M.A.(PUBLIC RELATIONS)

SEMESTER - II (CBCS)

RESEARCH IN PUBLIC RELATIONS - II

SUBJECT CODE :

Programe Co-ordinator : **Mr. Anil R. Bankar**
Associate Professor of History and
Head, Faculty of Humanities,
IDOL, University of Mumbai.

Course Co-ordinator : **Mr. Tejasvi Khatry**
Assistant Professor, Public Relations.

Editor: :

Course Writers : **Deveeka Shetty**
Faculty,
Thakur College of Science and Commerce.

: **Dr. Yatindra Ingle**
Assistant Professor,
Usha Pravin Gandhi College of Arts Science and Commerce.

: **Tejasvi Khatry**
Coordinator – MAPR, IDOL.

: **Dr. Meenakshi Upadhyay**
Director - Center for Distance Education,
SNDT University.

: **Shruti Joshi**
Faculty, Wilson College.

: **Dr. Rommani Shitak**
Assistant Professor, Hinduja College.

: **Laxmi Krishnan**
Content Editor, Pepper Content.

: **Shikha Dutta**
Associate Professor,
VES College of Arts, Science and Commerce.

May 2022, Print I

Published by
Director
Institute of Distance and Open Learning, University of Mumbai,Vidyanagari, Mumbai - 400 098.

DTP COMPOSED AND PRINTED BY
Mumbai University Press,
Vidyanagari, Santacruz (E), Mumbai - 400098.

CONTENTS

******

Syllabus

Research in Public Relations - II (Core Course)

M.A.(Public Relations)	**Semester – II**
Course Name: Research in Public Relations - II (English Version)	**Course Code:**

This course develops from the Research in Public Relations – I course in semester I. The learner prepares a research proposal with a sound bibliography, a review of literature and chapterisation. Several research methods are also dealt with in this course.

The course shall comprise of the following units:

Week 1	Why conduct PR research?	Primer of Public Relations Research, Third Edition, Don W. Stacks, The Guilford Press, 2017 A Practitioner's Guide to Public Relations Research, Measurement and Evaluation, Don Stacks, Business Expert Press, 2010
Week 2	PR best practices	
Week 3	What makes news – a study of news values	
Week 4	Description versus inference	
Week 5	Conducting a content analysis	
Week 6	Conducting a content analysis	
Week 7	Reviewing and summarizing literature	
Week 8	Conducting a case study	
Week 9	Conducting a case study	
Week 10	Making questionnaires and In-Depth interviews	
Week 11	Conducting focus group discussions	
Week 12	Participant observation	

Week 13	Sampling techniques and strategies – what is the random	
Week 14	Experimental design, control and public relations	
Week 15	Writing a research report	
Total Hours	60 Hours	

Class methodology:

This is a six credit course. It will involve teaching-learning for four hours a week for a period of 15 weeks. Of the total 60 teaching-learning hours, 40 will comprise the central teaching component while 20 hours will comprise the self-study component. The self-study component will consist of academic tasks outside the classroom that will be assigned by the teacher. The 40 hour teaching component will include two tests conducted in the classroom. These tests may be written, oral or presentation. Altogether these tests will be for 25 marks. The course will lay special emphasis on studying cases.

The self-study component of 20 hours will include application of research methods and producing a research project proposal under the supervision of the teacher. These will be evaluated for 15 marks. The self-study component assigned in this manner will be related to or an extension of but not in lieu of the prescribed syllabus.

*****

1

WHY DO PR RESEARCH AND BEST PR PRACTICES

Unit Structure

1.0 OBJECTIVES

- Appreciate the role, scope and need for research in public relation
- Understand the theoretical underpinnings of public relations
- Describe the various kinds of research and methodologies adopted by PR researchers
- Decipher which research method to use when
- Differentiate between Filed and Desk research techniques

Introduction:

Research is the foundation of any field, whether it be science, medicine, or the humanities. Because, in order to become robust, any profession need a body of knowledge, and Public Relations is no different.

To make a profession relevant, it is crucial to conduct research inside and about it.

In this Unit, we will cover the significance of research in Public Relations and the many research methodologies utilised by professionals in the field.

Research and Evaluation in Public Relations:

According to a number of analysts, public relations professionals do not value research. It is frequently perceived in a limited manner. Many may lack the confidence to do research and evaluation studies, while others may lack the educational background and experience in social science research necessary to conduct such investigations. Numerous practitioners rely on output measurement via media coverage to reflect the contribution of the programme.

Pseudo Research:

Other reasons for not conducting research could be that management does not support expenditures on a discipline that it perceives to be intangible, or that research is time-consuming and complicated, therefore the public relations manager does not undertake it. It is considered that good research reflects issue areas that practitioners would prefer to stay dormant in order to avoid being "exposed" upon failure. Many conduct a semblance of study to impress the management or the client, which is ineffective.

Stewart A. Smith provides the following explanations for the many causes of bogus research:

a) Organizational politics: In this instance, research is employed to obtain authority, defend choices, or serve as a scapegoat.

b) Service promotion: To impress clients or prospects with the sponsor's sophistication, modernity, or authenticity.

c) Personal satisfaction: In this instance, the study is an exercise in boosting one's ego in order to keep up with trends or to display gained talents.

A practitioner of public relations does not need to be a research expert, but he or she must believe in research and have a working grasp of the research process in order to outsource work to external research companies. Someone has correctly stated that one does not need to be a motor technician to drive a car, but it is helpful to know a few basics about car mechanics while visiting a garage.

Research is Instinctive:

Researchers feel that research is innate to the majority of individuals. As humans who strive for excellence, we routinely conduct study. For instance, when we visit a supermarket, we examine numerous brands of a product before selecting the one that meets our need/desire, budget, and level of satisfaction. Students frequently conduct extensive desk and primary research when applying to several universities for college admission.

When they have more than two colleges to pick from, they collect information on their rating, speak with faculty, and may even chat with alumni before deciding. Similarly, public relations managers have depended on research in one form or another to demonstrate to the client that

a) their work has had an influence on the public or audience, and

b) they have studied media vehicles to determine whether they have disseminated the press release's news.

According to *Stacks*, research in any activity or programme is "the beginning of a process designed to achieve a certain goal." As public relations is a management role, choices cannot be made in the absence of study.

Research is Strategic:

According to *Dolphin*, research not only serves a function, but also seeks to determine whether the means of communication are suitable. It also helps determine what sorts of messaging and topics may be necessary to improve the organization's perception or develop a new image.

In order to facilitate decision-making, public relations utilises both informal and formal research methods. After addressing a few models utilised in PR research, we will examine a variety of methodologies for both types of study.

Theoretical underpinnings in public relation research:

Scholars of public relations feel that practitioners will soon have to utilise public relations as a multidisciplinary body of knowledge. "Communication expertise," asserts 6andra Oliver, "is proactive, proactive, catalytic, precognitive, and supporting; its conventional methods of strategic programming with comprehensive plans now embrace post-technological management thinking."

Mintzberg believes that the detailed plans handle the role of communication and serve in three directions, namely the external environment, the organisation, and the input end of the strategy formulation process. For example, Mintzberg argues that the issue for the role of stakeholder relations in the policy and practise of research on corporate strategy is to guarantee that the research focus is based on what he calls "re-conceived strategic programming rather than pre-conceived strategic programming."

The Process of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (PRE)

The Institute of Public Relations recommends The Planning, Research, and Evaluation Process (PRE) as a component of a PR campaign.

The first phase of audit *Where are we?* entails conducting research and collecting data to provide the foundation for the program's campaign.

The objectives that must be linked with organisational goals and objectives are determined in **Stage 2** by *"Where we need to be."*

In Stage 3, "How do we get there?" research and evaluation must be prioritised, and decisions must be made regarding the sort of measurement to be applied and the pre-testing methodologies to be implemented.

In Stage 4, *"Are we getting there?"* is concerned with ongoing research to ensure the programme is on track, and decisions are made regarding any necessary adjustments. It may also indicate that the programme must be terminated.

Examines the extent to which the campaign or program's objectives were met.

This dynamic cyclical research process can be represented as a pyramid with four levels.

Cutlip, Center, and Broom's PII Model:

Cutlip et al. contend that evaluation means many things to different individuals, but evaluation ideally refers to planning, implementation, and impact levels of a comprehensive programme assessment (PII). The evaluation process includes the following stages:

Stage One:

- The initial evaluation phase consists of the following:
- Adequacy of the background knowledge base for programme design
- Content appropriateness of messages and activities

Stage Two:

Quality of message and activity content

- The following constitutes the second stage:
- Number of messages sent to media and number of actions planned
- Number of activities placed and number of activities carried out
- Number of recipients and participants
- Participants in messages and activities
- Various levels and phases of programme evaluation

Level Three:

The following constitutes the third stage:

- Number of recipients who learn message content
- Number of recipients who change viewpoint
- Number of recipients who change attitude
- Number of recipients who behave as requested
- Number of recipients who repeat behaviour

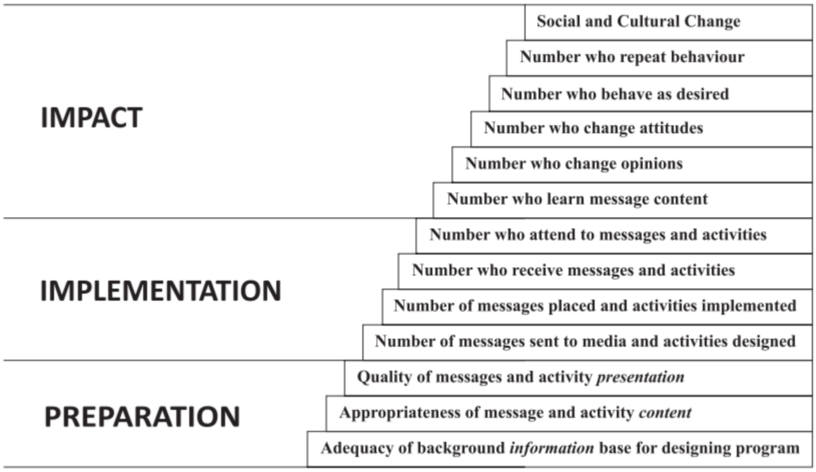
Social and cultural evolution:

The PII model is progressive and provides additional information for evaluating effectiveness.

The bottom rung, reflected as stage one above, is the preparation of evaluation and examines if sufficient background information is available to organise the programme appropriately. The content of created input is evaluated to determine whether it conforms to the plan, and the presentation of material is evaluated to determine whether it contributes to the desired response. A properly written press release, for instance, does not guarantee that it reached the media on time and was covered.

In phase two, implementation research would examine how tactics and efforts have been implemented, including distribution of materials, attendance at events, and exposure of target audiences to the messaging.

According to Cutlip et al., each phase of programme evaluation contributes to increased comprehension and adds information for assessing effectiveness. For example, the evaluation of preparation evaluates the quality and sufficiency of information and strategic planning. Implementation of evaluation chronicles the adequacy of the techniques and effort, while impact evaluation reflects feedback on the program's outcomes.

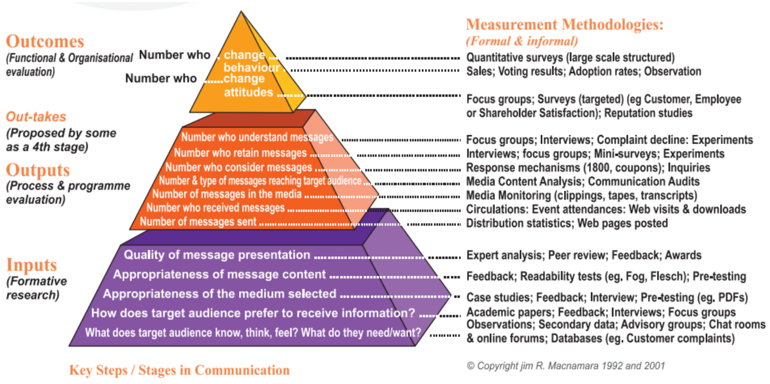


The PII model, Cutlip, Center and Broom's Evaluation Model:

McNamara's Pyramid Model:

The framework of McNamara's model, formerly known as the "macro model" and now as the "Pyramid Model of PR research," is "bottom up." According to McNamara, "the pyramid metaphor is excellent for emphasising that, at the base, when communication planning is initiated, practitioners have a vast quantity of information to gather and a variety of media and activity alternatives. Choices and selections are made to deliver particular messages to specified target audiences via specific media in order to finally achieve clearly defined goals (the peak of the programme or project).

Using McNamara as a source, Watson et al. state that 'Cutlip et al PII's model was used to extract the essential steps of the communication process. In contrast, the pyramid model provides additional value by detailing the evaluation procedures for each of its three levels. Although feedback loops are not explicitly depicted on the model, "it is implicit in this model that research findings from each step are continuously fed back into planning."



Pyramid Model of PR Research, Jim. R. Mcnamara:

(Image Source: Egyankosh)

Informal Research Techniques:

Many feel that informal research methodologies continue to dominate the public relations industry, despite the availability of very sophisticated research instruments. Among the informal research methods are the following:

Personal Contacts:

Public relations managers, like other managers, develop the ability to network with individuals who can serve as crucial contacts. Since public relations is all about information, pictures, perceptions, and reputation, having personal contacts within the organisation and among diverse stakeholders outside the organisation is quite beneficial for reading the pulse of different TA groups. Many individuals believe that no survey can provide the same level of insight as personal connections.

Gatekeepers:

Gatekeepers are characterised as opinion leaders whose opinions matter to those groups of people who rely on them for social, economic, political, or emotional support. There are gatekeepers in all professions and social groups. An opinion leader can be a physician, an engineer, a teacher, a politician, a celebrity, or a village chief. In the Indian context, it is often said that postmen in rural areas and village barbers are influential opinion leaders. This is because it is not uncommon for a postman to read letters to their recipients and assist them in sending replies. It is only natural that his opinion is sought on various issues, as he is regarded as a wise individual.

Similarly, in Indian villages, one could observe groups of people conversing in barbershops that are frequently situated beneath trees. Numerous political leaders in India assert that the forecasts made by these opinion leaders are even more accurate than those made by psephologists.

It is considered that if the gatekeepers are swayed, so will the individuals who view them as informed and, in some situations, as their role models.

Mail Analysis:

The vast majority of the letters that product line companies receive from their customers may not be complimentary. Periodic study of letters can assist in identifying areas of disapproval and concern. Numerous businesses now use their websites to address customer complaints.

The Intranet of Satyam computers, which connects its employees in numerous cities and countries, was developed to reflect how clients saw the company's services so that staff could receive feedback and improve.

Field Reports:

Companies with a focus on marketing typically have agents, field officers, and marketing officers stationed in various locations. They transmit periodic field reports. For example, Hindustan Unilever Ltd., an FMCG firm with a big market in the rural hinterland of the country, sends all of its new recruits, regardless of their discipline, to village postings in order for them to grasp the dynamics of the rural market.

The Department of Field Publicity of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting employs a large number of field publicity officers who travel throughout the country to disseminate information on various social issues and the achievements of the government in the welfare sector, as well as to collect feedback for the government to take corrective action.

Focus Teams:

Focus groups are identified with the study objectives in mind. In this method, the sample is subjected to in-depth questioning to discover not only what is being said, but also why it is being said, in order to gain insight into the attitudes and perspectives of the targeted population.

Media Reflections:

Daily media scanning is one of the most crucial duties of a public relations manager in order to understand the environment and the media's reaction to it. Regular media monitoring reveals issues of popular concern and media agenda setting. Later in the Unit, monitoring the media scientifically through quantitative measures and doing content assessments through formal research procedures are explored.

Blog Monitoring:

People's engagement with the media has undergone a paradigm shift as a result of the new media. The pervasive media, which affects nearly everything under the sun and comes from all sides and directions, transcending geographical boundaries, has made organisations even more concerned about maintaining their image. A unhappy employee, client, or enemy can wreak damage on an individual's or organization's reputation.

Following the blogosphere and digging through the comments can yield a huge assortment of perspectives and viewpoints. Various types of software are now available to fast monitor the blogs on a topic in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues.

Formal Research Methods:

Formal methods of research include attitude and opinion studies, image surveys, communication audits, media studies, and secondary data analysis, among others.

In addition to these, public relations professionals must have access to a wealth of syndicated research about communities, media, and the media consumption habits of the general population.

A Research-Based Planning Instrument:

Public Relations departments occasionally launch campaigns and programmes on a variety of topics, such as institutional advertising, the use of various mass media, staff motivational programmes designed to increase productivity, and crisis information distribution programmes, to mention a few.

The research must therefore be conducted as a tool for planning and not as an afterthought. The research's scope must be outlined by organisational objectives. Ineffective is research that is neither specific nor comprehensive. The practitioner must determine the most pertinent facts for study direction decision-making. Many academics believe that research should supplement experience and judgement rather than necessarily replace them.

- In 2004, Gaunt and Wright performed an interesting online poll to which practitioners from 25 countries respond. The research gives a number of helpful insights, such as the following:
- The demand for measurement is fueled by CEOs, who view it as an intrinsic component of the programme.
- In media evaluation, more external communication practitioners measured outputs than results.
- Opinion polling was deemed the most successful method. Dashboards and advertising value equivalents (AVEs) were perceived to be the least efficient.
- Many organisations employed feedback systems for internal communication. However, 23 percent of practitioners relied on instinct.
- Cost (77), time (59), lack of knowledge and dubious usefulness of results (each 58) were regarded as the leading obstacles to measurement.

- 65% of respondents believed that Return on Investment (ROI) could be implemented in their programmes.

What to Research?:

As the term implies, research is the investigation of what is already present (i.e., "Re+search") but is not manifest. In other words, we intend to explore something that is either obscure or elusive.

The first step is therefore to establish the aim, i.e., what are we trying to determine? Is it the access of the target audience to a message, its recall, assimilation, and action, or is it the reaction of a certain stakeholder group after a particular decision has been made? It can also involve assessing the coverage obtained following a press conference. An additional field of inquiry might consist of analysing media content to determine the quality of coverage, i.e., the proportion of negative, good, and neutral coverage. In this situation, one must decide ahead what constitutes favourable, negative, and neutral coverage from the standpoint of the organisation.

Research is not an independent discipline; rather, it must be integrated into a programme from the outset. In reality, the program's objectives must specify the research project. Additionally, the research purpose would guide the selection of research methodology.

For instance, if the purpose of a programme is to raise awareness about an organization's CSR initiative, then the measurement criteria could be the number of target audience members who received information via each medium (used for information dissemination). The second question may be what they think of the effort.

Consider a hypothetical situation in which a company's plant management wants to design a programme to push employees to attain higher levels of productivity, with the support of its corporate public relations and communication department. In this instance, the programme would include a variety of media, including shop-door conversations, brainstorming meetings, a bulletin board, brochures, a house diary, the Intranet, etc. As the TA in this type of study are defined, the internal stakeholders and the programme team should preferably have access to their demographic profile in order to determine the most suitable media. The data is freely accessible through the Human Resources department.

In the evaluation, the study would seek to determine whether the intended TA received the messages and whether the employees understood and assimilated the messages. It would also seek to determine whether the programme was able to achieve its goal of increased productivity within a specified time frame. If there are several shifts and assembly lines, one can also determine the relative change in employee behaviour between shifts/lines. The review may also seek to determine which media were deemed more reliable.

The second area of examination is determining the appropriateness of specific messages that appeared in the employee-oriented company magazine.

Another area of study could involve determining exposure, readability, legibility, believability, and the desired action.

If the evaluation is conducted through a public opinion survey, the number of messages placed and the number of media vehicles utilised would determine whether the intended audience got the opportunity to view/read the message. In other words, the investigation would seek to determine whether the intended OTS was accomplished (Opportunity to See). However, exposure of messages in the media is not a guarantee that the intended audiences were reached. Not all media content is read or viewed with comprehension. In other words, reach is not necessarily equivalent to access, and access does not necessarily equate to message comprehension. Messages may be comprehended, but they may not be deemed credible. All of the above may be great for the organisation, but the targeted TA may not take action for various reasons, such as societal conditioning, self-interest, or a lack of willingness to take action. The three-step research process described above can be used to find this information.

For a study of this nature, it is impossible to rely just on quantitative data; instead, qualitative research methods, such as in-depth and focus group interviews, must be used to get insight into the reasons why people do or do not take action.

It is essential for the public relations professional to keep the management or client regularly informed of the research's findings and the corrective steps he recommends. One-time study is seldom sufficient, as it may only uncover findings pertinent to that time period. Research must be an ongoing endeavour. All research contributes to a corpus of information that must be preserved for future use.

When programme implementers utilise mass media, an analysis of mass media reach and access is conducted to determine how many individuals were exposed to the messages.

Formative Research:

Program implementers perform formative research with the assistance of experts to define the problem that the proposed programme intends to address through communicative intervention. The above-mentioned PRE model covers the research method for formative research in the first three steps, namely, "where are we," "where do we need to go," and "how do we get there?"

Opinion Surveys:

Surveys are a quantitative and qualitative method of primary research. The former refers to the collection of data in terms of number/quantity and objectivity, which can be projected scientifically; the use of closed-ended questions to obtain precise responses. The latter, qualitative research, refers to a subjective, in–depth interrogation of respondents using an open–ended or unstructured form of response.

The fundamental purpose of a survey is to determine how a target audience feels about a business, product, service, or issue. The intended audience may be quite large; thus researchers use a scientific method to pick a cross-section of individuals from that group in order to determine the group's average opinion. A margin of error is also accounted for. Opinion polls are not limited to predicting political outcomes; they can be utilised in a range of fields. For instance, a market research firm may compile weekly music charts by analysing CD sales data from, say, 500 retail outlets. Similarly, an opinion poll can be conducted among a specialist group to assess the CSR or corporate governance score of various businesses.

Research Imperatives:

The following are essential components of a Research Study:

The researcher must have a reasonable understanding of what the investigation is intended to discover.

- **Research Rationale:** Frequently, the objectives determine the methodology.
- **Methodology:** It must be determined if the study will be based on secondary research or primary research. If it is the latter, specify whether the research will be quantitative through a questionnaire, qualitative through in-depth interviews, or qualitative through focus group discussions using a research guide.
- **Universe:** It is essential to identify your intended audience, whose opinions the research seeks. This will aid in establishing the scope of investigation.

Research Instrument:

Researchers use a questionnaire and administer it in person, by mail, or over the phone to inquire about respondents' perspectives on the many problems under investigation. Personal interview surveys, sometimes known as "mall intercepts," are conducted in shopping malls, private residences, and public spaces. There can be one, two, or more checkboxes on a questionnaire, or a combination of close-ended and open-ended items. In the latter scenario, more frank responses are anticipated. In the case of open-ended questions, the respondent provides a descriptive answer, which might provide valuable insights into his or her attitudes, which is not achievable with a "yes" or "no" response.

Attitude Scale, which contains Likert Scale, Semantic Differential Scale, and Rank-Order Scales, is an instrument designed to collect these evaluative data.

As it is simple to construct and analyse, the **Likert scale** is the most used form of attitude scale. Additionally, it is easy for responders to respond. Respondents could be given the following options: "Agree/ Disagree/ Neither agree nor disagree."

Additionally, the **Semantic Differential Scale** is simple to administer. The scale includes bipolar words such as "Expensive/Inexpensive, Beautiful/Ugly, etc."

In **Rank-Order Scale**, respondents are asked to rate objects according to some criterion, such as quality or cost-effectiveness. This allows research to get data for competitor items as well.

Using the Rank-order scale approach, (delman, a US-based PR firm, requested respondents in a global study to rank various organisations on a scale from 1 ("I don't trust them at all") to 9 ("I trust them very much"). In the study, no specific businesses or organisations were highlighted. Some interesting findings arose. Some particulars:

Mexico, India, Japan, Brazil, South Korea, Spain, Ireland, Britain, and Russia are among the nations in which business is more trusted than the government.

Germany, Italy, Canada, France, China, the Netherlands, Australia, and the Netherlands are among the nations where the public sector is viewed as more trustworthy than the private sector.

Despite this, the economic downturn occurred in the United States, yet respondents from around the world (52) stated they trusted US-based enterprises.

Britain, Sweden, Germany, and Canada had the highest levels of trust, ranging from 68 for Britain to 75 for Sweden. At the bottom of the spectrum, at 24, were Chinese and Russian businesses.

Define Sampling:

Sampling is an essential component of a research design and must address who to survey, how many to question, and how to choose them. In other words, it is necessary to determine the sample unit, sample size, and sampling process. The size of the sample depends on the researcher's budget, available time, and desired level of precision. Sampling can be probability-based or non-probability-based.

Probability Sampling:

Simple Random Sampling:

Every member of the population has an equal probability of getting selected using this method. For example, if there are 100 students in a class, the random sampling can occur every fifth, tenth, or any other number that must be adhered to scientifically, ensuring that every individual has an equal chance of being included.

Stratified Sampling:

The population is separated into mutually exclusive categories from which random samples are obtained. For instance, if a class of 100 students includes students from both urban and rural locations, the class will be separated based on the urban/rural divide and then a random sample will be drawn from each group. In this arrangement, both groups would be represented proportionally to their class enrolment.

Cluster (Area) Group:

The researcher divides the population into mutually exclusive groups and then selects a sample from each group to interview. It is a multi-stage study in which natural groupings are sampled first, followed by sub-samples of each group for interviews. To example, a researcher may collect a sample of institutions that teach mass communication and a sample of students from each institution. Subsequently, a subsample of those selected is chosen for in-depth interviews.

Non-Probability Sampling:

Convenience Sampling: The researcher selects the most accessible people of the population from whom to collect data. To exemplify, the researcher conducts interviews in his area to gain insight into various trends.

Judgment Sampling: The researcher utilises his judgement to select individuals from which to collect data. For instance, professionals in the relevant field of study, such as cardiologists to understand heart disorders or environmental scientists to comprehend the condition of the environment, etc.

Quota Sampling: The researcher picks a predetermined number of respondents from one or more groups, based on age, gender, financial level, etc.

In-depth Interviews:

Conducting interviews via telephone or in-person is one of the survey methods. Through a well-structured questionnaire or a study agenda created by the researcher, a succession of questions can be asked during an interview.

In-person interviews can be costly and time-consuming. However, the rate of refusal would generally be lower than for telephone interviews. When the researcher phones, it may not be an ideal time. The respondent, if uninterested, may provide an excuse of being busy or simply reject until the researcher is skilled in his or her work and able to encourage the person on the other end of the line to participate in the interview.

The researcher must also select this sample scientifically, i.e., arbitrarily, systematically, or representatively.

Focus Group Interviews:

The focus group interview technique is reportedly derived from the marketing research technique, which social science academics have adopted in a very beneficial manner.

For performing public relations initiatives, surveys, secondary data analysis, and focus groups might be effective.

This research method has the potential to provide a comprehensive insight of the attitudes and opinions of the target group. However, only researchers with proper training can express them. According to Daymon and Holloway, the key characteristics of focus-group research are: "they provide evidence from many voices on the same topic; they are interactive; they provide a supportive forum for expressing suppressed views; and they allow you to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short amount of time."

Research Analysis

Typically, the moderator or test researcher analyses replies in qualitative research. In quantitative research, the analyst is supervised by the researcher.

The responses to a closed-ended questionnaire are statistically analysed using numbers. Responses to open-ended questions are coded and converted to a numeric score before being collated and analysed. Most of these polls utilise computer analysis.

Report: The research report for both qualitative and quantitative surveys include a brief executive overview of the findings as well as full findings presented in tables, graphs, and charts. Occasionally, it may also include recommendations, if requested.

Media Research

A significant number of public relations is accomplished via mass media. Similarly, media portrayals of organisations have an effect on their reputation and engagement with diverse stakeholders. What is media writing, why is it written, are there biases in the media's position, and do media have an impact are perennial concerns that plague the ordinary public relations professional.

Media Content Analysis

The application of systematic processes to determine objectively what is being said in the media is defined as content analysis. Press clippings and broadcast monitors simply reveal what was covered, not necessarily what is being read and seen. In addition to news, researchers track editorials, op-eds, and letters to the editor to comprehend the media's stance and bias on problems that affect organisations, as well as letters and phone calls from readers to gauge public sentiment.

Grunig and Hunt allude to the research's effects, which must include the following:

- Was the message received and comprehended?
- Was the message recalled" Were actions done in response to the communication

In the case of the media, it should describe how the media covered the news, if it was based on the press release, whether additional information was included, and what the overall impact of the story was, i.e. good, neutral, or negative.

Organizations typically maintain track of at least some media through press clippings and may employ scientific or crude methods to determine whether media coverage is positive, negative, or neutral.

Numerous organisations use outside PR/CC firms to monitor the media, including print, electronic, and internet, in order to remain informed of its coverage in the media and the media's stance on its issues. Professional media tracking services utilise the proper technology and tools to conduct scientific media tracking.

There are numerous areas that can be tracked through media coverage that can be uncovered through media research.

Here is a checklist:

- Which periodicals and electronic media reported the news?
- How frequently?
- How many articles have by-lines?
- How many items are obtained through wire services?
- coverage of opponents
- Have images and visuals been utilised?
- What is the primary message carried?
- What is the area occupied by articles?
- Are their spokesperson's quotes featured in the articles?"
- Mention of rivals in the same narrative
- Overview of the subject or sector

The stories' perspectives, namely good, negative, and neutral.

It is a matter of contention in professional circles, but many public relations professionals measure coverage in terms of ad space and provide it to management or clients to demonstrate the effort's value in terms of ad space.

Web Search

The ephemeral nature of web material makes it difficult for academics to monitor it. It is possible to locate everything on the Internet using various search engines, however certain content may be password-protected. Without the necessary proprietary software, information generated in chat rooms and discussion forums is inaccessible.

According to the "conversation tracker" software, participants' comments, news graphs, mailing lists, and message boards provide a summary image. There are numerous types of content tracking tools available. For example, Com Audit and media monitor-CARMA Asia Pacific are window-based, Com Audit

COMA Audit is among the tools utilised by researchers for the majority of global markets. The most used spreadsheet application is Microsoft Excel. The growth of websites has led to an increase in software promotion.

The new Vocus programme aims to monitor social networking sites and promises a "fully integrated PR software solution that enables you to communicate with, monitor, and analyse traditional media, bloggers, and the social media world."

Many in the West utilise the evaluation system devised by the English PR firm Hallmark. Through the procedure, the organisation performing the tracking selects six notifications (the number is limited to six to minimise confusion with too many issues). The messages are associated with corporate objectives, products, promotions, and vital contact information, among other things.

Publications, television media, and the Internet are routinely scanned to ensure that they continue to target the same demographic. The data entry may feel like a tedious administrative task, but it is the analysis that provide value. The evaluation system permits the collecting of alternate communications, such as a negative comment and a response from a competitor. It gathers data on media versus the activity that created media coverage, journalists who are writing about the organisation, corporate spokespersons quoted by the media, and article placement by position in print and electronic media.

When assessing websites, Treadwells' suggests the following:

Ownership: Whose website, is it? Is it sponsored by a recognisable person or organisation?

Authorship: Who wrote the content? What are the qualifications of the author or institution?

Bias: Is the bias visible or latent in favour of or against a certain subject, organisation, or person? " To obtain the other viewpoint, we must search different websites.

Authority: Is the content reviewed" Are there identifiable criteria, reviewers or editors by which the material is screened or chosen for the web site"

Links: Exist their credible links? "Do you know of any reputable websites that connect to this page?"

Currency: Is the information current?" Not updated websites demonstrate a lack of professionalism and reflect poorly on the author and website.

Analysis of media material can be both quantitative and qualitative. In the former, the research seeks to determine how much, i.e., in terms of quantity, is being covered, whereas in the latter, it seeks to determine what is being said and from what perspective, i.e., positive, negative, or neutral.

Desk Research

Internal records/archives, published reports, material in the public domain, the media, websites, publications, reports, court rulings, etc. contain a wealth of important information. These are also referred to as secondary data, as the information already exists, whereas survey data is referred to as primary or raw data, which requires interpretation. Using secondary data sources can yield a wealth of information for a PR professional.

Secondary Data Sources

Information about the media can be obtained from sources within the media as well as from some external sources. The following are examples of media source books and other database publications frequently utilised by media strategists in the Indian context:

Population Census

The Census, conducted every ten years, is likely the most comprehensive database that provides a profile of the Indian population. The census data offer information on the population number, demographic strata, age, sex ratio, literacy level, family size, and forms, among other things. The data also includes information regarding various castes, religions, beliefs, and faiths.

Annual Economic Analysis

This presents an SEC-based (gender, education, caste, income, and occupation, etc.) industrial survey.

India - Year Book

The India - Year Book, published by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, provides a comprehensive picture of facts on government, demography, progress, etc. Since the data are derived from numerous official sources, they are quite accurate and reliable.

INFA

The Indian News & Feature Alliance Year Book, also known as the INFA Year Book, is published annually in Delhi and provides information on numerous newspapers and periodicals. The data includes basic information about India, who is who in the press, marketing, and advertising, a list of publications with information about the number of editions, mechanical data about the size of the publication, and the type of advertisement. Material that will be acceptable to them, circulation and names of the relevant advertising department personnel, etc.

Audit Bureau of Circulation

In the early days of advertising, each medium's circulation levels were mirrored in its format.

The figures' veracity is called into question by inconsistencies in reporting and the proclivity of certain media outlets to exaggerate numbers. With the help of newspaper publishers, magazine publishers, advertisers, and advertising agencies, the Audit Bureau of Circulation, sometimes known as ABC, was founded to give an objective evaluation. ABC offers advertisers a neutral and reliable audit of circulation statements from member publications.

The ABC has made modifications to the system in an effort to improve its accuracy.

Syndicated Research

Syndicated research is frequently based on a certain sample or panel survey, the entirety or a portion of which is distributed to multiple consumers. Numerous marketing research agencies, such as the Indian Marketing and Research Bureau [IMRB], Marketing and Research Group [MARG], and MODE, as well as academic and economic institutions such as the National Council for Applied Economic Research [NCAER] and others, are continually engaged in measuring the pulse of markets and consumer behaviour.

Additionally, client organisations can launch syndicated research. Numerous blue-chip organisations, particularly in the consumer sector, conduct this type of research for the fundamental aim of understanding the market, consumer psychology, and altering paradigms. Over the past couple of decades, there has been a growing need to understand the "media-consumer," his or her media habits, accessibility, and shifting perceptions. This is a result of the expansion of media, particularly in the setting of satellite channels and the ultimate ability of the "remote" to switch channels or choose one media vehicle over another.

Previously, the National Readership Survey (NRS) and now the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) provided marketers and media professionals with a comprehensive database. In reality, the IRS conducts a nationwide field survey every quarter.

According to the Media Users Research Council (MURC), the IRS is "Modelled on internationally accepted annual sample spread, the IRS is the world's largest ongoing readership research study with an annual sample size reaching 2.56 lakh respondents. It evaluates newspaper and magazine readership as well as other media consumption, such as television viewing, radio listening, movie attendance, and Internet usage. It provides an in-depth insight of media behaviour through expanded media measurements such as time spent using various media and frequency of media use.

Database for Digital Media

The Doordarshan and All India Radio publish two publications extensively utilised by media strategists, namely 'Doordarshan Today and 5adio Handbook. With the explosion of satellite channels and hundreds of hours of daily programming available to the average metropolitan household, media strategists frequently cite television rating point data to support their views.

QUESTION

1. What is Public Relation research? What do you understand by Pseudo research?
2. Explain the techniques involved in Informal Research.
3. Discuss research and evaluation in public relations
4. Write a note on McNamara’s Pyramid Model
5. Explain the methods involved in Formal Research
6. Discuss research instruments
7. Define sampling? Explain Probability and Non-Probability Sampling..
8. Explain what do you understand by Media Research
9. Write a note on Web Research.
10. Explain ‘Desk Research’.

REFERENCES:

Primer of Public Relations Research, Third Edition by by Don W. Stacks (2020). Retrieved 29 June 2020, from https://www.amazon. com/Primer-Public-Relations-Research-Third-dp-146252270X/dp/146252270X/ref=mt_other"_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=

What You Should Know About PR Evaluation: Models and Processes (I). (2018). Retrieved 19 July 2020, from https://www.clappro.ch/2018/11/20/evaluation-models-and-process-in-public-relations/

https://www.prsa.org/about/all-about-pr/glossary-of-terms

*****

2

WHAT MAKES NEWS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE NEWS VALUES DEBATE

Unit Structure

OBJECTIVES:

After reading this unit you will be able to understand:

- The definition of news
- The evolution of news from information to content
- The debate around what’s news in the current setting and its implications

INTRODUCTION

None of us is unfamiliar with the term News. We all live in a world of news, we are surrounded by it all the time and there are many indirect and direct platforms that serve news to us in myriad formats today. News is what we often wake up to, or see breaking before we sleep.

The news wasn’t always available in all these varieties, however, news has always played quite a pivotal role in shaping society, culture, behaviour patterns and even customs. Not long ago, locals gathered at shops to watch and discuss the news. Before that people used to wait for a 30 minute broadcast of news on a radio that was shared by a community. Today, we can not only pick and choose what format we want to see the news in, we even have access to news from all around the world, in whatever narrative and tonality we want it in.

The extremely straightforward question of "What is news?" stays fitting even as we wonder about the future of journalism in the digital age.

What is news?

News is a source of information and it's available in several formats. News is the spinal cord of journalism. The basic assumption of journalism is the collection, presentation and interpretation of news which is meant to inform the people about new and novel. News is expected to be objective, honest and informative.

Definition of news:

News has been defined differently by different experts. Some of the definitions are given below:

1. News is anything out of the ordinary
2. News is the unusual picture of life
3. News is anything that people talk about; the more it excites the greater its value. ,
4. News comprises all current activities which are of general human interest and the best news is that which interests most of the reader.
5. News is the report of an event that is fresh, unusual and which is interesting to a greater number of people

A journalism professor of Stanford University, USA, Chilton R. Bush, defined news as "….the report of an event that a reader can and will understand." Another oversimplified yet practical definition can be: "News is an account of an event which a newspaper prints in the belief that by so doing it will profit."

William Metz, professor of journalism, University of Nevada, USA, explains: "While it may not be possible to describe it precisely in words, every news reporter must come to a personal understanding of nature of news, must reach some conclusion about its essence before it is possible to recognise 'news' when it happens."

News values

There are many elements that determine whether a piece of information becomes a piece of news or not. We can think about them as filters that will help you weed out all the other information from the news itself. Every piece of news in some way should reflect these values. In this age of information overload, each day you will be presented with hundreds of pieces of information. As news is subjective, you will have to look at them from an unbiased lens and news values help you do that. If you work in niche media, this might differ. In the face of a crisis, these may change. But these are excellent tools for your determining process.

1. Timeliness/Newness

Time as a lever plays an important role in the impact of a news story. This becomes all the more prevalent in the given times, as you receive information from pretty much every aspect of your life these days. With the boom of digital media and our infinite access to various platforms, the world is now smaller than ever. You get text updates minutes after things happen, and push notifications to tell you all about global developments. This has turned time into a very challenging aspect of news gathering and publication.

Journalism’s famous slogan is “Today news is today”. If it is not new, it cannot be news. So a virus breakout and its impact on people can be relevant, important and even for people. But if it’s not reported appropriately on time, it’s not news.

But that also doesn’t mean occurrences that happened in the past still can’t be news, if it was only recently discovered and unreported, the newness takes precedence over the time factor. Very often we see on news, something that happened weeks ago that didn’t receive media attention then, but is now picked up. Its freshness makes it appealing to the audience.

2. Proximity or Nearness

News’s importance can also be measured by its place of origin. There are two aspects to proximity, geographical and interest-based. If a certain something is happening in my immediate vicinity, like the floods in Assam, it’s definitely news to individuals in the region. But it’s also news to the Assamese and Indian diaspora everywhere. While they might not be in the direct hit location, their interest in nearness determines news value. Racism faced by Asians in the United States after the breakout of COVID is a fine example. It was widely reported across Asia.

3. Prominence

Just like everything else, prominent names make news more interesting. As a society, we are invested in and in awe of several people. This varies from country to country. In India, film stars and cricketers are the biggest names, while in many Western countries, musicians and basketball/soccer players get the maximum limelight. But one thing is common all across, big names make news.

In India, there are several celebrities who do everyday activities but land up on news. A fine example would be election day. Every year when news houses cover elections, they ensure that they have a celebrity face on the front page the next day. We all do the very same activity. But we don’t garner the same attention. An almost ridiculous trend around this is the Paparazzi who wait outside airports to cover celebrity sightings. They camp out there, waiting for a prominent individual to show up so that they can have an exclusive. This has then led to the origin of ‘Airport Fashion’.

4. Magnitude

Occurrences that lead to greater loss of life, damage or natural disaster create interest amongst readers. The California wildfires that burned right through a major part of the state created much buzz amongst all, including Indians, a society that’s actually not well-versed with wildfires as a disaster, simply because of how large it was.

Oftentimes when a tragedy hits, something along the lines of natural calamity, reporting last for days. In fact, these kinds of stories are some of the most followed up stories in the sector. The follow-ups often vary from the after-shock and the aftermath of the event and often even go to the extent of informing people about what kind of activities are happening to build back what we lost.

5. Conflict

Confrontation and conflict between people, nations and groups are all themes of interest. Conflict leads to the extra-ordinary and that leads to the news. Geo-political conflicts can manifest as wars and in this global village, wars dominate the news. The Russian invasion of Ukraine gets massive coverage across the globe with multiple narratives.

A very common format of conflict reporting happens in politics. During assembly sessions, there are often heated arguments and debates between the sitting political party and the opposition. You may observe these after every assembly session or newspaper. Both intellectual and physical conflicts are reported depending on how big the conflict is.

6. Oddity/Unusualness

A dog biting a common man is not news but if a man bites a dog it is definitely news because it is distinctive. People enjoy reading about exceptional things - whatever the magnitude may be. Often small children who can speak multiple languages make it to the newspaper, although it makes no difference to the social fabric because it’s unusual.

There have been reports of petroleum being present in borewells in some of the regions in India. While there is a perfectly empirical explanation as to why this happens when it happens, there are readers who are extremely intrigued by its nature.

7. Consequence

Things that come with deep and wide consequences interest people. For instance, news about budget, rise in petrol price, electricity rates and a payscale revision committee etc, are all themes that interest people. It's because these actions have an impact on their everyday life.

8. Human interest

Humans are emotional beings. They try to connect dots and try to find commonalities between themselves and others to find a sense of belongingness. There's neuroscience research that proves that when you are reading someone's story, you start experiencing it/visualising it. That's why we feel upset after reading the news about children being abandoned. That's why we all love an underdog story. Because we put ourselves in their shoes. Any story that speaks directly to human emotions, is a human interest story.

Feature stories or a fine example of human interest reporting. Sometimes you will see full-page coverage of certain individuals and their lives Journey. It's also an extremely popular format because it makes you feel connected to another individual.

Q. What are some filters you could use to identify news from a clutter of information?

Evolution of news as a content format

No other form of information dissemination has undergone a radical shift like the news has in the last couple of decades. From format, shape and structure, all the way to the actual purpose, the news is no more the same. A big trigger for this drastic shift is the unprecedented growth of technology and the tremendous growth in terms of internet penetration. News used to be something that was served to you along with your morning tea, now the news industry is so cutting edge and competitive, that you can read live tweets about the real-time sports match by your favourite journalist. News is now beyond newspapers, radio and TV. It's delivered to you via WhatsApp chatbots, push notifications and even curated emails.

Even with the growth of news dissemination being so disorienting, the biggest shift is still the emergence so clear agendas, propaganda and polarization. Many publishing houses changed the way they worked and are now often acting as a mouthpiece for a certain group. If you pick up 6 different national dailies from the same city, all of them will have different headlines. This contest to turn everything into bite-sized is also not actively advancing objectivity. This is why we need to look at news values now differently.

The importance of visuals, indicated by Caple and Bednarek (2015) and Dick (2014), informs us that halting audio-visuals are certainly worth listing as a news value in their own right. So any coverage that comes with the most impactful visuals, may get the centre stage. It's not just about text and good storytelling anymore. There is also evidence to support the arguments of Phillips (2015) and Schultz (2007), among others, that conflict and exclusivity are both worthy of consideration for new news values. But something that only existed passively in the past, the importance of a concept we call "shareability" is striking. We all use that word in our everyday conversations. We describe the content and social media posts as 'shareworthy'. Today's news also demands to be shareable. So when one drafts the headlines, when they choose the visuals and tone, this becomes a key factor. Will this news be shareable?

While traditional news values haven't completely lost their purpose, there are emerging news values that one needs to be aware of. They are as follows:

- **Exclusivity:** Anything that's exclusive and available to a premium selective group makes news more interesting. People are very interested in participating in things that other people don't have access to. Similarly, they are excited to read about things that other people haven't read. The exclusivity is what makes it interesting for them.

- **Bad news:** As much as you want to protect yourself from the doomsday narrative, bad news works like a charm. If you do a quick analysis of your everyday newspaper, you will easily understand that there is more negative news and positive news out there. It is simply because there is a larger consumer base for negative news often. Any negative news with the same magnitude, conflict, consequences and is more interesting than positive news with the same values.

- **Surprise:** Stories that have an element of surprise, stories that make you gasp with a twist, are stories that generate a lot of interest.

- **Audio-visuals:** As we discussed earlier, powerful photography, videography, and even illustrations to support the story can help. Stories with no kind of visual aid find it hard to connect with audiences.

- **Shareability:** How will this news piece inspire its audience to share it on their own pages? A completely new age news value, shareability has become a big part of deciding the importance of a story even within the media house structure as well. Often Journalists approach issues from the perspective of whether this will actually intrigue people to re-share them on their own pages.

- **Entertainment and Drama:** News pieces with a certain drama quotient work well amongst the audience. An example would be the Anna Sorokin story from Newyork which otherwise has little to no impact on regular people and its popularity.

- **Follow-up:** Stories about subjects already in the news. As we discussed earlier, natural calamities are a very good example. People often follow up on those courses till the after-shock has left the region. Even in several crime-related stories, follow-ups happen as they arrest the accused and the trial continues.

- **The power elite:** Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations, institutions or corporations. This is a very new element of news-with the boom of social media and the increase in accessibility to almost every prominent individual around the world, a new generation of celebrities has been born. Earlier not a lot of people look that as business tycoons or entrepreneurs as heroes. That scenario has fully changed today. There are many many self-made celebrities who wouldn't have been considered celebrities a decade ago on the digital media. Now news houses are not just expected to cover the traditional celebrities, they are also keeping track of the modern celebrities.

- *Good news*: Right in the wake of the pandemic, many celebrities started their own news segments that share positive and heartwarming stories. This has started a trend of many established publishing houses having a dedicated subchannel for feel-good news.

- **News organisation's agenda:** While whether this is a value or not is a debate, what the news organisation wants to convey becomes a driving factor of news. As you will read further in this chapter, most news houses are acquired by private conglomerates. So the possibility of being completely objective and biased is often questioned.

Q. What are new-age news values and how are they different from the traditional news values?

What constitutes news now:

We have just observed what the traditional news values are and what the new emerging news values are. One or more of these news values can determine what's news tomorrow.

Editors have their specific target audience in mind. Earlier there was little to no way to identify who your audience was and what they think. Today, feedback comes real-time. Everything is then there and if the audience is upset with a piece of news/coverage, there are avenues for them to display their disapproval. This also plays a key role in determining what news is for the popular audience.

Another element that has come into play today is citizen journalism. While it was a rare occurrence once to have a local reporter for a region, today with the massive popularity of video logs, citizens report on issues that affect them in real-time. Indian students in Ukraine gave us a day by day analysis of what was going on for weeks before they were evacuated.

Technology has also transformed the way news is gathered. It's more efficient now with chances of unverified news being published diminishing. At the same time, media is now more divided than ever and often competes with one another with contradictory narratives.

The evolution of news and the outcome:

Many of the changes around what constitutes news can be traced all the way back to the early 1960s. The 1980's played a pivotal role in accelerating these changes. Media companies were bought by large conglomerates and increased media concentration across the globe. Towards the middle of the 20th-century television network came along, however news was a public service. It change quickly after the private entities got involved. There was a big shift in the way news changed its standards.

Another major element that played a key role and the evolution of news was market segmentation. Advertisers started receiving analysing huge amounts of data, which gave them a deeper understanding of what the audience was looking for. Sometimes this data indicated that a certain demographic watched or listened to a particular news source. A big indication of this was the emergence of magazines. Most magazines around this time were supremely niche and delivered to a very hyper-specific group of people.

As a byproduct of these hyper-specific audience groups, echo chambers were created. This existed even before the arrival of the web. However, when the web arrived, it increase the number of echo chambers and give people an opportunity to connect with like-minded people. An essential part of the web is its algorithm and which directly gives centre stage to a feedback system. It’s in human nature to listen to and consume more similar opinions to your own. The web presented them with that opportunity like no other. It creates systems and patterns where you can choose to only look at or even only have access to a certain type of perspective that you already believe in.

This algorithm and pattern along with the echo chamber perfectly fit into what the marketers want. It tells them all about your aptitudes, likes, dislikes, interests and more. This equipped them to deliver content to us, in this case, news, tailor-made to suit our taste.

In the early 2000s, newspapers were yet to see their readership downfall. However, the arrival of the web drastically changed the way advertisers distributed their money. This meant that newspapers were losing a lot of their revenue. For instance, if you lived in India and if you wanted to buy a used motorcycle, a slightly older generation used to go into the classifieds section of the newspaper, find a suitable ad and make calls before they were able to see the product in person. Maybe due to a radical change in this, newspapers started to lose a lot of their revenue. Many many media houses laid off massive numbers of journalists in the mid-2000s.

The natural next step for newspapers when they started losing the classified revenue, as well as readership, was to organically move towards having a web presence. However, the advertising money did not follow them there. Newspapers were thrown off from the agency of being the only people who produce stories. As blogs gathered popularity, many many individual contributors started writing online their opinion pieces and original pieces started to lose their significance. The situation played a significant role in the creation of a model where news was no longer looked at as an authentic source of information and the only one at that.

A radical change that has happened since news moved online was how little new original reporting was available there. The only place where you find quality original reporting these days is on the traditional new sites run by traditional newspapers. However, there are other forms of news content that are being churned out. Most of them are opinion pieces.

As a consumer, this has changed a few things for us. We no more sit and wait for our favourite journalist to report an event or wait in the evening to listen to our favourite television anchor speak about the current realities. We are now a lot more specific in our news requirements. There are a few things that we want to know and we have found our own avenues for that. Platforms that serve bite-size news are a popular outcome of this. Similarly, there might be completely contradicting pieces of news available on the internet. There is also the emergence of a new group of journalists who call themselves the alternative journalists who cover non-mainstream themes. It's also a very formal job responsibility right now to be able to verify the news. This indicates the growth in fake and misinformed news across platforms. In other words, there is some news outlet out there for everybody and their very peculiar interest.

It's also important to note that the role of journalists has also shifted drastically in the current climate. As most companies are owned by private entities, there is an expectation that they will be serving the particular narrative their owners want them to. We have also observed that the news values have changed. The digital landscape is changing every day. Beyond all this, there have been several attacks on journalists and news media organisations across the globe. There are many many challenges for journalists and media houses to tackle. However, their job in the current society is not yet done.

To sum it up:

While the news has stayed a consistent factor in our everyday life, the definition of news and news values have changed over time. The penetration of technology and the internet is an important factor that influenced this. If you are going to be a new age journalist, you are also going to have to strike a balance between traditional and modern news values.

QUESTIONS

1. What's the definition of news?
2. What's the definition of news values?
3. What are news values?
4. What's the difference between traditional and new news values?
5. What have been some factors that have influenced the shift of news values?

REFERENCES

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1150193

https://owenspencer-thomas.com/journalism/newsvalues/#5

https://www.thenewsmanual.net/Manuals%20Volume%201/volume1_01.htm

https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/57072/1/Unit%201.pdf

https://owenspencer-thomas.com/journalism/newsvalues/#5

*****

4

DESCRIPTION VERSUS INFERENCE

Unit Structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand

- Meaning of Description
- Meaning of Inference
- Use in Public Relations Research

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Research always begins with curiosity. Research in Public Relations is not a new phenomenon. There are plenty of research papers available in various media and public relations journals worldwide on various aspects of public relations. One can do research in so many areas of public relations. It could be publicity, media relations, crisis communication, audience research etc. Once the researcher has zeroed down to the research problem, research question and or hypothesis it becomes easier to put together a literature review for the body of the research to begin. The process of doing the next phase of research will involve putting a research design together before starting data collection for the said research question and or hypothesis.

Once the data collection is done it is now the process of putting together the data for analysis. Statistical Analysis is something that most students look for to understand. To begin that there are some basic points to remember as per Zina O'Leary who has written books on doing research: 1. Nature of variables needs to be understood clearly 2. Need and the use of descriptive and inferential statistics 3. The use of the statistical tests for the questions in the study and the data types.

Analysis of research can be done through various software that are available for both quantitative and qualitative studies. For the researcher it is imperative to understand the meaning of putting together the results of the analysis in the description/descriptive or inference/inferential format. The researcher needs to interpret what the numbers are in their research and if descriptive or inferential statistics needs to be used to understand the findings. This chapter will focus on the concept of descriptive and inferential statistics and its use in Public Relations research. Suitable examples will be given where necessary to make you understand the concept better.

4.2 UNDERSTANDING DATA

We need to first understand the meaning of data. Data is facts and numbers put together. The question here is how does one interpret the numbers that we obtain after we collect data? As Don Stacks, who has written books in public relations research and communication research clearly states that "Quite simply, numbers (data) have no meaning, they only reflect a quantification of some theoretical position". So once we understand this we can now look at the data more carefully and with the help of statistical software we can further see how the data can be analysed. But before we go there we need to understand the various types of data we will see while doing research.

4.3 TYPES OF DATA

There are various types of data. But foremost we need to define if data falls under the category of qualitative data or quantitative data.

Qualitative data can be put into categories comprising of ***nominal data***: Here we can look at examples of gender: men, women and the other gender. Hair colour: black, brown, blonde etc and ethnicity: Asian, American etc. can be another data which can be varied in the same data. The other kind of data is ***ordinal data*** which is also qualitative in nature. This data specifies that the number is in some order and also is the difference between nominal and ordinal data. For e.g. First, Second Third. Letters A to Z. Economic strata of society.

Quantitative data can be categorized into ***discrete*** and ***continuous*** data. For e.g. discrete data can be number of children in a class. Number of people travelling on a plane etc. Continuous data can be height of a person, weight of an object, temperature of a place or thing. Continuous data can be further broken down into interval and ratio. E.g. of interval data is time, age. E.g. of ratio data is height or weight.

4.4 SCALES OF MEASUREMENT

It was psychologist Stanley Stevens who came up with the four common scales of measurement: **nominal**, **ordinal**, **interval** and **ratio**. Each scale helps in analysing data appropriately. Once we understand the scales of measurement of the data being used in research studies one can then decide which statistical test needs to be applied to it.

1. **Nominal scale of measurement:** These kind of data cannot be multiplied, divided, added or subtracted from each other. One cannot measure the difference between the data points. Some nominal data can be with order such as cold, very cold, warm, hot etc. The other kind without order is the gender male, female. Dichotomous data is simply a yes or no kind of category.

2. **Ordinal scale of measurement:** This kind of data specifies order. The values have a rank. E.g. of such kind of data would be ranking a college of preference, rating a restaurant, satisfaction data points in a survey for a retail outlet etc.

3. **Interval scale of measurement:** This data has both properties of nominal and ordinal and but the difference in the data points can be quantified. For e.g. 20 degrees is not 1o degrees multiplied by 2. The number zero is also an existing variable in this kind of measurement. So for e.g. zero degree is a valid temperature when measured.

4. **Ratio scale of measurement:** It has properties of all the scales put together. Ratio scales have a ‘true zero’. So for e.g. height of a person or weight of a person cannot be zero cms or zero kgs. Neither can it have a negative connotation. This kind of scale of measurement helps in the calculation of company shares or product sales.

If we were to summarise the above kind of measurement scales we can say that nominal scales helps in labelling or describing values. Ranking a data or putting it up in specific order can be done using ordinals scales. The order and the differences between the order of the values can understood using interval scale. Ratio scale makes it more detailed where it describes the following about the data such as its identity, the order and difference, and the details between in the data points.

4.5 USE OF DATA IN STATISTICS

Data as we have now understood is collection of factual information in various nature as explained above used for the purpose of analysis. These are in raw form, from which statistics is made to be. The way the data is described or interpretated and finally presented becomes statistics of that research. Statistics can be presented in various forms such as table, graphs and charts. Infographics takes over the next step in presenting the statistics in a very succinct way.

Statistics is the method to analyse numerical or quantitative data. It helps interpret data in the correct manner. It also helps to study the relationship between variables to be meaningful and significant and not merely by chance. The tests available in statistical tools give a meaning to the numeric that are obtained from data collection.

4.6 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics is used to describe characteristics of data collected in a scholarly form. The most basic of how the data should analysed is presented through descriptive statistics. Measures of central tendency, dispersion, and distribution shape can be presented while using this function of statistics. These are standard calculations in statistical programs and depending on the data type the results are accordingly present. As aptly put by *Jay Lee* in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography (Second Edition), 2020* "The classical descriptive statistics allow analysts to have a quick glance of the central tendency and the degree of dispersion of values in datasets."

He further adds that descriptive statistics cannot be ignored in the times of big data. As large volumes of data is being churned out the era of the Internet, the use of descriptive statistics only grows. The distribution of a variable in a given dataset is very crucial in data analytics. It describes the many ways the values of a given variable and the frequency with which it occurs of each value. This distribution of values is presented by the use of a table or function or graph.

Measuring Central tendency:

Finding out average is the most basic thing you do while examining data. For e.g., what is the average of students performing in an assignment, average of sales that has happened of a product in each period. What is the average price of a guitar in the market? So on and so forth. These are following ways to measure central tendency in statistics: mode, median, and mean.

Mode: This depicts the most common value noticed of a variable. Nominal data which is categorical in nature is measured by mode as a measure of central tendency.

Median: This is the mid-point of a range. The easiest way to find median of a data is to arrange the values in an ascending or descending manner and find the middle value. Ordinal data uses this kind of measure and extreme values can be avoided in such measures.

Mode: This is the mathematical average. To find mean you add up all the values for each given event and divide by the total number of events. This form of calculation is used to measure central tendency for interval and ratio data. This is not used to measure for nominal and ordinal data as they are not mathematical calculations and here numbers are used in code formats. E.g. you could code gender with 1 or 2, or names of countries with numbers etc.

Measuring Dispersion:

In statistical terminologies dispersion is basically how much is the distribution of your data stretched or squeezed. Dispersion is also called variability, scatter or spread. There are many ways to calculate dispersion.

Range: This calculates by subtracting the highest minus the lowest value. So if test scores ranged between 16 and 30, the range would be 14. Remember this only looks at the extreme values ignoring the ones in between.

Variance: This calculates by using up all the values surrounding the mean and is the 'average squared deviation from the mean'. This calculation can be done using the interval and ratio data and thus indicates dispersion.

Standard Deviation: It is the square root of variance. It is the foundation of all statistical tests for all interval and ratio data. It assumes its importance by the fact with all the data found under the bell curve.

4.7 INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

Inferential statistics is derived from the word infer. At the outset this needs to be clear that inferential statistics does not 'absolutely' demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship or an explanation about a phenomenon. Infer is only limited to the fact as defined in the American Heritage Dictionary that it is 'to conclude or judge from premises or evidence.'

As we have observed that descriptive statistics helps in describing and summarising a given dataset. Inferential on the other hand helps in coming up to conclusions from the available data. It helps in testing relationship between the variables, helps in assessing if any difference observed wasn't just by a matter of chance, or to look at the characteristics of a given sample from the population. Inferential statistics helps doing statistical tests that yield statistical significance.

Inferential Statistics will help come to conclusions of a population based only on the sample selected from it. It helps come up with estimates based on the sample and hypothesis testing. So, for e.g., why did people watch a movie? Was it because of the director's work? the storyline? the actors? or any other reason. Another e.g., why was a certain college more popular as compared to the rest: is it due to the location? the ambience? the way the courses are taught? the quality of academics? Etc. are some of the questions in both the situations that can be probed upon using inferential statistics.

Statistical Significance:

It is the concept which states that a specific outcome from a dataset done either by testing or experiment is not happening by chance or a random occurrence. This should ideally happen because of a very specific reason. It points out to the concept of ‘p-value’ which examines the chances of your findings being more than mere coincidence. Traditional p-values have values of .05, .01, and .001; Lower the p-values more the confidence that the research findings are authentic.

There are some points to be noted while going through your data to be used for inferential statistics: -

1. Sample drawn from the population: Looking at the over picture.
2. To check for any major differences between respondents.
3. Change in respondents over time.
4. Checking for relationship between two or more variables.

There are many tests available to help in finding out the statistical significance, there are various software that help in performing these tests without the researchers needing to know the actual mathematical jumble mumble of the operations. But the crucial point here is knowing which is the right statistical test to be used in the study.

These are some of the inferential statistical tests often used: -

- One sample test of difference/One sample hypothesis test.
- Confidence Interval.
- Contingency Tables and Chi Square Statistic.
- T-test or Anova.
- Pearson Correlation.
- Bi-variate Regression.
- Multi-variate Regression.

As we know by now that inferential statistics is used to infer from the sample taken from the population, one has to be careful of certain things. There can be two kind of error which may occur, i.e., sampling error and sampling bias which can lead to results not expected or even biased.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS STATISTICAL SOFTWARE

SPSS and SAS are more commonly used for analysing data through software. SPSS Statistics software is made by IBM for data management, advanced analytics, multivariate analysis, etc and most commonly used by researchers in academics and industry. SAS was developed by SAS Institute for data management, advanced analytics, multivariate analysis, business intelligence, criminal investigation, and predictive analytics.

Microsoft Excel 2000 (version 9) provides a set of data analysis tools called the **Analysis Tool Pak**. This can help develop complex statistical analysis. As you input the data and parameters for each analysis; the tool presents results based on the specific statistical macro functions. Even charts and can be generated other than output tables to display results.

R analytics is data analytics programming using **R programming language** which is an open-source language used for statistical computing or graphics. It is now also being used in statistical analysis and data mining.

4.9 APPLICABILITY IN PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH

Public relations research can be well explained by the following "Research gives the hard data necessary to provide value to the organization, and helps provide information to make decisions that have real impact" - Gronstedt (1997). If not for research it will be difficult for organisations to really know where they are headed in terms of communicating with their audiences. Research helps discover the various areas of concern which can help organisations help into building relationships, making effective programmes and take on time needed actions that will stop issues from not being blown out of proportions and later becoming huge issues. -(Broom & Dozier, 1990; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000).

As the understanding of descriptive and inferential statistics becomes clear let us now look at.   the various situations in which these can be applied in the field of public relations research. Studies on media relations and publicity using social media and other digital platforms can be a study where a descriptive study can done to simply get an idea of the selected sample of public relations practitioners and journalists were using various platforms to better their relations and generate publicity. Using various kind of descriptive statistics tools a descriptive result can be obtained. Inferential statistics can be used to test relationship between the variables present in the study and how does that affect the smooth functioning of media relations. A lot of audience studies on social media can be done and later analysed using both the kind of statistics where the study focuses on communication and engagement between audience and organisation. A descriptive study here demonstrates how the audience behaves with the organisation on social media. Various variables can be looked upon in this study to check for the cause-and-effect relationship which could affect the interaction with audience on social media. The understanding of both descriptive and inferential analysis is useful to results and findings which will help come to conclusions of a population based only on the sample selected from it.

Check your progress

1. How is the understanding of data important for descriptive and inferential statistics?

2. What is the difference between descriptive and inferential statistics?

3. Can you explain with examples the understanding of descriptive and inferential and its use in public relations research?

4.10 LET'S SUM IT UP

- Research always begins with curiosity. Research in Public Relations is not a new phenomenon. There are plenty of research papers available in various media and public relations journals worldwide on various aspects of public relations. We need to first understand the meaning of data. Data is facts and numbers put together. The question here is how does one interpret the numbers that we obtain after we collect data? As Don Stacks, who has written books in public relations research and communication research clearly states that "Quite simply, numbers (data) have no meaning, they only reflect a quantification of some theoretical position".

- Qualitative data can be put into categories comprising of nominal data: Here we can look at examples of gender: men, women and the other gender. Hair colour: black, brown, blonde etc and ethnicity: Asian, American etc. can be another data which can be varied in the same data. The other kind of data is ordinal data which is also qualitative in nature. This data specifies that the number is in some order and also is the difference between nominal and ordinal data. For e.g. First, Second Third. Letters A to Z. Economic strata of society.

- Quantitative data can be categorized into discrete and continuous data. For e.g. discrete data can be number of children in a class. Number of people travelling on a plane etc. Continuous data can be height of a person, weight of an object, temperature of a place or thing. Continuous data can be further broken down into interval and ratio. E.g. of interval data is time, age. E.g. of ratio data is height or weight. Statistics is the method to analyse numerical or quantitative data. It helps interpret data in the correct manner. It also helps to study the relationship between variables to be meaningful and significant and not merely by chance. The tests available in statistical tools give a meaning to the numeric that are obtained from data collection.

- Descriptive statistics is used to describe characteristics of data collected in a scholarly form. The most basic of how the data should analysed is presented through descriptive statistics. Measures of central tendency, dispersion, and distribution shape can be presented while using this function of statistics. These are standard calculations in statistical programs and depending on the data type the results are accordingly present.

- Inferential statistics is derived from the word infer. At the outset this needs to be clear that inferential statistics does not 'absolutely' demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship or an explanation about a phenomenon.

- Statistical Significance is the concept which states that a specific outcome from a dataset done either by testing or experiment is not happening by chance or a random occurrence. This should ideally happen because of a very specific reason. It points out to the concept of ‘p-value’ which examines the chances of your findings being more than mere coincidence. Traditional p-values have values of .05, .01, and .001; Lower the p-values more the confidence that the research findings are authentic.

- There are many tests available to help in finding out the statistical significance, there are various software that help in performing these tests without the researchers needing to know the actual mathematical jumble mumble of the operations. But the crucial point here is knowing which is the right statistical test to be used in the study.

- SPSS and SAS are more commonly used for analysing data through software. Microsoft Excel 2000 (version 9) provides a set of data analysis tools called the Analysis Tool Pak. This can help develop complex statistical analysis. As you input the data and parameters for each analysis; the tool presents results based on the specific statistical macro functions. Even charts and can be generated other than output tables to display results. R analytics is data analytics programming using R programming language which is an open-source language used for statistical computing or graphics. It is now also being used in statistical analysis and data mining.

- Public relations research can be well explained by the following “Research gives the hard data necessary to provide value to the organization, and helps provide information to make decisions that have real impact” - Gronstedt (1997).

REFERENCES

- The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project Third Edition, Zina O'Leary March 2017 | 415 pages | SAGE Publications Ltd

- Mass Media Research: An Introduction Book by Joseph Dominick and Roger D Wimmer

- *NIST/SEMATECH e-Handbook of Statistical Methods. "1.3.6.4. Location and Scale Parameters". www.itl.nist.gov. U.S. Department of Commerce.*

- Motivating Students to Become Receptive to Research: How to Overcome the Fear of Numbers in the Introductory Public Relations Course By Don W. Stacks, A monograph https://www.sciencedirect.com

*****

5

REVIEWING AND SUMMARIZING LITERATURE

Unit structure

5.0 Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand:

- The role of literature review in the research process
- How to review the literature?
- Developing theoretical framework for your study
- Developing a conceptual framework

5.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review is often undertaken as part of writing academic research papers or a dissertation or thesis. A literature review is an account of what has been published on a given topic by scholars and researchers. The objective of writing a literature review is to convey to your reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic. As part of your literature review you may even highlight what were the strengths and weaknesses of each piece of work that you include in your literature review. Your literature review is where you demonstrate that you are able to engage in scholarly review based on your reading and understanding of the work of others in the same field. Moreover, using the existing literature on a topic is a means of developing an argument about the significance of your research and where it leads.

The literature review makes a valuable contribution to almost every operational step in the research process. It is important even before the first step, that is, when you are merely thinking about the research question that you may want to find answers to through your research journey. In the initial stages of research it helps you to clarify your ideas, establish the theoretical roots of your study and develop your research methodology.

A literature review is not just to include a summary of previously published works but also involves classification, synthesis and analysis of previous works to see how they relate to your proposed research work. Since an important responsibility in research is to compare the findings of your research with those of others, it is here that the literature review plays an extremely important role. Finally, while writing your research report/ dissertation it helps you to integrate your findings with the existing body of knowledge.

5.2 ROLE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW IN RESEARCH

Researchers who conduct studies under the guidelines of scientific research never begin a research project without first consulting available literature to learn what has been done, how it was done, and what results were found. Experienced researchers consider the literature review to be one of the most important steps in the research process. It allows them to learn from (and eventually add to) previous research and saves time, effort, and money. Failing to conduct a literature review is as detrimental to a project as failing to address any of the other steps in the research process.

A literature review serves the following functions in the research process:

- Helps to develop research questions
- Identify gaps in previous research to highlight areas that need further research

- Identify other people working in the same field
- Increase the breadth and depth of your knowledge in the research area
- Access diverse viewpoints and perspectives on your research area
- Provides intellectual context to your work

In relation to your own study, the literature review can help in four ways. It can:

- Bring clarity and focus to your research problem
- Improve your research methodology
- Broaden your knowledge base in your research area
- Contextualize your findings i.e. integrate your findings with the existing body of language

5.2.1 Bringing clarity and focus to your research problem:

The process of reviewing the literature helps you to understand the subject area better and thus, helps you to conceptualize your research problem clearly and precisely and makes it more relevant and pertinent to your field of enquiry. When reviewing the literature, you learn what aspects of your subject area have been examined by others what they have found out about these aspects, what gaps they have identified and what suggestions they have made for further research.

5.2.2 Improving your research methodology:

Going through the literature acquaints you with the methodologies that have been used by other researchers to find answers to research questions similar to the one you are investigating. A literature review tells you if others have used procedures and methods similar to the ones that you are proposing, which procedures and methods have worked well for them, and what problems they have faced with them. By becoming aware of problems encountered by other researchers, you will be in a better position to select a methodology that is capable of providing valid answers to your research questions. This will increase your confidence in the methodology you plan to use and will equip you to defend its use.

5.2.3 Broadening your knowledge base in your research area:

The most important function of the literature review is to ensure you read widely around the subject area in which you intend to conduct your research study. It is important that you know what other researchers have found in regard to the same or similar questions, what theories have been put forward and what gaps exist in the existing body of knowledge.

5.2.4 Contextualizing your findings:

Once you obtain the answers to your research questions the next step is to examine how your findings fit into the existing body of knowledge. How do answers to your research questions compare with what others have found? What contribution you have been able to make to the existing body of knowledge? How are your findings different from those of others? Undertaking a literature review will enable you to compare your findings with those of others and answer these questions. It is important to place your findings in the context of what is already known in your field of enquiry, that is, to integrate what you have found with the existing literature.

5.3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LITERATURE REVIEW AND A SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

Some people use the terms 'literature review' and 'summary of the literature' interchangeably. However, there is a difference between the two. A summary of the literature is a description of the significant findings of each relevant piece of work that you have gone through as a part of your literature search. The summary involves listing under each pertinent source, the major findings of relevance to your study. The sources searched can be listed in any order. However, in a literature review the findings are organized around main themes that emerge from your literature search.

✓ **Check your progress: Select the most appropriate answer**

1. Conducting a literature review helps you to:

a. Pay a visit to the library

b. Submit your thesis

c. Broaden your knowledge base on the subject

d. Compels you to change your research topic

2. Which among the following is a function of literature review in the research process:

a. Find out existing knowledge in the field of study

b. Develop an argument for your own study

c. Helps in developing research questions

d. All of the above

3. A summary of literature is different from review of literature as it is merely a:

a. Critical analysis of other's work

b. Description of major findings of other's research projects/ work

c. Questionnaire from another related study

d. Insights about research methodology

5.4 HOW TO REVIEW THE LITERATURE?

When you have settled on the topic for your research you should begin to read as much as you can about it. Read any key literature, but also read around your subject area; investigate related areas or similar topics for ideas on theoretical approaches and methods of analysis.

If you do not have a specific research problem, you should review the literature in your broad area of interest with the aim of gradually narrowing it down to what you want to find out about. Once you have reasonably narrowed your research problem, the literature review should then be focused around your research problem. There is a danger in undertaking the review of literature without having a reasonably specific idea of what you want to study. It can condition your thinking about your study and the methodology you might use, resulting in a less innovative choice of research problem and methodology than otherwise would have been possible. Hence, you should try to broadly conceptualize your research problem before undertaking your major literature review.

There are four steps involved in conducting a literature review:

- Searching for existing literature in your area of study
- Reviewing the selected literature
- Developing a theoretical framework
- Developing a conceptual framework

5.4.1 Searching for the existing literature:

To search effectively for the literature in your field of enquiry, it is imperative that you have at least some idea of the broad subject area and of the problem you wish to investigate, in order to set parameters for your search. The research project is an opportunity for you to add to the knowledge which already exists, but you can't do this until you are aware of what is already known and written about your subject. If you find that there are hundreds of books and articles on your research problem, probably you have not narrowed it sufficiently. Read the most frequently cited and/or recent books and articles on the topic and find out which are the main areas of contention. Could you find out something about these? Is there an area which the literature seems to have missed? Or a new phenomenon which the research hasn't caught up with yet? If, however, you find nothing has been written, you are probably not looking in the right place or you are being much too specific. Redefine your search terms and try again. As you read, take careful notes on what research has been done in your area of interest and by whom; you will need this information when you come to write your literature review.

Usually, students will have in mind a few initial references when they begin on a project. These will probably come from recommended reading in course modules, or from textbooks. The bibliographies provided at the end of textbook chapters or articles will usually provide you with a number of useful relevant references that can also be followed up. Here is a list of sources that you ought to go through for your literature review:

Books:

Though books are a central part of any bibliography; they have their disadvantages as well as advantages. The main advantage is that the material published in books is usually important and of good quality, and the findings are integrated with other research to form a coherent body of knowledge. The main disadvantage is that the material is not always completely up to date, as a year or more may pass between the completion of a work and its publication in the form of a book.

When you have selected 10-15 books that you think are appropriate for your topic, examine the bibliography of each one. Go through these bibliographies carefully to identify the books common to several of them. If a book has been referenced by a number of authors, you should include it in your reading list. Prepare a final list of books that you consider essential reading.

Journals:

You need to go through the journals relating to your research in a similar manner. Journals are one of the best resources to get the most up-to-date information. You should select as many journals as you possibly can, though the number of journals available depends upon the field of study. There are a number of ways to find the journals you need to examine in order to identify the literature relevant to your study.

Conference papers

Another important source for the literature review is the papers presented at professional conferences. These can provide you with the most recent research in the area. You should try to get copies of the papers presented at recent conferences in your area of interest.

The internet:

In almost every academic discipline and professional field, the internet has become an important tool for finding published literature. Through an internet search you can identify published material in books, journals and other sources with immense ease and speed. An internet search is carried out through search engines. Search engines such as Google Scholar is particularly useful for research.

Getting the most from your reading:

When you are reading the existing literature, try to do the following:

- Take good notes, including the details of the material you read. It is irritating to find that you forgot to record the volume number of an article you read that needs to be included in your Bibliography.

- Develop critical reading skills. In reviewing the literature you should do more than simply summarize what you have read. You should, whenever appropriate, be critical in your approach. It is worth developing these skills and recording relevant critical points in the course of taking notes. Developing a critical approach does not simply mean criticizing the work of others. It involves moving beyond simple descriptions and asking questions about the significance of the work. It entails addressing such issues as: how does this piece of work relate to others you have read? Are there any apparent strengths and deficiencies – perhaps in terms of methodology or in terms of the conclusions drawn?

- Use your review of the literature as a means of showing why your research questions are important. For example, if one of your arguments in arriving at your research questions is that, although a lot of research has been done on X (a general topic or area, such as crisis communication) little or no research has been done on X_1 (a specific aspect of crisis communication say crisis communication using social media), the literature review is the point where you can justify this assertion.

- Do not try to get everything you read into a literature review. Trying to force everything you have read into your review (because of all the hard work involved in finding and reading the material) is not going to help you. The literature review must assist you in developing an argument.

Keywords and defining search parameters:

For all the online databases, you will need to work out some suitable keywords that can be entered into the search engines and that will allow you to identify suitable references. Journal articles often include lists of keywords. When you find two or three articles that are relevant to your research and that have lists of keywords, it may be useful to use some of these keywords that are relevant to your research for searching other articles. You will also need to think of synonyms or alternative terms and try to match your language to that of the source you are searching.

5.4.2 Reviewing the selected literature:

Now that you have identified several books and articles as useful, the next step is to start reading them critically to pull together themes and issues that are of relevance to your study. Unless you have a theoretical framework of themes in mind to start with, use separate sheets of paper for each theme or issue you identify as you go through selected books and articles. Once you develop a rough framework, slot the findings from the material so far reviewed into these themes, using a separate sheet of paper for each theme of the framework so far developed. As you read further, continue slotting the information where it logically belongs under the themes so far developed. Keep in mind that you may need to add more themes as you go along.

5.4.3 Developing a theoretical framework:

Examining the literature can be a never-ending task, but to keep it focused it is important to set parameters by reviewing the literature in relation to some main themes pertinent to your research topic. As you start reading the literature, you will soon discover that the problem you wish to investigate has its roots in a number of theories that have been developed from different perspectives. The information obtained from different books and journals now needs to be sorted under the main themes and theories, highlighting agreements and disagreements among the authors and identifying the unanswered questions or gaps.

Literature pertinent to your study may deal with two types of information: universal or general; and more specific (local trends). In writing about such information you should start with the general information, gradually narrowing it down to the specific.

5.4.4 Developing a conceptual framework:

Whereas the theoretical framework consists of the theories in which your study is embedded, the conceptual framework describes the aspects you selected from the theoretical framework to become the basis of your enquiry. For instance, for a study on ‘War news on television’, the theoretical framework may include media theories such as Agenda Setting Theory, Framing, and Propaganda theories, among others. However, out of these, you may be planning to test only one, say the agenda setting theory with respect to the topic ‘war news on television’. The conceptual framework grows out of the theoretical framework and relates only and specifically to your research problem. The conceptual framework becomes the foundation of your study.

✓ **Check your progress:**

1. How can you ensure that you get the most from your reading?
2. What are the main sources to find existing literature on your subject?
3. How do keywords help in searching databases for review of literature?

5.5 WRITING ABOUT THE LITERATURE REVIEWED

The two broad functions of a literature review are (1) to provide a theoretical background to your study, and (2) to enable you to contextualize your findings in relation to the existing body of knowledge besides refining your research methodology. The content of your literature review should reflect these two purposes. In order to fulfill the first purpose, you should identify and describe various theories relevant to your field and specify gaps in existing knowledge in the area, recent advances in the area of study, current trends and so on. In order to fulfill the second, you should integrate the results from your study with specific and relevant findings from the existing literature by comparing the two for confirmation or contradiction.

While reading the literature for the theoretical background to your study, you will observe that certain themes will emerge. List the main ones, converting them into subheadings. These subheadings should be precise, descriptive of the theme in question and follow a logical progression. Now, under each subheading, record the main findings with respect to the theme in question (thematic writing), highlighting the reasons for and against an argument if they exist, and identifying gaps and issues.

The second broad function of the literature review – contextualizing the findings of your study – requires you to compare very systematically your findings with those made by others. Quote from these studies to show how your findings contradict, confirm or add to them. This places your findings in the context of what others have found. One must provide a complete reference for any quoted material, in an acceptable format.

5.6 SUMMARY

Reviewing the literature is a continuous process. It begins before a research problem is finalized and continues until the report is finished. There is a paradox in the literature review: you cannot undertake an effective literature review unless you have formulated a research problem, at the same time your literature search plays an important role in helping you to clearly define your research problem. The literature review brings clarity and focus to your research problem, improves your research methodology and broadens your knowledge base. A literature review identifies the main themes from the literature studied that are of relevance to your study.

Reviewing the literature involves a number of steps: searching for existing literature in your area of study; reviewing the literature selected, and using it to develop a theoretical framework from which your study emerges. The main sources for identifying the literature are books, journals, conference papers, and the internet.

Your writing about the literature reviewed should be thematic in nature, that is, based on main themes, the sequence of these themes in the write-up should follow a logical order; various arguments should be substantiated with specific quotations and citations from the literature, adhering to an acceptable academic referencing style.

5.7 QUESTIONS

1. What are the main reasons for writing a literature review?

2. How should the literature review section be organized and written in a research report/ dissertation?

3. Describe the differences between theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

5.8 REFERENCES

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods.* Oxford University Press.

Kumar, R. (2014). *Research Methodology – A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

*****

6

CONDUCTING A CASE STUDY

Unit Structure

6.0 Objectives

6.1 Introduction

62 What is case study?

6.3 Use of case study method in research

6.4 Process and rigor of doing a case study method

6.5 Case study Research in Public Relations

6.6 Let's sum it up

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand:

- Meaning of Case Study Research
- Process of Case Study Research
- Use of Case Study Research in Public Relations

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher will come across various kinds of research methods while doing research. Case studies are one of them. It is a highly specialized method used to study complex real-life situations. Case studies are studies in real life situations, they are not a part of an experiment being done in a laboratory with pre-defined parameters. It is recorded as they occur. The researcher gets to examine crucial events occurring in organisations, in people's lives, consumers etc. which will throw insight into how these phenomena occur and have an effect. It will also be interesting to note that such studies will have multiple data points and variables beyond being studied through other methods (Yin, 1994, p. 15).

6.2 WHAT IS CASE STUDY?

According to Yin (1994) the research questions of the study will determine the kind of research design to be used in the study. "Case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). The researchers study real life events and tries to explore and look for any causal relationships. This can happen even if there is not much clarity observed between a situation and the corresponding entities within it. Ideally a case study should have a theoretical base before starting off the research process. Validity check should also be kept in mind and as far as possible. A case study rests on the same thoroughness as it would apply to any other research method. The quality of the case study quality will stand by the following standard tests as applicable. These tests are construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. Case studies unlike surveys depend on "analytical generalization,". This means that the researcher generalises a set of the results obtained to a theoretical concept (Yin, 1994, p. 36). Examples of use of case study method are many like for e.g., using an in-depth longitudinal study can be useful if one was studying some event over a prolonged period where then data can be collected, analysed, and reported for the said time. Studies on child language development can be done using the above method. Another e.g., could where reading process of a subject can be explored over a given duration of time. So basically, this only emphasis that case study method is useful for looking at a specific natural phenomenon occurring in a space, in its entirety (Yin, 1984). A survey method would thus study trends in data at the macro stage whereas case study looks at the micro stage.

Though one thing must be kept in mind that by the fact the issue at hand is a case study it cannot be generalised beyond the case at hand being examined.

6.3 USE OF CASE STUDY METHOD IN RESEARCH

Case study methodology is qualitative in nature. This helps researchers to do an in-depth study of specific phenomena occurring in each situation. It is very useful as one can do a detailed study of individuals, communities, and organizations through this method. The data collection is done through various sources and different methods are used such as observations and interviews. Though case study is used a lot in qualitative research (Yazan, 2015), it is still given a legit place in social science research as it lacks a structural and protocol driven rigor (Yin, 2002). Precisely why young researchers do not have a definitive process in mind when intending to start using this method also its difference from other methodologies (Merriam, 1998).

Case study method tend to beyond the standard quantitative statistical results and observe behaviors from a respondent's viewpoint. But if both quantitative and qualitative is combined then a case study method will show the complete occurrence of a phenomenon through examination, rebuilding and evaluation of the case being studied (Tellis, 1997). This method can see being applied in many genres and practices. To name a few, area of Sociology (Grassel & Schirmer, 2006), Law (Lovell, 2006) and Medicine (Taylor & Berridge, 2006). Other fields include government, management and in education. For e.g., there have been studies which have been done to check if government programmes have been effective, goals of a programme were achieved. In some more examples, education efficacy applications were done to check for if educations programmes reached their mark. If only quantitative methods were used in such studies some crucial observations would be missed to be recorded.

Some of the names that played an important role in influencing this method are Robert K. Yin, Sharan Merriam, and Robert E. Stake. They put together procedures for using case study research (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). They are considered for laying the foundation of this method where researchers can rely on their acumen to decide when putting down a case study research design (Yazan, 2015). A lot of books known for case study research (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2011) though put case study research together but they stress more on the theory than the practice and many don't explain the basics of the case study method process for someone starting out in research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016).

6.4 PROCESS AND RIGOR OF DOING A CASE STUDY METHOD

An article by (Yasir Rashid, et al) on case study method "Case Study Method: A Step-by-Step Guide for Business Researchers" in an article in Sage Journal clearly lays down steps on doing a case study research step by step. They put down the case study process with the following steps: Foundation phase which comprises of Philosophical consideration, Inquiry techniques consideration, Research logic consideration. The next step is the pre-field phase which includes decide and case study protocol steps. This is followed by Field phase which includes contact and interact steps and finally the reporting phase which comprises of the case study reporting steps. The details of the steps are described in the subsequent paragraphs below.

The foundation stage is most basic and very important as the entire research rests on this step and it describes the research philosophy. There should be clarity at this stage as rest everything you do in your research rests on this stage (Wilson, 2014) e.g., what is the your research about, how do you perceive going about it etc. Research paradigms needs to used here and the knowledge of ontology, epistemology, and other paradigm options should be used and will be part of the process adding more depth to your research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This will formalise the basis of the research approach. There are two common inquiry techniques that researchers use while starting of any research is quantitative and qualitative. Our own philosophical stance influences the selection of the techniques. If one is choosing the positivist research approach then it is linked to quantitative research methods ; if one chooses interpretive research then it is linked to qualitative research methods. E.g., as researcher knowing which approach one is taking to do say a study on media relations and publicity is crucial.

An interpretivist will seek answers related to credibility, conformability, transferability, and dependability while the positivist will look for criteria of reliability and generalizability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). These are research jargons whose understanding is very important. There are two research logic approaches in social science research: Induction and deduction. Järvensivu and Törnroos (2010) that those researchers who have the realist ontological stand will go for deductive research. Deductive research logic starts off with a theory and will test arguments. The Relativist will begin with the subjective perspective of personal experience based on which theory is then put together in an inductive manner. These two kinds of research logics are most common than a rather not much used one that is abduction formed by Peirce (1903). The next stage is the pre-field stage where the researcher now puts together the operational intricacies. There are two steps to this. One is the *Decide* step where the researcher confirms if the case study method is the best choice. Methods by their very definition are "techniques for gathering evidence" (Harding, 1986) or "procedures, tools, and techniques" of research (Schwandt, 2001). Next step is the *Case study protocol* where a formalised document is put together which contains the set of steps needed in collection of empirical data (Yin, 2009). This also leads the researchers to collect any proof, analysis tools and finally one puts together the findings (Yin, 1994). The field phase consists of the *Contact* step. As this kind of study is qualitative in nature it is important to know with an interpretive approach the researchers becomes plays an integral role in the collection of data and interpretation of the same. The researcher thus needs to know the cases, respondents well who are going to be part of the study. This will make for an obstacle free process. E.g., in case studies especially knowing the respondent well helps as sometimes studies can be prolonged and detailing would be required. The next step in the phase is the *Interact* step. Here the case study methods will go through a lot of numerical data collection tools so that the research questions that were initially put together for the study will yield the subsequent findings. At this stage semi-structured interview tools can be used other than observation methods and any other document collection. Triangulation happens when one used more than one method for collection of data (Yin, 2009). This not only adds value but also but using this multiple ways of data collection adds a rigour, the depth, the breadth to the study (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). The reporting phase is the final phase of the case study process and equally crucial as the collection and interpretation steps (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). It has long been advised that putting a report together is like telling a story. So adding crucial points like the various descriptions of the case, participants, the details of them, the field protocols as discussed above and the finally the analysis and conclusion will sump up the report.

6.5 CASE STUDY RESEARCH IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations has been an evolving practice, its origin and growth has traversed many years across the world. Sriramesh quotes James Grunig's definition of public relations that it is "the management of communication between an organization and its publics (Sriramesh & White, 1992). Public relations serve the functions of information, communication, persuasion, image building, continuous building of trust, management of conflicts, and the generation of consensus" (Sriramesh K. , 2003). So from the above it is clear that Public Relations is a profession which practitioners of it will have to look very seriously into the relationship of an organsiation with its stakeholders and always try to improvise upon its communications and activities to maintain it.

Public relations research can be well explained by the following "Research gives the hard data necessary to provide value to the organization, and helps provide information to make decisions that have real impact" - Gronstedt (1997). If not for research it will be difficult for organisations to really know where they are headed in terms of communicating with their audiences. Research helps discover the various areas of concern which can help organisations help into building relationships, making effective programmes and take on time needed actions that will stop issues from not being blown out of proportions and later becoming huge issues. -(Broom & Dozier, 1990; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000). Research helps discover the various areas of concern which can help organisations help into building relationships, making effective programmes and take on time needed actions that will stop issues from not being blown out of proportions and later becoming huge issues. -(Broom & Dozier, 1990; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000).

A public relations practitioner is a story teller and that to a persuasive one. Persuasive communication was used in public relations way back in 320 B.C when Emperor Asoka used rock tablets to make announcements of orders. But in current times a case will do the work of persuasion which will help an organisation to reach out to their stakeholders. They are constantly coming up with different stories that they write on the behalf of the client to put up to their audience. It is a very useful tool as a client can be projected in a positive light by putting together a piece of them connected to their works. A public relations case study examines the organisation in context with its stakeholders. It highlights the works being done for the client to better their image and reputation. It studies and hopefully help improves the relationship between the two entities. The findings of the study are quantifiable in nature and serve as a historical account of public relations in times to come for people who need to understand this profession better. Case studies also allow for the combination of being qualitative or quantitative or both and as they look into the intricacies of an individual or organisation they examine in public relations parlance the opportunities or challenges that an organisation faces while communicating, crisis communication, issues that a customer faces, the prescribed solution given by the company to the problem at hand, and finally an empirical evaluation and presentation of the results of the services being used by customers. E.g., any increase in profit, engagement findings or any poll undertaken. The cases provide for a window to describe in detail the practices being done for the client, organisation, stakeholders or target audience: the beneficiaries. Another very crucial point that Cases are serve as promotional text for future clients. Your works done and recorded in text always helps in showcasing yourself in the world of business.

Public Relations functions are important to understand as then only one can examine and prepare cases pertaining to them. A case study on APSRTC states the functions that they have laid down for their organisation. Please find below:-

1) Corporate objectives, programmes and passenger amenities of the organisation should be known to the publics.

2) The issues that the organisation can face such as violence to the crew operating the buses during unrest situations so that people as far as possible cooperate with the organisation and do not resort to any unruly behaviour.

3) It reiterates traffic rules and behaviour amongst commuters so that follow queues, avoid any footboard travel, buy the right ticket, maintain small change in hand, etc.

4) To obtain feedback from the passengers and opinion leaders on the behaviour of the bus crew in writing or verbal communication.

5) It is important to keep the press informed about any untoward incident such as accidents and the subsequent relief measures, department enquiry undertaken.

6) It is crucial to train the staff on the concept of public relations and code of etiquette.

7) It is the function of the public relations team of the organisation to maintain internal communication to ensure that employees feel a bonhomie as part of the organisation and helps improve their work productivity.

8) It is vital for the management to know passenger feedback and their complaints. This comes crucial especially in case there is negative publicity of the organisation. Continuous feedback is needed from various stakeholders to ensure smooth function of the organisation.

Sources for looking up cases in Public Relations are as below. They will also help in understanding how cases are written.

1. Arthur W.Page Society: These include some cases originally written by students in accredited business schools or communication or journalism streams. Their degree was focussed on corporate communications and the practice of public relations.

2. PR Council Case studies

These comprise of cases and best works in the area of public relations.

3. PR Newswire

This site keeps a list of case studies and white paper in public relations

4. PRSA Case studies

Public Relations Society of America website includes cases under the database by the name Silver Anvil case studies. One needs to be a member of this organisation to be able to view the complete works.

There are various books too in Public Relations that reflect upon cases in Public Relations:

- How Fifteen Transnational Corporations Manage Public Affairs

ISBN: 0872510395

- PR News Casebook: 1000 Public Relations Case Studies

ISBN: 0810389053

- Public Relations Inquiry as Rhetorical Criticism: Case Studies of Corporate Discourse and Social Influence

ISBN: 0275951502

- Public Relations Practices: Managerial Case Studies & Problems

ISBN: 0130981532

Check your progress

1. **What is a case study method? Where do you think you can use it?**
2. **What is the use of case study method in research?**
3. **What is the process of doing case study method?**
4. **Explain the use of case study method in Public Relations research.**

6.6 LET'S SUM IT UP

Case studies are studies in real life situations, they are not a part of an experiment being done in a laboratory with pre-defined parameters. It is recorded as they occur. The researcher gets to examine crucial events occurring in organisations, in people's lives, consumers etc. which will throw insight into how these phenomena occur and have an effect. According to Yin (1994) the research questions of the study will determine the kind of research design to be used in the study. The researchers study real life events and tries to explore and look for any causal relationships. This can happen even if there is not much clarity observed between a situation and the corresponding entities within it. Ideally a case study should have a theoretical base before starting off the research process. Validity check should also be kept in mind and as far as possible. A case study rests on the same thoroughness as it would apply to any other research method. Case study methodology is qualitative in nature. This helps researchers to do an in-depth study of specific phenomena occurring in each situation. It is very useful as one can do a detailed study of individuals, communities, and organizations through this method. The data collection is done through various sources and different methods are used such as observations and interviews. Case study method tend to beyond the standard quantitative statistical results and observe behaviors from a respondent's viewpoint. But if both quantitative and qualitative is combined then a case study method will show the complete occurrence of a phenomenon through examination, rebuilding and evaluation of the case being studied (Tellis, 1997). Some of the names that played an important role in influencing this method are Robert K. Yin, Sharan Merriam, and Robert E. Stake. They put together procedures for using case study research (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). A Step-by-Step Guide for Business Researchers" in an article in Sage Journal clearly lays down steps on doing a case study research step by step. The case study process consists of the following steps: Foundation phase which comprises of Philosophical consideration, Inquiry techniques consideration, Research logic consideration. The next step is the pre-field phase which includes decide and case study protocol steps. This is followed by Field phase which includes contact and interact steps and finally the Reporting phase which comprises of the case study reporting steps. So these are steps to do a case study method as explained in detail above. A public relations practitioner is a story teller. They are constantly coming up with different stories that they write on the behalf of the client to put up to their audience. It is a very useful tool as a client can be projected in a positive light by putting together a piece of them connected to their works. Public relations serve the functions of information, communication, persuasion, image building, continuous building of trust, management of conflicts, and the generation of consensus" (Sriramesh K. , 2003). A public relations case study examines the organisation in context with its stakeholders. Public relations research can be well explained by the following "Research gives the hard data necessary to provide value to the organization, and helps provide information to make decisions that have real impact" - Gronstedt (1997). If not for research it will be difficult for organisations to really know where they are headed in terms of communicating with their audiences. Research helps discover the various areas of concern which can help organisations help into building relationships, making effective programmes and take on time needed actions that will stop issues from not being blown out of proportions and later becoming huge issues. -(Broom & Dozier, 1990; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000). A public relations case study examines the organisation in context with its stakeholders. It highlights the works being done for the client to better their image and reputation. Case studies also allow for the combination of being qualitative or quantitative or both and as they look into the intricacies of an individual or organisation they examine in public relations parlance the opportunities or challenges that an organisation faces while communicating, issues that a customer faces, the prescribed solution given by the company to the problem at hand, and finally an empirical evaluation and presentation of the results of the services being used by customers. Another very crucial point that Cases are serve as promotional text for future clients. Your works done and recorded in text always helps in showcasing yourself in the world of business.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1609406919862424
- https://www.simplypsychology.org/case-study.html
- https://libguides.uta.edu/pr/casestudies

  Case study as a research method - CORE
- https://core.ac.uk ›
- http://www.egyankosh.ac.in › *bitstream › Unit-5*

https://libguides.gvsu.edu/cap/cases

- https://library.onu.edu/c.php?g=357909&p=2417478
- Public Relations, Principles, Cases and Problems; H. Frazier Moore; Frd B.;
- Kalupa Surjeet Publications; 1985.
- Effective Public Relations; Scott M Cutlip, Allen H; Centre Prentice Hall; 5th
- edition; 1978.
- Bardhan N., & Krishnamurthy Sriramesh Public Relations in India Review of a Programme of Research, *Journal of Creative Communications* 2006; 1; 39, DOI: 10.1177/097325860500100103
- The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, Research, and Practice
- Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management
- Case study as a research method by Zaidah Zainal Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development
- Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

***

7

QUESTIONNAIRES AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Unit Structure

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand:

- The different types of interviews and their use in research
- How to design a questionnaire
- The advantages and disadvantages of the interview method and questionnaires

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Interviewing is a commonly used method of collecting information from people. Interviews are a good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is one of the most powerful ways of understanding others. An interview is an extended conversation but it has a purpose and is highly focussed. Unstructured or depth interviews helps in collecting a great deal of information, ask follow-up questions and in acquiring unexpected data.

7.2 DEFINING INTERVIEWS

There are many definitions of interviews, but it is essentially a person-to-person interaction, either face-to-face or otherwise, between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind. According to Monette et al. (1986, p. 156), 'an interview involves an interviewer reading questions to respondents and recording their answers'. According to Burns (1997, p. 329), 'an interview is a verbal interchange, often face to face, though the telephone may be used, in which an interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person'.

When interviewing a respondent, as a researcher, you have the freedom to decide the format and content of your questions, choose how to word them, decide how you want to ask them and in what order. The process of asking questions can be either very flexible, where you as the interviewer have the freedom to think about and formulate questions as they come to your mind around the issue being investigated, or inflexible, where you have to keep strictly to questions decided on beforehand – including their wording, sequence and the manner in which they are asked. Interviews are classified according to this degree of flexibility.

7.3 UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The main strength of an unstructured interview lies in having almost complete freedom in terms of its structure, contents, question wording and order. You are free to ask whatever you want, and in a format that is relevant to the situation. You also have complete freedom in terms of the wording you use and the way you explain questions to your respondents. You may formulate questions and raise issues on the spur of the moment, depending upon what occurs to you in the context of the discussion.

7.4 STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In a structured interview, the researcher asks a predetermined set of questions, using the same wording and order of questions as specified in the interview schedule. An interview schedule is a written list of questions, open-ended or closed, pre-tested for standardized wording, meaning and interpretation, prepared for use by an interviewer in a person-to-person interaction. Note than an interview schedule is a research tool/ instrument for collecting data, whereas interviewing is a method of data collection.

One of the main advantages of structured interview is that it provides uniform information, which assures the comparability of data. Structured interviewing requires fewer interviewing skills than does unstructured interviewing.

7.5 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW AND THE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

Qualitative interviewing is usually very different from interviewing in quantitative research in a number of ways:

- The approach tends to be much less structured in qualitative research. In quantitative research, the approach is structured to maximize the reliability and validity of measurement of key concepts. It is also more structured because the researcher has a clearly specified set of research questions that are to be investigated. The structured interview is designed to answer these questions. Instead, in qualitative research, there is an emphasis on the interviewee’s own perspectives.
- In qualitative interviewing, there is much greater interest in the interviewee’s point of view; in quantitative research, the interview reflects the researcher’s concerns.
- In qualitative interviewing, interviewees can depart significantly from any schedule or guide that is being used. They can ask new questions that follow up interviewees’ replies and can vary the order and even the wording of questions. In quantitative interviewing, none of this is possible because that will compromise the standardization of the interview process.
- In qualitative interviewing, the researcher wants rich, detailed answers; in structured interviewing the interview is supposed to generate answers that can be coded and processed quickly.

7.6 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire is a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by the respondents. Thus, the respondents read the questions on their own, interpret as per their understanding and then write down the answers. The only difference between an interview schedule and a questionnaire is that in the former it is the interviewer who asks the questions (and if necessary, explains them) and records the respondent’s replies, and in the latter the replies are recorded by the respondents themselves. This distinction is important in accounting for the respective strengths and weaknesses of the two methods and their respective use in the research process.

In a questionnaire, because there is no one to explain the meaning of questions to respondents it is important that the questions are clear and easy to understand. Also, the layout of a questionnaire should be such that it is easy to read and pleasant to the eyes. Further, the sequence of questions should be easy to follow. A questionnaire should be developed in an interactive style. This means respondents should feel as if someone is talking to them. In a questionnaire, a sensitive question or a question that respondents may be hesitant to answer should be prefaced by an interactive statement explaining the relevance of the question.

7.7 WAYS OF ADMINISTERING A QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire can be administered in a number of ways. Your selection of a particular method of administration depends upon the assessment of your respondent population and your impressions about how they would prefer to participate in your study. The various ways in which you can administer a questionnaire are as follows:

- **The mailed questionnaire:** the most common approach to collecting information is to send the questionnaire to prospective respondents by mail. This approach presupposes that you have access to their email addresses. It may not be easy to get addresses, so before you decide to collect your data through this method, ensure the availability of addresses of potential respondents.

- **Collective administration:** One of the best ways of administering a questionnaire is to obtain a captive audience such as students in a classroom, people attending a function, participants in a programme or people assembled in one place. This ensures a very high response rate as you will find few people refusing to participate in your study. Also, as you have personal contact with the study population, you can explain the purpose, relevance and importance of the study and can clarify any questions that respondents may have.

- **Online questionnaire:** With the advancement in communication technology, the use of the online questionnaire to collect information for research has become quite common. You have to develop a questionnaire in the same way as you normally do using a program that is designed for the purpose. The main difference is that instead of personally delivering, collectively distributing, or individually mailing, you post it either on social media groups or provide a link in your email/ social media feed for potential respondents to access it and respond. One can analyze the data collected through online questionnaires using an appropriate program.

- **Administration in a public place:** Sometimes you can administer a questionnaire in a public place such as a shopping centre, health centre, hospital, school or recreational place. Of course, this depends upon the type of study population you are looking for and where it is likely to be found. Usually the purpose of the study is explained to potential respondents as they approach and their participation in the study is requested.

7.8 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Questionnaire design is a systematic process in which the researcher contemplates various question formats, considers a number of factors characterising the survey, words the various questions very carefully, and organises the questionnaire's layout.

Question development is the practice of selecting appropriate response formats and wording questions that are understandable, unambiguous, and unbiased. Here are a few tips for designing a good questionnaire:

- **Do not cramp the presentation:** Because of the well-known problem of low response rates especially in mailed questionnaires, it is sometimes considered preferable to make the instrument appear as short as possible so that it does not deter prospective respondents from answering. However, this is almost always a mistake. Experts suggest that an attractive layout is likely to enhance response rates.

- **Clear presentation:** A self-completion questionnaire with a layout that is easy on the eye facilitates the answering of all questions that are relevant to the respondent.

- **Vertical or horizontal closed answers?** Bearing in mind that most questions in a self-completion questionnaire are likely to be of the closed nature, one consideration is whether to arrange the fixed answers vertically or horizontally. Very often, the nature of the answers will dictate a vertical arrangement because of their sheer length. Many writers prefer a vertical format whenever possible, because, in some cases where either arrangement is feasible, confusion can arise when a horizontal one is employed. Consider the following:

What do you think of the sports supervisor's performance since he took office?

Very good______Good_____Fair_____Poor_____Very poor_____

There is a risk that, if the questionnaire is being answered in haste, the required tick will be placed in the wrong space – for example, indicating 'Good' when 'fair' was the intended response. Also, a vertical format more clearly distinguishes questions from answers.

7.8.1 Four "Do's" of Question Wording:

- The question should be focussed on a single topic or issue: The researcher must stay focussed on the specific issue or topic. For example, take the question, "What type of hotel do you usually stay in when on trip?" The focus of this question is ambiguous because it does not narrow down the type of trip or when the hotel is being used.

- The question should be brief: Unnecessary and redundant words should always be eliminated. This requirement is especially important when designing questions that will be administered verbally, such as over the telephone. Brevity is important.

For example, "What are the considerations that would come to your mind while you are confronted with the decision to have some type of repair done on the automatic icemaker in your refrigerator assuming that you noticed it was not making ice cubes as well as it did when you first brought it?"

- The Question should be a grammatically simple sentence (if possible): A simple sentence is preferred because it has only a single subject and predicate.

- The Question should be Crystal Clear: One tactic for clarity is to develop questions that use words that are in respondents' core vocabularies; that is, the general public does not use marketing jargon such as 'price point' or 'brand equity'.

7.8.2 Four "Do not's" of Question Wording:

- The question should not lead the respondent to a particular answer (A Leading Question): such a question is worded or structured in a way as to give the respondent a strong cue or expectation as how to answer. Therefore, it biases responses.

For example, "Don't you see any problems with using your credit card for an online purchase?"

Or

"Do you see any problems with using your credit card for an online purchase?"

The first question may lead respondents to assume the role of a critic regarding the use of credit cards because of the way it is worded and may prevent respondents from giving honest answers.

- The question should not have loaded words or phrasing: In contrast to leading questions, loaded questions are more subtle, yet, they are also biased questions. Identifying the bias here requires more judgment.

For example, "Should people be allowed to protect themselves from harm by using pepper sprays as self-defence?" Here, the bias in favour of using lethal measures may not be evident at first sight. However, a careful reading of the question will reveal that the question is likely to make people reply in the affirmative.

- Avoid Double-Barrelled questions: A double barrelled question is really two different questions posed as one. With two questions posed as one, it becomes difficult for the respondent to answer. For example, "Were you satisfied with the restaurant's food and service?"

- The question should not use words that overstate the condition: An overstated question is one that places undue emphasis on some aspect of the topic. For example, imagine a survey being conducted for Ray-Ban sunglasses? An overstated question might ask: "How much do you think you would pay for a pair of sunglasses that will protect your eyes from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays, which are known to cause blindness?" In this case, there is an overstatement concerning the effect of UV rays.

✓ **Check your progress: Select the most appropriate answer**

1. The problem with double-barreled questions is that they:

a. contains two questions requiring only one answer

b. suggests what answer is right

c. require long answers

d. suggests what answer is wrong

2. One of the advantages of interviews as a data collection method is that:

a. helps you analyze data

b. get short answers

c. get numerical data

d. allows you to ask follow-up questions

3. An instrument comprised of a series of questions that are filled in by the respondent herself is called a:

a. transcript

b. questionnaire

c. sampling

d. interview schedule

4. The problem with loaded questions is that they:

a. suggests what answer is right

b. suggests what answer is wrong

c. have two questions in one

d. requires 'yes', 'no' type answers

5. 'An extended conversation with a purpose and highly focused', this is the definition of:

a. content analysis

b. an interview

c. a survey

d. case study

6. Non-standardized, in-depth, open-ended interviews are known as:

a. unstructured interviews

b. structured interviews

c. surveys

d. observation

7.9 CHOOSING BETWEEN AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND A QUESTIONNAIRE

The choice between a questionnaire and an interview schedule is important and should be considered thoroughly as the strengths and weaknesses of the two methods can affect the validity of the findings. The nature of the investigation and the socioeconomic demographic characteristics of the study population are central in this choice. The selection between an interview schedule and a questionnaire should be based upon the following criteria:

- The nature of the investigation: if the study is about issues that respondents may feel reluctant to discuss with the researcher, a questionnaire may be a better choice as it ensures anonymity. This may be the case with studies on drug use, sexuality, indulgence in criminal activities and personal finances. However, there are situations where better information about sensitive issues can be obtained by interviewing respondents. It depends on the type of study population and the skills of the interviewer. As a researcher, you need to explore which method is better suited for your study and respondents.

- The geographical distribution of the study population: If potential respondents are scattered over a wide geographical area, you have no choice but to use a questionnaire as conducting interviews in such a situation would be extremely expensive.

- The type of study population: If the study population is illiterate, very young or very old, there may be no option but to interview the respondents.

7.10 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF A QUESTIONNAIRE

Advantages of a questionnaire

A questionnaire has the following advantages:

- It is less expensive: As you do not interview respondents, you save time and resources. The use of a questionnaire, therefore, is comparatively convenient and inexpensive, especially when it is administered collectively to a study population.

- It offers greater anonymity: As there is no face-to-face interaction between respondents and interviewer, this method provides greater anonymity. In some situations where sensitive questions are asked it helps to increase the likelihood of obtaining accurate information.

Disadvantages of a questionnaire:

Although a questionnaire has several advantages, it is important to note that not all data collection using this method has these advantages. The prevalence of a particular disadvantage depends on a number of other factors. Some of these disadvantages are as follows:

- Limited application: One of the main disadvantages is that its application is limited to a study population that can read and write. It also cannot be used on a population that is very young or very old.

- Low response rate: Questionnaires are notorious for their low response rates; that is, people fail to return them. If you plan to use a questionnaire, keep in mind that because not everyone will return/ answer the questionnaire, your sample size will in effect be reduced. The response rate depends upon a number of factors: the interest of the sample in the topic of the study, the layout and length of the questionnaire, and the methodology used to deliver the questionnaire.

- Self-selecting bias: Since not everyone who receives a questionnaire returns it, there is a self-selecting bias. Those who return their questionnaires may have attitudes, attributes, or motivations that are different from those who do not. Hence, if the response rate is very low, the findings may not be representative of the total study population.

- Lack of opportunity to clarify issues: If, for any reason, respondents do not understand some questions, there is almost no opportunity for them to have the meaning clarified unless they get in touch with the researcher (which is mostly rare). If different respondents interpret questions differently, this will affect the quality of the information provided.

- No opportunity for spontaneous responses: Mailed questionnaires are inappropriate when spontaneous responses are required, as most respondents will glance through the whole questionnaire before answering. This gives them time to reflect before answering, which may make them change their answers to some questions.

- The response to a question may be influenced by the response to other questions: As respondents can read all the questions before answering (which usually happens), the way they answer a particular question may be affected by their knowledge of other questions.

- Others can influence the answers: With mailed questionnaires respondents may consult other people before responding. In situations where an investigator wants to find out only the study population's opinions, this method may be inappropriate, though requesting respondents to express their own opinion may help.

- A response cannot be supplemented with other information: The information gathered by interviewing can sometimes be supplemented with information from other methods of data collection such as observation. However, a questionnaire lacks this advantage.

7.11 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE INTERVIEW METHOD

Advantages of the interview method

- More appropriate for complex situations: It is the most appropriate approach for studying complex and sensitive topics as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare a respondent before asking sensitive questions and to explain complex ones to respondents in person.

- Useful for collecting in-depth information: In an interview situation, it is possible for an investigator to obtain in-depth information by probing. Hence, in situations where in-depth information is required, interviewing is the preferred method of data collection.

- Information can be supplemented: An interviewer is able to supplement information obtained from responses with those gained from observations of non-verbal reactions.

- Questions can be explained: It is less likely that a question will be misunderstood as the interviewer can either repeat a question or put it in a form that is understood by the respondent.

Disadvantages of the interview method

- Time consuming and expensive: This is especially so when potential respondents are scattered over a wide geographical area. However, if you have a situation such as an office, a hospital or an agency where potential respondents come to obtain a service, interviewing them in that setting may be less expensive and less time consuming.

- The quality of data depends upon the quality of the interaction: In an interview the quality of interaction between an interviewer and interviewee is likely to affect the quality of the information obtained. Also, because the interaction in each interview is unique, the quality of the responses obtained from different interviews may vary significantly.

- The quality of data depends upon the skills of the interviewer: In an interview situation the quality of the data generated is affected by the experience, skills and commitment of the interviewer.

7.12 SUMMARY

Interviewing is a method of data collection which helps the researcher to access people's perceptions and constructions of reality in their own words. The interview method offers the freedom to decide the format and content of questions, their wording, sequence and number of questions.

Interviews are broadly classified into two types – structured and unstructured interviews. Unstructured interviews help in collecting a great deal of information, ask follow-up questions and in acquiring unexpected data. Structured interviews, on the other hand, ask a predetermined set of questions. Structured interviews are mostly used in quantitative research while unstructured interviews see higher application in the qualitative tradition.

A questionnaire is a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by the respondents. The major difference between interviews and questionnaires is that in an interview, the interviewer asks the questions and records the answers whereas in a questionnaire the replies are recorded by the respondents themselves. Since questionnaires are often characterized by low-response rates, its layout should be such that it is easy and pleasant to read.

A questionnaire can be administered in a number of ways. Questionnaires can either be sent through email, conducted face-to-face with a captive audience, administered at a public place, or uploaded to public online platforms including social media for potential respondents to access it in the form of a hyperlink.

7.13 QUESTIONS

1. What factors will you keep in mind while deciding between a questionnaire and an interview schedule for your research study?

2. What makes unstructured interviews a suitable data collection tool for qualitative research?

3. Design a questionnaire for a research study on 'Preferred Social Media Platforms for Influencer Marketing for Fashion Products'.

7.14 REFERENCES

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods.* Oxford University Press.

Kumar, R. (2014). *Research Methodology – A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

*****

8

CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Unit Structure

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand:

- Difference between a group interview and focus group discussion
- Practical aspects of conducting focus group sessions
- Challenges of using focus group sessions as a data collection method

8.1 INTRODUCTION

We are used to thinking of the interview as something that involves an interviewer and an interviewee. The focus group technique is a method of interviewing that involves more than one, usually at least four, interviewees. Essentially, it is a group interview. Some authors draw a distinction between the focus group and the group interview techniques. Three reasons are put forward to suggest a distinction:

- Focus groups typically emphasize a specific theme or topic that is explored in depth, whereas group interviews often span very widely.
- Sometimes group interviews are conducted to save time and money by carrying out interviews with a number of individuals simultaneously. However, focus groups are not conducted for this reason.
- The focus group practitioner is invariably interested in the ways in which individuals discuss a certain issue as members of a group, rather than simply as individuals. In other words, with a focus group the researcher will be interested in such things as how people respond to each other's views and build up a view out of the interaction that takes place within the group.

Most focus group researchers undertake their work within the traditions of qualitative research. They are, therefore, more keen to observe how the group participants view the issues with which they are confronted; the researcher will aim to provide a fairly unstructured setting for the extraction of their views and perspectives. The person who runs the focus groups session is usually called a moderator, and he or she will be expected to guide each session but not to be too intrusive.

Focus group discussions are by no means a new technique. It has been used for many years in market research, where it is employed for such purposes as testing responses to new products and advertising initiatives.

8.2 THE FOCUS GROUP METHOD

The focus group method is a form of group interview in which there are several participants (in addition to the moderator); there is an emphasis in the questioning on a particular fairly tightly defined topic; and the accent is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning.

Focus groups are a form of interaction in qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions, or perceptions towards an issue, product, service or programme are explored through a free and open discussion between members of a group and the researcher. Both focus groups and group interviews are facilitated group discussions in which a researcher raises issues or asks questions that stimulate discussion among members of the group. Because of its low cost, it is a popular method for finding information in almost every professional area and academic field. Social, political and behavioural scientists, market research and product testing agencies, and urban and town planning experts often use this design for a variety of situations. For example, in marketing research this design is widely used to obtain consumers’ opinion and feedback on a product, their opinions on the quality of the product, its acceptance and appeal, price and packaging, how to improve the quality and increase the sale of the product, etc.

8.3 USES OF FOCUS GROUPS

- This technique allows the researcher to develop an understanding about why people feel the way they do. In a normal individual interview, the interviewee is often asked about his or her reasons for holding a particular view, but the focus group approach offers the opportunity of allowing people to probe each other’s reasons for holding a certain view. This can be more interesting than the sometimes predictable question-followed-by-answer approach of normal interviews.

- In focus group sessions, participants are able to bring to the fore issues in relation to a topic that they deem to be important and significant. This is an aim of individual interviews too, but, because the moderator has to relinquish a certain amount of control to the participants, the issues that concern them can surface better in a focus group. This is clearly an important consideration in the context of qualitative research, since the viewpoints of the people being studied are an important consideration.

- In conventional one-to-one interviewing, interviewees are rarely challenged; they might say things that are inconsistent with earlier replies or that may not be true, but researchers are often reluctant to point out such deficiencies. In the context of a focus group, individuals will often argue with each other and challenge each other’s views. This process of arguing means that the researcher may stand a chance of ending up with more realistic accounts of what people think, because they are forced to think about and possibly revise their views.

- The focus group offers the researcher the opportunity to study the ways in which individuals’ collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it.

8.4 CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS

There are a number of practical aspects for conducting focus group research that require some discussion.

3.4.1 Recording and transcription:

As with interviewing for qualitative research, the focus group session will work best if it is recorded and subsequently transcribed. Recording is mostly preferred for focus group research because of the following reasons:

- One reason is the simple difficulty of writing down not only exactly what people say but also who says it. In an individual interview you might be able to ask the respondent to hold on while you write something down, but to do this in the context of an interview involving several people would be extremely disruptive.

- The researcher will be interested in who expresses views within the group, such as whether certain individuals seem to act as opinion leaders or dominate the discussion. This also means that there is an interest in ranges of opinions within groups; for example, in a session, does most of the range of opinion derive from just one or two people or from most of the people in the group.

- A major reason for conducting focus group research is the fact that it is possible to study the processes whereby meaning is collectively constructed within each session. It would be very difficult to do this by taking notes, because of the need to keep track of who says what. If this element is lost, the dynamics of the focus group session would also be lost, and therefore a major reason for conducting focus group interviews rather than individual ones would be undermined.

- Like all qualitative researchers, the focus group practitioner will be interested in not just what people say but how they say it, for example, the particular language that they employ. There is every chance that the nuances of language will be lost if the researcher has to rely exclusively on hand written notes.

It should be kept in mind that transcribing focus group sessions is more complicated and hence more time-consuming than transcribing traditional interview recordings. This is because you need to take account of who is talking in the session, as well as what is said. This is sometimes difficult, since people's voices are not always easy to distinguish. Also, people sometimes talk over each other, which can make transcription even more difficult. Therefore, it becomes important to ensure that you have a high-quality microphone for the session, which is capable of picking up voices, some of which may be quite faint, from many directions.

3.4.2 Size of groups:

How large should groups be? Experts suggest that the typical group should consist of six to ten members. One major problem encountered by focus group practitioners is people who agree to participate but who do not turn up on the day of the session. It is almost impossible to control for such 'no-shows' other than consciously over-recruiting participants for the study.

Smaller groups are recommended when participants are likely to have a lot to say on the research topic. This is likely to occur when participants are very involved in or emotionally preoccupied with the topic. Smaller groups may also be preferred when topics are controversial or complex. Larger groups, on the other hand, are recommended when involvement with a topic is likely to be low or when the researcher wants to hear numerous brief suggestions from members.

8.4.3 Level of moderator involvement:

How involved should the moderator be? In qualitative research, the aim is to understand the perspectives of those being studied. Consequently, the approach should not be intrusive and structured. Therefore, there is a tendency for researcher to use a fairly small number of very general questions to guide the focus group discussion. Further, it would be better for the moderator to allow quite a lot of latitude to participants, so that the discussion can range widely. However, if the discussion moves significantly away from the core topic, it may be necessary to refocus the participants' attention, but even then it may be necessary to be careful, because what may appear to be digressions may in fact reveal something of interest to the group participants.

8.4.4 Skills required of a moderator:

- A good moderator must have excellent observation, interpersonal, and communication skills to recognise and overcome threats to a productive group discussion.
- The moderator must be prepared, experienced, and armed with a detailed list of topics to be discussed.
- The best moderators are experienced, enthusiastic, prepared, involved, energetic, and open-minded.

Focus group moderators - "Tricks of the trade"

Question	Tricks of the trade
How do you make your groups great every time?	• Be prepared • Be energised • Be nice but firm • Make sure everything about the experience is comfortable.
How do you build rapport quickly?	• Make meaningful eye contact during each person's introduction. • Learn and remember names.

How do you bring a drifting group back into focus?	• Tell them the topic is "for anothe and that they need to focus on the topic group. • Make a note and tell them that t come back to this topic if there is time.
How do you get them to talk about deeper things than top-of-the-mind answers?	• Play naïve or dumb and ask them to understand by explaining. • Use probes such as "tell us more abo or "can you go deeper on that?" • Ask for specifics such as "Tell me a last time that you…" • Pair them up and give them 10 mi each pair to come up with a solution or sug

✓ **Check your progress: Select the most appropriate answer**

1. Who among the following plays the most important role in a focus group discussion?

a. moderator

b. respondents

c. people who are taking notes or recording the discussion on tape

d. Business client

2. One of the advantages of focus group discussion is that:

a. they sound good

b. they are more expensive

c. they have client presence

d. the security of being in a crowd encourages some members to speak out

3. One of the disadvantages of focus group discussion is that:

a. the cost per participant is high

b. they generate fresh ideas

c. they allow clients to observe their participants

d. a group interview situation is generally more exciting

4. A data collection method in which small groups of people are brought together and guided by a moderator through a discussion is known as:

a. focus group discussion

b. interviews

c. observation

d. survey

5. Which among the following is an essential requirement for a moderator of focus group discussions?

a. good looking and presentable

b. loud voice

c. ability to build rapport

d. fluent in English

3.4.5 Selecting participants:

Who can participate? Anyone for whom the topic is relevant can logically be a suitable participant. Sometimes, certain topics do not require participants of a particular kind. A wide range of people may be required, but they are organized into separate groups in terms of stratifying criteria, such as age, gender, education, occupation, and having or not having had a certain experience. Participants for each group can then be selected randomly or through some kind of snowball sampling method. The aim is to establish whether there is any systematic variation in the ways in which different groups discuss a matter.

8.4.6 Asking questions:

An issue that is close to the question of the degree of involvement on the part of the moderator is the matter of how far there should be a set of questions that must be addressed. Some people prefer to use one or two very general questions to stimulate discussion, with the moderator intervening as necessary.

8.4.7 Beginning and finishing the discussion:

It is recommended that focus group discussions begin with an introduction of the participants. The moderator can also thank the participants for joining; discuss the objective of the research, the need for recording the session, and the format of the session. It is also important to mention some of the conventions of focus group participation, such as: only one person should speak at a time (help them explain the problems that occur when people speak over each other in a recorded session); emphasize on the confidentiality of the data collected, that the session is open and everyone's views are important; and the amount of time that may be required. During the introduction round or just before that, it is possible that respondents may be asked to fill in forms providing basic socio-demographic information about themselves, such as age, gender, occupation, and address etc. Participants may even be encouraged to write out their first name on a card placed in front of them, so that everyone's name is known.

At the end, moderators should thank the group members for their participation and explain very briefly what will happen to the data they have supplied. If a further session is to be arranged, steps should be taken to coordinate this.

8.5 FOCUS GROUPS IN MARKET RESEARCH

On 23rd April 1985, a product was launched that proved to be one of the greatest marketing blunders in business history. On that day, Coca-Cola Company not only launched what it called 'New Coke' but it removed the old one from the market, on which success the massive corporation had been built. Thereafter, New Coke wasn't quite successful and people demanded the return of the Old Coke, in spite of assurances by the company that they will eventually get used to the taste of New Coke and get to like it better. Yet close attention to the data collected from focus group discussions that the company had commissioned in the lead-up to the launch of New Coke might have prevented the disaster from happening in the first place. In 1982 and 1983, focus group research was conducted across USA for this new launch. At one point in each session, consumers were presented with a scenario in which they were told that a new formula for a certain product had been introduced and that the response to it was very favourable. The new product i.e. New Coke was introduced and the original formula (Old Coke) was withdrawn from the market. This turned out to be a big mistake. The issue with the taste tests and focus group research was that consumers were not told that only one product would be marketed. Thus, they were not asked whether they would give up the original formula for New Coke. Eventually, the company reintroduced the original formula as Coke Classic and tried to market the two products. Ultimately, New Coke was withdrawn from the market (Bryman, 2008, p. 474).

8.6 LIMITATIONS OF FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups clearly have considerable potential for research questions in which we wish to understand how meaning is jointly constructed. Focus group sessions allow the participants' perspectives to be presented openly and freely which is an important criterion of qualitative research. However, this method of data collection has also got its own limitations some of which are as follows:

- The researcher has less control over proceedings than is the case in an individual interview. Also, a delicate balance needs to be maintained between how involved moderators should be and how far a set of prompts or questions should influence the conduct of a focus group. The moderator can introduce serious biases in the interview by shifting topics too rapidly, verbally or nonverbally encouraging certain answers, failing to cover specific areas, and so on.

- There are chances that participants may go along with the popular opinion instead of expressing their own which may be contrary to the popular opinions.

- The data are often difficult to analyze. A huge amount of data can be quickly produced through a focus group session. Developing a strategy of analysis that incorporates both the themes in what people say and patterns of interaction is not easy.

- They require more planning and money to organize. Not only do you have to secure the agreement of people to participate in your study; you also need to persuade them to turn up at a particular time. Small payments or a gift card/ voucher are sometimes given especially in marketing and advertising research to encourage participants to turn up but even then not all participants may turn up on the day of the focused group discussion. Since focus group sessions typically last one-and-half to three hours and take place at a central location, securing cooperation from a random sample is difficult.

- The recordings are more time-consuming to transcribe than equivalent recordings of individual interviews, because of variations in voice pitch and the need to figure out who says what.

- A common problem in focus group discussions is the tendency for two or more participants to speak at the same time which is not seen in individual interviews. It is very difficult to make sense of and therefore transcribe the proceedings when this occurs.

- There is a likelihood of occurrence of group effects. This includes the problem of dealing with quiet speakers and with those who try to dominate the discussion. One way of dealing with it is to mention at the very beginning that everyone's view is important to hear. For those who do not speak very much, it is recommended that they are actively encouraged by the moderator to say something. Further, there are chances that participants may go along with the popular opinion instead of expressing their own which may be contrary to the popular opinions.

- Related to this is another issue, that in group contexts, participants may be more prone to expressing culturally expected views than in individual interviews.

- There could also be situations when focus groups may not be appropriate, because of their potential for causing discomfort among participants. When such discomfort might arise, individual interviews may be better suited. Situations in which unease might be encountered are: when intimate details of private lives need to be revealed; when participants may not be comfortable in each other's presence (for example, bringing together people in a hierarchical relationship in front of each other); and when participants are likely to disagree greatly with each other.

8.7 SUMMARY

The focus group is a group interview that is concerned with exploring a certain topic. The moderator generally tries to provide a relatively free rein to the discussion. However, there may be contexts in which it is necessary to ask fairly specific questions. Focus group discussions need to be recorded and transcribed. There are several important considerations concerning the recruitment of focus group participants – in particular, whether to use natural groupings and whether to employ stratifying criteria. Group interaction is an important component of focus group sessions.

8.8 QUESTIONS

1. What advantages might the focus group method offer in contrast to an individual depth interview?
2. How involved should the moderator be in focus group sessions?
3. Why might it be important to treat group interaction as an important issue when analyzing focus group data?
4. Does the potential for the loss of control over proceedings and for group effects damage the potential utility of the focus group as a method?
5. How far do the problems of transcription and difficulty of analysis undermine the potential of focus groups?

8.9 REFERENCES

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods.* Oxford University Press.

Kumar, R. (2014). *Research Methodology – A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

*****

9

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Unit Structure

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 What is Ethnography?

9.3 Observation methods: Participant and Non-Participant

9.4 Public Relations and Participant Observation

9.5 Let's sum it up

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand:

- Meaning of Ethnography
- Understanding of observation methods: Participant and Non-Participant
- Public Relations and Participant Observation

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Research is a process which begins with curiosity and eventually formal steps a laid down to implement it. As explained by an internationally recognized leader in *research* methodologies Zina O'Leary: Research can be thought of as a "thinking game" and a "whole-brain" activity that often demands that researchers think outside any set of perspective "rules". It is a creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, reassessing, and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information, carrying out appropriate analysis, and drawing credible conclusion about the problem under study. Once the researcher has thought of a research topic, research problem, research question and or hypothesis it can then become more easier to write a literature review to build an argument for the study. The process of doing the next phase of research will involve putting the research methodology together before starting data collection. Analysis is the next big step where the findings emerge after all the work done in the research process so far. The step where research methodology is involved is important as that puts down the actual approach, method and tools in place which explains how the research is done. As Zina O'Leary appropriately defines this term "The framework associated with a particular set of paradigmatic assumptions that you will use to conduct your research, i.e., scientific method, ethnography, action research.” This unit focuses on observation method which is a method under the methodology ethnography.

9.2 WHAT IS ETHNOGRAPHY?

Ethnography is a methodology having its basis in cultural anthropology and is defined as ‘the recording and analysis of a culture or society, usually based on participant-observation and resulting in a written account of a people, place or institution’ (Simpson & Coleman 2017). According to Walter K. Lindenmann, ‘Ethnographic research relies on the tools and techniques of cultural anthropologists and sociologists to obtain a better understanding of how individuals and groups function in their natural settings’. These kinds of research are carried out by unbiased and trained researchers who completely involve themselves into the day-to-day lifestyles of the community or cultural set up using a mix method approach such as “observation, participation, and role-playing techniques” to really get a hang of the phenomenon at hand from the cultural point of view. A caste study of a community can be done by studying closely using mix methods such as “observation, participation, role-playing, secondary analysis, content analysis, formal and informal interviewing techniques”. Ethnography helps in sustained amount of time helps look into how people perceive themselves in a particular set up, it explores why a certain ‘way of life’ or ‘way of work’ is the way it is or as Emerson says that ethnographic descriptions are a researcher’s ‘theory informed re-presentations’ (1983: 21). They carry a researcher’s perspective, with its own biases from where he/she comes from, and from the theoretical and analytical frames.

This is understood by becoming a participant in the process or being a non-participant observer in the process. As Zina O’Leary explains “To ‘write a culture’. Involves exploration of a cultural group in a bid to understand, discover, describe, and interpret a way of life from the point of view of its participants”. She further adds that groups are bind together beyond their physical and mental make-up. It is even beyond their communal, thoughts and beliefs that which binds say a group of people at work or live in a particular culture, or celebrate a certain festival etc. It is an attempt to “‘see’ things the way group members do”, and how they make meanings of things they do or as ethnographers make sense and interpret this and put it together like a case, or as Geertz (2000) calls it ‘thick descriptions’.

Process of Ethnography:

The data collection for this methodology is heterogenous and involves various methods. It is prolonged and very tenacious. John Brewer, an eminent social scientist, explain that data collection methods should capture the "social meanings and ordinary activities" of people in "naturally occurring settings" popularly known as "the field."

A researcher is a participant observer, so the method of participant observation; Sometimes the researcher may not be a participant observer and will merely observe as a non-participant observer. As a participant observer he may come across situations where he is expected to be flexible and come up with on-the-spot decisions to take the research ahead with what was best suited at that time and to observe the world as it is of that group. The group is beyond the physical and mental or any other demographic make-up but like in a case study the group here needs to be defined, which is the ‘cultural’ group. The group could be a tribe, a workplace group, a migrant group, school students etc. But the essential point to be noted here is that the cultural group we are talking about is that they need to share a culture here. A group could be chosen based on ‘pragmatics, intrinsic interest, theory, or any combination thereof’. Sometime groups are chose because nobody really understood what they are doing, like in the case of public relations as a practice is rarely understood outside of the profession, often misunderstood to be a another name for advertising. Such work cultures and work practice need more so attention a subject of study. The most important criteria like in the case of case study method the researcher needs to be having consistent access to the group of study even while doing ethnography. While ‘performing’ the observation method the observer needs to go beyond what is being shown and see that which is explicitly not being shown. Methods that can be used are participant or non-participant observation, interviews, and content analysis. Though quantitative data may be produced, pre-dominantly the study is qualitative in nature and that is the focus and that is how data will be described.

9.3 OBSERVATION METHODS: PARTICIPANT AND NON-PARTICIPANT

Observation method:

MARSHALL and ROSSMAN (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p.79). Observations help the researcher to talk about current situations by observing through the five senses, and thus creating a "written photograph" of the subject under study (ERLANDSON, HARRIS, SKIPPER, & ALLEN, 1993). Observation method give an insight to researchers to look for ‘nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities’ (SCHMUCK, 1997).

DeWALT and DeWALT (2002) say "the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method" (p.92).

Participant Observation method:

Participant observation is one of the oldest methods in anthropological studies, especially in the field of ethnographic studies, and has been used extensively as a data collection method for more than a century now. To go more deeper into the participant observation method, which is the focus of this unit, the researcher needs to build a bond, empathy with the members of the group to have an exchange which is as if he was 'living' the same reality. BERNARD (1994) " defines participant observation as the process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community so that its members will act naturally, then removing oneself from the setting or community to immerse oneself in the data to understand what is going on and be able to write about it." It will take a while for the researcher to immerse himself into the daily dynamics of that group but once done more rich observations will emerge. As put together by Signe Howell, "It is undertaken as open-ended inductive long-term living with and among the people to be studied, the sole purpose of which is to achieve an understanding of local knowledge, values, and practices 'from the "native's point of view"". Participant observation can be also be an eye opener as it one can observe what people say what they actually do. Participant observation needs the person observing to have 'an open, non-judgmental attitude, being interested in learning more about others, being aware of the propensity for feeling culture shock and for making mistakes, the majority of which can be overcome, being a careful observer and a good listener, and being open to the unexpected in what is learned' (DeWALT & DeWALT, 1998).

Non-Participant Observation method:

In this method the researcher will have a structured check list to observe that he will note in his dairy, like observing the working of a film set, observing children in a classroom etc. But both these examples can also be done using the participant observation method.

Ethnography as a methodology can be evaluated as suggested below:

In Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein's (1997) monograph, *The New Language of Qualitative Method,* that outlines ethnography in context of the "methods talk" as below:-

1. ***"Substantive contribution*:** "Does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life?"
2. ***Aesthetic merit*:** "Does this piece succeed aesthetically?"
3. ***Reflexivity*:** "How did the author come to write this text…Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view?"
4. ***Impact*:** "Does this affect me? Emotionally? Intellectually?" Does it move me?

5. ***Expresses a reality***: "Does it seem 'true'—a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the 'real'?"”

There can be some fundamental limitation of using participant observation method which is as explained as below: DeWALT and DeWALT (2002) explain that gender plays an important role. So male and female researchers may have access to diverse information, for they could be accessing different respondents, settings could be different, and also the institutes of knowledge. Participant observation is conducted by a human who can be biased in his own right; In such complex situations it is must for the researcher to discern how ‘his/her gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis, and interpretation’. The researcher needs to be vigilant while expecially using this method.

9.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Public Relations has been an evolving practice, its origin and growth has traversed many years across the world. Sriramesh quotes James Grunig’s definition of public relations that it is "the management of communication between an organization and its publics (Sriramesh & White, 1992). Public relations serve the functions of information, communication, persuasion, image building, continuous building of trust, management of conflicts, and the generation of consensus” (Sriramesh K. , 2003).

Researchers and scholars in the field of communication studies have used ethnography to understand communication aspects like communication behaviors and phenomenon. They have gone into in depth analysis of not much appreciated routines, as well explained by this definition of ethnography “a method is a storied, careful, and systematic examination of the reality-generating mechanisms of everyday life” (Coulon, 1995). Public relations research is articulated well by the following definition “Research gives the hard data necessary to provide value to the organization, and helps provide information to make decisions that have real impact” - Gronstedt (1997). Research points out to concern areas which can steer organisations into building relationships, making effective programmes and take on time needed actions that will stop issues from not being blown out of proportions and later becoming huge issues. -(Broom & Dozier, 1990; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000).

The studies done in the field of communication using ethnography as a methodology, explains the “how’ of the mundane practices in the field of work or otherwise in establishing their identities of individuals through their daily actions. By doing this one understand the “why” and “how come” of communication by people.

There can be many examples where such studies can be done, One could study the work practices of how media relations is conducted, how is a daily work routine of a PR agency, how crisis communication is managed by a corporate communications department etc.

“Campaigns are coordinated, purposeful, extended efforts designed to achieve a specific goal or a set of interrelated goals that will move the organisation towards a longer-range objective expressed as its mission statement”- Doug Newsom, Judy VanSlyke and Dean Kruckberg's “This is PR. The realities of Public Relations”. These can be cases which can be part of observation studies. Here the researcher can be a participant observer and immerse himself into the PR campaign done to communicate image building, selling a product or a crisis communication done with the target audience. Only by putting oneself into the shoes of the campaigner can one really get the challenges that are faced while putting PR campaigns together.

A certain study focused on “Public relations in the postmodern city: An ethnographic account of PR occupational culture in Mexico City” searching for meanings that the PR practitioners in the study gave to their day-to-day workings and how they ‘made use of social networks to help them negotiate their way through the potentially hostile waters’ of making a work life in one of the big cities in the world. An Indonesian research focused on “concept of public relations with the cultural activities of Jakhu Suku focussing on communications” was studied using the methodology of Ethnography, it examined the culture-based public relations communication behaviour. Yet another study examined “Cultures and places: Ethnography in public relations spaces” where topic of women's leadership and public relations was studied using Ethnography.

Check your progress

1. What is ethnography?
2. What is Observation method and its process?
3. What is the use of participant observation methods in communication and public relations field?
4. What is the limitation of the participation observation method?

9.5 LET’S SUM IT UP

Research is a process which begins with curiosity and eventually formal steps a laid down to implement it. As explained by an internationally recognized leader in *research* methodologies Zina O’Leary: Research can be thought of as a “thinking game” and a “whole-brain” activity that often demands that researchers think outside any set of perspective “rules”.

The step where research methodology is involved is important as that puts down the actual approach, method and tools in place which explains how the research is done. As Zina O’Leary appropriately defines this term “The framework associated with a particular set of paradigmatic assumptions that you will use to conduct your research, i.e., scientific method, ethnography, action research.”

Ethnography is a methodology having its basis in cultural anthropology and is defined as 'the recording and analysis of a culture or society, usually based on participant-observation and resulting in a written account of a people, place or institution' (Simpson & Coleman 2017). According to Walter K. Lindemann, 'Ethnographic research relies on the tools and techniques of cultural anthropologists and sociologists to obtain a better understanding of how individuals and groups function in their natural settings'.

The data collection for this methodology is heterogenous and involves various methods. It is prolonged and very tenacious. John Brewer, an eminent social scientist, explain that data collection methods should capture the "social meanings and ordinary activities" of people in "naturally occurring settings" popularly known as "the field." MARSHALL and ROSSMAN (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p.79).

A researcher is a participant observer, so the method of participant observation; Sometimes the researcher may not be a participant observer and will merely observe as a non-participant observer. As a participant observer he may come across situations where he is expected to be flexible and come up with on-the-spot decisions to take the research ahead with what was best suited at that time and to observe the world as it is of that group. The group is beyond the physical and mental or any other demographic make-up but like in a case study the group here needs to be defined, which is the 'cultural' group.

Observation method give an insight to researchers to look for 'nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities' (SCHMUCK, 1997)

To go more deeper into the participant observation method, which is the focus of this unit, the researcher needs to build a bond, empathy with the members of the group to have an exchange which is as if he was 'living' the same reality. It will take a while for the researcher to immerse himself into the daily dynamics of that group but once done more rich observations will emerge.

Participant observation needs the person observing to have 'an open, non-judgmental attitude, being interested in learning more about others, being aware of the propensity for feeling culture shock and for making mistakes, the majority of which can be overcome, being a careful observer and a good listener, and being open to the unexpected in what is learned' (DeWALT & DeWALT, 1998).

In non-participant observation method, the researcher will have a structured check list to observe that he will note in his dairy, like observing the working of a film set, observing children in a classroom etc.

But both these examples can also be done using the participant observation method.

Researchers and scholars in the field of communication studies have used ethnography to understand communication aspects like communication behaviors and phenomenon. They have gone into in depth analysis of not much appreciated routines, as well explained by this definition of ethnography “a method is a storied, careful, and systematic examination of the reality-generating mechanisms of everyday life” (Coulon, 1995).

The studies done in the field of communication using ethnography as a methodology, explains the “how’ of the mundane practices in the field of work or otherwise in establishing their identities of individuals through their daily actions. By doing this one understand the “why” and “how come” of communication by people.

Campaigns can be cases which can be part of observation studies. Here the researcher can be a participant observer and immerse himself into the PR campaign done to communicate image building, selling a product or a crisis communication done with the target audience. Only by putting oneself into the shoes of the campaigner can one really get the challenges that face PR campaigns.

There can be some fundamental limitation of using participant observation method which is as explained as below: DeWALT and DeWALT (2002) explain that gender plays an important role. So male and female researchers may have access to diverse information, for they could be accessing different respondents, settings could be different, and also the institutes of knowledge. Participant observation is conducted by a human who can be biased in his own right; In such complex situations it is must for the researcher to discern how ‘his/her gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis, and interpretation’.

References

Brewer, John D. (2000). Ethnography. Philadelphia: Open University Press. p.10.

Jacquie L’Etang, Caroline Hodges, Magda Pieczka, Cultures and places: Ethnography in public relations spaces, November 2012Public Relations Review 38(4):519–521

Geertz, C. (1973) The Interpretation of Cultures. New York: Basic Books

Grills, S. (ed.) (1998) Doing Ethnographic Research. London: Sage

Hamersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995) Ethnography: Principles in Practice London: Routledge.

Public Relations Research for Planning and Evaluation Copyright © 2006, Walter K. Lindenmann www.instituteforpr.org

Public Relations Communication Behavior Through a Local-Wisdom Approach: The Findings of Public Relations Components Via Ethnography as Methodology DASRUN HIDAYAT BSI University, Indonesia ENGKUS KUSWARNO FELIZA ZUBAIR HANNY HAFIAR Padjadjaran University, Indonesia

Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., and Piele, L. J. (2005). Communication Research: Strategies and Sources. Belmont, California: Thomson Wadworth. pp. 229.

https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203832134-8/public-relations-postmodern-city-ethnographic-account-pr-occupational-culture-mexico-city-caroline-hodges

https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/how-to/observation/use-ethnographic-methods-participant-observation

https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/public-relations-review/vol/38/issue/4

https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/ethnography

https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996

*****

10

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN, CONTROL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Unit Structure

10.0 Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to understand:

- Meaning of Research in Public Relations
- Understanding Experimental design and Control
- Understanding Experimental Design, Control and Public Relations

10.1 Introduction

Public Relations has long been understood as a practice that revolves around creating mutually beneficial relationships between various kinds of stakeholders and "stakeseekers". The PR practitioners also need to connect and manage relationships between individuals and organisations from various demographics to reach organisational goals and objectives and meet the needs of the audiences. Stakeholders comprise of "individuals, organizations, or groups that have a stake in or relationship with an organization". They include employees, shareholders, suppliers and others. Stakeseekers consists of people and organisations who are keen on connecting with each other for mutual beneficial relationships.

Research requires curiosity to begin with. A lot of research can be found in media and public relations journals worldwide on various functions of public relations and public relations campaigns. These could be on functions of publicity, media relations, crisis communication, audience research, campaigns in public relations etc. Once the researcher has decided the research problem, research question and or hypothesis it becomes easier to put together a literature review for the body of the research to begin. The process of doing the next phase of research will involve putting a research methodology where one of the steps, methods an important part of the study are decided and then data collection begins for the said research question and or hypothesis. Analysis is the step which reveals the findings of the research after all the work done in the research process so far.

As explained by an internationally-recognized leader in *research* methodologies Zina O'Leary : Research can be thought of as a "thinking game" and a "whole-brain" activity that often demands that researchers think outside any set of perspective "rules". It is a creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, reassessing, and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information, carrying out appropriate analysis, and drawing credible conclusion.

10.2 What is Research in Public Relations?

Public relations research can be well explained by the following definitions. Cutlip, Center, and Broom's (1985) emphasise research in public relations as "methodical, systematic research as the foundation of effective public relations". "Research gives the hard data necessary to provide value to the organization, and helps provide information to make decisions that have real impact" - Gronstedt (1997). Research plays a crucial role for organisations to really know where they are headed in terms of communicating with their audiences. Research helps discover the various areas of concern which can help organisations help into building relationships, making effective programmes and initiate on time needed actions that will stop issues from not being blown out of proportions. - (Broom & Dozier, 1990; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000). Donald K. Wright says, "research is important because public relations people are finding that research is part and parcel of their jobs when they offer communication strategies, counsel on communication problems, and educate clients as to the best public relations strategies or actions".

Research is useful in Public Relations as it helps in knowing clients better, while pitching an idea to the client, suggesting a campaign plan or persuading them to pick a particular medium over the other; it can be more convincing if research based data is provided here. Knowing your demographics is so crucial for anyone in the promotion business. Whether to create an image or help in sales in both situations research is useful. Understanding demographics helps in knowing way of life and likings of the target audience. Message creation is the key in a campaign plan and the research really helps in getting there.

10.3 What is Experimental design and Control?

In his first book of Public Relations Research (2002), Don Stacks explain that experiments are "the only way that we can definitely test whether something actually causes a change in something else" (p. 196).

Experiments are kind of quantitative research where one examines causal relationship type of questions. The experimental design prescribes "how participants are allocated to the different groups in an experiment." The different types of experimental designs include repeated measures, independent groups and matched pairs. Another concept we come across is the control group. This comprises of participant in the group who are excluded from the experiment treatment and serve only as comparative entities.

How are Experiments designed?

According to Stacks (2002), experiments rely on three main concepts. The study must establish that: (1) "changes in one variable cause changes in the other variable", (2) "the effect follows the cause", and (3) "no third variable influenced the relationship" (p. 200). Here researchers can use "true, quasi-, or pre-experiments to test theory or evaluate the effectiveness of communication tactics" (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002; Stacks,2002).

While designing the experiments the following points must be kept in mind: -

1. **Independent measures / between-groups**: In this different participants are needed in each of the said situation of the IV or independent variable.

2. **Repeated measures /within-groups**: In this type the same participants are needed in each of the said situation of the IV or independent variable.

3. **Matched pairs**: In this kind, each situation there are different participants but the commonly matched with respect to different demographics parameters.

Summarising Experiments designing is collecting data in a methodical manner, largely the focus being on the experiment design itself more than the outcome, to keep a tab on the changes to be introduced in the independent variable and its subsequent effect on the dependant variables and the varying results. Last but not the least the results should be valid and simply understood.

10.4 Experimental Design, Control and Public Relations

It has been noted long back by Miller and Levine (1996) that persuasion research has depended on experiments to examine how good the impact by sources and message was on attitudes and behaviours of people. Very few experiments usage have been observed in public relations research. Broom and Dozier (1990) suggest that, in public relations, "every research plan to evaluate program impact includes either an explicit or implicit experimental design" (p. 99). Experimental designs are excellent in pointing out "specific causal variables in persuasion" (Miller & Levine, 1996, p. 265), for e.g., how self-esteem and other factors play an important role in influencing the message content to bring about any change in attitude or behaviour change. "Experimental designs allow the researcher the control necessary to precisely specify and manipulate the source or message characteristics he or she is interested in comparing” (p. 265), This allows researchers to test and check for relationship between variables (Stacks, 2002). Various marketing and advertising researchers have used the experimental design method to do different studies: “how public accountability may predict corporate trustworthiness” (Sinclair & Irani, 2005), “the impact of issues advocacy advertisements on sponsor credibility” (Burgoon, Pfau, & Birk, 1995; Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000); “the relationship of source credibility and perceived purchase risk” (Grewal, Gottleib, & Marmorstein, 1994).

Various materials available on Experimental Design, Control and Public Relations state that the experimental design method is rarely in the field of public relations used as compared to the fields of advertising and marketing. There the application can be seen in the fields of consumer behaviour and media effects, As Don Stacks (2002) says that “probably the most rigorous kind of research conducted but, at the same time, is almost never found in public relations research” (p. 195). Not much change has been observed since this observation was made as told by other authors, Lois Boynton & Elizabeth Dougall too when they say that “This “avoidance” of the experimental method has persisted over time in spite of three critical factors: the growth of public relations postgraduate programs; the concomitant progress in producing trained researchers; and the method’s usefulness in measuring key public relations-related and relationship-management-related topics such as trust, accountability, and credibility”.

As mentioned in his study (Stacks, 2002) “the experimental method as the *sine qua non* of the research world” only 21 from several 400 articles had the findings of experimental research, in the studies published in well-known public relations journals namely Journal of Public Relations Research and Public Relations Review, between 1995-2004. The experiments were done on testing messages created in health and communication and studying the impact of public relations practice. Just 19 articles cited the experimental method. Three of these articles, were part of Public Relations Review, which discussed at length methods which also included experimental research design (Fischer, 1995; Hallahan, 1999b, 2001). Fischer (1995) suggested “control construct evaluation procedures” (p. 45) simply and cheap method for evaluation of information campaigns. There were other mentions too in other journals some even passing ones, or the process not explained in detail. These clearly explain that this experimental design method was not widely used. As explained by the authors Lois Boynton & Elizabeth Dougall in their paper “very few professional and academic questions are examined by public relations scholars using experimental research designs. In spite of the rigour and reputation of this method in the world of science, if 10 years of scholarly articles are any indicator, experimental research is poorly used and even more poorly understood in public relations research.” But of course, in the times we live in especially with digital communication now becoming the norm it is time that this method is given its due and place in the research of public relations practice.

Check your Progress

1. What is public relations research?
2. What are the areas in public relations that require research? Explain with examples.
3. What are experiments?
4. What is a control group in experiments?
5. What is experimental design in public relations research?

10.5 Let's sum it up

Public Relations has long been understood as a practice that revolves around creating mutually beneficial relationships between various kinds of stakeholders and "stakeseekers". The PR practitioners also need to connect and manage relationships between individuals and organisations from various demographics to reach organisational goals and objectives and meet the needs of the audiences.

Research can be thought of as a "thinking game" and a "whole-brain" activity that often demands that researchers think outside any set of perspective "rules". Research requires curiosity to begin with. A lot of research can be found in media and public relations journals worldwide on various functions of public relations and public relations campaigns. These could be on functions of publicity, media relations, crisis communication, audience research, campaigns in public relations etc.

Public relations research can be well explained by the following definitions. Cutlip, Center, and Broom's (1985) emphasise research in public relations as "methodical, systematic research as the foundation of effective public relations". Research is useful in Public Relations as it helps in knowing clients better, while pitching an idea to the client, suggesting a campaign plan or persuading them to pick a particular medium over the other it can be more convincing if research based data is provided here. Knowing your demographics is so crucial for anyone in the promotion business. Whether to create an image or help in sales in both situations research is useful. Understanding demographics helps in knowing way of life and likings of the target audience. Message creation is the key in a campaign plan and the research really helps in getting there.

In his first book of Public Relations Research (2002), Don Stacks explain that experiments are "the only way that we can definitely test whether something actually causes a change in something else" (p. 196).

Experiments are kind of quantitative research where one examines causal relationship type of questions. The experimental design prescribes "how participants are allocated to the different groups in an experiment." The different types of experimental designs include repeated measures, independent groups and matched pairs. Another concept we come across is the control group. This comprises of participant in the group where the experiment treatment is not given and only work as comparative standards.

According to Stacks (2002), experiments rely on three main concepts. The study must establish that: (1) "changes in one variable cause changes in the other variable", (2) "the effect follows the cause", and (3) "no third variable influenced the relationship" (p. 200). Here researchers can use "true, quasi-, or pre-experiments to test theory or evaluate the effectiveness of communication tactics" (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002; Stacks,2002).

It has been noted long back by Miller and Levine (1996) that persuasion research has depended on experiments to examine how good the impact by sources and message was on attitudes and behaviours of people. Very few experiments usage have been observed in public relations research. Broom and Dozier (1990) suggest that, in public relations, "every research plan to evaluate program impact includes either an explicit or implicit experimental design" (p. 99).

Various materials available on Experimental Design, Control and Public Relations state that the experimental design method is rarely in the field of public relations used as compared to the fields of advertising and marketing. There the application can be seen in the fields of consumer behaviour and media effects, As Don Stacks (2002) says that "probably the most rigorous kind of research conducted but, at the same time, is almost never found in public relations research" (p. 195). But of course, in the times we live in especially with digital communication now becoming the norm it is time that this method is given its due and place in the research of public relations practice.

References and further reading

https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i11510.xml

https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i5045.xml

https://www.statisticshowto.com/experimental-design/

McLeod, S. A. (2017, January 14). *Experimental design*. Simply Psychology. www.simplypsychology.org/experimental-designs.html

The Methodical Avoidance of Experiments in Public Relations Research by Lois Boynton & Elizabeth Dougall, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Guide to doing research by Zina Oleary

*****

11

RESEARCH REPORT

Unit Structure

11.0 OBJECTIVES

The importance of any research study is to evaluate both scholastically and practically the contents of the written proposal and report of the study. The merit of the problem and its adequacy is examined based on the research proposal and the contribution of the study is judged based on the research report of a thesis of the study. There are various formats of an educational research report but a

researcher must understand its meaning and purpose. The following are the major writing formats of research work.

1. Research Proposal or synopsis: or outline of research work or project.

2. Research Report or thesis

3. Research Summary, and

4. Research Abstracts.

A research proposal deals with a problem or topic that is to be investigated. It has a variety of formats that vary in their length. Writing a research proposal or synopsis includes an introductory section: problem, hypotheses, objectives, assumptions, method of study, tools, justification and implications of the study. It is written in the present or future tense. It covers four to ten pages. It is submitted for final approval before starting the actual research work. The preparation of a research proposal is significant in the development and pursuit of a research project. It is the planning phase of a research work that is produced in written form to judge its worth.

A research report deals with the results of completed research work. After completing a research work, it is generally produced in written form and is called a research report or thesis. A detailed description of research activities is provided in it. It has a variety of formats and varies as to its length. It is written in the past tense and third person. It is the final form of the research work.

A research report includes usually the following chapters:-

- Introduction or theoretical background.
- Review of related literature.
- Methodology.
- Data collection.
- Analysis of data.
- Discussion of results.
- findings of the study.
- Bibliography and Appendices.

It is also submitted for evaluating its contributions. It serves the purpose of communicating the results of a research work done.

A research summary is the condensed version of the research report. It provides the important aspects of the research report or thesis. The purpose of the summary is to facilitate the readers or other scholars to understand the work done at a glance because going through a research report is very time consuming and difficult. Therefore, the main features of the research report are summarized. It takes the form of a research journal article or paper. It is also written in the past tense and covers six to twelve pages.

A research abstract is the condensed version of the research summary. The main essence of the research work when reduced to a page or para is called research abstract. It includes the title, method, sample and findings of the study. These abstracts are published in the journal as Abstracts.

What is a Research Report?

A research report is a well-crafted document that outlines the processes, data, and findings of a systematic investigation. It is an important document that serves as a first-hand account of the research process, and it is typically considered an objective and accurate source of information.

In many ways, a research report can be considered as a summary of the research process that highlights findings, recommendations, and other important details. Reading a well-written research report should provide you with all the information you need about the core areas of the research process.

Features of a Research Report

So how do you recognize a research report when you see one? Here are some of the basic features that define a research report.

- It is a detailed presentation of research processes and findings, and it usually includes tables and graphs.

- It is written in a formal language.
- A research report is usually written in the third person.
- It is informative and based on first-hand verifiable information.
- It is formally structured with headings, sections, and bullet points.
- It always includes recommendations for future actions.

Types of Research Report

The research report is classified based on two things; nature of research and target audience.

Nature of Research

- **Qualitative Research Report**

This is the type of report writing for qualitative research. It outlines the methods, processes, and findings of a qualitative method of systematic investigation. In educational research, a qualitative research report provides an opportunity for one to apply his or her knowledge and develop skills in planning and executing qualitative research projects.

A qualitative research report is usually descriptive. Hence, in addition to presenting details of the research process, you must also create a descriptive narrative of the information.

- **Quantitative Research Report**

A quantitative research report is a type of research report that is written for quantitative research. Quantitative research is a type of systematic investigation that pays attention to numerical or statistical values in a bid to find answers to research questions.

In this type of research report, the researcher presents quantitative data to support the research process and findings. Unlike a qualitative research report that is mainly descriptive, a quantitative research report works with numbers; that is, it is numerical.

Target Audience

Also, a research report can be said to be technical or popular based on the target audience. If you're dealing with a general audience, you would need to present a popular research report, and if you're dealing with a specialized audience, you would submit a technical report.

- **Technical Research Report**

A technical research report is a detailed document that you present after carrying out industry-based research. This report is highly specialized because it provides information for a technical audience; that is, individuals with above-average knowledge in the field of study.

In a technical research report, the researcher is expected to provide specific information about the research process, including statistical analyses and sampling methods. Also, the use of language is highly specialized and filled with jargon.

Examples of technical research reports include legal and medical research reports.

- **Popular Research Report**

A popular research report is one for a general audience; that is, for individuals who do not necessarily have any knowledge in the field of study. A popular research report aims to make information accessible to everyone.

It is written in very simple language, which makes it easy to understand the findings and recommendations. Examples of popular research reports are the information contained in newspapers and magazines.

GENERAL FORMAT OF RESEARCH REPORT

The writing of a research report is usually the concluding task of the research endeavour. Everything is combined during the writing of the report. This is the point at which the research must be essentially reproduced in written form. It is a matter of communicating what was done, what occurred, and what the results mean in a concise, understandable, accurate and logical manner.

A written format of research work is known as a thesis or research report. All such works may differ considerably in the scope of treatment and details of the presentation. Even then all types of research reports are expected to follow a general uniform, common pattern of format, style and structure. The general format of a report or thesis is an organized format of research work done. It is viewed in three major categories:

A. Preliminaries,

B. Textual Body, and

C. References.

Each category has been outlined further as follows:

A. Preliminary Section

1. Title page

2. Preface or acknowledgements

3. Table of content

4. List of tables (if any).

5. List of figures (if any).

A. PRELIMINARY SECTION

As the preliminaries form a significant part of the whole thesis report, due care should be taken in preparing them. If the specifications are already laid down by some colleges or universities they should be observed. However, a general standard pattern suggested here in each case will be helpful for a researcher.

1. Title Page

This is the first page of a thesis or a dissertation. It includes:

(a) Title of thesis.

(b) Name of the candidate.

(c) Purpose or relationship of the thesis to the course or degree requirement.

(d) College and/or department in which the candidate has been admitted for the degree.

(e) Name of the university to which it is submitted.

(f) Month and year of submission or acceptance.

The title should be accurate, concise and printed in capital letters. It should convey the main theme of the problem investigated and if possible one should give a clue about the method or type of research involved. A specimen of the title page has been presented here.

2. Preface or Acknowledgement

A preface is different from an introduction. It is a brief account of the purport or the origin and the utility of the study for which the thesis is presented. It also includes the acknowledgement of the persons and sources that have been helpful to the investigator. If the researcher does not want to mention anything about the study on this page except acknowledging the debt to others, it will be desirable to use just the title and be restrained without flattery and effusive recognition for help by the family members and others. The preface should not be too long with too many details about the research work or its organization, which can appear in the introduction. The word PREFACE or ACKNOWLEDGEMENT should be typed in capital letters. It should be written impressively.

3. Table of Contents

This section lists all the main chapter headings and the essential sub-heading in each with the appropriate page numbers against each. The listing of main chapters is generally preceded by some preliminaries like preface or acknowledgement, list of tables, list of figures, abstract or synopsis and their respective pages in small Roman numbers and followed at the end by appendices, and Indexes.

Contents should neither be too detailed nor too sketchy. The table of contents should serve an important purpose in providing an outline of the contents of the report. The capitalized title 'CONTENTS' should be the central heading of the page and the capitalized word 'CHAPTER' and 'PAGE' should lead to the numbers of chapters and those of pages respectively on the left and right margins. An example has been given in the tabular form.

4. List of Tables

The table of contents is followed by the list of tables on a separate page. This list of tables consists of the titles or captions of the tables included "in the thesis along with the page number where these can be located. It has been illustrated here. The capitalized title 'LIST OF TABLES' should be the central heading of the page and the capital words 'TABLE' and 'PAGE' should lead to the numbers and those of pages respectively at left and right margins.

5. List of Figures and Illustrations

If any charts graphs or any other illustrations are used in the thesis, a list of figures on a separate page is prepared in the same form as the list of tables except that they are numbered with Arabic numbers. An example has been given here for this purpose.

(B) MAIN BODY OF REPORT OR TEXTUAL BODY

The text of the thesis is the most important section in the organization of the research report. The quality of worth of the thesis is mainly examined. It is the original production of the researcher. The report of the main body serves the function of demonstrating the competence of the researcher. If any sentence, paragraph, or concept fails to serve the single function within a given section or chapter, it is irrelevant. The subject matter of any chapter should be relevant to that point. Generally, the main body of the research reports consists of five or six chapters.

Chapter Names:

1. Introduction or Theoretical Frame Work

II. Review of Related Literature

III. Design or Methodology

IV. Data Collection or Administration of Tools and Scoring.

V Analysis and Interpretation of Data.

VI Conclusions and Suggestions for the Further Research.

Chapter 1. Introduction or Theoretical Frame Work

The main purpose of this chapter is to indicate the need and scope of the study. It consists essentially of the statement of research inquiry. It is reported in the past tense form of work completed. The problem objectives, hypotheses, assumptions and delimitations of the study are reported precisely.

Chapter 2. Review of Related Literature

This chapter is essential in most of the research studies. It presents the comprehensive development of the problem background. It Indicates what has already been studied by others, which has a bearing upon the present study.

The review of literature stresses two aspects: the first is the consideration of the subject matter and it is likely more important than the other. The second is related to methodology and design. The review chapter is devoted to the development of the problem statement or the object of the inquiry. The review is utilized to retain direct relevance to the study at hand. It is the balancing chapter of the research report.

Chapter 3. Design or Methodology of Research

This chapter indicates the line of approach of the study. The first aspect deals with the method, population and sample of the study and the second part provide the tools and techniques employed in the research. It also presents the procedure of the study. The whole plan of the study is discussed in detail in this chapter.

Administration of tools and scoring procedures are reported systematically. The data organization and presentation should be given in this section. It may be reported in a separate chapter of the report.

Chapter 4. Analysis and Interpretation of the Data.

In this chapter analysis and results are reported to draw the inferences of the study. The analysis of data is presented in tabular form and figures or pictorial presentation. The results are interpreted at length. This chapter provides the original work or contribution by the researcher. Communicative accuracy is required in this chapter. The text must be developed to ensure an effective ordering of the evidence.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Suggestions

This is the most important chapter of the report. It requires the creative and reflective aspect of the researcher. The results are discussed to make a more meaningful comparison of the results with the evidence in the review section. It should be woven into the text whenever such a discussion can serve to clarify the points being reported. This is the final chapter of a report, thus findings of the study are summarized and suggestions for further studies are also given. The implications and delimitations of the findings are also mentioned in this section. The main thrust in the section is the answer to the question or solution of the problem. The validity of the findings should be mentioned.

(C) REFERENCE SECTION

This is the third section of a research report. It consists of generally the bibliography and appendices. It is also essential to include a glossary and index for the convenience of the readers. The bibliography, appendix, glossary and index are written on a separate page - in the centre with capital letters.

1. Bibliography

The bibliography is a list of the printed sources utilized in the research work. The publications used for information-yield but not quoted in the report may also be included in the bibliography. The format of the bibliography depends on the footnote style. If the foot-notes reference in the text is numbered to refer to the source in the bibliography, the entries must be numerically listed in the order of appearance in the text. The various format manuals include information on a form for the bibliography. If the list of sources is too large the bibliography should be categorized in the following sections:

- Books
- monographs
- documents and reports
- periodicals and journals
- essays and articles
- unpublished thesis and material and newspapers.

If selected sources are reported the words "Selected Bibliography' should be written. In writing a bibliography the surname is written first instead of the initials, year of publication, the title of the book, publisher's name, place and the total number of pages are also mentioned. The following are the examples of writing bibliography:

(i) Example for single author:

Best, John. W (1977) Research in Education, 3rd ed., New Jersy: Prentice-Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs, 403 pp.

(ii) Example for two authors: The only difference is that the second author's name is written differently i.e. initial first and surname at the end in a usual manner. McGrath, J.H. and D. Gene Watts on (1970) Research Methods and Designs for Education Pennsylvania: International Text-Book Company, 222 pp.

(iii) Example for three or more authors:

Selltiz, Claire et al. (1959) "Research Method in Social Relations', New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 424 pp.

(iv) Example for editor-author: Baros, Oscar K. ed. (1965) The Sixth Mental Measurement', Yearbook: Highland Park,

N.J.: Gryphon Press 1163 pp.

A bibliography reference is written in the following manner and arranged alphabetically to facilitate the readers:

- Name of the author with the last name first and initials afterwards.
- The year of publication is given in bracket after the name of the author and authors.
- Title of the book or the work is written, underlined and followed by a full stop (.)
- Place of Publication followed by a colon (:).
- Name of the publishing agency and publishers and followed by a comma (.).
- Total pages of the book are given.

The above sequence is employed in preparing bibliographical references. It is also used for giving footnotes reference with a little deviation. In the footnote, the name of the author with the Initials first followed by surname or last name is given. The specific page number of the work or the book is given but the total number of pages is not mentioned. Other things remain the same as mentioned in the bibliography. The bibliography pages are also written in Arabic figures in the sequence of the main body of the report.

2. Appendix

An appendix is the important reference materials category. It includes the material which cannot be logically included in the main body or textual body of the research report or the relevant materials too unwieldy to include in the main body. The appendix usually includes tools of research, statistical tables and sometimes raw data (when data were processed through the computer). Even the material of minor importance e.g. forms, letters, reminders, interview sheets, blank questionnaires, charts, tables, lengthy questions, reports of cases (if follow-up or case studies have been conducted). The tools and other material should be placed first and tables at the end and page numbers should be assigned in Roman Numbers (i, ii, xxi). The appendix serves the function of providing greater clarity and authenticity for the readers or consumers of the thesis. The items in the appendix are very essential for a good research report.

3. Index and Glossary

When a research report is published, an index must be given. The index includes authors and subjects and topics or words in alphabetical order.

In the report, a glossary should be provided. It includes the meanings or definitions of some words and terms used in the research report. Some notations symbols or abbreviations should be explained in terms of what they mean or indicate in the study.

MECHANICS OF REPORT WRITING

Research report writing is a highly technical activity. It includes various mechanics for a smooth flow of the thesis. The mechanical aspect has been standardized which must be followed by a researcher in preparing a thesis. Such mechanics involve the following issues:

(a) Footnotes and references,

(b) Style of writing,

(c) Headings,

(d) Tables,

(e) Figures,

(f) Pagination,

(g) Proofreading, and

(h) Binding and submission.

(a) Footnotes

Sometimes it is desirable to quote some authoritative views or statements from written works of others in the research report. It may be necessary for various purposes viz. to review the related literature, to support or to give the rationale for one's viewpoint.

Each quotation must have a footnote or reference indicating the sources from which it is borrowed.

All these sources and authority should be acknowledged both for intellectual honesty and for the validity of one's research.

Footnotes serve many purposes. They enable the researcher to substantiate his presentation by quotations or citations of other authorities, to give credit to sources of material that he has reported and to provide the reader with specific sources that he may use to verify the authenticity and accuracy of the material quoted. The citation or quoted statements are written using single-space whereas the text is written using double-space.

The footnotes are placed at the bottom of the page and are separated from the text by a three cms horizontal line drawn from the left margin. Footnotes are numbered consecutively within a chapter. The recent approach is that references are given in the place of footnotes. The reference of quoted material is inserted in parentheses at the end of the sentence. For example, (4:72) indicates that the statement refers to the bibliography listing number 4, page 72. Another procedure is that all the references are placed on one page at the end of the chapter in the sequence of quoted statements.

Method of Writing Footnotes: Usually the footnotes are given at bottom of the page at the end of the text according to the number of quotations provided on it. The following examples illustrate the style of writing footnotes:

1. Single author

John W. Best. (1977), 'Research in Education 3rd ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliff, 84 p. 2. Two authors:

J.H. MC. Grath and D. Gene Wattson (1970), 'Research Methods and Designs for Education, Pennsylvania International Text-book Company, 124 p.

Usually following three types of abbreviations are employed:

Ibid-In consecutive reference to the same work the Latin abbreviation Ibid (Indicates the same page as an earlier footnote), Ibid p. 36 (same work, but a different page 36) is used.

Qp. Ci.-When a reference to the same is not used in consecutive but after some other references, the Latin abbreviation op. cit. (indicates the work already cited in the report). The surname of the author and op. cit. is used. If the page number of the book is different, in this situation op. cit. and page number along the surname is used. The examples are as follows: Chaube, op. cit (the work cited).

Chaube, op. cit. page 48 (the work cited on page 48).

Loc. Ci. - When a second but non-consecutive reference follows, referring to the same work and same page, the Latin abbreviation Loc-cit (previously cited) may be used. The author's surname along with Loc. cit must be included. An example is given below:

Chaturvedi, Loc. cit (previously cited on page 48).

(b) Style of Preparing Thesis

Important points for writing a research report

The research report should be written in a style that is creative, clear and concise. Therefore the following considerations should be kept in view in writing a research report.

1. The research must be reported in full and its results are subjected to criticism and verification.
2. A research report is always written in the third person i.e. he, she or the investigator. I, we, you, my, our and us should not be used.
3. It is prepared and written in past tense and present-prefect tense because it is reported usually after completion of the work.
4. The scientific language is used rather than literary language. The British-English pattern is followed in writing a research report. The spellings of the words are employed in British English.
5. It is typed printed/cyclostyled on 12 size Times New Romens (thesis size) sunlit bond papers. There should be left a margin of 1-1/2" right margin one inch top and bottom margin should be 1-1/4" in each. The same machine of typing must be used for the typing of a research report.
6. The presentation of matter should be in a floating sequence. There should be consistency in the form and content organization.
7. An appropriate and proper format of a research report should be used.
8. The footnotes, references, tables, figures, heading, subheading and bibliography should be provided in their standard form.
9. It should be typed in double space, quotations or citations should be given in single space. A word should not be split into two aspects due to the shortage of space in a line. A table, figure and diagram should always be given at a single pace. If the table size is large. a large size paper should be used. It should not continue on the next page.
10. A typist with great experience and proficiency should be employed for preparing a thesis or dissertation because it is the responsibility of the researcher that a thesis should be typed in proper form. The correction of major errors is not the responsibility of the typist.
11. Good research reports are not written hurriedly. Even an expert and experienced researcher revises many times before he submits a manuscript for typing. Typographical standards for the thesis or dissertation are more exacting. Therefore, every typist cannot prepare a thesis, there are experts for typing thesis, who should be employed for typing thesis.

Generally, a research report is divided into chapters, each chapter begins from a new page. The title of a chapter is called the chapter heading. The work 'CHAPTER' is written in capital letters, in the centre of the page and the title is placed in three spaces of the chapter. The following is the example:

Conclusion

Always remember that a research report is just as important as the actual systematic investigation because it plays a vital role in communicating research findings to everyone else. This is why you must take care to create a concise document summarizing the process of conducting any research.

In this article, we've outlined essential tips to help you create a research report. When writing your report, you should always have the audience at the back of your mind, as this would set the tone for the document.

Reference

Singh, Yogesh Kumar.

Fundamental of RESEARCH METHODOLOGY and STATISTICS.

New Dehli: NEW AGE INTERNATIONAL (P) LIMITED, PUBLISHERS.

Page No-243 to 260.

Links-

https://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/sites/default/files/docs/learning guide-writingaresearchreport

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research_report

https://www.formpl.us/blog/research-report

https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/RM-12-05

*****