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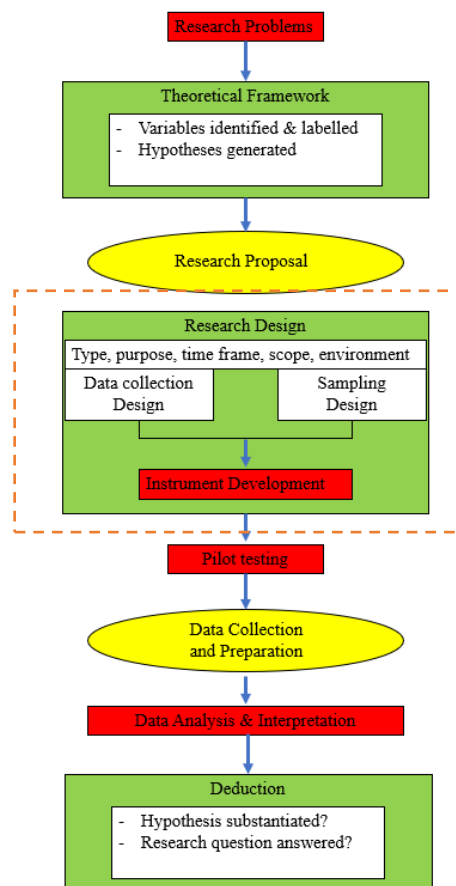
Methodology Chapter

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1. Introduction

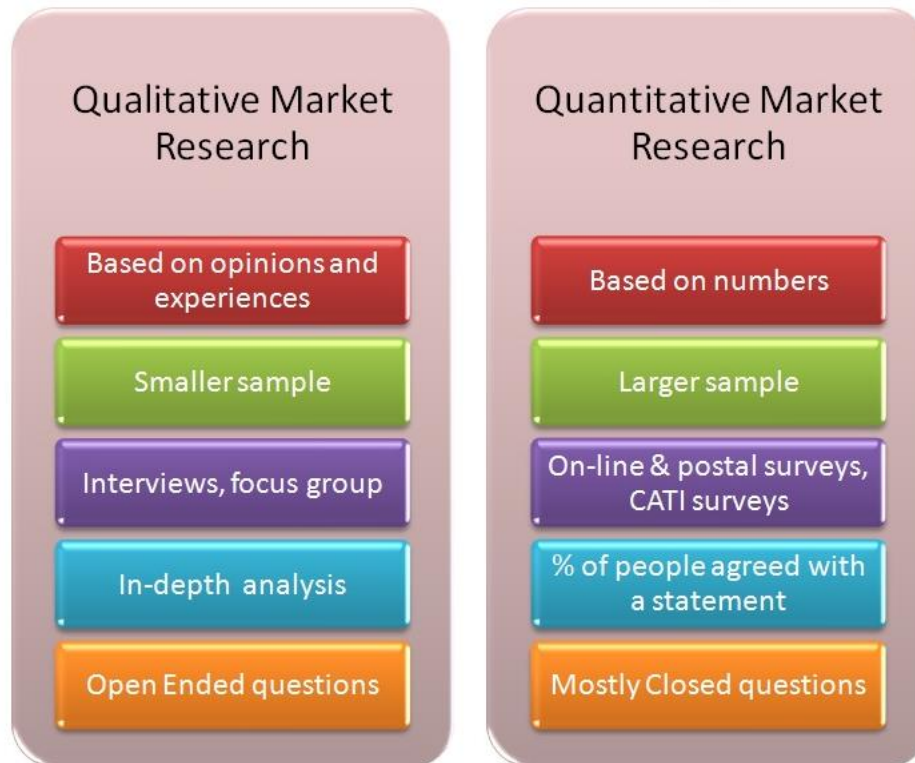
The third chapter of a dissertation is typically the methodology chapter. This chapter describes, in detail, the research methods and the reasoning for selecting these particular methods. There should be enough detail in a methodology chapter so that a subsequent researcher could confidently replicate the study (Saunders et al., 2009).



The figure above provides a visual representation of the steps involved in a methodology. The methodology chapter begins with the research design followed by a detailed sampling plan and ethical considerations for the particular research. Normally pilot tests are not considered feasible in individual academic research but for large scale commercial studies it is considered a must according to McGivern (2012).

The research design that forms the core of the methodology can be based on a simple and easy to implement method created by Saunders et al., (2009) as shown in the figure below.

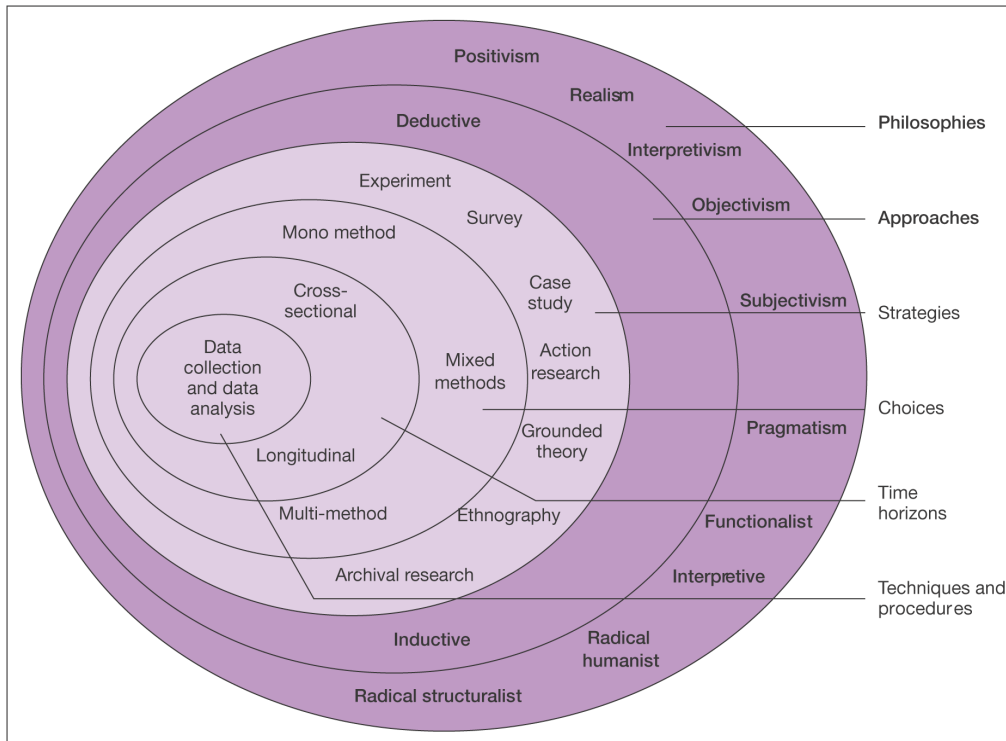
1.1 Quantitative or Qualitative Research



In any dissertation the type of research dictates the research methodology. There are two types of research as show in the figure above, qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative research is used to explore ideas, opinions and experiences of the people and hence the questions are open-ended and so dig deep in the respondents' psyche. The questionnaires are unstructured or semi-structured and the data is collected using focus groups or face-to-face interviews. This is a time-consuming method and an expensive one as well. Hence, surveys are also used for data collection. An example of this research would be to explore an innovative product before it is brought to market. On the other hand, the quantitative method is used for research with fixed objectives where theories and hypotheses are tested using close-ended questions that create statistical data that can be analysed to gain insight. The questionnaires are structured and, normally, the survey method is used for this type of research. For example, to understand the

percentage of population that is affected by new rules, to understand how trust impacts brand image and so on.

1.2 Saunders Onion Methodology Design



The figure above shows Saunder’s Onion methodology design which is a step-by-step process where the next step depends upon the choices made in the previous one. The analogy of the onion is because, similar to peeling layers of an onion, the methodology is developed in layers or steps. There can be six layers or steps to this methodology starting with the outermost shell of research philosophy followed by approach, strategy, choices, time horizons and finally techniques. For academic dissertations, the key steps are research philosophy, approach and strategy and time horizons while the other two may be skipped according to Bryman and Bell (2012). These four main steps will be explained in detail below.

1.2.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is the belief in the way a research should be conducted to achieve the end result according to Silverman et al, (2013). There are many disciplines of

academia including social science, marketing, psychology and so on that have developed different philosophies over the years. Some of the most common ones are as shown in the figure above, interpretivist, positivist, realist, pragmatist and so on. The type of philosophy to be used depends upon the aims and objectives of the research. For academic studies conducted by individuals, the preferred philosophy is typically the positivist philosophy as it provides a structured and logical approach to the research process, according to McGivern (2012). However, there is some debate surrounding this, as some social scientists, for example, would say that an interpretivist or social constructionist approach is more suitable for unearthing deeper insights about the complex nature of human experience (Burr, 2003).

1.2.2 Research Approach

The research approach depends upon the chosen research philosophy. There are only two types of approaches, deductive and inductive approach. Typically, a deductive approach is used in quantitative research and an inductive approach is used in qualitative studies. Deductive approach is used when an existing theoretical framework is tested, and hypotheses are formulated to test this framework. In contrast, inductive research is not guided by any fixed hypotheses and it tests to create new theoretical frameworks, rather than test old ones.

1.2.3 Research strategy

The strategy is the third important layer of the methodology and is based on the choices made in the research philosophy and approach as well as on the research question being investigated. There are many choices of a strategy such as surveys, case study, ethnography and so on.

1.3 Sampling plan

Once the methodology is finalised, the next important step is creating a sampling plan. According to Bajpai (2011) there are four steps in a sampling plan, these are as below:
Target population: this is the group of the people from which data will be collected. For example, for a research on home buyers survey, the target market will be homeowners.

Sampling technique: there are two broad types of sampling techniques, these are either probability or non-probability sampling. These types are further divided into many subcategories, from pure random sampling used in large commercial research and based on probability sampling to convenience sampling used in small individual academic studies.

Sample size: this includes the actual number of people and the selection criteria for the research. For small studies samples, 50 to 100 responses are collected, whereas for large scale studies, samples are collected in their thousands. The selection criteria is specific to the research, for example in the home buyers survey the criteria could be all the people aged over 18 years of age who have bought a house in the UK in the last twelve months using a mortgage.

Field work instructions: The last step in the research is an important one where the research designer has to give instructions to the people in the field who are actually collecting the data. These days the fieldwork has largely moved online and, instead of individuals, websites collect the data in case of commercial organisations while, in small research projects, the designer collects the data themselves.

1.4 Data Collection

Once the research design and sampling plan is devised, the next step is data collection. The type of data to be collected, the people from whom it is to be collected, and the method of collecting it is decided based on the research type, research question and methodology. The data can be qualitative or quantitative in nature, the quantitative data is collected in the form of numbers and is used for statistical analysis while the qualitative data can be in the form of audio-visual such as consumer recordings, consumer diaries or focus groups where people are asked to discuss ideas in a group.

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