

Pros and cons of data collection methods

We are often asked about the best type of research methodology for different purposes. While this decision should be made in the context of each and every research project, some general guidelines for selecting the most appropriate research method are below.

- If budgets are very constrained, better value can often be obtained from undertaking qualitative research – in this respect, qualitative sensing interviews can also sometimes be more cost-effective than running a focus group, as incentives and venue hire are typically not required
- If budgets are very limited, it may also be useful to review published research conducted by other companies and organisations such as through an internet search (Google scholar is particularly useful for literature searches online) or an academic database search (eg. university library databases) – other sources such as data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics may provide useful information on the population of interest (www.abs.gov.au)
- Another approach may involve interviewing representatives from organisations which have already conducted research in different jurisdictions – this allows prior learnings to be gathered from “experts” who have already made important insights – in some cases, overseas jurisdictions with similar structures can also be approached to explore whether research has already been conducted in the field of interest (including unpublished research)
- Qualitative research is generally more useful if creative ideas and new strategies are required – qualitative research – including focus groups and interviews – can give insight into stakeholder views, perceptions and behaviours and such information can be used to develop creative strategies – creative qualitative research is also typically much more useful to develop communication strategies or strategies to influence behavioural change
- Quantitative research is particularly useful if large numbers of respondents are present and quantitative estimates must be made of the percent of the population with certain attitudes or certain behaviours – the only downside to quantitative research of course is that larger budgets are typically required – However, the benefit of quantitative research is that information gathering can be structured to gather a large number of views in a relatively short period of time.