

Consultancy Project

Research Methodology:

Different approaches

Quantitative & Qualitative methods



Bid Feedback

- Interesting organisations
- Communicate with your client. What do they really want?
- Don't give away the punchline!
- Clearer, SMART Aim and Objectives needed

Last time



- To examine why research is relevant to the consultancy process
- To identify the key stages in this research project
- To consider how to choose a good research topic
- **To explore how to develop effective project questions/aims and objectives**
- To acknowledge the difficulties of gaining access to the organisation and data and to consider strategies for doing so
- To assess the purpose of the PID
- To list the key components of the PID

How did you get on?

- Have you translated your project into the PID structure?

Today's Objectives



To introduce the key concepts and approaches underpinning the research process

To outline the different philosophical perspectives

To consider the different research methodologies

To review the research methods available

To compare and contrast *quantitative* and *qualitative* research methods

Philosophical perspectives (paradigms)

Research projects are influenced by both the:

- a) requirements of the study and
- b) philosophical perspective which a researcher adopts

Gill & Johnson (1991:18) suggest that (b) is influenced by:

‘value judgements, norms, standards, frames of reference, perspectives, ideologies, myths, theories and approved procedures’

and may affect a researcher’s thinking and actions

Different people 'look' at things in different ways

- The way you see or think about things may be may be affected by your perception of reality
- **Ontology** – “assumptions about the nature of reality” (Saunders) What you consider to be evidence (reality) may not be shared by, or acceptable, to others. Big questions E.g. Does God exist?
- “Their different ontological assumptions mean that they focus on how resistance to change can best be harnessed to benefit organisations, rather than looking for ways to eliminate resistance” (Thomas and Hardy 2011).
- **epistemology or the study of knowledge** - The way you see knowledge in a research context (will affect your view of what's important and the evidence that you will collect. Studying will produce evidence and answers
- What constitutes acceptable valid and legitimate knowledge? What might you study when seeking your answers?

Three philosophical perspectives dominate thinking in relation to research methods:

1. **Positivism** = **scientific** approach “You would look for causal relationships in your data to create law-like generalisations like those produced by scientists” (Gill and Johnson 2010).
2. **Interpretivism** = **subjective** approach. Exploration of **subjective** elements which motivate people “The purpose of interpretivist research is to create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts.” Saunders
3. **Critical perspective = realist research.** Sits between positivism & interpretivism. Researchers study **reality** i.e. external objective world

Three philosophical perspectives dominate thinking in relation to research methods:

Positivism - the oldest paradigm, expounded by Comte (1848)

- **scientific** approach - arguing that the only authentic knowledge can come from the testing of theories via strict scientific methods
- considers humans to be rational individuals '**whose behaviour is learned through observation and governed by external causes**' (i)
- highly structured methodology, dependent on rules and procedures, is **deductive** and separates facts from values
- researcher is an **objective analyst**

Interpretivism - challenged positivism in the 1960s & includes a range of philosophical approaches including *phenomenology* & ethnomethodology argue:

- social world too complex to be theorised over using laws
- humans occupy central position and 'subjective meanings, patterns and regularities of behaviour emerge as a result of social conventions established through interaction' (i)
- important to explore *subjective* elements which motivate people
- approach aids *interpretation* and understanding of social phenomena which may be unique to a particular set of circumstances or time
- role of interpretivist researcher to understand *subject reality*

Critical perspective (realist research) - less well established paradigm. Also evolved from several sources, principally Marx, critical sociology and feminism

- sits between positivism and interpretivism
- contend that a reality exists which is independent of human thoughts and beliefs i.e. there are large scale forces and processes which affect people
- suggests humans are restricted and oppressed by social factors and conditions and exploited by others so don't fulfil their true potential
- researchers study *reality* i.e. external objective world

Deductive versus inductive approach

When the research aim and objectives have been decided it's necessary to decide on the approach to be taken.

Do you want to:

a. test a theory that you've already identified?

or

b. develop your theory during or after you've collected your data?

If it's the former (a) you will adopt a *deductive* approach which is linked to *positivism*

If it's the latter (b) an *inductive* approach will be adopted. This is linked to *interpretivism* (favoured by social scientists)

The meaning of methodology

The term *methodology* relates to:

- the research principles which reflect the scientific or naturalistic philosophies and the
- guidelines on appropriate *research practices*. The latter may be either *quantitative* or *qualitative*

Jankowicz (1995:174) says it is:

‘the analysis of, and rationale for the particular method or methods used in a given study’

Quantitative versus Qualitative Research?

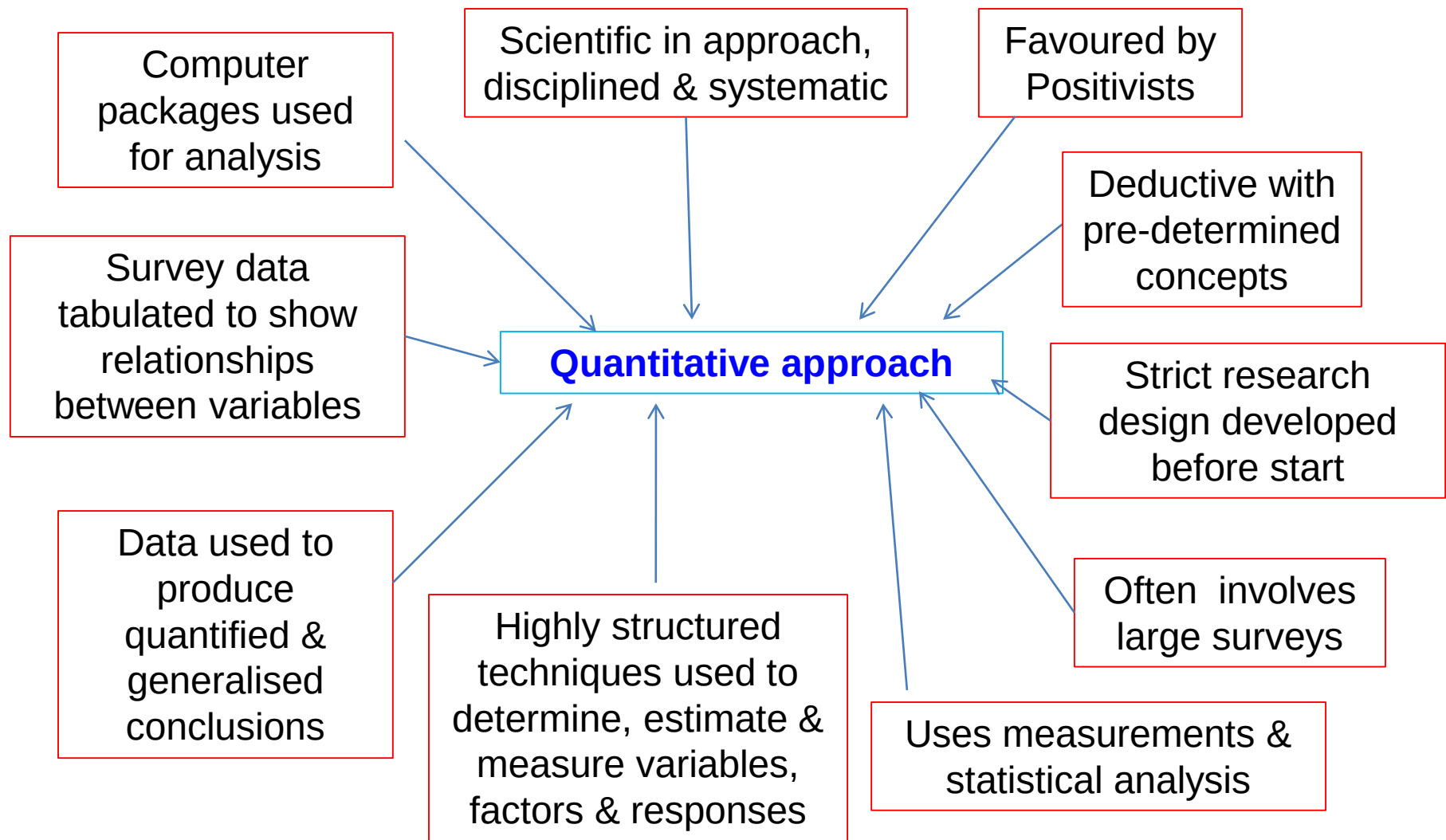
Mariampolski (2000) suggests:

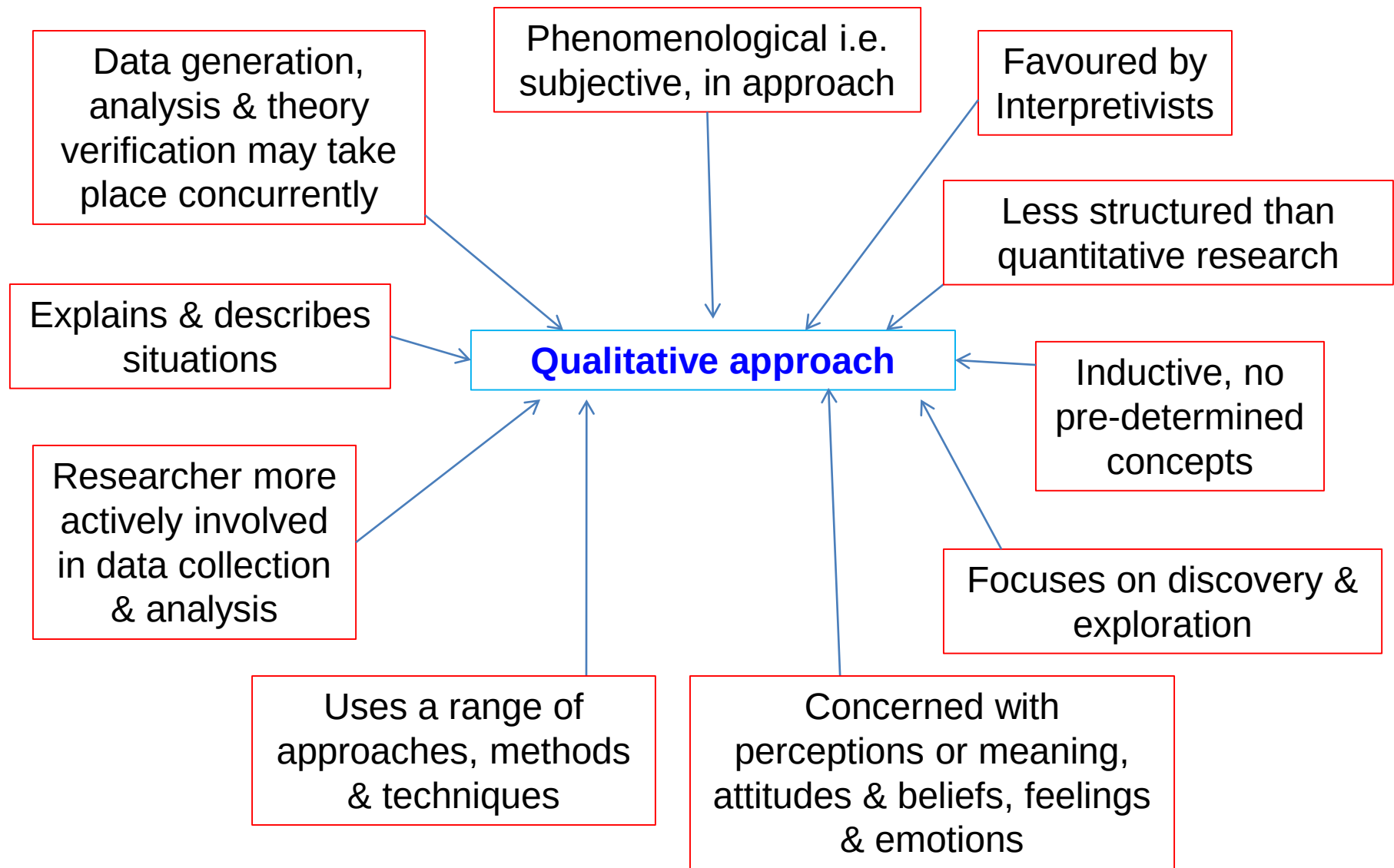
Quantitative research is most appropriate for studies emphasising precise measurements e.g. how much or how many and says:

‘it is called for when the objectives demand strict enumeration for the phenomena or when probabilistic projections are demanded’ (ibid:p24)

Qualitative is used for exploratory and explanatory purposes to seek:

‘meanings and motivations behind behaviour’





So which approach(es) should be chosen?

- Depends on research topic, questions to be addressed, nature of the population being studied & research objectives
- A mix of approaches may be used – quantitative & qualitative methodologies aren't mutually exclusive as:

‘the best method is the one that is most appropriate to the kinds of questions you wish to ask at the time, in the sort of environment and with the sort of thesis you're advocating’

(Ref: Jankowicz,1995:174)

- **Validity** and **reliability** may be enhanced if different methods are used for triangulation purposes

Quantitative or qualitative

- Which method(s) best suit your study and why?

Research methods

Having decided on a ***methodology*** the researcher needs to select the ***methods*** which are most appropriate to gather the required information. These are:

‘the tools of data generation and analysis’

(Ref: Sarantakos,1994:33)

Whatever method is chosen step by step procedures or ***techniques*** need to be followed in gathering and analysing data as they:

‘tell you how to do something rather than what you’re doing, or why you’re doing it’

(Ref: Bennett,1986 cited in Jankowicz 1995:172)

Quantitative versus Qualitative Research Methods

Quantitative Methods

Positivistic – tests hypothesis, correlations etc via:

- Experiments
- Surveys
- Structured interview
- Structured questionnaires

Qualitative Methods

Interpretive – observes & interprets reality via:

- Ethnography
- Case studies
- Action research
- Semi/Unstructured interview
- Participant observation
- Diary keeping

Which will you use and why?

Different characteristics

Quantitative

- Used to gather large quantities of data
- Designed to capture the broad picture, but limited in depth
- Assumes information gathered is objective not subjective
- Not suitable for gaining a detailed understanding of the behaviour and motivations of people
- Objective in approach

Qualitative

- Able to gather information that can't be gathered in other ways
- Explores feelings, motivations, attitudes and approaches of participants
- Subjective in approach
- Quantification of findings not usually possible unless a quantitative approach is incorporated into instrument e.g. appropriately designed questionnaire

Quantitative versus Qualitative research methods

	Quantitative	Qualitative
• Type of question used	Non -probing	Probing
• Sample size	Large	Small
• Info. per respondent	Varies	Much
• Administration	Fewer skills	Many skills
• Type of analysis	Statistical	Interpretive
• Equipment	IT software	Recording
• Ease of replication	Easy	Difficult
• Type of research	Descriptive	Exploratory

Quantitative data gathering techniques

Advantages

- Generally requires fewer researcher skills than for qualitative data collection
- Large surveys possible in a relatively short space of time
- Broad descriptions & inferences about populations are possible
- Researcher influence/bias less likely to affect responses
- Themes/questions which would benefit from additional qualitative research may be identified

Disadvantages

- Findings may lack depth and detail
- Outcomes are descriptive
- Analysis of collected data demands statistical skills and knowledge of sophisticated software e.g. SPSS, Excel, Statview

Qualitative data gathering techniques

Advantages

- Often cheaper than quantitative research
- Encourages understanding of attitudes and motivations
- May aid quantitative research by adding depth and richness to a study

Disadvantages

- Dominant participants may have a detrimental impact and 'skew' the data
- Researcher bias may affect outcomes (unwittingly)
- Samples may not be truly representative of the target group

Data gathering tools

Quantitative principally:

- ❖ Questionnaires
- ❖ Structured interviews
- ❖ Use of secondary data and documents

Qualitative mainly:

- ❖ Semi/unstructured Interviews
- ❖ Focus groups
- ❖ Observations
- ❖ Diaries

Recap

<http://youtu.be/8xvpxBVCo0c>

Read: Saunders 2009 Chapter 4 'Understanding research philosophy and approaches to theory development' Available to download

[file:///C:/Users/SBSTablet15/Downloads/Research Methods for Business Students C.pdf](file:///C:/Users/SBSTablet15/Downloads/Research%20Methods%20for%20Business%20Students%20C.pdf)

**Additional considerations:
triangulation, ethics, reliability and validity**

Triangulation: why is it important?

Triangulation is carried out:

- to verify findings
- by collecting data from various sources and comparing & contrasting the findings from each
- via different methods & techniques and is used to cross check results e.g. Qs & interviews, Qs & focus groups

By doing this one should:

‘produce as full and balanced a study as possible’

(OU, 1988; cited in Bell,1999:102)

and get

‘not only what people say they do and what you see them doing but also what they are recorded as doing’

(Kane, 1985;cited in Jankowicz,1995:175)

Adopting an ethical approach

The adoption of ethical practices is vital because:

- researchers need to consider who might be harmed by their research
- if individuals are unwitting subjects of research and

‘have no chance to safeguard their own interests, it should be the special concern of the researcher to look after these interests’

(Sapsfarol & Evans, 1984, cited in Bell,1999:4)

The latter is particularly important when conducting studies relating to specific organisations because internal readers might be able to identify participants even though external readers can't

Validity and reliability: why are they significant and what are the differences?

Reliability:

‘the ability to produce the same answers repeatedly ‘

Validity:

‘the ability to produce the correct answers’

(Mariampolski, 2000:56)

Bell (199:103) contends validity is the more complex concept as it:

*‘tells us whether an item measures or describes
what it is supposed to measure or describe’*

and is the key because if research is valid it should be reliable as well as **objective** . Validation via triangulation is necessary as is **transparency** in research methods so that others can judge its quality

(Bognmil & Insmerfall, 1985;cited in Sarantakos, 1994)

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Next

Primary & Secondary Research

