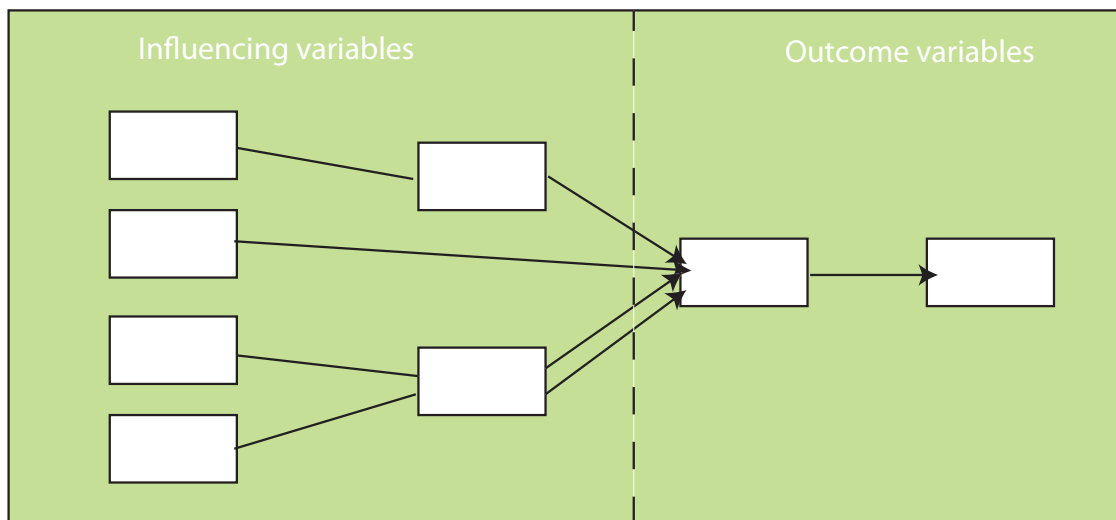


Conceptual framework

Over the years, we have seen many shopping list style research surveys. This typically involves an organisation putting a list of often disjointed questions together similar to the way a shopping list is developed. In this respect, there is limited consideration of the strategic objectives of the research or consideration of the factors which should be measured from a theoretical perspective. To this end, the better practice approach to research and survey design involves developing a conceptual framework of variables prior to developing the individual survey items (measures). This framework shows an overview of all major measures in the survey and implicitly presents an rationale for their inclusion. An example conceptual framework is shown below.



The figure above shows how a conceptual framework has differentiated between influencing variables and outcome variables. For instance, the left hand side may show that factors such as awareness, gender and attitudes towards smoking influence overall views towards recreational drugs, which in turn influences drug use behaviour (which may be the outcome variable). In this respect, forming a conceptual framework can help ensure that all the correct measures are included in any given survey. To develop a conceptual framework of research variables, it can be useful to differentiate between influencing, moderating and mediating variables and outcomes. Steps to developing a conceptual framework can include:

- Conducting focus group style research or interviews to gather information to better understand the variables at play
- Conduct a literature review to look for past research which may inform development of a conceptual framework
- Using pen and paper separate variables into influencing and outcome variables (using boxes such as above)
- Once the conceptual framework is complete, develop survey individual measures for each chunk of information in the conceptual framework.