



Observation

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Origins of Field Research

■ Anthropology

Ethnographic field work: The study of native cultures by learning the native language, observing and taking part in native life, originated with founders of modern anthropology.

■ Sociology

The social reform tradition of sociology is another major source of modern field research . In the late nineteenth century, as social reformers and sociologists turned first to social surveys and then to a more varied methodology based primarily on field observation.

What is field observation?

- Ethnographic research offers an orientation to understand the process and structure of a social setting and employs research techniques consistent with this orientation. It is the study of both explicit and tacit cultural knowledge. Observing user in the field is always the best way to determine their usability requirement.

Other Characteristics

- Focus on community and ethnic groups
- To know immediate impact of an event, and aspects of everyday life.
- To get a inside view of reality
- Focus on person & the setting

Qualitative & Quantitative

Because qualitative data typically involves words and quantitative data involves numbers. In quantitative research(deductive), the researcher is ideally an objective observer who neither participates in nor influences what is being studied. In qualitative research(inductive), however,the researcher can learn the most by participating and/or being immersed in a research situation.

Choices about which approach to use may reflect the interests of those conducting or benefiting from the research and the purposes for which the findings will be applied.

Decisions about which kind of research method to use may also based on the researcher's own experience and preference, the population being researched, the proposed audience for findings, time, money and other resources available.

Field Observation & Scientific Observation

- Casual & everyday,
 - Direct observation, unaided by any instruments
 - Natural setting
 - Less structured & less systematic
- Planned methodology
 - Direct & indirect observation
 - Laboratory contrived situation
 - Structured & systematic

When do we use it?

- To study a dynamics situation
- To preserve the interrelationship of the person & situation
- Methodological problems, resources, or ethics preclude the adoption of other research strategic
- Lack of knowledge about the topic

Types of Observation

- Participant vs Non-participant observation
- Structured vs Unstructured observation

Non Participant Observation

- Observer is an eavesdropper
- Someone who attempts to observe people without interacting with them
- Without their knowledge that they are being observed
- Used most routinely by psychologists studying children and animals.

Participant Observation

- Observer participates actively, for an extended period of time
- May require observer to live or work in that area
- Assumes that observer will become accepted member of the group or community
- Historically field research has been associated most strongly with participant observation.

Levels of participation

- Both types of observation are poles of a continuum.
- At one extreme is the participant observer who becomes completely absorbed in the group under observation
- At the other is the non-participant who tries to remain aloof from it.

Unstructured Observation

- Early phase of the research
- May become specific to when and where to observe, what specific aspects of the setting or behavior to observe, and how to make and record observations.

How to do unstructured observation

- Take a notebook and pen
- Note down when you see something interesting.
- Write down theories as you form them.
- Don't jump to conclusions straight away.
- Look for more evidence.
- Ask people to confirm things

Structured Observation

- Greater control of sampling
- Measurement of error
- Permits stronger generalizations and checks on reliability and validity
- This is more like a survey, where every respondent is asked the same set of questions. But in this case, questions are not asked. Instead, particular types of behavior are looked for and counted

Disadvantages

- Language barrier
- Cultural barrier
- Risks involved

- Though it is possible to observe particular people or families, even if they agree to your presence, the fact that you are observing them can make them behave differently from normal, and you are never sure that they would do the same things if they were not being observed.

Stages of Field Research

Qualitative observational research involves more than simply going out into the field and observing a given group or culture.

- Selecting a research setting
- Gaining Access
- Presenting Oneself
- Gathering Information
- Analyzing Data and Formulating Theory

Selecting a Research Setting:

- Find appropriate site in which to conduct study
- Should Permit Clear Observation
- Should Be Accessible
- Must be detached enough to be objective

Gaining Access

How to get in the group you wish to study

- If formal, seek permission from the person in charge (the gatekeepers)
- Must vouch for research
- If public – no need to negotiate, but make those potentially involved aware
- Figure out ways to interact with people
 - “key informant”: a highly regarded person who gets you in
 - know where to start in order to conduct study

Presenting Oneself

Master Roles

- Complete Observer
- Complete Participant
- Participant as Observer
- Observer as Participant

Gathering Information

- Realize limitations
- Use recording devices to take down large amounts of information,
 - ✓ Videography
 - ✓ Tape recorder
 - ✓ Notebook
 - ✓ Memory
 - ✓ In-depth/Intensive Interviews or Surveys
- Make complete descriptions
 - include your feelings and ideas

Analyze Data & Formulating Theory (Final phase)

- Determine how you want to present
- Make a “grounded theory”
- Coding
- Check hypothesis

Advice

- The less you know, the more you must be open to all possibilities
- Observational & interpretive skill are required
- Limited to a few settings and narrow down your observation
- Understand organization policies and work culture.
- Ethnical aspect
 1. Informed consent
 2. Harm & risk
 3. Honesty & trust
 4. Privacy, confidentiality, & anonymity
 5. Intervention & advocacy

Practical Advantage

To make better choice

Ethnographic observation is a valuable tool for new product development, new market development, improving product quality and for providing a foundation for achieving better results with marketing activities.