

Management Research Methods

Management Research Methods is a comprehensive guide to the design and conduct of research in management-related disciplines such as organisational behaviour, human resource management, industrial relations, and the general field of management. The book provides an overview of the research process and explains the main types of design used in management research – experimental and quasi-experimental designs, correlational field studies (surveys), case studies, historical analysis, and action research. It also describes the methods of data collection – interviews, questionnaires, documentation, and observation – commonly employed by management researchers. In addition, the book examines the issues of reliability and validity, the construction of multi-item scales, and the methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis. It concludes with a practical guide explaining how to report research findings and a discussion of ethical issues in the conduct and practice of research.

Management Research Methods is an essential guide for students, managers and researchers.

Phyllis Tharenou is Dean of Research in the Division of Business, University of South Australia.

Ross Donohue is a lecturer in the Department of Management, Monash University.

Brian Cooper is a lecturer in the Department of Management, Monash University.

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Phyllis Tharenou, Ross Donohue, and Brian Cooper
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PHYLLIS THARENOU, ROSS DONOHUE,
AND BRIAN COOPER



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Preface

In order to conduct sound research in the discipline of management, it is critical that you develop an awareness of research approaches and techniques. The purpose of this text is to foster your capacity to understand the appropriate method of research to undertake and what outcomes you could reasonably expect from that research. By using this text, you will be encouraged to become critical of the use of different techniques and methods applied in this research field.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this text is to develop your understanding of the research process suitable for the management discipline. Having completed this text, it is expected that you will be able to:

- critically analyse, interpret, and understand basic research designs in the management discipline;
- identify management-related issues for research;
- build the capacity to develop research questions grounded in a theoretical and conceptual framework;
- compare the appropriateness and use of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques as a means of investigating and answering research questions in the management discipline;
- outline the process of collecting primary data, and identify, search for, and locate secondary data and knowledge relevant to management research;
- summarise the role and introductory use of computer software packages and facilities in the collection, analysis, and presentation of research findings;
- demonstrate a general understanding of the role of management research in academic, industry, government, and professional and community organisations; and

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- develop academic writing skills appropriate to the discipline for reporting on business management research projects.

Text content

Every day, managers are involved in designing projects, jobs, organisational or departmental structures, and ways of matching individual and group needs in organisations. They base their decisions on existing knowledge resulting from what they or others have learnt from applied or pure academic research. In fact, designing questions to solve management problems is such a fundamental skill that we overlook its significance as a major factor contributing to quality management.

Management Research Methods aims to foster in readers an understanding of the basic research processes and a capacity to identify management-related research questions. Readers will learn the manner in which others have designed and conducted research studies to answer management-related questions, the sources of the main existing literature in management-related studies, the procedures involved in collecting primary data, the purposes of techniques for analysing and presenting data, and the necessary structuring and writing skills to generate a research report.

This text therefore provides a basic introduction to research design in management, types of research designs, data collection and measurement techniques, coding data, reliability and validity, qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, interpreting and discussing results, structuring and writing the research report, and integrating individual research into the overall management literature.

Organisation

This text is organised into six parts. Part 1, *Introduction*, contains Chapter 1, which outlines the research process, discusses foundational issues, defines key terms, and provides readers with an overview of topics discussed more comprehensively in subsequent chapters. Part 2, *Research Designs*, is comprised of chapters examining experimental and quasi-

experimental designs (Chapter 2), correlational field study (survey) designs (Chapter 3), case study research designs (Chapter 4), and action research designs (Chapter 5). Part 3 of the book is focused on *Methods of Data Collection* and includes chapters on asking questions using questionnaires and interviews (Chapter 6) and documentation and observation (Chapter 7). Part 4, *Measurement*, consists of chapters discussing reliability and validity (Chapter 8) and scale development (Chapter 9). Part 5 of the text groups the *Methods of Data Analysis* and contains chapters on quantitative data set-up and initial analysis (Chapter 10), quantitative multivariate analysis (Chapter 11), and content analysis (Chapter 12). *Reporting Research Findings and Ethical Considerations* is the final part and comprises chapters on writing up a qualitative or quantitative project (Chapter 13) and ethical issues and conduct in the practice of research (Chapter 14).

Learning outcomes

The main components involve:

- developing a critical understanding of basic research designs (for example, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, correlational field study designs, case study designs, and action research designs) in order to conduct applied management research;
- developing skills in designing research studies in relation to contemporary management issues, including ethical considerations in design;
- devising or locating techniques to generate or collect primary data, and identifying and locating sources of secondary data;
- developing basic, introductory skills in data collection – for example, interviewing, using questionnaires, observation techniques, and documentation;
- developing skills in the construction of multi-item scales;
- developing an understanding of basic data analysis concepts in relation to answering research questions and testing hypotheses;
- developing skills in writing up an academic research study in formal research report format; and

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- having an appreciation of the overall steps in research design and of integration of the individual research skills that comprise effective research designs in management.

Having completed the text, readers will be able to:

- prepare research questions both from applied and theoretical perspectives for management research;
- conduct computerised literature searches for management research;
- prepare research designs for a range of management research questions;
- design and conduct research in keeping with ethical considerations;
- identify and locate sources for data collection and design questionnaires, interviews, and multi-item scales;
- appreciate the broad purpose and applicability of data analytic techniques for quantitative and qualitative data analysis; and
- develop skills in writing an academic research report.

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