Face to Face Interviews

What is a Face to Face research interview?

An interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people that can help you gather valid and reliable data that is relevant to your research objectives (Kahn and Cannel, 1957). Face to face interviews allow for personal communication and make it possible to gather more information for your study.

The research interview is a general term for several types of interviews. Some may be highly formalized and structured or they may be informal and unstructured conversations. The following are examples of types of interviews most commonly used in face to face research.

Types of Face to Face Interviews

**SEMI-STRUCTURED:**

- Usually with a semi-structured questionnaire...
- These types of interviews are very loosely structured and consist of open-ended questions that define the chosen topic. The interviewer/interviewee may stray slightly from the question to pursue an idea in more detail.

**IN-DEPTH:**

- Usually with an in-depth interview questionnaire...
- These types of interviews usually cover one or two issues in great detail and questions are based on what the interviewee says. The questions are the least structured of the three mentioned.

**STRUCTURED:**

- Usually with a structured questionnaire...
- These types of interviews consist of administering structured questionnaires and trained interviewers ask fixed choice questions in a consistent format.

Face to face interviews are usually more accurate than other data collection methods (Jack Rabin).
Use of Different Types of Interviews

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<tr>
<th>Exploratory</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Structured</td>
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<td>Semi-structured</td>
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△△= more frequent, △= less frequent

*These various types of interviews are potentially valuable and useful while undertaking your research project.*

Types of Questions for Interviews

- Open ended questions and probing questions: are generally used in in-depth and semi-structured types of interviews.
- Specific and closed questions: are generally used in structured research interviews

*The key points that need to be considered while conducting an interview are the need for consistency between the research question and objectives, the strategy to be employed and the methods of data collection to be used.*

Tips in Conducting a Face to Face Interview

- Be organized and knowledgeable in the material presented
- Ask the same question of every respondent
- Ask every question in the same context
- Explain the purpose of the research to respondents in the same manner
- Make the effort to ensure that each question is understood in the same way
- Write down the answers in a standardized form
- Try to extract correct information without bias
- Be aware of the impact of your behavior

*These important tips will ensure reliable, credible, and unbiased results, while creating a more accurate outcome of the overall survey.*
Advantages of The Face to Face Interview

- Researcher can elicit more in-depth response or fill in information if participant does not understand the question
- Different data collection techniques – open-ended questions, visual aids, etc
- Certainty about who answered the questions
- The ability to find the target population
- Longer interviews are sometimes tolerated
- Very convenient for the respondent
- Extensive probing can be used to collect detailed information
- Respondents body language can guide the interviewer and be recorded to help interpret comments

Disadvantages of a face to face interview

- Intrusive and reactive
- Cost time and money
- Difficult to locate respondents for call backs
- Each location has its own characteristics, which can effect mood or attitude towards the interview
- Stage fright for interviewer or interviewee
- Jumping from one subject to another
- Giving advise during an interview
- Counseling (summarizing responses too early)
The management of an historical tourist attraction in the South East wished to explore the perceptions and opinions of users and non-users of the attraction as a means of more effectively marketing the attraction on an international basis. Semi-structured depth interviews were conducted with a quota sample of users and non-users, and home and overseas visitors. The interviews enabled the detailed exploration of reasons for their use/non-use, their perceptions of the attraction, their understanding of its historical significance, and an overall measure of their satisfaction.

References


Collecting primary data using semi-structured and in-depth interviews. (n.d.). *Chapter 9*, 244-273.