Convenience or accidental sample – Drop by the cafeteria and ask questions of whoever is there.
- Quota sample – In a school, find 10 elementary teachers, 10 middle school and 10 high school teachers.





# Non-Probability Samples

---

- Dimensional sample – Identify a specific number of male or female employees, etc. Any employee is OK as long as he or she fits the criteria.
- Snowball sample – You may know only a few users of a certain product, but they know other users. You contact the first few and ask them for names of others, and so on.



# Non-Probability Samples

---

- Purpose sample – For opinions of golfers, hang out at the last hole to ask questions. Or for a quick check of music lovers, hang out in the lobby before the symphony performs.



# Determining Random Sample Size

---

- The table on page 63 in the Study Guide shows the effect of sample size on accuracy in a random sample.
- The illustration is for populations of 100,000 or above, where a random sample of 384 will yield a confidence level of 95 percent with a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent.



# Determining Random Sample Size

---

- If you wish to reduce the margin of error, you must enlarge the sample substantially.
- To achieve a plus or minus 4 percent margin, the sample must be nearly doubled to 600.
- To lower the margin of error by another point to a plus or minus 3 percent, the sample must be more than 1,000.



# Determining Random Sample Size

---

- Reducing the size of the sample below 384 raises the margin of error and makes the results less dependable.
- With a sample of 96 or 100 interviews, for instance, the results obtained in the survey could be 10 percentage points above or below the actual level, and could be seriously misleading.



# Reporting Survey Results

---

Depending on the audience, consider providing the following:

- Dates when interviews were conducted.
- Number of interviews and types.
- Margin of error and confidence level.
- Number surveys mailed and returned.



# Content Analysis

---

- The objective, systematic and quantitative description and evaluation of the content of documents, including print media and broadcast coverage.



# Content Analysis

---

- In content analysis, we attempt to objectively code and describe the content of communication.
- Content analysis involves selecting a unit of analysis, defining categories, sampling and coding.





# Content Analysis

---

- Most often informal, primary research.
- Advantages: Relatively low cost; easy to replicate.
- Disadvantages: Requires careful definition of units of measurement, units of observation and attributes coded.



# Content Analysis

---

- Useful to compare messages that appear in the media, such as TV vs. newspapers.
- Also useful to study trends or changes in content in a medium over time.



# Communications Audit

---

- A complete analysis of an organization's communications processes, both internal and external.



# Communications Audit

---

- Designed to reveal how an organization wants to be perceived by designated publics, what it is doing to foster that perception and how it is actually perceived.



# Communications Audit

---

- Informal, primary research.
- Advantages: Assesses if public relations activities are in alignment with organization goals.
- Disadvantages: Can be costly; labor intensive.



# Public Relations Audit

---

- Involves a comprehensive study of the public relations position of an organization — how it stands in the opinion of its various publics.



# Public Relations Audit

---

During a public relations audit, we do four things:

1. Identify relevant publics (stockholders, etc.).
2. Determine standing with these publics.
3. Determine issues of concern to publics.
4. Assess the power of the publics given size, etc.



# Public Relations Audit

---

- Find out what “we” think – Interviews with key management, etc.
- Find out what “they” think – Research with key publics to determine how closely their views match those of company management.





# Public Relations Audit

---

- Evaluate the disparity – Analyze the differences between what “we” and “they” think.
- Recommend – Comprehensive plan to correct disparities and resolve any problems that surfaced.



# Research in the Planning Process

---

- We start with a question. Is there a problem (or opportunity)?
- What is the problem (or opportunity)?
- How do we know? Facts? Guesswork? Intuition?
- Do we need more facts?
- This becomes the research phase.



# Research in the Planning Process

---

- Next, we ask, “What will take us in the right direction?”
- Audiences — What do we want from them?
- Remember Awareness, Attitude and Action.
- This is the planning stage.



# Research in the Planning Process

---

- Then we come to “doing.”
- This is where most people and many projects start!
- Sometimes plans are prepared because there was only the perception of a problem (or opportunity).



# Research in the Planning Process

---

- Don't forget to evaluate!
- Did it work? If so, how well?
- If not, why not?
- How do we know? Facts? Estimates? Intuition?
- Do we need to keep doing this?
- Do we need to do this differently?



# Clarifying the Problem

---

- Organizations often seek a public relations campaign to solve a fuzzy problem, such as, “We need a membership drive for the alumni association,” or “We need more blood donors.”
- Research techniques can pinpoint the problem and increase your chances of finding effective solutions.



# Seven Parts to Research Statement

---

1. What's happening now?
2. What is the source of concern?
3. Where is it of concern?
4. When is it a concern?
5. Who does it involve or affect?
6. How does it involve or affect them?
7. Why does it concern the organization and its publics?



# Example of Research Statement

---

“During the months of June, July, August and December, demand for blood exceeds blood bank supplies by approximately 100 units each month. The blood bank’s inability to fulfill its supply mission causes critical blood shortages for emergencies at hospitals in the region, postponements of elective surgery, increased costs of transferring blood among hospitals and diversion of staff away from donor recruitment and blood collection activities.”

