

Survey Research Method

Survey Research Methodology: Definition

- Survey Research is defined as the process of conducting research using surveys that researchers send to survey respondents. The data collected from surveys is then statistically analyzed to draw meaningful research conclusions. Typically, researchers survey people who have particular knowledge, insights or experiences related to the study.
- This type of research allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation.

Survey Research Methodology: Process

- Researchers create a formal list of questions to ask the participants and may distribute it one-on-one, online or in the mail.
- The data collected are then processed by appropriate method and after statistical analysis, hypothesis is tested or conclusion is drawn
- Researchers can then use respondents' answers to understand public perceptions about or personal experiences with a particular item, service or product.

Survey Research Methodology: Importance

- This method is important because the data comes directly from the individuals the researchers have identified in their goal. And surveys give researchers a detailed, systematic way to view and analyze the data.
- Survey research is a unique way of gathering information from a large cohort with **a large population and therefore a greater statistical power. Thus it has the ability to gather large amounts of information having the availability of validated models.**

Basic Assumptions in Survey Research Methodology

While conducting survey, there are some specific guidelines that the researcher should follow in order to get the reliable information from the respondents

Data Cleaning: Data cleaning is the first step of data analysis in any survey research. This ensures consistency of data obtained in the survey.

About Instructions in Questionnaire: It is our experience that the respondents hardly read the instructions in the questionnaire; hence, the questions should be framed in such a manner so that the message can be effectively conveyed to the respondents.

Basic Assumptions in Survey Research Methodology

Respondent's Willingness to Answer: To get the correct information, the respondents should be genuinely interested to take part in your survey. It is very important that they should be motivated by means of some incentives.

Receiving Correct Information: One of the assumptions in survey research is that the respondents are giving correct information. If this is not the case, the whole purpose of the survey would be lost.

Seriousness of the Respondents: During the study, we need to assume that the respondents are serious in responding the questionnaire. Due to nonserious attitude of the respondents, the results may be totally misleading.

Basic Assumptions in Survey Research Methodology

Prior Knowledge of the Respondents: It is assumed that the respondents do not have the prior knowledge of acronyms and jargon used in the survey

Clarity About Items in the Questionnaire: It is assumed that the respondents understand each question in the survey correctly.

Ensuring Survey Feedback: It is assumed that the respondents will receive the feedback of the survey or at least they should be able to see it in the publication.

Nonresponse Error: It is assumed in the survey studies that there is least nonresponse error. This is one of the major causes of misleading findings in the survey research.

Purposes/Objectives of Survey research Method

There are mainly following purposes to conduct survey research method:

Exploratory Studies: Surveys can be used to explore new areas of research. By asking open-ended questions, researchers can gain insights into topics that may not have been studied extensively.

Descriptive Studies: Surveys are often used to describe the characteristics of a population or a phenomenon. They provide an overview of the current state of affairs, such as demographic information, attitudes, behaviors, and opinions.

Predictive Analysis: Surveys can be employed to predict future behaviors or trends. By understanding current attitudes and behaviors, researchers can make informed predictions about future outcomes.

Purposes/Objectives of Survey research Method

Correlational Studies: Surveys can help identify relationships between different variables. By analyzing survey responses, researchers can explore associations between variables, helping to establish correlations.

Policy and Decision Making: Surveys provide valuable information for policymakers, businesses, and organizations. By understanding public opinion or consumer preferences, decision-makers can make informed choices regarding policies, products, or services.

Social Science Studies: Surveys are a fundamental tool in sociology, psychology, political science, and other social sciences. Researchers use surveys to study human behavior, attitudes, and societal trends.

Steps in Conducting Survey Research

Step I: Determination of the aims and objectives of study: The researcher must at the outset analyse and assess the relevant areas or issues which need to be studied. Once the research area is selected by the researcher, the basic aims and objectives have to be clearly specified.

Step II: Define the population to be studied: After selecting the theme of the research, the researcher also needs to define the target population which would be studied by him/her.

Step III: Design and construct a survey: Once the target population is defined by the researcher, he or she needs to design a survey research.

Steps in Conducting Survey Research: contd

Step IV: Select a representative sample: The process of construction of the survey instruments gives a way to the selection of the sample from the target population.

Step V: Administer the survey: After the selection of the sample, the researcher conducts the survey by administering the survey instrument or tool on the selected sample.

Step VI: Analyse and interpret the findings of the survey: Once the data has been collected, the researcher analyses the data with the help of required statistical tools and then interprets the findings on the basis of the information revealed.

Steps in Conducting Survey Research: contd

Step VII: Prepare the report of the survey: On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of the results, the researcher prepares a report of the overall research conducted. The report contains all the details of aims, objectives, data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the results.

Step VIII: Communicate the findings of the survey: Last but not the least, the most important step of conducting the survey research is to disseminate the survey findings. The researcher needs to communicate the findings to the target population and it is equally important record for the future research to be done on a similar field.

Comparison of survey method with other methods

- **Survey Research:** Observes and collects data without manipulating variables.
 - **Experimental Research:** Manipulates variables to observe their effect on the dependent variable. It involves control groups and random assignment.
- **Survey Research:** Relies on self-reported data from respondents.
 - **Observational Research:** Involves direct observation of subjects in their natural environment. Researchers do not intervene but observe and record behavior.
- **Survey Research:** Gathers data from a large sample to generalize findings.
 - **Case Study:** Intensively examines a single unit (individual, group, organization) to understand its complexities.

Types of Survey Research Method

Basically there are two major types of survey: cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal surveys, though there exist some other types of surveys also.

Cross sectional survey

Cross sectional surveys are used by the researcher when he or she wants to collect data from varied or different types of groups (that may be in terms of age, sex, group, nation, tribes and so on) at a single time. An example of such a survey can be a study on the effect of socialisation of children of different age groups of a particular country. This type of survey is less time consuming and economical as well.

Types of Survey Research Method: contd.

Longitudinal survey

This type of research is used only when the subject wants to study the same sample for a longer period of time. Such longitudinal studies may be used to study behavioural changes, attitude changes, religious effects or any event or practice that may have a long time effect on the selected sample or population.

There are three main types of longitudinal studies which help the researcher to analyse the long term effects on the selected sample. These three include (i) **Trend studies** (ii) **Cohort studies** and (iii) **Panel studies**.

Types of Longitudinal Survey Research Method:

Trend studies

When the researcher needs to analyse a trend of a phenomenon in a population, they conduct trend studies. The sample of the selected population might not be the same (as over a period of time they might have shifted or not available for various reasons) but they belong to the same population. This selected population is sampled and examined regularly. Since it is a type of longitudinal research, it may not be started as well as ended by just one researcher or research project. An example of trend studies may be a yearly survey of number of graduates actively using books and journals from the library of a university

Types of Longitudinal Survey Research Method: contd.

Cohort studies

The focus of this type of longitudinal study is also on a particular population which is sampled and studied more than once within a time gap. The example of this study can be an investigation of the number of graduates of the year 2009 who have been actively using the library and four years later, the researcher may examine the same issue on another sample of the 2009 graduates and investigate whether after the time gap has there been any difference in the attitudes towards the importance of the library within the members of the same class. Wherein, in the trend study, the research scholar would study such an attitude within the graduates of different batches of the same university.

Types of Longitudinal Survey Research Method: contd.

Panel studies

The researcher in a panel study uses the same sample of people every time and that sample is called as a 'panel'. Such a study is used in order to investigate the changes in attitudes, behaviour or practices of the same panel within a period of time. They are more specific and focused as the researcher studies a particular change in the attitude, behaviour, belief or practice of the same group. For example, a researcher may study the library usage trends amongst the graduate students and ask them questions related to their frequency of library usage habits. Thereafter, the researcher may ask the same group or panel, similar questions and also the reasons behind the changes in their habits, if it has occurred. The study is difficult enough as it faces a greater trend of attrition rates (difficulty in availability of the same people).

Social Survey

Social survey is a method of gathering of social data from a sample of the target population through standardized interviews or questionnaires. The data thus collected is collated and systematically analyzed quantitatively. It provides descriptive information about the variables studied, correlations between two or more variables, and causal analysis.

Objectives of Social Surveys

- Collection of data related to the social aspect of community
- Study of social problems
- Description and explanation of social phenomena
- Search for cause and effect relationship
- Study of demographic characteristics
- Re –testing of social theories
- Formulation and testing of Hypothesis

Types of Social Survey

General or specialized surveys: In the general survey the community is made the subject of study like a country, state, town or village. In the specialized or topical survey the study is confined to some special aspect only e.g. unemployment, health, cleanliness, labor welfare, child welfare etc

Direct or indirect surveys: Direct survey is one in which the facts can be quantitatively interpreted while, on the other hand, no such quantitative interpretation is possible in the case of an indirect survey, e.g. the survey of population is direct, while on the other hand, the surveys of the state of health or the level of nutrition are indirect. Different problems of social sciences are studied by both kind of survey.

Types of Social Survey, contd.

Census survey or sample survey: in the census survey the different parts of the entire area are individually studied and the figures are then compiled into one. On the other hand, in the sample survey, instead of the whole is being studied, a part which represents the entire area is taken. Now this representative part is studied.

Regular or ad-hoc surveys: regular surveys are conducted after the lapse of a fixed period of time. The organization made for an ad-hoc survey is temporary and is dissolved after the survey has been completed.

Types of Social Survey, contd.

Primary or secondary surveys: In the primary survey, the survey work is started right from the beginning. In this, the survey collects facts concurring with his objectives and hence the primary surveys are more reliable and pure. But, if some data have already been collected in the study of any subject a new start has Types of Social Survey not to be made. The survey conducted under these circumstances is called a secondary survey.

Steps in Social Survey

- Selecting the problem.
- Defining the aim.
- Determination of scope.
- Determination of time limits.
- Examination of the means of information.
- Determination of the unit of survey.
- Determination of the amount of refinement.
- Preparedness of the respondents.
- Construction of tools for data collection.
- Field work and data collection.
- Processing and analysis of collected data.
- Interpretation and Report writing.

Pilot Survey

In case of social research, it is advisable to do some field observation and as such the researcher may undertake some sort of preliminary survey what is often called pilot survey.

Conducting a survey takes a long time and requires a lot of resources to do it. The pilot survey is a strategy that helps to evaluate or test a questionnaire using a smaller sample size than the planned sample.

Advantages of Pilot Survey

Conducting a pilot survey before the final survey has great benefits for the researcher. One of the advantages is that they help to detect the elements that could cause a negative impact on the research.

A pilot survey also helps to assess the accuracy of the instructions in advance, to see if all participants understand them.

Pilot surveys also save financial resources, because if errors are found early, there will be less chance of obtaining unreliable results that could harm our business or having to start from scratch after applying the real survey.

Disadvantages of Pilot Survey

When doing a preliminary survey, there is the possibility of making inaccurate predictions or hypotheses based on the data from the pilot test.

Successfully completing a pilot survey is not a guarantee of the success of a large-scale survey. Although the results of a pilot test may offer some index of the response rate of your main survey, this does not guarantee that this will be the case, as there are other factors to take into account.

Technical Survey

A technical survey is a comprehensive investigation or assessment of a certain area, system, or technology in order to obtain important information and data.

Examples: Engineering and Construction, Information Technology (IT), Telecommunications, Environmental Studies

Social and Technical Surveys

- A social survey is primarily concerned with acquiring information about human behavior, attitudes, views, and social phenomena. It is frequently used in sociology, psychology, and other social sciences to investigate societal issues such as demography, cultural trends, and public opinion.
- A technical survey, on the other hand, is focused on gathering information about technical aspects such as infrastructure, technological systems, environmental conditions, or engineering characteristics. Engineering, building, information technology, and environmental science are some of the sectors where it is often employed.

Social and Technical Surveys, contd.

- **Social Survey:** Methods can include interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, observations, and other techniques designed to capture information about human behavior and perceptions.
- **Technical Survey:** Methods often involve measurements, assessments, inspections, and data collection using instruments or tools to evaluate technical parameters.

Case Study Research Method

- A case study research method is that in which an in-depth, multi-faceted study of a complex issue of a person, group, institution, cultural unit, program, activity is performed.
- It allows researchers to explore the key characteristics, meanings, and implications of the case.
- A case study is an appropriate research method when researchers want to gain concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge about a specific real-world subject.

Types of Case Study Research Method

Collective case studies: These involve studying a group of individuals. Researchers might study a group of people in a certain setting or look at an entire community.

Descriptive case studies: These involve starting with a descriptive theory. The subjects are then observed, and the information gathered is compared to the pre-existing theory.

Explanatory case studies: These are often used to do causal investigations. In other words, researchers are interested in looking at factors that may have caused certain things to occur.

Types of Case Study Research Method, contd.

Exploratory case studies: This allows researchers to gather more information before developing their research questions and [hypotheses](#).

Instrumental case studies: These occur when the individual or group allows researchers to understand more than what is initially obvious to observers.

Intrinsic case studies: This type of case study is when the researcher has a personal interest in the case.

Steps in Case Study Research

1. Select the objectives or select the case
2. Identity the unit in which study is to be done
3. Building a theoretical framework or study design
4. Collect the data
5. Organise the data
6. Analyse the case and describe
7. Prepare report

Sources of Data for Case Study

Case study method may draw on a number of methods to gather data, such as observation, experiments, structured interviews, questionnaires, and/or documentary analysis such as Archives and Databases, Government and Regulatory Sources

Advantages of Case Study Research Method

1. Provides in depth study
2. Provides a real and consistent record
3. Provides sufficient logical relationships between variables
4. Causes to social changes
5. Enables to formulate hypothesis

Limitations of Case Study Research Methodology

1. Little chance of generalization of findings
2. High chance of manipulation of facts
3. Costly in terms of time and money
4. Deals with only qualitative research

Case Study Vs Other Research Methods

- **Case Study Method:** Emphasizes an in-depth and detailed examination of a single case or a small number of cases. The goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon, context, or situation.
 - **Other Research Methods:** Often involve broader sampling and focus on general trends or patterns in a larger population. Experimental designs, surveys, and observational studies may aim to generalize findings to a wider context.
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- **Case Study Method:** Takes a holistic approach, considering multiple aspects of the case and their interrelationships. It often involves studying the case in its real-world context to capture the complexity of the situation.
 - **Other Research Methods:** May focus on specific variables or relationships, isolating certain factors for experimental control or statistical analysis.

Case Study Vs Other Research Methods, contd.

- **Case Study Method:** Primarily relies on qualitative data, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. It seeks to provide a rich, descriptive understanding of the case.
- **Other Research Methods:** Can involve both qualitative and quantitative data, depending on the research design. Experimental designs, for example, often use statistical analysis of quantitative data.