



Unit 11: Research Project
The Impact of Digital Technology on Business Activity

Research Proposal

A research proposal should tell a story about what you are going to do in your research project.

It sets out the central issues or questions that you intend to address.

It outlines the general area of study within which your research falls.

It should identify your current state of knowledge and any recent debates on the topic.

It should demonstrate the originality of your proposed research.

Theme 'the impact of digital technology on business activity'

Title/Objective/Research question

The range of topics could cover the following:

- The stages that organisations have to go through for digital transformation
- The challenges of integrating emerging technologies within organisations
- The implications of digital technology on SME's (small and medium size enterprises)
- E-commerce and how it drives business success
- Engaging with stakeholders through digital technology.

What should your Research Proposal include?

1. A title – this is just tentative and can be revised over the course of your research
2. An abstract – a concise statement of your intended research
3. Context - a brief overview of the general area of study within which your proposed research falls, summarising the current state of knowledge and recent debates on the topic
4. Research questions - central aims and questions that will guide your research
5. Research methods - outline of how you are going to conduct your research, for example, visiting particular libraries or archives, field work or interviews
6. Research significance - demonstrate the originality of your intended research
7. A bibliography.

Crucially, it is also an opportunity for you to communicate your passion for the subject area and to make a persuasive argument about the impact your project can achieve.



Rationale for the Study

- ▶ It is essential to be able to justify the research you are undertaking in your research proposal.
- ▶ Research approach can be divided into two, inductive and deductive categories.
- ▶ If you choose to find the answer to a specific research question(s) formulated at the beginning, you would follow the inductive approach.
- ▶ If you choose to achieve a research objective(s) via testing hypotheses, your research approach can be specified as deductive.
- ▶ You should provide valid arguments.
- ▶ The research needs to contribute to the elimination of a gap in the literature.
- ▶ The research can be conducted to solve a specific problem.

Read more with: [Research Methodology](#) (2018a)

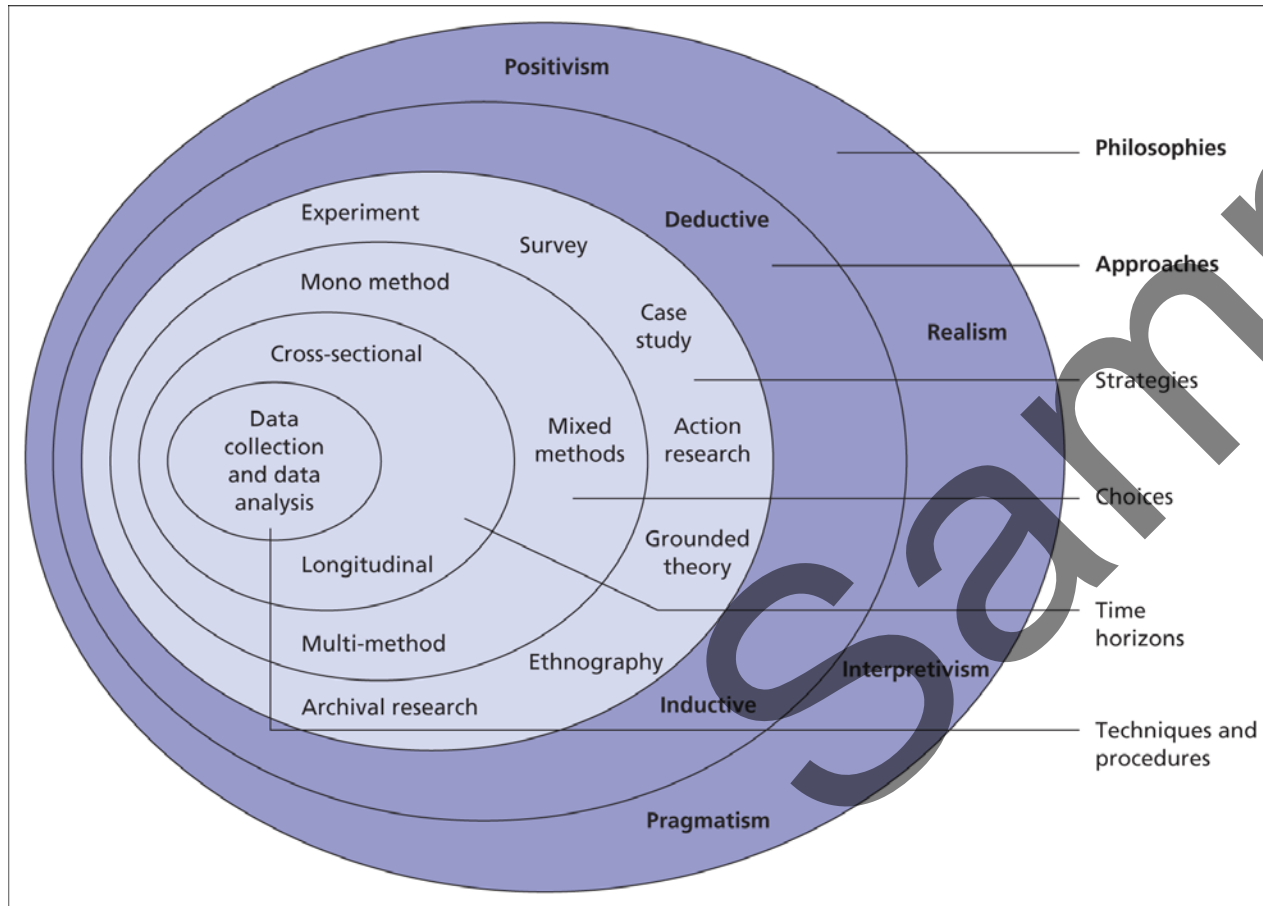


Research Methods and Techniques

- ▶ **Primary research** (field **research**) involves gathering new data that has not been collected before. For example, surveys using questionnaires or interviews with groups of people in a focus group.
- ▶ **Secondary research** (desk **research**) involves gathering existing data that has already been produced.
- ▶ **Exploratory research** tackles new problems on which little or no previous research has been done. Exploratory research design does not aim to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions, but merely explores the research topic with varying levels of depth.
- ▶ **Conclusive research** as the name implies, is applied to generate findings that are practically useful in reaching conclusions or decision-making. Conclusive studies usually have specific uses.



Saunders Research Onion



Ontology philosophy is concerned with the nature of reality.

Epistemology is concerned with addressing the facts by asking what the knowledge is.

Axiology allows the researcher to understand and recognise the role their values and opinion play in the collection and analysis of the research as opposed to eliminating or trying to balance the influence of it.

Read more with: Saunders et. al, (2009)





Primary Research

Research, an art of scientific investigation. It is a methodical search for relevant information or facts on a particular topic. It aims at discovering the answers to questions by applying scientific procedures. It is very helpful in the collection of authentic data. There are two kinds of research, i.e. primary research and secondary research. **Primary research** is one that involves the gathering of fresh data, i.e. when data about a particular subject is collected for the first time, then the research is known as primary one.

Definition of Primary Research

A type of research, wherein the research aims at acquiring new and original data by primary sources, is known as Primary Data. As the term 'primary' implies 'first and foremost' and when it is linked with research, it means an in-depth exploration of facts by the researcher himself and that too with the one to one communication with the people, who know about the subject.

It is a bit difficult to conduct primary research because it requires a lot of time, money, resources and some prior information about the subject. With a view to getting needed information, the researcher has to start from scratch. The research can be performed through interviews, questionnaires, observations, etc.



Secondary Research

The following table presents the main differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods:

Characteristic	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
<i>Type of data</i>	Phenomena are described numerically	Phenomena are described in a narrative fashion
<i>Analysis</i>	Descriptive and inferential statistics	Identification of major schemes
<i>Scope of inquiry</i>	Specific questions or hypotheses	Broad, thematic concerns
<i>Primary advantage</i>	Large sample, statistical validity, accurately reflects the population	Rich, in-depth, narrative description of sample
<i>Primary disadvantage</i>	Superficial understanding of participants' thoughts and feelings	Small sample, not generalizable to the population at large

On the contrary, **Secondary research** is a research method which involves the use of data, already collected through primary research. The main difference between primary and secondary research lies in the fact that whether the research is conducted previously or not.

Read more with: [Research Methodology](#) (2018b)



Definition of Secondary Research

The research which involves analysis, interpretation and summarisation of primary research, is called secondary research. In finer terms, the research in which data is obtained from readily available sources is secondary. As the data available is already analysed and interpreted, the researcher only needs to figure out the data of his choice, i.e. the relevant information for the project.

The data assembled is primarily published in newsletters, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, journals, reports, encyclopaedias etc.



Advantages and Disadvantages

Both primary and secondary research have their advantages and disadvantages.

While primary data is need-specific and quality is also up to the mark, but it is expensive and consumes more time.

Secondary research, on the other hand, is cheap, and the data collection is easy, but it is also possible that the data may be outdated and does not suit your requirements. So, before choosing any of these two, first examine your requirements, sources, costs, etc. to choose the best research type for your project.

Tertiary research is an index or textual consolidation of primary and secondary sources. Some tertiary sources are not to be used for academic research, unless they can also be used as secondary sources, or to find other sources.

Read more with: [Surbhi, S.](#) (2016)



Data Collection

- ▶ Factual information is called **quantitative data**. Information collected about opinions and views is called **qualitative data**.
- ▶ Accurate market research helps to reduce the risk of launching new or improved products.
- ▶ Some businesses opt out of field research and rely instead on the know-how and instincts of the entrepreneur to 'guess' customer requirements. They do this because market research costs time and money. Existing business can make use of direct customer contact to help them identify changing fashion and market trends.

Data Analysis

Qualitative and Quantitative data demand distinct treatment quantitative data analysed statistically and qualitative data analysed thematically.

Statistical analysis-can be descriptive (to summarise data), or inferential (to draw conclusions that extend beyond the immediate data).

Thematic analysis- can include analysis of words, concepts, literary devices, and/or non verbal cues. Includes content, discourse, narrative, and conversation analysis; semiotics; hermeneutics; and grounded theory techniques.



Research Approaches-Deductive and Inductive Research

Deduction emphasises

- scientific principles
- moving from theory to data
- the need to explain causal relationships between variables
- the collection of quantitative data
- the application of controls to ensure validity of data
- the operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition
- a highly structured approach
- researcher independence of what is being researched
- the necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions

Induction emphasises

- gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events
- a close understanding of the research context
- the collection of qualitative data
- a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses
- a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process
- less concern with the need to generalise

Reflective Practice

Donald Alan Schon (1930-1997) trained as a philosopher, but it was his concern with the development of reflective practice and learning systems within organizations and communities for which he is remembered.

Donald Schons interpretation of reflective practice and the act of reflection:

- ▶ **Knowing in action-** Unconscious actions based on past experience, tacit knowledge.
- ▶ **Reflection in action-** Reflect while you in action or working on a particular activity.
- ▶ **Reflection on action-** Reflect back on an activity or research.

Watch this short video: [Meierdirk, C.](#) (2017)



Stakeholders



Read more examples with: [United Utilities](#) (2018)

Who are they? (*internal/external*)

Why would they be interested in the research outcomes? (*Is your intended audience relevant to your research project*)

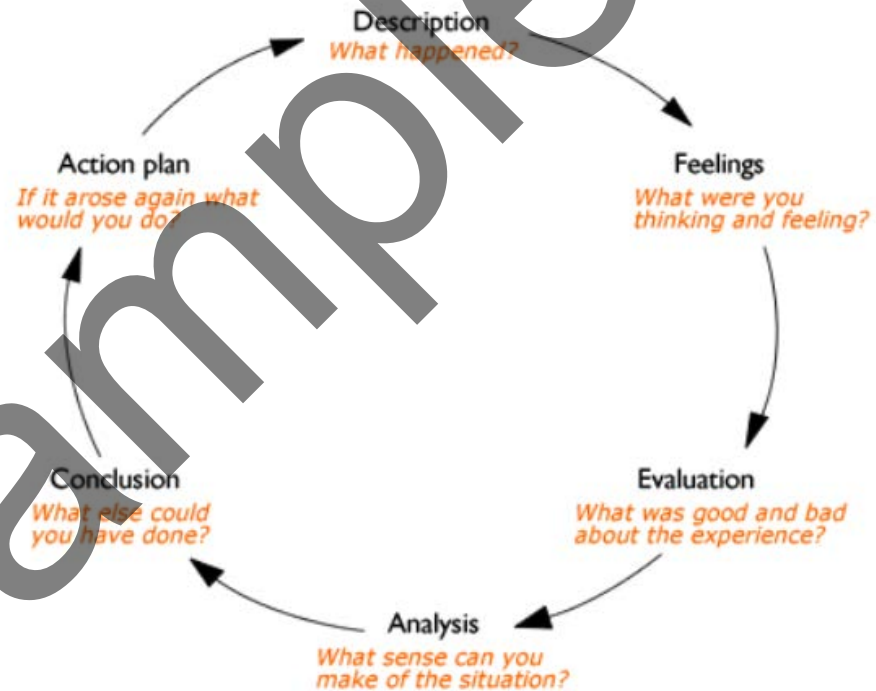
What communication method do they expect? (report, online, presentation)

Reflective Writing

Gibbs' reflective cycle is recognised globally. It encourages you to think systematically about the phases of an experience or activity.

This can be useful in making you think through the phases of an experience or research activity.

The reflective cycle (Gibbs 1988)



Reference List

- ▶ Meierdirk, C. (2017) Schon's Reflective Practice [online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tzjz-l8L1lc>
- ▶ Research Methodology (2018a) *Rationale for study* [online] <https://research-methodology.net/research-methodology/rationale-for-the-study/>
- ▶ Research Methodology (2018b) *Research Methods* [online] <https://research-methodology.net/research-methods/>
- ▶ Saunders, M., Thornhill, A. and Lewis, P. (2009) *Research Methods for Business Students* (5th Edition) Essex, Pearson.
- ▶ Surbhi, S. (2016) *Difference Between Primary and Secondary Research* [online] <https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-primary-and-secondary-research.html>
- ▶ United Utilities (2018) Stakeholder engagement [online] <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/responsibility/stakeholders/stakeholder-engagement/>