
UNIT 7 SURVEY METHOD

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7.0 INTRODUCTION

The Survey as a method is one of the most common forms of research methods for collection of primary data from the field. It is a quantitative method and aims to gather data from many respondents to describe the frequency of an event and to generalise results from a smaller sample to larger population depending upon the nature and objectives of a study. Surveys are extensively used to collect and analyse varied types of data including social, political, economic, psychological, technical, cultural and educational among others. However, despite its extensive use, the survey method is not always properly understood or carried out. While using this method, great attention needs to be given on selecting a representative sample, proper designing and pre-testing of questionnaire to reduce error rates, administering, tabulating, and analysing the data.

In this unit, we shall look at the characteristics and types of survey method and its applications. We shall discuss the data collection tools for survey which include

questionnaire and interview schedule and examine the process of designing a questionnaire incorporating both closed and open-ended questions. We shall describe the process of conducting a survey, including planning, sampling, designing and pretesting the research instrument, and analysis of the data collected.

7.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the salient features of survey method;
- describe different types of surveys and their applications;
- discuss the relative strengths and limitations of questionnaire and interview schedules as tools of data collection;
- differentiate between closed and open-ended questions;
- design a questionnaire and pre-test it; and
- use survey method in your research design.

7.2 SALIENT FEATURES

The literal meaning of the word ‘survey’ is to take or present a general view of something or examine something carefully. It involves investigation and examination and interviewing people (respondents) and asking them for information. Survey is conducted with a representative sample of the population being studied and it is assumed that information obtained from the sample is valid for the general population. As a quantitative method it describes, explains and predicts.

According to Bertrand & Hughes (2005), surveys can be used for:

- collating descriptive information (television serial viewing habits of homemakers);
- making comparisons (comparing the soap opera viewing habits of teenage girls and teenage boys, or of teenage girls and housewives); and
- exploring relationships (for instance, exploring the relationship between soap opera viewing and level of formal education).

A survey aims to seek diverse opinions and experiences into predetermined response categories and measures reactions of a large number of individuals to a limited set of questions. The method can be used to measure any aspect such as – the number of people below the poverty line, the number of illiterates in a given place, people watching a particular television channel/programme, reading newspaper/listening to radio programme – the list is endless. The numerical data thus obtained is expressed in frequency, percentages, averages, proportions etc. and presented in the form of tables, graphs and charts.

Surveys thus involve numbers, magnitude, and measurement with the focus on objective and standardised means of inquiry. However, the method is not useful for in-depth study of contexts and solutions to problems and it is often argued that ‘Surveys give a big picture of an issue under study but cannot capture the hidden nooks and crannies’.

According to Wiseman & Aron (1970), a survey is a “method for collecting and analysing social data via highly structured and often very detailed interviews and questionnaires in order to obtain information from large numbers of respondents presumed to be representative of a specific population.”

The survey method can be applied for a variety of purposes. It can be used to gather news; business corporations use it to develop marketing strategies; political parties use it to develop campaign strategies; while government agencies use it to obtain data. The scope and depth of a survey may vary depending upon the nature of the study – it may be broad or narrow, it may be limited to a small area or cover an entire state or even several states. Census, opinion polls and exit polls all use survey method for collecting data. In census all the members of a population group are covered thus eliminating the issues of representative sample. However, census requires a huge effort and at the national level can be undertaken only by the government that too only once in ten years in view of the expenses and challenges involved.

7.3 TYPES OF SURVEYS

Surveys can be broadly classified as Descriptive surveys and Analytical or Explanatory surveys.

7.3.1 Descriptive Surveys

In Unit 2 we discussed that descriptive research describes ‘what is’, and involves description, recording, analysis and interpretation of conditions that exist in a given area. Descriptive research uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods to study, describe and interpret what exists at present and provides useful and depth answers to research questions for decision makers and information users. It aims to examine a problematic situation, makes objective observations, analyse and interpret the data in clear and precise terms. Many a time, descriptive research itself is termed survey research. However, it is appropriate to consider survey as a descriptive research method.

Descriptive surveys aim to describe or document the state of affairs as it exists at present - the focus is on present day behaviour. The main characteristic of this type of survey is that the researcher has no control over the variables and s/he can report only of the happenings. Such surveys describe the population being studied and seek to relate this information to their opinions beliefs, values and behaviour etc. To take an example, audience research is conducted to obtain information about the demographic profile such as age, gender, area of residence, historical background, cultural factors, etc., while setting up a radio station. It is important to note that surveys are used to describe a situation at a given point in time; they cannot be used to describe either the past or the future.

7.3.2 Analytic Surveys

Analytical surveys attempt to describe and explain why certain situations exist, why people behave the way they do – what causes certain type of behaviour. These are also called Explanatory surveys as they aim to determine cause and effects relationships between two or more variables. Researchers often use data from descriptive surveys to develop hypotheses and use analytic surveys to test their

hypotheses. The results enable the researchers to examine the inter-relationships between variables and draw inferences.

According to Wimmer & Dominick (2004), a survey has some well defined advantages, because it can be used to investigate problems in realistic settings – where they happen rather than in laboratory or screening room under artificial conditions. The cost of conducting survey is relatively less as compared to other methods which can be further checked by using email and telephonic interviews.

Check Your Progress: 1

Notes: 1) Use the space below for your answer.

2) Compare your answers with those ones given at the end of this Unit.

1) Discuss the main features of Survey Method.

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2) How is Descriptive Survey different from Analytic survey?

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7.4 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

For conducting Surveys, questionnaire and interview schedules are used as tools of data collection.

7.4.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire consists of a set of questions posed in a written form and in a definite order. The questionnaires are usually mailed to the respondents, either through regular post or email or administered in person for filling-up the responses. The respondents are expected to go through the questionnaire, understand the questions and reply by writing in the relevant spaces and return the filled-in questionnaires. Since the onus of replying remains on the receiver, it is important that the questionnaire is designed with great care to elicit responses. You will read more about designing of questionnaire in detail in subsection 7.6 of this unit. While mailing the questionnaire through regular post, a self - addressed stamped or pre-paid cover is posted to increase the response rate.

Questionnaires are useful for eliciting data on a variety of areas including demographic factors such as age, gender, family structure, class, education, occupation; media habits – access to media, media exposure and utilisation patterns; likes and dislikes about specific programmes, characters, issues projected in media such as violence, crime and so on.

Strengths

A questionnaire is a convenient and economical tool for collecting large amounts of data from small as well as large population groups. It is an impersonal way to obtain data and ensures a certain degree of anonymity to the respondents; it can be used to obtain personal and to some extent, sensitive information and minimise bias during data collection. It places less pressure on the respondents for immediate response who can respond to the questionnaire at his/her own pace and time.

Limitations

A questionnaire, however, is also beset with a number of limitations – the most important being that it does not produce a high rate of recovery. Studies have revealed that the response rate of questionnaire is rarely more than 12-15 percent and in some cases even less and in such cases, the data has limited validity. Further, a questionnaire can be administered only to those who can read and write reasonably well and cannot be used with small children and illiterates. If a respondent misinterprets a question, there could be inconsistencies in replies. Moreover, respondent may give hurried responses lacking depth resulting in superficiality in responses. They may not reply to all questions and leave some blanks resulting in incomplete data. Once the information has been collected and compiled, analysis of data can be time consuming. Moreover, obtaining representative samples may be difficult leading to sampling errors. All these limitations emphasise the need for taking due care while using this tool of data collection.

7.4.2 Interviews Schedules

Some of the limitations of the questionnaire method can be overcome through Interview schedules or personal schedules. Interview, as you know, is a conversation between the researcher and the respondent - it involves asking questions, listening to individuals and recording their responses. It is generally conducted through face-to-face interaction though it can also be conducted by telephone, emails and other means. A schedule, when sent through post, email etc. is known as questionnaire but when administered in face-to-face situation is called interview schedule or personal schedule as it is a personalised way of data collection. The interview schedule is prepared well in advance before proceeding for data collection. The questions are carefully worded and delivered identically to all respondents and the resulting data are quantitative and comparable.

Strengths

An interview schedule is useful in collecting data from rural and illiterate/semi literate respondents who cannot use questionnaires. Since the interviewer is in a face-to-face situation with the respondents, s/he can build rapport with the respondents, spend time with them and can explain the questions, if needed. The response rate of interview schedule is high as the researcher is in direct contact with the respondents.

It is an effective tool for obtaining information about prevalence and distribution of an issue from large number of people. The schedule once designed can be shown and discussed in advance to weed out inconsistencies or jumps etc. It can be completed quickly in the field and is economical on time. The data obtained is comparable hence easier to analyse. While less skill is required on the part of the

interviewer when collecting data for his/her own research; the field investigators need to be oriented and trained before administering the interview schedule in larger projects involving a number of field investigators for data collection. Field investigators need to understand the broad aim and objectives of the research study and the importance of questions to record complete responses in a proper way. They may need to be trained in how questions should be asked; whether questions can be rephrased; or follow up questions can be asked. They also need to be trained on how to approach a respondent, build rapport, and what to do if the respondent refuses to answer any or all questions.

Limitations

Interview schedules are also beset with some limitations. Much skill is required to create an interview schedule as highly structured questionnaires yield little insight into how people feel about the issues involved. At times, an interviewer may not be able to respond to a valuable issue/situation which emerges during an interview but does not appear on the schedule. Since the researcher is expected to go to the field and meet the respondents to record their replies, it can be time consuming and expensive. It may be difficult to find those selected in the sample, and even if available, respondents may be reluctant to answer some questions. There could be cultural, linguistic and other forms of barriers. Their travel expenses, lodging boarding charges also need to be taken into account. In a larger study, individual differences among field investigators may affect the quality of data hence orientation of the researchers is a must. The tendency to get too personally involved with the respondents at times may turn intrusive and lead to the risk of introducing bias in the results. Care needs to be taken that the researcher does not impose his/her own perspective on an issue. Some of these limitations can be overcome through training of the researchers.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: 1) Use the space below for your answer.

2) Compare your answers with those ones given at the end of this Unit.

1) List five strengths and five limitations of Questionnaire as a tool of data collection.

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2) What is the main difference between Questionnaire and Interview schedule?

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7.5 TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Survey questions are largely of two types – Closed-ended or selected response questions and Open-ended or constructed response questions.

7.5.1 Closed-ended questions

In closed-ended questions, the respondents have to select an answer from a list of options provided by the researcher. Such questions are simple to answer, offer uniformity in responses and can be easily quantified; hence they are easier to process as compared to open-ended questions. Open ended questions have been found effective in eliciting data which is sensitive in nature. However, open ended questions are difficult to design as the researcher has to be sure of all the possible range of responses. It is useful for the researcher to have prior discussion with a select group of respondents before designing the questionnaires so that the issues raised by them can be incorporated in the questionnaire to make it more meaningful and effective. Closed ended questions are of following types:

Limited choice questions: which limit possible responses, such as

Do you read newspapers? Yes No

In some questions the component of Can't say or Don't Know is required. The major disadvantage of closed-ended questions is that often certain responses are not included in the options and to address this, the researcher can include an "Any other" response followed by a blank space to give respondents an opportunity to supply their own answer. Such question allow the possibility of an option given to the respondent

Any other (please specify).....

Multiple choice questions: In such questions, the respondents are given the option of ticking many responses. For example, the respondents may be asked:

Which news channels do you like to watch? (Multiple responses)

DD News AAJ TAK ABP News India TV
News Express ETV Samay Zee News
News Nation Mirror Now NDTV India India Today
News x NDTV 24 x7 Times Now
CNN IBN BBC World News CNN Other, Please Specify....

However, while formulating such questions, care needs to be taken that the categories are mutually exclusive so that there is no overlap and respondents are informed that they can tick multiple responses.

Ranking scales: Such questions allow measuring the degree of preference to different items, for example:

Which game of sports do you like to watch? (Rank in order of preference in which 1 is the highest)

- Cricket Tennis Table Tennis Hockey
- Badminton Kabaddi Soccer Wrestling
- Archery Athletics (Track) Boxing Rugby
- Athletics (Field) Golf Gymnastics Basketball
- Swimming Volleyball Formula 1 Race

Any Other (pls specify)

Rating scales: Rating scales allow eliciting varied shades of opinions, beliefs and attitudes on an issue. Likert scale introduced by Renis Likert (1932) is one of the most commonly used ratings scale in which the respondents are asked to choose from the five point scale of Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly disagree. For example, to ascertain the attitudes and opinions concerning road development, the respondents are asked to mark the extent of their agreement with each of these statements as per scale of:

SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree N=Neutral DA=Disagree SDA=Strongly Disagree

	Statements	SA	A	N	SD	SDA
1	Road connectivity is required for development in all the sectors					
2	Road development is a major link of boosting trade and industries					
3	Road development should be carried out by the government only					
4	Private investment for road development is necessary					
5	People should share investment burden by paying for road usage					
6	More taxation for road development is needed					
7	Using private investment and public money together is required for road development					

In this method, answers can be in the form of numerical rating scales for example,

5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree and 1 for Strongly Disagree. An individual's score on a particular attitude scale is the sum of his/her rating on all the items. This enables the researcher to obtain very precise and specific information on attitudes and opinions on a given issue thus add precision to the results.

7.5.2 Open-ended questions

When as a researcher you are not sure of all the possible range of responses and are trying to understand the situation, and you also want to collect qualitative responses; it is useful to include Open-ended questions. As discussed elsewhere, the survey method being a quantitative method is considered too narrow in its approach as it heavily relies on what can be counted and measured. However, there are many aspects of life which cannot be quantified but may hold great importance and open-ended questions allow overcoming this constraint. Open-ended questions are useful in eliciting data on feelings, beliefs and opinions and help generate more qualitative information even while using a questionnaire. The simplest form of open-ended question relates to the inclusion of 'why' and 'how' for eliciting qualitative data. Open-ended questions offer freedom to respondents in answering questions and an opportunity to provide in-depth responses. For example,

What kind of change would you like to see in the prime time television news bulletin?.....

How rural news can be included in the prime time television news bulletins?
.....

The limitation, however, is that in such questions, the respondent who is expected to formulate and record answers in his/her own words. The responses require relatively more time in collecting, coding and interpreting. Thus it is useful to have a mix of questions to supplement the quantitative data with qualitative data. Although there is no rule of thumb, four-five closed-ended questions may be followed by an open-ended question.

7.6 DESIGNING A QUESTIONNAIRE

It is often said that your study is as good or bad as your questionnaire, hence great deal of care needs to be taken while designing a questionnaire. A well designed questionnaire elicits quality responses. A set of questions are framed in the questionnaires and the researcher mails them to the respondents with a request to return them after completion. It should be easy to understand, appealing and motivating to the respondents.

It is useful to include a short introduction explaining the purpose of the study and the expectations from the participants. Informed consent needs to be taken and they need to be reassured that their participation is voluntary and their answers will be kept confidential and used only for research purpose. Their names will not be mentioned and they should feel comfortable in sharing the information. Towards the end, the participants need to be thanked for their participation and researcher may share his/her contact address for any further information.

The questionnaire needs to be structured keeping in view the objectives of the study. For example, if the objectives of your study are: ‘To obtain viewer’s feedback on the news content and presentation aspects of Prime time news bulletins’ some of the following areas may be considered:

Personal Profile

Media access

Media utilisation patterns

Content of primetime news bulletins

Presentation of the news stories

The questions related to personal profile of the respondents are generally given at the beginning in which information pertaining to socio-demographic profile of the respondents such as age, gender, religion, caste, area of residence, type of household, type of settlement, educational qualifications, occupation, income levels is elicited. It is important to include only what is necessary in the light of your objectives and the temptation to cover every possible area in the subject needs to be resisted. Many a time, researchers try to cover extensive details of an issue under study but the questionnaire should not be extremely lengthy. The respondents may not have time and inclination to respond to a very detailed questionnaire.

Further, given the limitations of survey method, all the issues under study cannot be examined through questionnaire and different methods of data collection will have to be used – for example, some issues will have to be analysed through case study, observation method or indepth interviews. The bottom line is that each question should have a purpose. A well structured questionnaire helps at the time of coding of data and analysis as well. Informal interviews in the study area have been found useful to identify, develop and refine the questions.

While designing the schedule, the flow and sequence of questions needs to be checked - early questions should be easy to answer. It is always useful to have a variety of questions as discussed in the previous section depending upon the nature of the study. Many a time people tend to give politically correct answers leading to a skew in the findings hence it is important to include some questions to cross-check their responses. However, only relevant questions which meet the objectives of the study should be included – unnecessary questions only add fluff, hence better avoided.

If a questionnaire has to be administered in Hindi or any regional language, then either it should be developed in the same language or translated in the language to be administered. This is important as every time a question is translated, the field researcher is likely to add or omit some information which may be understood differently by diverse set of respondents leading to disparity in responses. Space in questionnaire is also an important issue which needs to be conserved as you will have to get many sets of the questionnaire be made.

Certain do’s and don’ts need to be kept in view while designing a questionnaire.

7.6.1 Do's

- At the outset state concisely in a note what the survey is all about and how the findings will be used. Request the respondents for their cooperation.
- Write questions in simple language which is easy to understand.
- Keep sentences short and to the point.
- Keep the level of education, knowledge and perception of the respondents in view while framing the questionnaire.
- Begin with demographic profile (age, gender, education, area of residence, occupation, income level etc.). May include psychographic profile, if needed.
- Proceed in a logical order - from simple to complex; general to specific.
- Ask only one piece of information per question.
- Define the term for the first time to remove ambiguity (e.g. Have you heard of euthanasia (mercy killing)).
- Check that nothing important has been left out.

7.6.2 Don'ts

- Include 'leading' or 'loaded' questions which lead the respondent to answer in a certain direction (Do you think drinking alcohol has become a status symbol and those who don't drink become a centre of embarrassment?).
- Include double barrel questions (Is media glorifying drinking and leading the youth in drinking?).
- Include ambiguous questions as they will yield ambiguous data (Are multiple classes being handled by one teacher in the school?).
- Include questions which require unreasonable effort to answer.
- Include questions that cannot be answered accurately.
- Ask embarrassing questions.
- Ask questions which are not relevant to the study objectives as it can generate enormous data which may be later difficult to organise and analyse.

It is also important to remember that the questions asked on a questionnaire or in an interview must be closely related to the research questions and hypotheses framed for the study. There is often a tendency to collect too much data and then not know how to connect the data to the research questions or hypotheses. Thus, every question must be connected to the objectives of the research being undertaken.

Activity 1

Design a questionnaire comprising 15-20 questions on a topic of your choice keeping in view the points discussed in this sub-section.

7.7 THE PROCESS

The following steps are involved in survey method:

- Planning
- Sampling
- Designing research instrument
- Pre-testing
- Administering the questionnaire
- Data Analysis

7.7.1 Planning

The planning stage of a survey involves identification of topic and defining the research problem. As discussed in Unit 3, Block 1, you need to consider what you will be investigating and why this research is worth investigating. It is also useful to consider at this stage whether survey will be an appropriate research method to meet the objectives of the study, the population to be studied, study area, hypotheses for testing, data analysis techniques to be used and so on.

7.7.2 Sampling

The next stage is making decisions about the sampling frame, sample size of the population that need to be included in the survey. We have discussed Sampling in detail Unit 4. Remember, a reliable sample must be representative and adequate in size. If the sample is not representative of the population being studied, the findings may not be valid and reliable.

Conducting large surveys involves a great deal of coordination, training and supervision. Large surveys are also expensive. Language also places huge challenge apart from sample selection. A normal sample size for a state level survey is kept around 3500-4000, while in national studies; the sample size is around 15000 with at least six big states being included. The heterogeneity of population even within a state means that ideally every constituency and significant social groups within each constituency need to be sampled. What is important to remember is that it is the representativeness of the sample, not necessarily the sample size that makes survey results reliable.

7.7.3 Designing the research instrument

You need to keep the issues raised in sub-section 7.6 in view while designing a questionnaire. Once your draft is ready it is useful to discuss it with your seniors or colleagues for their inputs for finalising it.

7.7.4 Pre-Testing of Questionnaire

Testing the draft questionnaire on a small segment of the potential survey population is called pre-testing. This is an important phase of using surveys, as testing enables you to identify the gaps in the questionnaire, if any. It helps to ascertain whether respondents can easily understand the questions or not. It helps to remove ambiguity and ensure clarity. It answers questions such as - are there any missing links; does the questionnaire elicit the information required and does it meet the objectives of the study? Is the sequencing of the questions proper or is there a need for taking a different approach? Based on the feedback,

the questionnaire is modified and firmed up. Thus pre-testing helps you as researcher to identify problems and solve them before proceeding to undertake a larger study.

7.7.5 Administering the questionnaire

Once the questionnaire has been pretested and firmed up, it has to be administered to the respondents – either through post, telephone, email or in person. However, in view of the low response rate, as discussed earlier, there will be still a need to follow up by sending a polite reminder and/or attaching another copy of the questionnaire. If using personal interview schedule, you will have to introduce yourself and share the purpose of the study and seek cooperation. While filling up the schedule care should be taken so that you do not to give your own opinions, even by mistake or accident.

7.7.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the processing of collecting raw data and converting it into information useful for the stakeholders. The data is analysed to answer questions, test hypotheses or disprove theories. Data analysis involves processing of data, interpreting the results and drawing findings.

For data analysis a variety of software are available which may be used in view of the nature and objectives of the research study. We have discussed data analysis techniques in Unit 15, Block 4 in detail stating that data analysis through statistical procedures represents a systematic and objective way of determining whether significant patterns of relationships exist among those phenomena that have been measured in data collection.

Findings are drawn from the analysis of the data. Interpretations of the findings are provided by drawing inferences, linking the findings with other studies – how these are similar or different from existing research. It is explained as to what new element has been added through the findings and how this is important for understanding a certain phenomenon.

There is a need to eliminate bias or error and remove inconsistency as well as contradictions in findings to increase validity of the research findings. These findings are presented in tabular forms and represented in charts and graphs – these could be represented in either pie chart, bar diagram, line diagram and so on. Findings and your experience are shared with others to add to the scholarship in the discipline and theory and practice of life.

7.7.7 Evaluation of Surveys

According to Berger, there are three considerations involved in evaluating surveys:

- Sample size
- Margin of error
- Confidence level

The error of measurement strongly depends on the sample type and size. For example, to study the media habits of a village, if only the upper classes and castes or males are included in the sample, the results will be skewed. The margin of error decreases as the sample size gets larger but in smaller increments. According

to Berger, the larger the sample, the more confidence you can have that your findings will be accurate, but this works only up to a point as large samples may not provide the equivalent amount of accuracy and a survey of 1,500 people will give as much accuracy as a survey of 2000 people.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: 1) Use the space below for your answer.

2) Compare your answers with those ones given at the end of this Unit.

1) Why is it important to draw a representative sample?

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2) List the advantages of pre-testing.

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3) What are important factors for evaluating surveys?

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7.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed various issues related to Survey method. It was discussed that the concept of Survey originally developed in social sciences is one of the most commonly used research method in mass communication as well. Survey method is an important tool of developing audience profile, exploring media habits, and media exposure and utilisation patterns among others. It aims to measure and count the frequency of an occurrence systematically and objectively. It is basically a quantitative technique but can also elicit qualitative data in a limited way through the use of open-ended questions.

We further discussed the salient features and characteristics of survey method, the types of survey, the need and importance of designing a good questionnaire, the process of undertaking a survey. It is hoped that the learning acquired will enable you to use this method in your own research study in a systematic way.

7.9 FURTHER READINGS

- 1) Berger, Arther Asa (2000), Media and Communication Research Methods, Sage Publications, London, New Delhi
- 2) Bertrand Ina & Peter Hughes (2005), Media Research Methods: Audiences, Institutions, Texts, Palgrave MacMillan, New York.

- 3) Priest S. H (2010), Doing Media Research: An Introduction, Sage Publications, New Delhi
- 4) Wimmer R.D. & Joseph R. Dominick (2004), Mass Media Research: An Introduction, 4th edition, California, Wadsworth Series in Mass Communication

7.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Survey is a quantitative method of data collection which is used to describe the frequency of an event and generalise results from a representative sample to larger population. It seeks diverse opinions and experiences into pre - determined response categories and measures reactions of a large number of individuals to a limited set of questions. It is assumed that information obtained from the sample is valid for the general population.
- 2) The focus of Descriptive survey is to describe present day behaviour whereas Analytical survey attempts to explain why certain situations exist, why people behave the way they do and what causes certain type of behaviour. Often data from descriptive surveys is used to develop hypotheses and analytical surveys relate this information to analyse the opinions beliefs, values and behaviour etc. of the respondents.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Five strengths of questionnaire are:
 - Useful for eliciting data on a variety of areas, such as demographic profile, media habits, issues projected in media such as violence, crimes, etc.
 - Convenient and economical tool for collecting large amounts of data from population.
 - Impersonal way to obtain data hence ensures certain degree of anonymity to the respondents.
 - Can be used to obtain personal and to some extent, sensitive information.
 - Places less pressure on the respondents for immediate response who can respond to the questionnaire at his/her own pace and time.

Five limitations of questionnaire are:

- The response rate of questionnaire could be as low as 12-15 percent.
- Can be administered only to those who can read and write reasonably well.
- Designing a questionnaire requires great skill on the part of the researcher.
- If a respondent misinterprets a question, there could be inconsistencies in replies.
- The responses may be lacking in depth resulting in superficial data.

- They may not reply to all questions and leave some blanks resulting in incomplete data.
- 3) A questionnaire is administered through email, by post or in person to the respondents and has to be filled-in by them. In contrast, the interview schedule has to be administered by the researcher to the respondents in a face-to-face situation. It is a personalised way of data collection therefore is also called personal schedule.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) It is important to draw a sample which is representative of the population being studied for ensuring reliability and validity of the findings.
- 2) Some advantages of pre-testing are:
- Pre-testing enables the researcher to identify the gaps in the questionnaire.
 - It helps to remove ambiguity and ensure clarity.
 - It ensures that the questionnaire meets the objectives of the study.
 - It helps the researcher to solve the problems before proceeding to undertake a larger study.
- 3) Three main considerations involved in evaluating surveys are - sample size; margin of error and confidence level.