

Observation Methods: Structured Vs. Unstructured Observations

- For **Structured Observation**, the researcher specifies in detail what is to be observed and how the measurements are to be recorded, e.g., an auditor performing inventory analysis in a store.
- In **Unstructured Observation**, the observer monitors all aspects of the phenomenon that seem relevant to the problem at hand, e.g., observing children playing with new Toys.

Observation Methods: Disguised Vs. Undisguised

- In **Disguised Observation**, the respondents are unaware that they are being observed. Disguise may be accomplished by using one-way mirrors, hidden cameras, or inconspicuous mechanical devices. Observers may be disguised as shoppers or sales clerks.
- In **Unstructured Observation**, the respondents are aware that they are under observation.

Observation Methods: Natural vs. Contrived (Artificial) Observation

- **Natural Observation** involves observing behavior as it takes place in the environment. For example, one could observe the behavior of respondents eating food at Burger King.
- In **Contrived Observation**, respondents' behavior is observed in an artificial environment, such as a test kitchen. *(Contrived is suitable when combined with Undisguised observation)*

A Classification of Observing Methods:

- Personal Observation.
- Mechanical Observation
- Audit
- Content Analysis
- Trace Analysis

Observation Methods Classification: Personal Observation

- A researcher observes actual behavior as it occurs.
- The observer does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon being observed but merely records what takes place.
- For example, a researcher might record traffic counts and observe traffic flows in a department store.

Observation Methods Classification: Mechanical Observation

Does NOT require respondents' direct participation.

- Turnstiles that record the number of people entering or leaving a building.
- On-Site Cameras (Still, Motion Picture, or Video)
- Optical Scanners in Supermarkets
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Does REQUIRE respondent involvement

- Eye-Tracking Monitors
- Pupilometers
- Pshchogalvanometers
- Voice Pitch Analyzers
- Device Measuring Response Latency

Observation Methods Classification: Audit

- The researcher collects data by examining physical records or performing inventory analysis.
- Data are collected personally by the researcher.
- The data are based upon counts, usually to physical objects.
- Retail and wholesale audits conducted by marketing research suppliers where discussed in the context of syndicated data in chapter 4.

Observation Methods Classification: Content Analysis

- The objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication.
- The unit of analysis may be words, characters (individuals or objects), themes (propositions), space and time measures (length or duration of the message), or topics (subjects of the message).
- Analytical categories for classifying the units are developed and the communication is broken down according to prescribed rules.

Observation Methods Classification: Trace Analysis

Data collection is based on physical traces, or evidence, of past behavior.

- The selective erosion of tile in a museum indexed by the replacement rate was used to determine the relative popularity of exhibits.
- The number of different fingerprints on a page was used to gauge the readership of various advertisements in a magazine.
- The position of the radio dials in cars brought in for services was used to estimate share of listening audience of various radio stations.
- The age and condition of cars in a parking lot were used to assess the affluence of customers.
- The Magazines people donated to charity were used to determine people's favorite magazines.
- Internet visitors leave traces which can be analyzed to examine browsing and usage behavior by using cookies.

LOOKUP Table 6.4 in Book (IMPORTANT)

Relative Advantages of Observation:

- They permit measurement of actual behavior rather than reports of intended or preferred behavior.
- There is no reporting bias, and potential bias caused by the interviewer and the interviewing process is eliminated or reduced.
- Certain types of data can only be collected through observations.
- If the observed phenomenon occurs frequently or is of short duration, observational methods may be cheaper and faster than survey methods.

Relative Disadvantages of Observation:

- The reasons for the observed behavior may not be determined since little is known about the underlying motives, beliefs attitudes, and preferences.
- Selective perception (Bias in the researcher's perception) can bias the data.
- Observational data are often time-consuming and expensive, and it is difficult to observe certain forms of behavior.
- In some cases, the use of observational methods may be unethical, as in observing without their knowledge or consent.

It is best to view observation as a complement to survey methods, rather than as being in competition with them.