Doing research in business & management: An essential guide to planning your project.
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Abstract

About this book It is now fourteen years since we collaborated in the writing of our first research methods book. The success of that book suggests that research methods is a popular subject with business and management students. The fact research methods is a complex area - one where it is easy to do things, but much less easy to do things right in mind. That was to write a book in a way that came as near as possible to the way in which we taught our students straightforward, and explain things in a way that lost none of the complexity, or academic rigour of the subject. We were passionate about clear communication as we did back in 1997. However, things in the world of business and management reflect those changes. In 1997 the normal requirement was for undergraduate students in their final year, to undertake and collect their own data and was assessed by means of a written project report. This is now often not the case. A complete an assessed research project, they may be told that, rather than collect their own data, they should use purpose (secondary data), or alternatively, write an extended review of the literature. For a second category of students, research work is a research methods module which is assessed by a research proposal. There is a third category, research project at all. We have written this book to cater for all three categories of students. For those undertaking research to be assessed by a written project report, help in all aspects of the research process; from thinking of a topic through to writing the final submission. We have included chapters on using secondary data (chapter 4) and reviewing the literature (chapter 2). Analysing data as an understanding of these is important for all types of research projects as well as preparing a research proposal which is assessed by a research proposal you will find that there is considerable emphasis upon the preparation of writing the research proposal. It may sound strange, but we think that business and management students in the can gain just as much from this book as those in the other two categories. As a student you will spend much of your time which has been scrutinised by the research community prior to publication. This scrutiny is a guarantee of good quality. However, some of what you read may not have been through quite such a rigorous process. Knowing something about the research process you are studying. It gives you the sense of healthy scepticism that is the hallmark of a ur anticipate that you will read this book progressively from chapter 1 through to chapter 8. In fact, you may not necessarily reason we suspect is that you will choose those chapters that meet your own needs. This may be because you are questions about the research process you need to answer, or it may be that your research methods lecturers specify that they stand alone. To some extent they draw inevitably on material from other chapters directly. Where this is the point remains that you can pick up any chapter in isolation and make sense of it. This book is not a self-study text. However, we have included points in each chapter which facilitate an element of independent learning. Each chapter this chapter? This gives you some idea of the chapter content and the approach we have taken to the topic being research called 'Research in Practice'. These serve to illustrate in a practical manner some of the points being made in practical examples in a research methods lecture. Every chapter ends with a summary of the main points in the chapter and placed in 'Key terms definition' boxes to make it easy for you to refresh your understanding of these terms. With the first issue you will encounter in the research process: choosing the right research topic. We suggest some guidance in deciding what constitutes an effective research topic, and consider some topics which may be problematic defining suitable research questions and objectives. The chapter ends with a discussion on what is meant by the use of information technology. The chapter also explains what constitutes an effective critical literature review an
concerned with practical issues concerning gaining access to work organizations from which you may collect your own research data. In this chapter we also consider the issues of self-management you may face in conducting your research, particularly the effective use of resources such as time. The management of other aspects of the research process is also discussed, such as your supervisor, university and those from whom you collect your data. We also help you about some of the pitfalls inherent in the use of secondary data and how to assess its value to your strategy. This involves a consideration of the main philosophies you may adopt and the ways in which they affect strategy, with an emphasis upon the possibility of mixing strategies in one research project. We end the chapter with ensuring that your research results and conclusions are believable. Chapter 6 gets to the heart of the research process by drafting an effective questionnaire and conducting effective interviews in their various forms, including electronic means. We discuss the two types of data: quantitative and qualitative and the ways in which these data may be prepared for analysis and analysis of data is explained with particular emphasis upon the use of different software packages prepared for analysis and analysed. As with the analysis of quantitative data we emphasise the way in which you project to the writing of your research proposal. We explain how the process of writing clarifies your ideas and we emphasise the importance of ‘work in progress’ by constantly revising it. The chapter also includes a discussion on what content the proposal writing style to be adopted. Finally, we suggest some of the criteria against which the quality of your research project book, that’s why it exists! But we also hope that you will enjoy reading it. Doing your research project should be fun!


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