

Types of Research

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What is Research?

Definition: Research is defined as careful consideration of study regarding a particular concern or problem using scientific methods. According to the American sociologist Earl Robert Babbie, “research is a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict, and control the observed phenomenon. It involves inductive and deductive methods.”

Inductive research methods analyze an observed event, while deductive methods verify the observed event. Inductive approaches are associated with qualitative research, and deductive methods are more commonly associated with quantitative analysis.

Research is conducted with a purpose to:

- Identify potential and new customers
- Understand existing customers
- Set pragmatic goals
- Develop productive market strategies
- Address business challenges
- Put together a business expansion plan
- Identify new business opportunities



What are the characteristics of research?

1. Good research follows a systematic approach to capture accurate data. Researchers need to practice ethics and a code of conduct while making observations or drawing conclusions.
2. The analysis is based on logical reasoning and involves both inductive and deductive methods.

3. Real-time data and knowledge is derived from actual observations in natural settings.
4. There is an in-depth analysis of all data collected so that there are no anomalies associated with it.
5. It creates a path for generating new questions. Existing data helps create more research opportunities.
6. It is analytical and uses all the available data so that there is no ambiguity in inference.
7. Accuracy is one of the most critical aspects of research. The information must be accurate and correct. For example, laboratories provide a controlled environment to collect data. Accuracy is measured in the instruments used, the calibrations of instruments or tools, and the experiment's final result.

What is the purpose of research?

1. **Exploratory:** As the name suggests, researchers conduct exploratory studies to explore a group of questions. The answers and analytics may not offer a conclusion to the perceived problem. It is undertaken to handle new problem areas that haven't been explored before. This exploratory process lays the foundation for more conclusive data collection and analysis.
2. **Descriptive:** It focuses on expanding knowledge on current issues through a process of data collection. Descriptive research describe the behavior of a sample population. Only one variable is required to conduct the study. The three primary purposes of descriptive studies are describing, explaining, and validating the findings. For example, a study conducted to know if top-level management leaders in the 21st century possess the moral right to receive a considerable sum of money from the company profit.
3. **Explanatory:** Causal or explanatory research is conducted to understand the impact of specific changes in existing standard procedures. Running experiments is the most popular form. For example, a study that is conducted to understand the effect of rebranding on customer loyalty.

19 Types of Research

Here are 19 different types of research you may consider as you design your research methodology:

Fundamental research

Fundamental, or basic, research is designed to help researchers better understand certain phenomena in the world; it looks at how things work. This research attempts to broaden your understanding and expand scientific theories and explanations. For example,

fundamental research could include a company's study of how different product placements affect product sales. This study provides information and is knowledge-based.

Applied research

Applied research is designed to identify solutions to specific problems or find answers to specific questions. The research is meant to offer knowledge that is applicable and implementable. For instance, applied research may include a study on ways to increase student involvement in the classroom. This research focuses on a defined problem and is solution-based.

Fundamental and applied research are the two main research categories. Most research can be defined as fundamental or applied, depending on the goals of the study.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research involves nonnumerical data, such as opinions and literature. Examples of qualitative data may include:

- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Participant comments
- Observations
- Interviews

Businesses often use qualitative research to determine consumer opinions and reactions. For instance, a marketing organization may present a new commercial to a focus group before airing it publicly to receive feedback. The company collects nonnumerical data—the opinions of the focus group participants—to make decisions.

Quantitative research

Quantitative research depends on numerical data, such as statistics and measurements. For example, a car manufacturer may compare the number of sales of red sedans compared to white sedans. The research uses objective data—the sales figures for red and white sedans—to draw conclusions.

Mixed research

Mixed research includes both qualitative and quantitative data. Consider the car manufacturer comparing sedan sales. The company could also ask car buyers to

complete a survey after buying a red or white sedan that asks how much the color impacted their decision and other opinion-based questions.

Exploratory research

Exploratory research is designed to examine what is already known about a topic and what additional information may be relevant. It rarely answers a specific question, but rather presents the foundational knowledge of a subject as a precursor to additional research. Often, exploratory research applies to lesser known issues and phenomena.

For instance, you may consider what is currently known about the success of year-long maternity and paternity leave programs. This research can include gathering all relevant information and compiling it together in an accessible format that has not been available previously. Your research may reveal gaps in information, leading to additional studies in the future.

Longitudinal research

Longitudinal research focuses on how certain measurements change over time without manipulating any variables. For instance, a researcher may examine if and how employee satisfaction changes in the same employees after one year, three years and five years with the same company.

Cross-sectional research

Cross-sectional research studies a group or subgroup at one point in time. Participants are generally chosen based on certain shared characteristics, such as age, gender or income, and researchers examine the similarities and differences within groups and between groups. The group is often used as a representation of a larger population. Similar to longitudinal research, researchers observe participants without altering variables.

For example, a company may research the sales techniques of its top 10% of salespeople and compare them to the techniques used by its bottom 10% of salespeople. This can help provide the company insights into the most successful and least successful sales methods.

Field research

Field research takes place wherever the participants or subjects are, or "on location." This type of research requires onsite observation and data collection. For instance, a manufacturing plant may hire an environmental engineering firm to test the air quality

at the plant to ensure it complies with all health and safety requirements. The researchers would travel to the plant to collect samples.

Laboratory research

Laboratory research takes place in a controlled laboratory setting rather than in the field. Often, the study demands strict adherence to certain conditions, such as elimination of variables or timing conditions. Laboratory research includes chemical experimentation and pharmacological research.

Fixed research

Fixed research involves experiment procedures that are determined ahead of time, such as how often testing will take place, where testing will take place, number of subjects and types of subjects. The research depends on precise conditions and compliance with predetermined protocols to reduce variables. Generally, fixed research is more reliable and replicable than flexible research.

Experimentation is often fixed research. For example, a researcher may test how different labels affect consumers' ratings of a sports drink. The researcher must try to control all other variables that may affect how the participants rate the drink, except the label. Participants are given the same drink with different labels at the same time and take a survey about taste and overall impressions. The timing of giving each drink and the subsequent surveys are critical to the validity of the study.

Flexible research

Flexible research allows procedures to change throughout the course of the experiment. The different types of flexible research include:

- Case studies: Case studies are in-depth analyses and observations about a specific individual or subject.
- Ethnographic studies: Ethnographic studies are in-depth analyses and observations about a group of people.
- Grounded theory studies: Grounded theory studies are designed to develop theories based on carefully collected and analyzed data.

Action research

Action research refers to the process of examining your actions, assessing their effectiveness in bringing about the desired outcome and choosing a course of action

based on your results. Action research is typically used in educational settings for teachers and principals to perform a type of self-assessment and course correction.

For instance, a teacher may collect data about their methods of teaching fifth-grade math. At the end of the first school quarter, the teacher may discover only a third of the students demonstrated proficiency in the concepts. As a result, the teacher implements new methods in her fifth-grade math class for the second quarter.

Policy research

Policy research is designed to examine the effects of current government or social policies or predict the potential effects of proposed policies as those effects relate to the distribution or redistribution of resources. Policy researchers often work within government agencies and conduct the following types of studies:

- Cost analysis
- Cost-benefit analysis
- Program evaluation
- Needs analysis

Classification research

Classification research seeks to identify and classify individual elements of a group into larger groups or subgroups. For example, biologists research animals and place them in defined categories based on shared characteristics, such as:

- Body segmentation
- Type of habitat
- Reproductive methods
- Diet

Comparative research

Comparative research is designed to identify similarities and differences between two individuals, subjects or groups. For instance, an owner may review new hire training documentation and discover that new employees are receiving much of the same training at orientation and their initial departmental training. The owner may decide to incorporate all of the similar training into orientation documents to allow more time for department-specific training.

Causal research

Causal research, also called explanatory research, seeks to determine cause and effect relationships between variables. This research is designed to identify how much one variable may cause a change in the other. Causal research is important for evaluating current processes and procedures and determining if and how changes should take place.

For instance, a business may study employee retention rates before and after instituting a work-from-home policy after six months of employment to see if this policy increases employee retention.

Inductive research

Inductive research, also known as theory-building research, is designed to collect data that may help develop a new theory about a process or phenomenon. This type of research examines observations and patterns and offers several hypotheses to explain these patterns. Inductive research moves from the specific to the general.

For example, researchers may observe that the year 12 international corporations enacted in-house carbon emissions standards, worldwide emissions declined. The researchers may theorize that worldwide emissions can be reduced significantly if international corporations impose in-house emissions standards.

Deductive research

Deductive, or theory-testing, research is the opposite of inductive research and moves from the broad to the specific. Researchers choose a hypothesis and test its accuracy through experimentation or observation.

Consider the previous example of emissions standards in international corporations. The deductive approach to this hypothesis is conducting research that compares global emissions levels before and after international companies enact emissions standards.

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