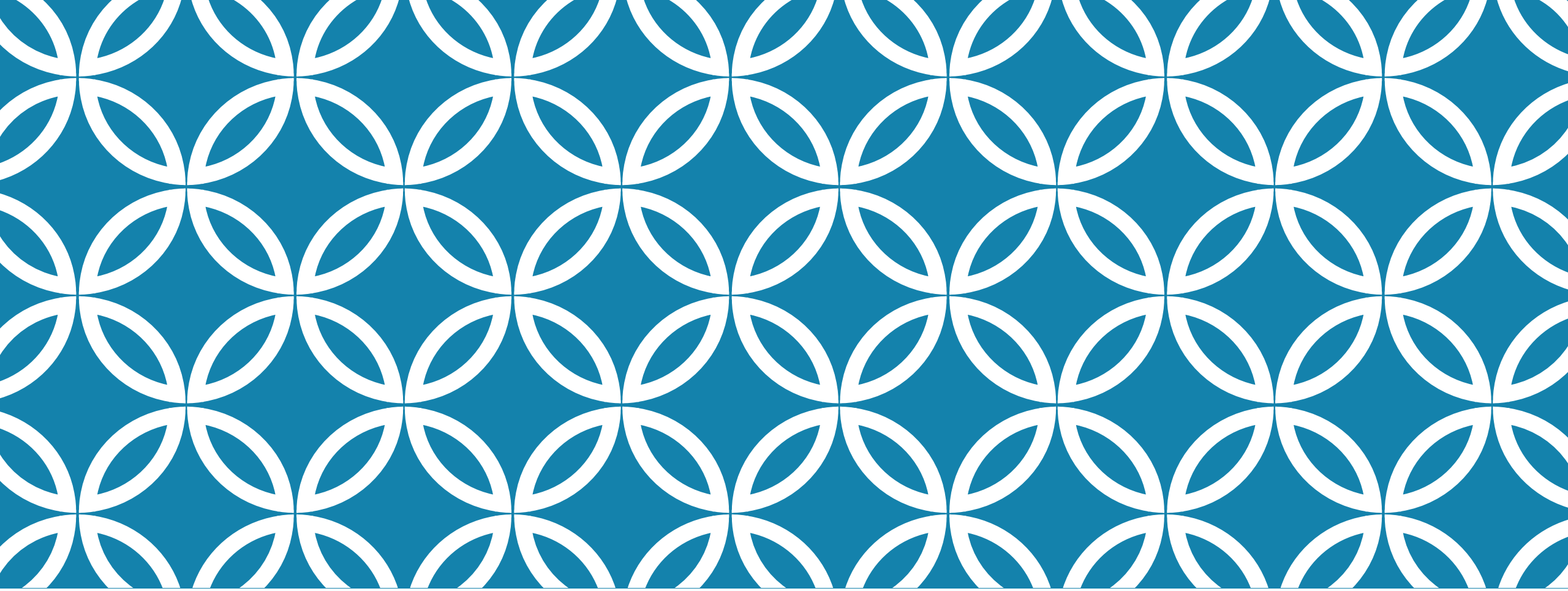


QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter: 9

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. How qualitative methods differ from quantitative methods.
2. The controversy surrounding qualitative research.
3. The types of decisions that use qualitative methods.
4. The variety of qualitative research methods

SOMETIMES PEOPLE ARE LAYERED. THERE'S SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT UNDERNEATH THAN WHAT'S ON THE SURFACE . . . LIKE PIE.

Joss Whedon

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

Definition:

- Qualitative business research is research that addresses business objectives through techniques that allow the researcher to provide elaborate interpretations of market phenomena without depending on numerical measurement.

WHAT IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

Includes a variety of approaches and methods

- There is no one good way of doing qualitative research

Common to different qualitative approaches are

- Interest in people's lives and perspectives
- Interest in cultural meanings
- Acknowledgement of the contextual nature of knowledge
- Relatively small cohorts of data, discretionary or theoretical 'sampling'
- Hypotheses from the data (vs. from theory)
- The circularity of research process
- Narrative style of writing

WHAT DOES QUALITY RESEARCH INCLUDE?

Data collection

- Focus groups
- Individual depth interviews (IDIs)
- Case studies
- Ethnography
- Grounded theory
- Action research
- Observation

Data analysis

- Written/recorded materials
- Behavioral observations
- Debriefing of observers

WHAT CAN QUALITATIVE METHODS ACHIEVE?

Qualitative research aims to achieve an in-depth understanding of a situation

Qualitative research draws data from a variety of sources:

- People (individuals or groups).
- Organizations or institutions.
- Texts (published, including virtual ones).
- Settings and environments (visual/ sensory and virtual material).
- Objects, artifacts, media products (textual/visual/sensory and virtual material).
- Events and happenings (textual/ visual/sensory and virtual material).

QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

- Carefully using literature searches to build probing questions.
- Thoroughly justifying the methodology or combination of methodologies chosen.
- Executing the chosen methodology in its natural setting (field study) rather than a highly controlled setting (laboratory).

QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

- Choosing sample participants for relevance to the breadth of the issue rather than how well they represent the target population.
- Developing and including questions that reveal the exceptions to a rule or theory.
- Carefully structuring the data analysis.
- Comparing data across multiple sources and different contexts.
- Conducting peer-researcher debriefing on results for added clarity, additional insights, and reduced bias.

SOME APPROPRIATE USES FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Decision arena	Questions to be answered
Job Analysis	• Does the current assignment of tasks generate the most productivity? • Does the advancement through different job levels incorporate the necessary training to foster the strongest performance?
Advertising concept development	• What images should we use to connect with our target customers' motivations?
Productivity enhancement	• What actions could we take to boost worker productivity without generating worker discontent?
New product development	• What would our current market think of a proposed product idea? • We need new products, but what should they be to take advantage of our existing customer-perceived strengths? • Which products will create the greatest synergy with our existing products in terms of ROI and distribution partner growth?
Benefits management	• Should our compensation plan be more flexible and customizable? • How do employees perceive wellness-prevention programs as compared to corrective health programs in terms of value?

SOME APPROPRIATE USES FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Decision arena	• Questions to be answered
Retail design	• How do consumers prefer to shop in our store? Do they shop with a defined purpose, or are they affected by other motives?
Process understanding	• What steps are involved in cleaning a wood floor? How is our product perceived or involved in this process?
Market segmentation	• Why does one demographic or lifestyle group use our product more than another? • Who are our customers and how do they use our product to support their lifestyle? • What is the influence of culture on product choice?
Union representation	• How do various departments perceive the current effort to unionize our plant? Where and what are the elements of discontent?
Sales analysis	• Why have once-loyal customers stopped buying our service?

QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH: THE DISTINCTION

Quantitative research attempts precise measurement of something.

Quantitative methodologies measure consumer:

- Behavior
- Knowledge
- Opinions

Answer questions related to:

- How much
- How often
- How many
- When
- Who

Gathering data which provide a detailed description of events

Studying situations and interaction between people and things

Providing depth and detail

QUALITATIVE VERSUS QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Focus of Research	• Understand and interpret	• Describe, explain, and predict
Researcher Involvement	• High—researcher is participant or catalyst	• Limited; controlled to prevent bias
Research Purpose	• In-depth understanding; theory building	• Describe or predict; build and test theory
Sample Design	• Nonprobability; purposive	• Probability
Research Design	• May evolve or adjust during the course of the project • Often uses multiple methods simultaneously or sequentially • Consistency is not expected • Involves longitudinal approach	• Determined before commencing the project • Uses single method or mixed methods • Consistency is critical • Involves either a cross-sectional or a longitudinal approach
Participant Preparation	• Pretasking is common	• No preparation desired to avoid biasing the participant

Business research methods / Donald R. Cooper, Pamela S. Schindler

QUALITATIVE VERSUS QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Data type and preparation	• Verbal or pictorial descriptions • Reduced to verbal codes (sometimes with computer assistance)	• Verbal descriptions • Reduced to numerical codes for computerized analysis
Data Analysis	• Human analysis following computer or human coding; primarily nonquantitative • Forces researcher to see the contextual framework of the phenomenon being measured—distinction between facts and judgments less clear • Always ongoing during the project	• Computerized analysis—statistical and mathematical methods dominate • Analysis may be ongoing during the project • Maintains clear distinction between facts and judgments
Insights and Meaning	• Deeper level of understanding is the norm; determined by type and quantity of free-response questions • Researcher participation in data collection allows insights to form and be tested during the process	• Limited by the opportunity to probe respondents and the quality of the original data collection instrument • Insights follow data collection and data entry, with limited ability to reinterview participants
Research Sponsor Involvement	• May participate by observing research in real time or via taped interviews	• Rarely has either direct or indirect contact with participant

CONTRASTING EXPLORATORY AND CONFIRMATORY RESEARCH

Exploratory

- Qualitative data

Confirmatory

- Quantitative data

ORIENTATIONS TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

1. Phenomenology—originating in philosophy and psychology

2. Ethnography—originating in anthropology

3. Grounded theory—originating in sociology

4. Case studies—originating in psychology and in business research

WHAT IS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RESEARCH?

A philosophical approach to studying human experiences based on the idea that human experience itself is inherently subjective and determined by the context in which people live

The phenomenological researcher focuses on:

- How a person's behavior is shaped by the relationship he or she has with the physical environment, objects, people, and situations?

WHAT IS ETHNOGRAPHY?

Ethnography

- Represents ways of studying cultures through methods that involve becoming highly active within that culture

Participant-observation

- Ethnographic research approach where the researcher becomes immersed within the culture that he or she is studying and draws data from his or her observations

WHAT IS GROUNDED THEORY?

Represents:

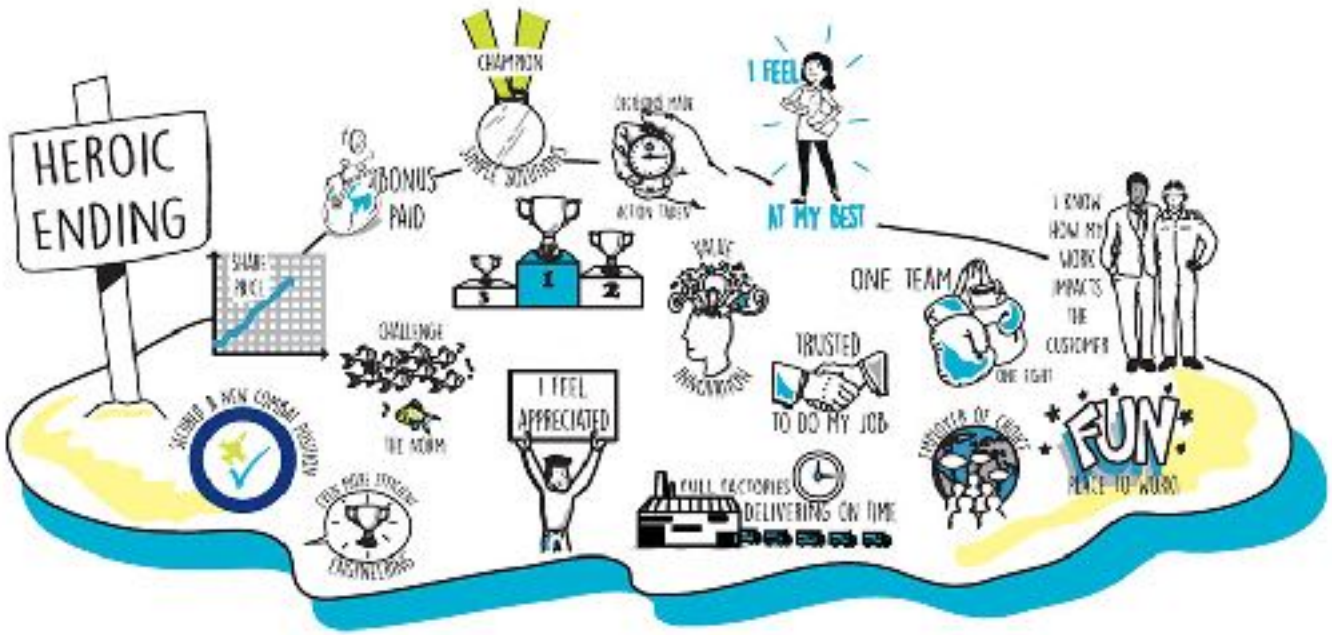
- an inductive investigation in which the researcher poses questions about information provided by respondents or taken from historical records

What is happening here?

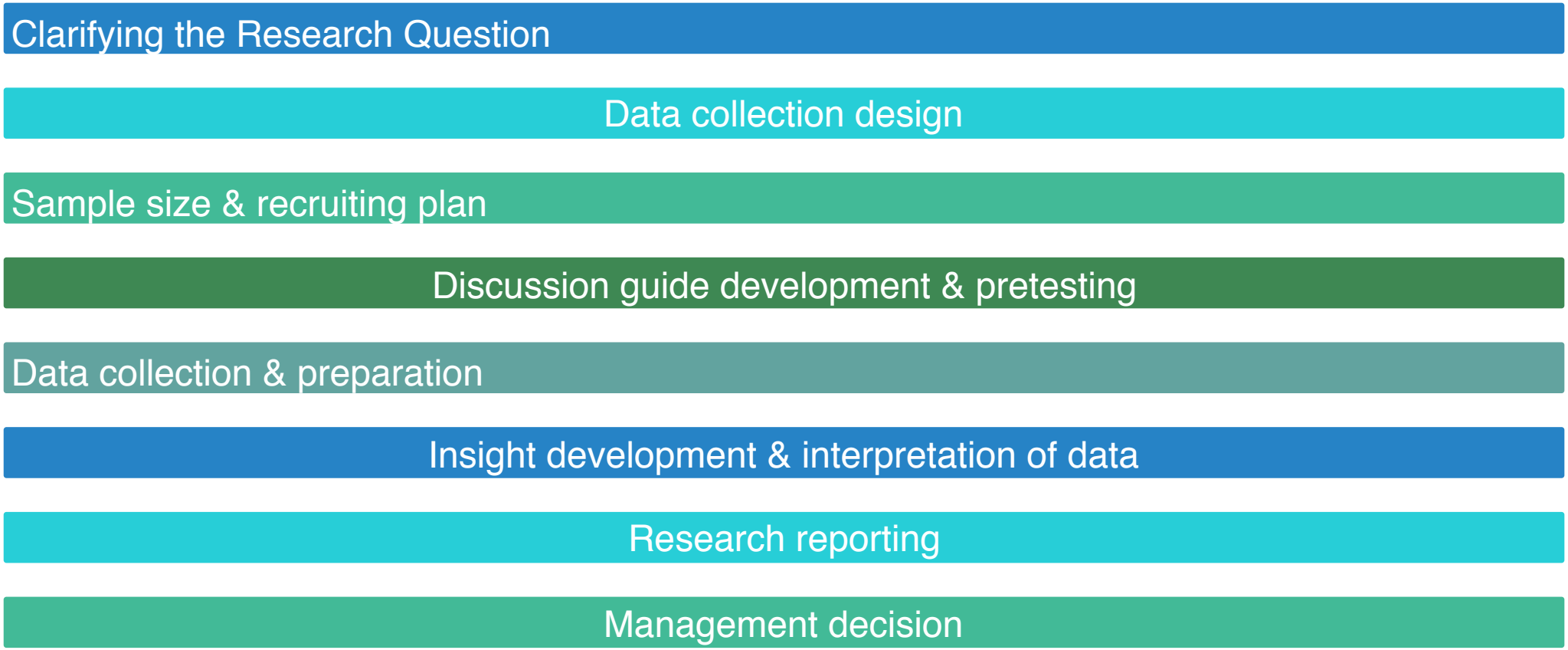
How is it different?

WHAT ARE CASE STUDIES?

The documented history of a particular person, group, organization, or event



THE PROCESS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH



QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES: SAMPLING

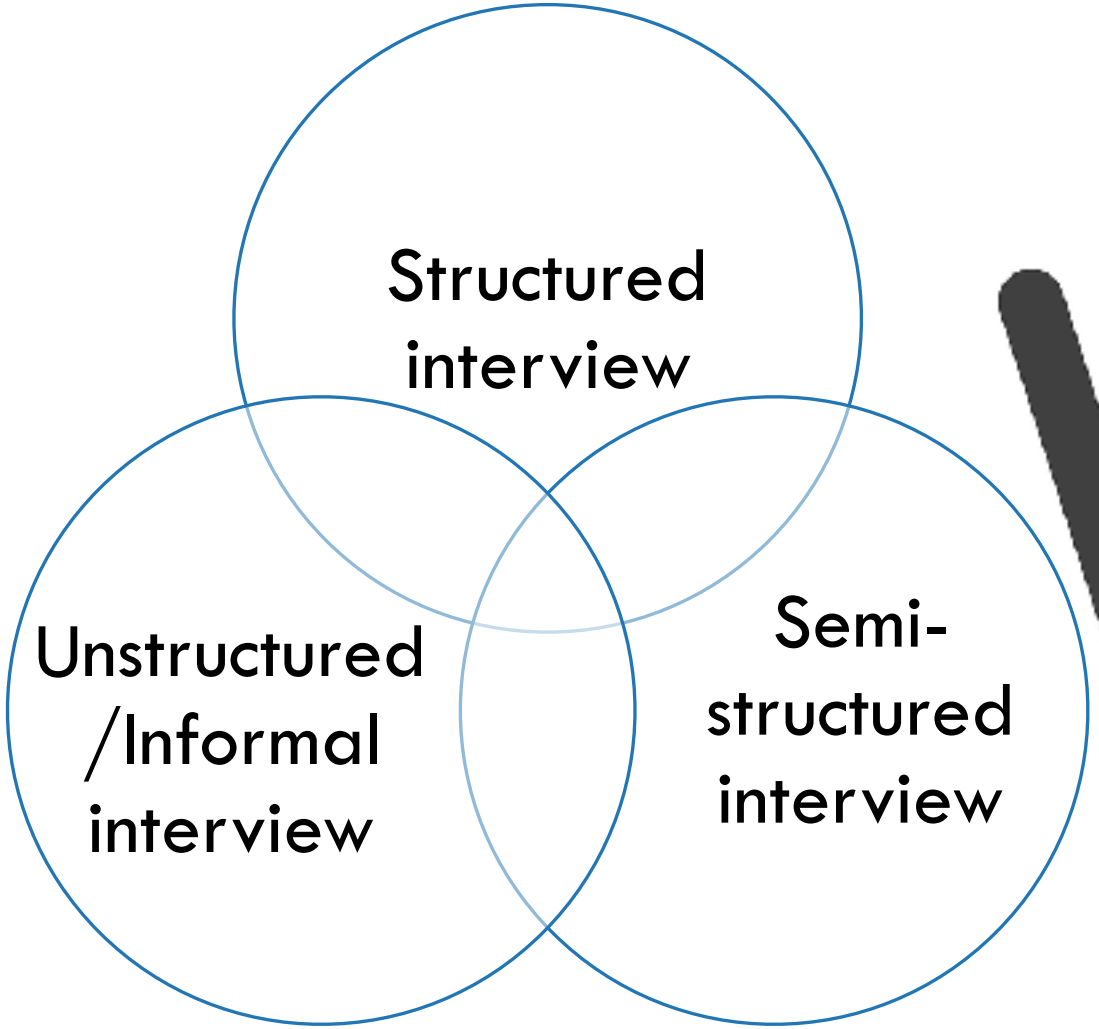
Qualitative research involves nonprobability sampling

Several types of nonprobability sampling are common:

- Purposive sampling
- Snowball sampling
- Convenience sampling

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES: INTERVIEWS

CATEGORIES OF INTERVIEWS



UNSTRUCTURED OR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

- Rely on developing a dialog between interviewer and participant.
- Require more interviewer creativity.
- Use the skill of the interviewer to extract more and a greater variety of data.
- Use interviewer experience and skill to achieve greater clarity and elaboration of answers

INTERVIEWER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Recommends the topics and questions
- Controls the interview, but also plans—and may manage—the locations and facilities for the study
- Proposes the criteria for drawing the sample participants
- Writes the recruitment screener and may recruit participants
- Develops the various pretasking exercises
- Prepares any research tools (e.g., picture sorts or written exercises) to be used during the interview
- Supervises the transcription process
- Helps analyze the data and draw insights
- Writes or directs the writing of the client report, including extracting video clips for the oral report.

COMMON TECHNIQUES USED IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

WHAT IS A FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW?

- An unstructured, free-flowing interview with a small group of people, usually between six and ten. Focus groups are led by a trained moderator who follows a flexible format encouraging dialogue among respondents

ADVANTAGES OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

1. Relatively fast
2. Easy to execute
3. Allow respondents to piggyback off each other's ideas
4. Provide multiple perspectives
5. Flexibility to allow more detailed descriptions
6. High degree of scrutiny

DEPTH INTERVIEWS

a depth interview is a one-on-one interview between a professional researcher and a research respondent.

Advantages

- Gain considerable insight from each individual
- Good for understanding unusual behaviors

Disadvantages

- Result dependent on researcher's interpretation
- Results not meant to generalize
- Very expensive

CONVERSATIONS

an informal data-gathering approach in which the researcher engages a respondent in a discussion of the relevant subject matter

Advantages

- Gain unique insights from enthusiasts
- Can cover sensitive topics
- Less expensive than depth interviews or focus groups

Disadvantages

- Easy to get off course
- Interpretations are very researcher-dependent

OBSERVATION

Advantages

- Can be unobtrusive
- Can yield actual behavior patterns

Disadvantages

- Can be very expensive with participant-observer series

COLLAGES

Advantages

- Flexible enough to allow novel insights

Disadvantages

- Highly dependent on the researcher's interpretation of the collage

THEMATIC APPERCEPTION/ CARTOON TESTS

Advantages

- Projective, allows to get at sensitive issues
- Flexible

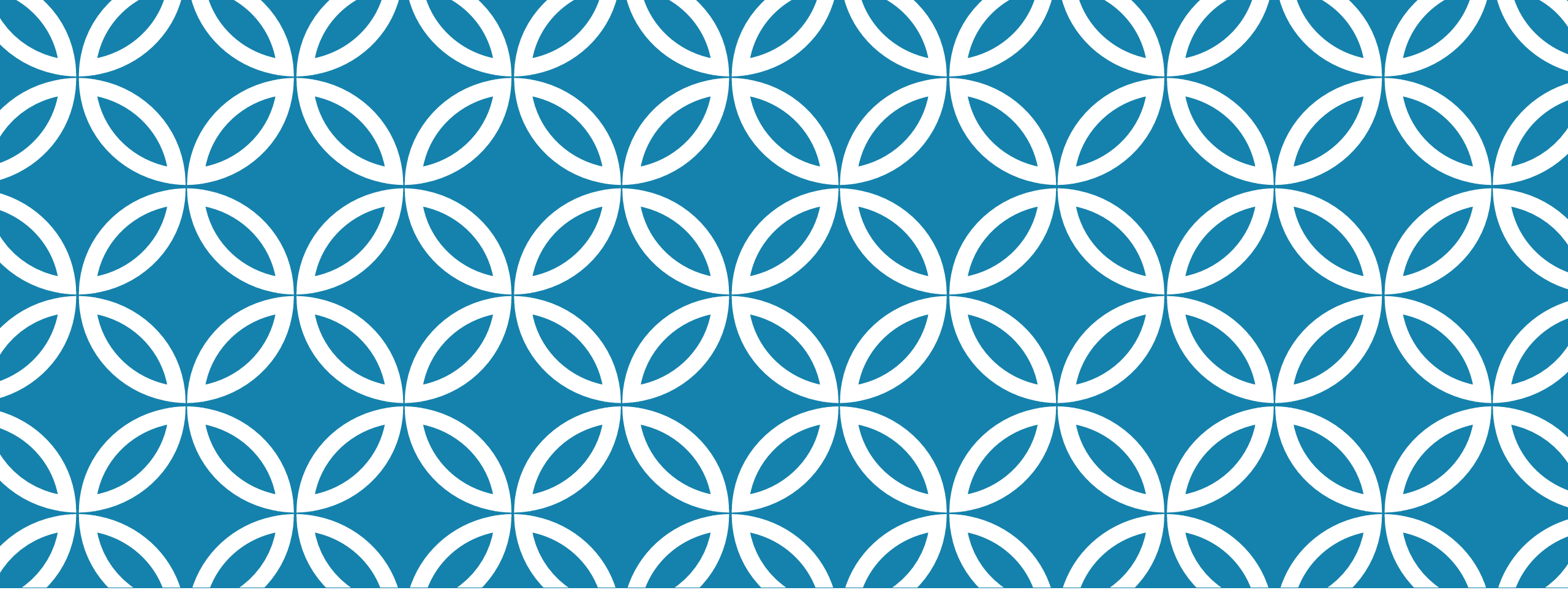
Disadvantages

- Highly dependent on the researcher's interpretation

Definition: TAT is a test that presents subjects with an ambiguous picture(s) in which consumers and products are the center of attention; the investigator asks the subject to tell what is happening in the picture(s) now and what might happen next.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

1. Gain valuable customer insights
2. Increase brand awareness and loyalty
3. Run targeted ads with real-time results
4. Generate higher converting leads
5. Provide rich customer experiences
6. Increase website traffic and search ranking
7. Find out what your competitors are doing
8. Share content faster and easier
9. Geo-target content
10. Build relationships



THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION