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MLIS Semester II
(Paper – 1)
Research Methods And Statistical Techniques
Topic – Descriptive Method
e-content

Descriptive method


Descriptive research is defined as a research method that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon that is being studied. This methodology focuses more on the “what” of the research subject rather than the “why” of the research subject.

In other words, it is a type of research that describes a population, situation, or phenomenon that is being studied. It focuses on answering the *how, what, when, and where* questions. If a research problem, rather than the *why*.

This is mainly because it is important to have a proper understanding of what a research problem is about before investigating why it exists in the first place.

Characteristics

- **Quantitative research:** Descriptive research is a quantitative research method that attempts to collect quantifiable information to be used for statistical analysis of the population sample. It is an popular market research tool that allows to collect and describe the nature of the demographic segment.
- **Uncontrolled variables:** In descriptive research, none of the variables are influenced in any way. This uses observational methods to conduct the research. Hence, the nature of the variables or their behaviour is not in the hands of the researcher.

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- **Cross-sectional studies:** Descriptive research is generally a Cross-sectional study where different sections belonging to the same group are studied and properly describe the research problem.
 - **Basis for further research:** The data collected and analyzed from descriptive research can then be further researched using different research techniques. The data also can help point towards the types of research methods are to be used for the subsequent research.

Data collection method in descriptive research


There are 3 main data collection methods in descriptive research, namely;

- ❖ observational method,
- ❖ case study method, and
- ❖ survey research.

Observational method

The observational method allows researchers to collect data based on their view of the behaviour and characteristics of the respondent, with the respondents themselves not directly having an input. It is often used in market research, psychology, and some other social science research to understand human behaviour.

The observational method is the most effective method to conduct descriptive research and both quantitative observation and qualitative observation are used in this research method.

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- Quantitative observation involved the objective collection of numerical data, whose results can be analyzed using numerical and statistical methods.
 - Qualitative observation, on the other hand, involves the monitoring of characteristics and not the measurement of numbers. The researcher makes his observation from a distance, records it, and is used to inform conclusions.

Case study method

A case study is a sample group (an individual, a group of people, organizations, events, etc.) whose characteristics are used to describe the characteristics of a larger group in which the case study is a subgroup. The information gathered from investigating a case study may be generalized to serve the larger group.

This generalization, may, however, be risky because case studies are not sufficient to make accurate predictions about larger groups. Case studies are a poor case of generalization.

Survey research

This is a very popular data collection method in research designs. In survey research, researchers create a survey or questionnaire and distribute it to respondents who give answers.

Generally, it is used to obtain quick information directly from the primary source and also conducting rigorous quantitative and qualitative research. In some cases, survey research uses a blend of both qualitative and quantitative strategies.

Advantages

- Effective to analyse non-quantified topics and issues.
- The possibility to observe the phenomenon in a completely natural and unchanged natural environment.
- The opportunity to integrate the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection.
- Less time-consuming than quantitative experiments.

Disadvantages

- Descriptive studies cannot test or verify the research problem statistically.
- Research results may reflect certain level of bias due to the absence of statistical tests.
- The majority of descriptive studies are not 'repeatable' due to their observational nature.
- Descriptive studies are not helpful in identifying cause behind described phenomenon.



Thank you