

Business Research Process

BUS 230: Business Research and Communication

Goals and Learning Objectives

- Goals of this chapter:
 - Learn what research is.
 - Learn why businesses want to do research to inform decisions.
 - Learn about types of research.
 - Learn the steps of the research process.
- Learning objective #1: Develop the ability to define a research problem.
- Learning objective #1(a): Formulate research questions and hypotheses that are measurable, well-defined, address the overall problem, are directly related, and reflect the scope of the problem.

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Business Decision Making

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- **Business decision making:** process of developing and deciding among alternative ways of,
 - resolving a business problem, or
 - taking advantage of a business opportunity.
- **Business problem:** a situation in which negative consequences are possible.
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 - **symptom:** the effects caused by a problem, serve as observable clues that a problem may exist.
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Why Research?

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Ambiguous situations:

- Existence of an opportunity or problem may not be obvious.
- Precise nature of the problem or opportunity is not known.
- How to resolve a problem / take advantage of opportunity are not fully clear.
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Good research question / project identifies an *opportunity* or *problem*, evidenced by one or more *symptoms*, and investigates *solutions*.

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Example: McDonald's Coffee

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McDonald's coffee sales are down. What is this?

- 1 Problem
- 2 Opportunity
- 3 Symptom
- 4 Alternative



Problems and Solutions: McDonald's Coffee

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- Symptom: Coffee sales are down.
- What could be the problem?
- What could be the solution?
- How would you figure this out?

The right business decision *depends on the problem*, not the symptom.

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McDonald's McCafé

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Discover the rich,
bold flavor.



Defining the Research Objectives

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 - Term “problem” is used more generally, what don't we know, what question are we going to answer?
 - Not about confirmation or justification.
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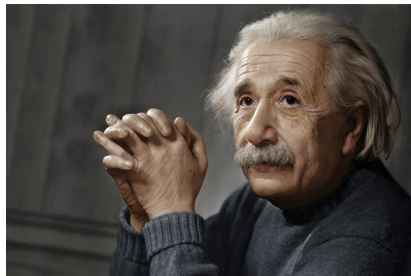
Well Defined Problems

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“A problem well defined is a problem half solved.”

“The formulation of a problem is often more essential than its own solution.”

– Albert Einstein



Methods for Finding Problem

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- Exploratory research.
- Literature review. Often previous (published) research will motivate new questions.
- Pilot study (practice run): small-scale research project that collects data from individuals similar to those which will be used in a full study.
- Focus group: small group discussion in a loosely structured format, where participants are likely similar to those which would be used in a full study.

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- 1 Exploratory research:** identify problems or opportunities, discover alternatives.
 - Purpose is to clarify ambiguous situations.
 - Not intended to provide answers to problems or opportunities.
 - This is only the first step in a business decision process.
- 2 Descriptive research:** describes people, organizations, customers, groups, etc. that are relevant to the business decision (more ahead).
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 - Typically discovered with well written survey questions.
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 - How will an online training program affect workers' job performance?
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- What is the ethnic, racial, and age profiles for viewers of *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central?
- Is there a difference between the amount of cheating between freshman students and senior students?
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- Concomitant variation: simply means two variables are related
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- Example: class size and academic performance is related to another. Do you think they are positively related or negatively related?
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 - 1 Defining the research objectives.
 - 2 Planning a research design.
 - Planning a sample.
 - Collecting the data.
 - 3 Analyzing the data.
 - 4 Formulating conclusions.
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- Forward Linkage: earlier stages in the research process influence how the later stages are conducted.
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- Purpose of collecting a sample:
 - Make inferences about the population, based on results from the sample
 - Objective is *not* just to describe the sample
- First ask: who is population?
 - Might be obvious: A population may be UW-L students
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 - Experimental cancer treatment
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- Obtrusive methods: gathering data is inconvenient or worse to participant
 - Eg: Filling out a questionnaire, interacting with an interviewer.
- Unobtrusive methods: subjects not disturbed, maybe even unaware
 - Counting vehicles passing a billboard
 - Collecting data on customer purchases
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- Did your analysis fail to fully answer the question, what questions remain.
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