

Questionnaire Design

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The qualities of a good questionnaire

- **Exploratory questionnaire:** qualitative information for the purposes of better understanding or the generation of hypotheses on a subject
- **Formal standardized questionnaires:** quantitative information to test specific hypotheses that have previously been generate

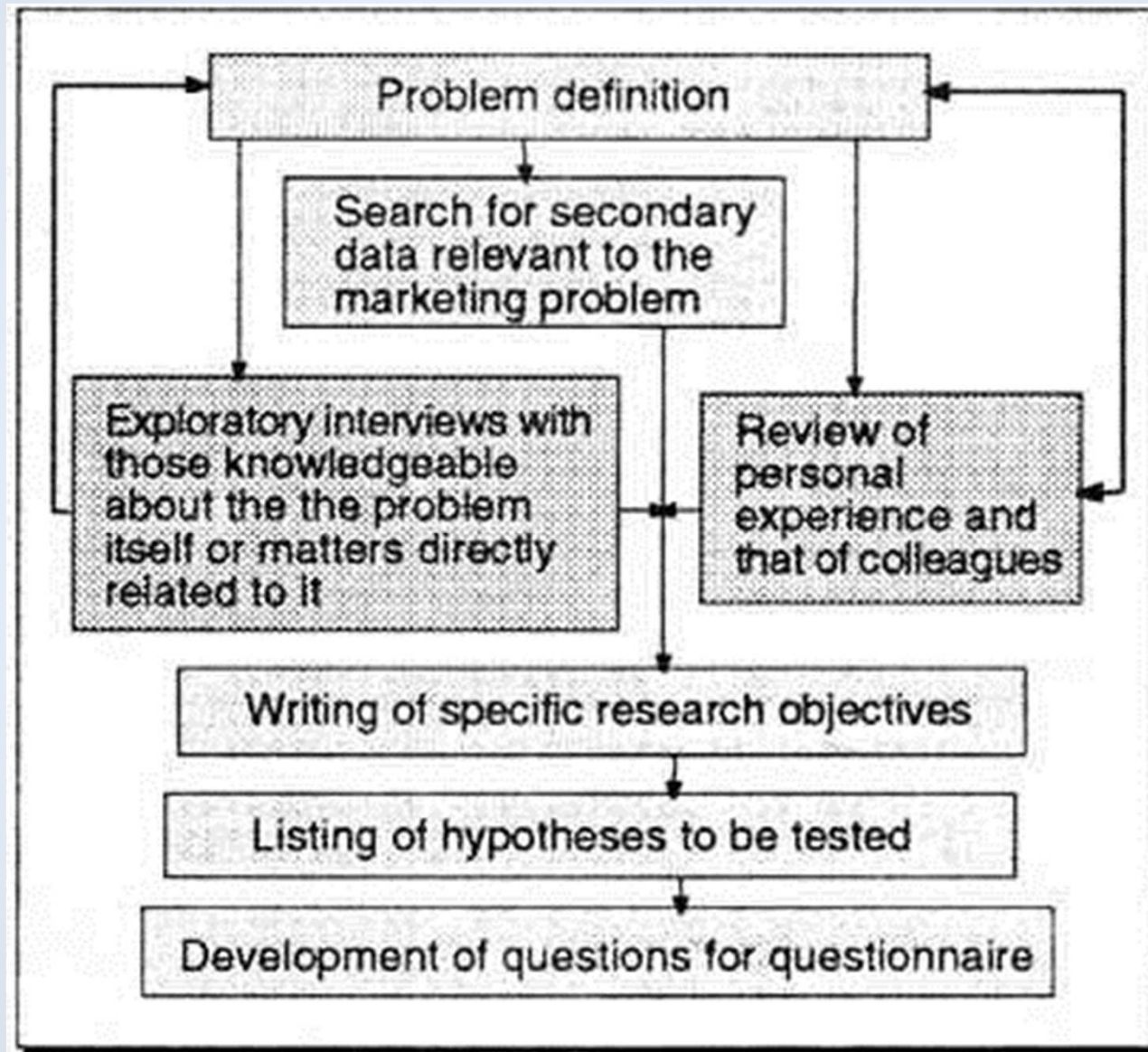
Questionnaire characteristic

- Prescribed wording and order of questions, to ensure that each respondent receives the same stimuli
- Prescribed definitions or explanations for each question, to ensure interviewers handle questions consistently and can answer respondents' requests for clarification if they occur
- Prescribed response format, to enable rapid completion of the questionnaire during the interviewing process

How to design questionnaire

- **A well-design questionnaire should meet the research objectives.**
- **It should obtain the most complete and accurate information possible.**
- **Make it easy for respondents to give the necessary information and for the interviewer to record the answer, and it should be arranged so that sound analysis and interpretation are possible.**
- **It would keep the interview brief and to the point and be so arranged that the respondents remain interest throughout the interview.**

The steps proceeding questionnaire design



(Source: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w3241e/w3241e05.htm>)

Preliminary decisions in a questionnaire design

1. **Decide the information required.**
2. **Define the target respondents**
3. **Choose the methods of reaching your target respondents**
4. **Decide on question content**
5. **Develop the question wording**
6. **Put questions into a meaningful order and format**
7. **Check the length of the questionnaire**
8. **Pre-test the questionnaire**
9. **Develop the final survey form**

Choose the methods of reaching your target respondents

- **Personal interviews**
- **Group or focus interviews**
- **Mailed questionnaires**
- **Telephone interviews**

Decide on question content

- Researchers must always be prepared to ask, “Is this question really need?”
- There are only 2 occasions when seemingly “redundant” questions might be included:
 - Opening questions that are easy to answer and which are not perceived as being “threatening”, and/or are perceived as being interesting, can greatly assist in gaining the respondent's involvement in the survey and help to establish a rapport.
 - “Dummy” questions can disguise the purpose of the survey and/or the sponsorship of a study.

Develop the question wording

- **Survey questions can be classified into three forms, i.e.**
 - **Closed questions**
 - **Open-ended questions**
 - **Open response-option questions.**

- **Closed questions advantages:**

- It provides the respondent with an easy method of indicating his answer - he does not have to think about how to articulate his answer.
- It 'prompts' the respondent so that the respondent has to rely less on memory in answering a question.
- Responses can be easily classified, making analysis very straightforward.
- It permits the respondent to specify the answer categories most suitable for their purposes.

- **Closed questions disadvantages:**

- They do not allow the respondent the opportunity to give a different response to those suggested.
- They 'suggest' answers that respondents may not have considered before.

- **Open-ended questions advantages:**
 - They allow the respondent to answer in his own words, with no influence by any specific alternatives suggested by the interviewer.
 - They often reveal the issues which are most important to the respondent, and this may reveal findings which were not originally anticipated when the survey was initiated.
 - Respondents can 'qualify' their answers or emphasize the strength of their opinions.
- **Open-ended questions disadvantages:**
 - Respondents may find it difficult to 'articulate' their responses
 - Respondents may not give a full answer simply because they may forget to mention important points.
 - Data collected is in the form of verbatim comments - it has to be coded and reduced to manageable categories.
 - Respondents will tend to answer open questions in different 'dimensions'

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- **Open response-option questions advantages:**
 - The researcher can avoid the potential problems of poor memory or poor articulation by then subsequently being able to prompt the respondent into considering particular response options.
 - Recording during interview is relatively straightforward.
- **Open response-option questions disadvantages:**
 - It requires the researcher to have a good prior knowledge of the subject in order to generate realistic/likely response options before printing the questionnaire.

Put questions into a meaningful order and format

- **Opening questions:** Opening questions should be easy to answer and not in any way threatening to the respondents. The first question is crucial because it is the respondent's first exposure to the interview and sets the tone for the nature of the task to be performed.
- **Question flow:** Questions should flow in some kind of psychological order, so that one leads easily and naturally to the next.
- **Question variety:** Respondents become bored quickly and restless when asked similar questions for half an hour or so. It usually improves response, therefore, to vary the respondent's task from time to time.

Physical appearance of the questionnaire

Use of booklets

The use of booklets, in the place of loose or stapled sheets of paper, make it easier for interviewer or respondent to progress through the document. Moreover, fewer pages tend to get lost.

Simple, clear formats

The clarity of questionnaire presentation can also help to improve the ease with which interviewers or respondents are able to complete a questionnaire.

Creative use of space and typeface

In their anxiety to reduce the number of pages of a questionnaire there is a tendency to put too much information on a page. This is counter-productive since it gives the questionnaire the appearance of being complicated. Questionnaires that make use of blank space appear easier to use, enjoy higher response rates and contain fewer errors when completed.

Use of color coding

Colour coding can help in the administration of questionnaires. It is often the case that several types of respondents are included within a single survey (e.g. wholesalers and retailers). Printing the questionnaires on two different colours of paper can make the handling easier.

Interviewer instructions

Interviewer instructions should be placed alongside the questions to which they pertain. Instructions on where the interviewers should probe for more information or how replies should be recorded are placed after the question.

Piloting the questionnaires

The purpose of pretesting the questionnaire is to determine:

- whether the questions as they are worded will achieve the desired results · whether the questions have been placed in the best order
- whether the questions are understood by all classes of respondent
- whether additional or specifying questions are needed or whether some questions should be eliminated
- whether the instructions to interviewers are adequate.