

MANAGEMENT & BUSINESS RESEARCH

Sage Publications Ltd

8TH
EDITION

LENA J. JASPERSEN
RICHARD THORPE
DANAT VALIZADE

MANAGEMENT & BUSINESS RESEARCH

 Sage



1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks
California 91320

10th Floor, Emaar Capital Tower 2
MG Road, Sikanderpur, Sector 26
Gurugram, Haryana – 122002
India

8 Marina View Suite 43-053
Asia Square Tower 1
Singapore 018960

Editor: Ruth Stitt
Development editor: Hannah Cooper
Editorial Assistant: Clara Langdren
Production editor: Sarah Cooke
Copyeditor: Martin Noble
Proofreader:
Indexer:
Marketing manager: Elena Asplen
Cover design:
Typeset by:
Printed in the UK: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd, Chennai, India

© Lena J. Jaspersen, Danat Valizade and Richard
Thorpe 2026

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research, private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, this publication may not be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, or in the case of reprographic reproduction, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to the publisher.

Library of Congress Control Number:

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the
British Library

ISBN 9781529672534
ISBN 9781529672527 (pbk)

CONTENTS

<i>About the Authors</i>	ix
<i>Preface to the Eighth Edition</i>	xi
<i>Online Resources</i>	xiii
<i>Your Guide to the Research Process</i>	xv
1 Finding Your Feet in Management and Business Research	1
Introduction	1
The landscape of management and business research	2
Features of a research project	9
Writing a research proposal	13
Structure of the book	19
Conclusion	21
Further reading	21
2 Reviewing the Literature	23
Introduction	23
What is a literature review and what are its main purposes?	24
Types of literature reviews	27
Choosing a research problem	30
Preparing a literature review: finding and recording relevant literature	32
Finding relevant literature	35
Evaluating literature	53
Writing a literature review	61
Conclusion	64
Further reading	65
3 The Philosophy of Management and Business Research	67
Introduction	67
The tree as a metaphor for the research process	68
The philosophical debates	73
Strengths and weaknesses of the main paradigms	88
Mixing approaches and methods	89
Paradigms and research approaches	92
Mapping philosophies and approaches	94
Conclusion	102
Further reading	103

4 Designing Management and Business Research	105
Introduction	105
Types of research design	109
Positivist research designs	111
Sampling	124
Constructionist research designs	135
Case study research	146
Mixed methods	152
Data analytics	158
Common design dilemmas	159
Contributing to theory	164
Contrasting views on validity and reliability	166
Research design template	166
Conclusion	170
Further reading	171
5 The Ethical Researcher	173
Introduction	173
Politics and power in research	174
Access and engagement	180
Ethics	190
Navigating academia	197
Positive mindset	200
Conclusion	202
Further reading	203
6 Crafting Qualitative Data through Language and Text	205
Introduction	205
Crafting qualitative data	207
Secondary textual data	207
Primary textual data	209
Qualitative interviews	213
Preparing for qualitative interviews	220
Conducting interviews	227
Group interviews and focus groups	234
Interview-based mapping techniques	236
Conclusion	239
Further reading	240
7 Crafting Qualitative Data through Observation and Participatory Research	243
Introduction	243
Visual methods	244
Observational research	253
Participatory methods	265

Conclusion	273
Further reading	274
8 Framing and Interpreting Qualitative Data	277
Introduction	277
Preparing and managing qualitative data	280
Choosing a method for the analysis of qualitative data	283
Framing and interpreting qualitative data: ten approaches	286
Computer-aided analysis	322
Quality in qualitative research	325
Conclusion	328
Further reading	328
9 Crafting Quantitative Data	331
Introduction	331
Experimental and observational quantitative studies	332
Sources of primary data	338
Using secondary data sources	346
Working with data: data pre-processing and measurements	355
Conclusion	364
Further reading	365
10 Statistical Analysis of Quantitative Data	367
Introduction	367
Describing and visualizing data	368
Going beyond a sample: statistical hypothesis testing	384
Causal modelling: regression analysis	395
Conclusion	408
Further reading	408
11 Application of Machine Learning in Quantitative Research	411
Introduction	411
Machine learning in business and management research	412
Types of machine learning	415
Unsupervised learning	418
Supervised learning	425
Interpretable machine learning: what is inside a black box?	432
Conclusion	438
Further reading	440
12 Disseminating Management and Business Research	441
Introduction	441
Audiences and outputs	442
Learning to write	448

Writing introductions	457
Literature reviews	458
From methods to findings	460
Discussion and conclusion	463
Academic integrity	467
Dissemination strategies	469
Conclusion	475
Further reading	475
<i>Glossary</i>	477
<i>Bibliography</i>	493
<i>Index</i>	000

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lena Jaspersen is a Lecturer for Innovation and Qualitative Research Methods at the University of Leeds, where she co-leads award-winning teaching on innovation and collaborates internationally on decolonial and reflexive approaches to research. Lena brings a deep enthusiasm for helping students and colleagues ask – and answer – the questions that matter most to them. With a strong commitment to qualitative inquiry, she has published in leading journals including *Organization Studies* and the *British Journal of Management*, and co-authored interdisciplinary books such as *Understanding Global Development Research* and *Design Thinking for Student Projects*. Her research explores collaborative innovation, innovation for low-resource contexts, and visual and participatory research methods. Lena serves on the Editorial Board of the *Journal for Participatory Research Methods*.



Danat Valizade is a Professor of Quantitative Employment Research at the University of Leeds. His research integrates insights from cutting-edge perspectives on causal inference and machine learning to enhance our understanding of the societal, organizational, and political contexts that shape the future of work. Danat has published extensively in leading management, sociology and employment relations journals, contributing to debates on inequalities in the labour market, quality of working lives and the impact of digital technology at work. He serves as joint Editor-in-Chief of *New Technology, Work and Employment* and as an editor of *Work, Employment and Society*. Over the past decade, Danat has taught advanced quantitative methods at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and has led the Master's programme in Data Analytics and Human Resource Management at Leeds University Business School.





Richard Thorpe is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Leeds where he was Professor of Management Development and a Pro-Dean for Research. His experiences of research have been wide-ranging, from his early days as a member of a research team investigating the operation of payments systems in the 1970 and 80s to co-leading a research team investigating small firm growth and development. His experiences have informed his ethos and shaped the way his research has been conducted and disseminated. He has had a commitment to process methodologies that focus action and engagement and have relevance to users. He has also been committed to building capacity within the sector, whether this be through the British Academy of Management of which he was chair or the ESRC where he served on the Training and Development Board. He has published throughout his career in both books and journals.

PREFACE TO THE EIGHTH EDITION

It is with great pride – and a renewed sense of purpose – that we present the eighth edition of *Management and Business Research*. Since the first edition, this book has guided thousands of students through the research process, and with each new edition, we've worked to keep it relevant, accessible, and inspiring. As we enter a new era of research and higher education, this edition reflects both the changes in our global context and our continued commitment to clarity, breadth, and academic excellence.

A great deal has changed since the previous edition. The impact of the global pandemic, the acceleration of digital research practices, and the rise of generative AI have reshaped how research is conducted, taught, and communicated. The higher education landscape itself has continued to grow more global and diverse. Management and business research increasingly straddles disciplines, methods, and cultures – often driven by urgent societal and environmental challenges. Against this backdrop, we have thoroughly updated the content, language, and tone of this book to reflect the reality of today's research environment, and to better support our truly international community of readers.

This edition marks an important moment of transition. It is the first without our much-missed colleague Mark Easterby-Smith, whose contribution to establishing this book was immense. It is also the first to be led by a new generation of authors, Lena and Danat, who are committed to carrying forward the book's spirit while expanding its reach. Their ambition is to ensure the book remains the go-to guide for students and lecturers seeking an approach that is rigorous, creative, and inclusive – equally at home in data analytics with contemporary software packages, as in case study research, narrative enquiry or participatory methods.

So, what have we kept? Our attitude. Our conviction that research can and should be rigorous without being overly dogmatic. It should also be exciting, and when appropriate innovative. Our belief that good research begins with curiosity, is shaped by philosophical reflection, and is brought to life through thoughtful design and analysis. Our iconic tree metaphor remains central – now in its eighth edition and still helping students understand how epistemology, ontology, and values shape research questions and methods. And our practical focus remains as strong as ever. From developing a research question to presenting results, we guide students through every stage of the research process, supported by our increasingly popular Research Plan Canvas – a tool that not only helps students manage their projects but also improves the supervision experience for everyone involved.

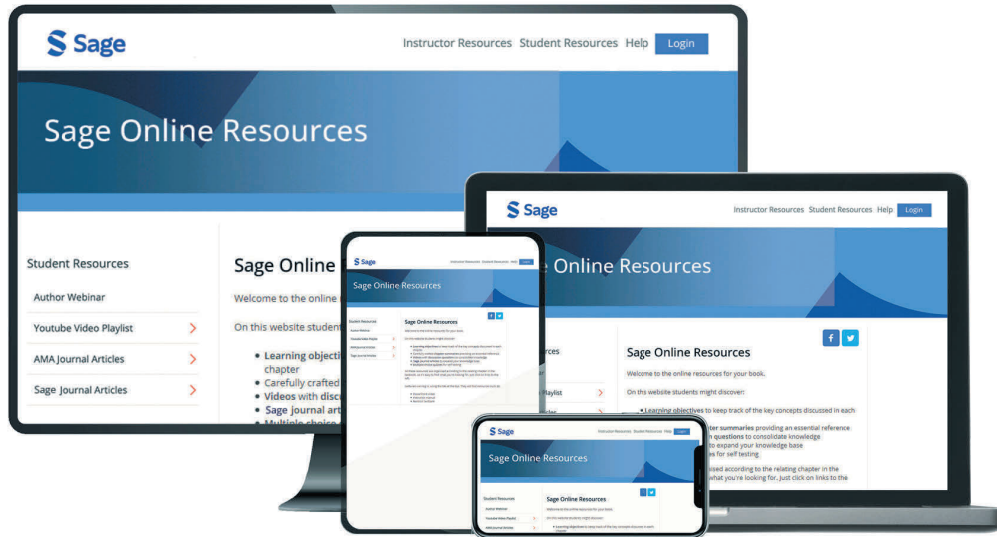
We are deeply grateful to our predecessors, colleagues, and students – whose feedback, questions, and real-world challenges have shaped every chapter. We hope this new edition does justice to their contributions. Whether you are an undergraduate, a master's student, or embarking on doctoral research, we hope this book enables you to reach a new level of insight and confidence.

In preparing this edition, we also explored new tools ourselves. For the first time, we used generative AI in a limited way to support the revision of selected sections – primarily as a writing aid to help rephrase and clarify existing material. All content was carefully reviewed and edited by us to ensure clarity, originality, and alignment with the voice and aims of the book. All intellectual framing, examples, and arguments remain entirely our own, and any AI-assisted phrasing was treated as a starting point – refined through human judgement and editorial care.

And finally, we would love to hear from you. Whether it's through a course review, student feedback, or a passing comment, your voice matters. We look forward to continuing this conversation – with you.

The Authors

ONLINE RESOURCES



Head online to <https://study.sagepub.com/jaspersen8e> to access a range of online resources that will aid study and support teaching. The eighth edition of *Management and Business Research* is accompanied by:

FOR LECTURERS

- A comprehensive **instructor's manual** with step-by-step guidance, ideas for tutorials and seminars, and answers to activities in the book.
- **PowerPoint slides**, which can be adapted and edited to suit your own teaching needs.
- A **testbank of multiple-choice questions** to support assessment.

Set up or use your instructor login to access these lecturer resources.

FOR STUDENTS

- Choose from a range of **practical resources** and **templates** for download, including our research plan canvas, literature review templates, interactive graphs and R tutorials.

Sage Publications Ltd

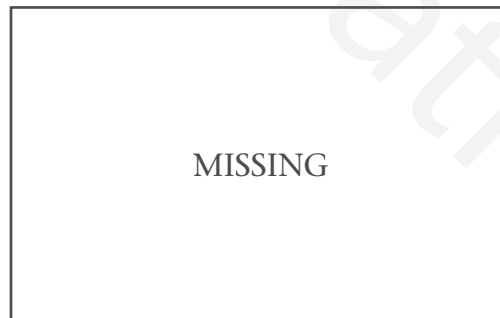
YOUR GUIDE TO THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Understanding the philosophy underlying research designs and methods is a crucial part of any research project.

Chapter 3 of this book, 'The Philosophy of Management and Business Research', outlines how a tree can be used as a metaphor to represent the research process. The tree metaphor is designed to help you understand the importance of research traditions and key concepts.

THE TREE AS A METAPHOR FOR THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The key elements of the tree are the soil, the roots, the trunk and branches, the leaves, and the fruit. Each of these plays a vital role in the growth of the tree and parallels important aspects of conducting research.



- 1 **The roots** of the tree symbolize the research traditions within particular disciplines. The soil in which the roots are anchored is made up from the experience of previous research projects all designed to answer the problematics that exist within particular management disciplines or fields. Your research is rooted in these traditions and builds on existing theory and knowledge.
- 2 **The trunk** transports the nutrients from the roots through the branches to the leaves and fruit; it also provides strength and shape to the tree. The colour-coded cross-section of the tree on p. 71 symbolizes the four main features of a research design: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods and techniques.

- 3 Moving up and along **the branches**, the leaves of a tree collect energy from sunlight, and so represent the collection and analysis of research data. It is the collection of what is already known about the subject (drawn up from the soil), together with new empirical research data collected from the leaves, from your original research study, which enables the evolution of theory.
- 4 **The fruits** of the tree represent research outputs. The form of outputs depends on underlying assumptions and the purpose of the research.

CROSS-SECTION OF TREE TRUNK



- 1 **The inner ring** of the trunk is the densest part of the trunk, and represents the **ontology**, your basic assumptions about the nature of reality.
- 2 **The second ring** of the trunk represents the **epistemology**, the assumptions about the best ways of inquiring into the nature of the world.
- 3 **The third ring** from the centre represents the methodology or *how methods and techniques are combined* to form a coherent research strategy.
- 4 **The outer fourth ring** of the trunk (bark) represents the individual **methods and techniques** that are used for data collection and analysis, such as interviews and questionnaires. The bark is the only aspect of the research that is visible to others but behind it lie many assumptions and decisions about methodology, epistemology, and ontology.

If the trunk is rotten from the inside, the tree cannot withstand the weather in the long run. A research project where ontology, epistemology, and methodology do not align cannot withstand evaluation or critical review.

The leaves represent the collection and analysis of data

We distinguish between three main kinds of data based on the underlying epistemology (second ring in the trunk cross-section), according to whether they are essentially **positivist**, **constructionist**, or **hybrid** (mixed methods) approaches.



MISSING

DELVE DEEPER

In the same way that roots draw nutrition from the soil, research traditions are drawn up and form the basis of the research design, methods and forms of analysis. There are three different possible ontological research traditions (inner ring in the trunk cross-section) explained in Chapter 3 – a **realist** perspective, a **nominalist** perspective and what we term **various other third ways** (a mixture of the realist and nominalist traditions).

Sage Publications Ltd

1

FINDING YOUR FEET IN MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS RESEARCH



Learning Goals

- To explore the landscape of management and business research.
- To examine the purposes and characteristics of different forms of research.
- To understand the key elements of academic research and scholarship.
- To appreciate why research proposals are important - and what to consider when writing one.
- To learn about a tool that will help you to keep track of your research project

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Management and Business Research*! We hope you will enjoy reading this book. Whether you're about to embark on your first research project or are looking to refine your research skills, this book is your companion in conducting management and business research. We will assist you in turning what is often a vague idea into a well-designed research proposal and delivering the research and presenting your research findings with clarity and confidence. However, we need to tell you upfront: this book can't provide you with *all* the answers! This is because research isn't about formulas for what to do or ready-made answers, it is about developing a deeper understanding of how to align purpose, approach, and method in a way that suits *your* research problem or question. Therefore, our aim is to guide you to ask the right questions, sharpen your understanding of how best to develop and conduct your research, and develop the enthusiasm, knowledge, and skills needed to bring your research to life.

This introductory chapter will orient you within the broader landscape of management and business research. We then examine the principal features of an academic research project and relate this to the content of the initial research proposal because this will probably mark the first step on your research journey. We conclude the chapter with an overview of the book to give you a roadmap of what's to come.

THE LANDSCAPE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS RESEARCH

Management and business research is a systematic inquiry that helps academics, practitioners, and managers understand and solve business problems and thereby, contribute to management knowledge. By delivering evidence-based insights into how and/or why things work (or don't work), management research reduces reliance on cultural or historical embedded practice, intuition, or trial and error approaches. As we will see later in this chapter, paying attention to context and to where and how the research was conducted is key to appreciating its potential for real-world relevance and impact. Management and business research covers a wide spectrum of topics and methods, ranging from surveys of the views, opinions, and attitudes of consumers to in-depth studies focused on particular settings to understand the nature of problems within organizations, or the use of large-scale administrative datasets to address issues of productivity, performance, and sustainability. What we study when we conduct management and business research is influenced by changing businesses practices but also by *Zeitgeist* – the prevailing ideas and beliefs of a time, which relate to who we are, our backgrounds and experiences, and what we care about. In the late 1990s, much research focussed on globalization, organizational culture, and strategic management. In the 2000s, we then transitioned to a stronger emphasis on innovation, knowledge management, and global supply chains. The 2010s saw an exponential growth in research on digital transformation but also sustainability and corporate social responsibility. More recently, we witnessed continued interest in sustainability and governance but also, because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, resilience, crisis management, and remote working. Now, we see a growth in academic research, business practice, and political discourse about the transformative potential of machine learning and (generative) Artificial Intelligence (AI).

There are plenty of futuristic scenarios from global prosperity, the ability of AI to cure diseases, eliminate poverty, and find climate change solutions to fears of job displacement and intrusive algorithmic control. While it is difficult to predict the implications of AI revolution for future generations, we are certain that it will depend on how human societies decide to adopt, use, and regulate AI. We are at the very beginning of this process and that is why it is of fundamental importance that we, as business practitioners and academic researchers, reflect on how these tools impact our thinking, knowledge, and understanding of truth more generally.

The previous edition of this book introduced machine learning as a distinctive methodological approach, outlined its core principles, and provided practical examples. The main purpose was to introduce students to what is now universally accepted as a driving force behind a rapid growth in AI solutions. Owing to improvements in data storage and analytics, AI models have come a long way from awkward attempts to replicate simple content to modern language models and generative AI (GenAI) tools capable of producing original content. Yet, these models rely on interaction with our intelligence and creativity for accurate, detailed prompts in order to produce high-quality outputs. For example, we used ChatGPT to create a new illustration of a 'landscape of **management and business research** based on a map of the world' (as included below) but eventually had to give up on it showing New Zealand. It simply refused to include it! This is, of course, a rather random issue – unless you're one of our readers from New Zealand, in which case, we sincerely apologize. Still, the example illustrates that we are only at the beginning of a new phase of co-creation between humans and AI.

management and business research a systematic inquiry that helps to understand and solve business problems and contributes to management knowledge

When used effectively and ethically, generative AI tools can help produce high-quality outputs and save time on routine or repetitive cognitive tasks. However, learning to use AI reflexively – to think critically about where it adds value and where caution is needed – is essential in this age of AI transformation. That’s why this edition incorporates examples and references to generative AI throughout the chapters. At the same time, we are only beginning to understand what ethical use truly means. Ethical questions go beyond factual accuracy or bias – they include how models are trained, whether the creators of the training materials consented to their use, and the environmental impact of large-scale AI computation. These questions are not peripheral but central to critical engagement with digital tools in research. As this book emphasizes throughout, reflexivity and critical thinking are not just academic ideals – they are practical skills needed to navigate the complex and evolving relationship between technology, knowledge production, and responsible research practice.



Figure 1.1 Landscape of Management and Business Research - as imagined by ChatGPT 4.

Types of Research

While there is a huge diversity of research topics, approaches, and methods, at a more fundamental level, we can differentiate four types of management and business research based on their respective purpose. Basic research aims at the development, refinement and testing of general principles and theories that help us to explain social phenomena of relevance to the business and management disciplines. Its focus is on ‘pure’ knowledge creation – it is indeed often called **pure research** – making basic research the most prestigious type of research (at least within academia). However, much of basic research is not really concerned with achieving real-world impact. In contrast, **applied research** involves exploring the value of theory in an applied setting. It aims at delivering outcomes that can be used by policy-makers and practitioners. **Evaluation research** takes this focus on application one step further by making the evaluation of a given policy or intervention the main purpose of the research. It is not really concerned with academic theory, but rather with helping practitioners measure and understand outcomes of particular practices. **Data driven research** is the final, fourth type and is a relatively new addition to the

typology. This approach relies on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to generate new knowledge and draw conclusions. Unlike basic and applied research, instead of starting with a theory, data-driven research begins with empirical evidence that stems from a robust analysis of large volumes of data (both qualitative and quantitative). The aim is to uncover patterns, trends, and correlations and to turn them into actionable business insights. For example, a firm might analyse available data to understand why candidates from specific backgrounds (e.g. ethnic minority women) are under-represented in recruitment and selection. Data insights can then be used to inform executive decisions, design new policies, and justify recruitment key performance indicators or key performance indicators (KPIs).

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the three types of research.

- pure research** for which the primary objective is the development of theory and greater understanding of an issue or a phenomenon without there necessarily being any direct impact
- applied research** focusses on tackling practical problems where the desired outcome will be knowledge about how to solve the problem
- evaluation research** involves the systemic and rigorous assessment of an activity or object
- data driven research** relies on processing and analysing large amounts of data to find the most likely explanation or an optimal solution for business problems

Table 1.1 Four types of research

	Pure research	Applied research	Evaluation research	Data driven research
	Academia ↔ Industry			
Nature of the problem	Basic research seeks to derive new knowledge about social phenomena, and aims at the development of abstract principles and theories with which to explain them.	Applied research seeks to understand and address particular organizational or policy-related problems, with well-grounded guidelines to remedial action.	Evaluation research assesses the outcomes of actions taken by organizations.	Deals with a specific business problem and aims to derive an explanation or solution from the available data.
Goal	To produce new theory (such as abstract concepts, frameworks or models) that helps us to explain aspects of a given social phenomenon.	To explore the value of abstract theory in an applied setting and the creation of knowledge that can be used productively by practitioners (for example, managers or policy-makers).	To provide an accurate account of the outcome of a programme when applied to a business-related problem.	To derive meaningful patterns and associations from the data without a priori theoretical assumptions.

	Pure research	Applied research	Evaluation research	Data driven research
Theory	Theory creation and extension. Selection of an appropriate theory used to guide hypothesis testing.	Creation and/or selection of a theory or theories which together with appropriate practitioner knowledge can help to explore the dynamics of a business issue or problem.	Selection of an appropriate theory to fit the problem, programme or intervention under assessment.	Agnostic to theory but requires to sense-check the insights emerging from the data with existing theories and knowledge.
Methods and techniques	Theory formulation and testing using rigorous academic methods.	Similar to basic research, only in a setting where the implications of the research are immediately obvious.	Use of conventional evaluation techniques appropriate to the question. These usually take the form of (quasi-) experiments.	Using large amounts of data and, typically, machine learning algorithms to learn patterns and associations from data.

Source: Adapted from Miller and Salkind, 2002: 3.

Why do you need to know this? It is helpful to be clear about the purpose, audience and goals of your research before you begin developing your proposal. Do you want to conduct an academic study that aims at a contribution to the literature or rather an applied research project that can inform improvements in your business? As you will come to appreciate, this decision has important implications for how you approach your research, how you will conduct it, and how you will disseminate your findings. What type of research you conduct further depends on what kind of academic or practitioner you want to be (Ellwood et al., 2013), and on where you are in your career.

It is important to understand how one type of research can build on previous research activities (Thorpe et al., 2011). This idea of a knowledge value chain is illustrated by Figure 1.2. At each stage of the knowledge translation process, different contributions can be made to **scholarship**. Please note that we use the word knowledge translation rather than transfer here. Transfer gives the impression that the knowledge produced by academics is just transferred over to the practitioner, whereas translation acknowledges that practitioners make sense of this knowledge in their own terms for it to be truly useful.

scholarship a term given to the development of high levels of knowledge about a particular issue or topic

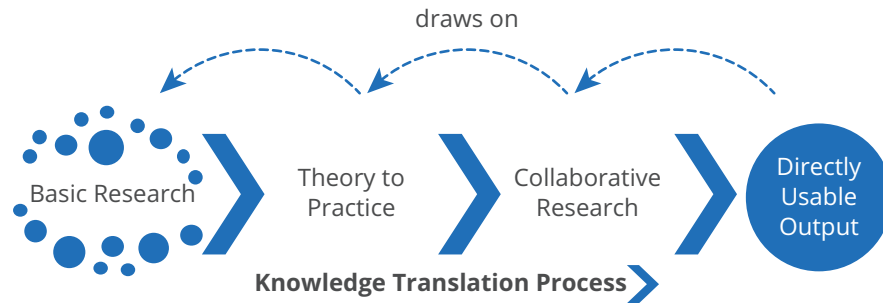


Figure 1.2 Knowledge value chain

Source: Based on Thorpe et al., 2011.

Universities often prefer academics to focus on the first stage of the chain and to conduct pure research, but this might not always lead to the greatest impact. Where researchers undertake work at the second stage, the focus is on how theory can be brought into practice. The third stage places emphasis on collaboration with user groups, which not only helps to define the new research questions but also assists in the dissemination of the research findings. The fourth stage focuses on usable outputs to bring the research to the attention of the widest possible audience.

We believe that the depiction of knowledge as flows through a value chain (and, in practice, through various feedback loops) offers a useful view of how research gets disseminated.

Levels of Research

Research can be conducted at various levels, each differing in the methods used, the research approach, and the time allocated to finding answers. For instance, undergraduate research typically focuses on specific, well-defined topics. Common projects assigned by tutors include small market research or interview-based studies, which tend to be completed during a semester. Research conducted as part of a postgraduate taught degree will normally have greater scope, and more time available – often several months over the summer. Postgraduate dissertations are required to produce contributions to knowledge and, therefore, require a certain degree of originality and critical thinking.

Funded projects, typically undertaken by experienced researchers, involve many of the same decision-making processes as university projects but may also include additional complexities due to the broader scope and impact of the research. Of course, research is not only undertaken by qualified and trained individuals. Research is something that managers do as a natural part of their everyday activity, collecting and analysing data, and drawing conclusions. Consultants also conduct research, and many management and business students go on to become consultants in later life. Data analytics is a rapidly growing field and an attractive career choice for researchers who wish to work outside academia.

A Global Community of Researchers

Management and business research is not just conducted in different ways and at different levels, it is also conducted in different ways in different places despite being increasingly global in scope. This has of course something to do with the phenomenon we investigate. Today, management and business research is conducted all over the world, mirroring the universal presence of business activities across countries and cultures.

Research in Action

International Business research

Hinrich Voss is Chair in International Business Management at the University of Bristol, where he investigates the relationship and interactions between multinational enterprises (MNEs) and institutions. This interest has evolved into a research strand on Chinese and emerging market MNEs (EMNEs) and one on sustainability, business and human rights, and ethics. Hinrich has published in the *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of World Business*, and *Journal of Economic Geography*, among other journals, and was recipient of the 2017 JIBS Decade Award.



Hinrich Voss

As a scholar in International Business, can you tell us a bit more about the field?

International Business - or IB - has its roots in economics, where dominant models did not capture the role of the firm, its managers and employees in international trade and investment. Early IB scholars investigated how firms invest overseas, first examining businesses in the US and then Europe. Later, questions around the operations of MNEs became more dominant, for example looking at the impact of MNEs on the economy, society, and the environment in the home, host, and third countries. The field is predominantly interested in the operations of MNEs. Lately, the field has evolved and is now also concerned with International Business policies and the impacts of MNEs on the geographies they are operating in and beyond.

Is there a difference between international and global business research?

The field of study is referred to as International Business. While global business and IB are terms that are often used interchangeably, one could argue that 'global' research focuses on global issues such as global economic governance or universal strategies or standards of operations and captures business that are truly global active. Researchers adopting an international perspective examine international issues from the perspective of one country or region. Indeed, most businesses internationalize within their home region and then may go on to invest in another region as well, but they do not operate all over the world or globally.

Management and business research has been criticized for being too western-centric. Empirical research published in the major journals has often been conducted in Europe and North America, or at least by scholars based at European and North American universities. What is your take on this?

The field of IB emerged when North American businesses invested in Europe. As a result, many of the concepts and theories used in IB were initially developed in the context

(Continued)

of the so-called 'advanced economies'. This is not without problems as, in the social sciences, concepts and theories are context dependent. For example, what constitutes good leadership or notions of trust can vary across different cultures. Research drawing on well-established concepts, theories, and methods is easier to publish in short journal articles than research that requires a lot of contextualization.

As China and other 'emerging economies' continue to grow, there have been calls for more locally developed, 'indigenous' research and theories. However, core traditional theories - such as why firms exist - have largely remained unchanged and unchallenged. At the same time, studying new contexts and shifting views on globalization have encouraged researchers to revisit existing theories and explore how they might vary across different settings.

Top Tip

Always pay attention to context. Reflect on where research was conducted, by whom and for what reason.

context refers to the setting, circumstances and conditions that shape the phenomena we investigate (empirical context), and also the research we conduct (research context).

Despite its global reach, much of the seminal literature and key theories in management research have been shaped by studies conducted predominantly in Europe and the USA. As Professor Voss notes, this geographical concentration is increasingly seen as problematic because it does not capture the nuances and complexities of business practices in other regions. Currently, we witness a growing call for **decolonization** in management research, which involves contextualizing and evaluating our existing knowledge and theory, with a view to expanding it beyond Western-centric frameworks. Proponents of this approach hope to develop more holistic understandings of business and management in different cultural and regional contexts.

decolonialization involves attending to the context of knowledge production, acknowledging different frameworks of knowledge and where these come from (including the colonial framework), and opening up research to a plurality of perspectives and frames of knowledge.

Exercise 1.1

Thinking about Management and Business Research

- 1 Reflect on what you have learnt about the landscape of management research and create a diagram, picture or mind-map that illustrates the meaning and the scope of management research. Present your diagrams/pictures and explain what they illustrate. Who has created the most creative illustration?
- 2 Consider what business and management phenomena and business problems are of particular interest today, and for the next ten years or so. Conduct some searches online and experiment with GenAI tools to explore different ideas and angles. Identify a research problem that seems particularly important, and that you care about. Present your idea in class and explain why this should be a major topic for management and business research in the 2030s.
- 3 Write a paragraph on why it is important that business and management research is conducted in different countries and settings. Discuss where we still encounter colonial assumptions in our concepts and theories (such as e.g. in modernization or leadership theories), what this means, and what we can do to address this.
- 4 Look up the website of a top journal in your discipline, such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Strategic Management Journal*, or *Journal of Marketing*. You can identify the top journals by using an established list such as the 'UT Dallas journal list', which you can access online. Identify which ten articles in the chosen journal were cited or read most in the last ten years. What are the main themes that are investigated? Where are the authors based? If these articles report empirical research, where and how was it conducted?

FEATURES OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

As we have seen in the previous section, we can navigate the landscape of management and business research by mapping out different topic areas, problems, and contexts, but also by differentiating different types and different levels of research, which imply different purposes and frameworks of knowledge. As we will see later in the book, these have important implications for how we conduct our research. While this book adopts an inclusive perspective to practitioner research and will help you to acquire relevant knowledge and skills, our main focus is on academic research. This is why we start this section with a quick overview of the nature of academic scholarship.

Common to many of these points is the importance of understanding, challenging and building upon existing knowledge. Often this is referred to using Sir Isaac Newton's metaphor of how 'standing on the shoulders of giants' enabled him to see further, thereby acknowledging how the contributions made by researchers before him enabled him to achieve what he did. Arguably, today there are a lot more giants with shoulders to stand on – and for anyone conducting academic research it is therefore essential that they are well acquainted with key literature in their field if they wish to be taken seriously. This is true for research professionals as it is for undergraduates!

Table 1.2 The nature of academic scholarship

Type of scholarship	Overview
Academic work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognized by others working in a similar area
Original	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes a different angle Adopts a different methodology Provides a different explanation
Situated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates knowledge of wider context, e.g. other literatures Attends to the context of knowledge production
Critically reflective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers a critical evaluation of other literatures Demonstrates critical understanding of its own limitations Offers a critical evaluation of the theories generated
Logically consistent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is coherent, not internally contradictory
Methodologically coherent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methods and data collection and analysis support the aims and objectives Offers a critically informed rationale for the selection of particular methods
Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combines theory and data into a cohesive argument
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses primarily an academic as well as a practitioner audience

Source: Adapted from Mauch and Park, 2003. Reproduced by permission of Taylor and Francis Group, LLC, a division of Informa plc.

Academic writing should further have a dimension of *originality*. For example, as researchers we might adopt a different perspective or methodology, with the aim of yielding new insights into a problem. In order to do this successfully, we need to know what approaches have been used before, which takes us back to the giants.

Another key aspect of research requires us to be self-aware of our own positions and biases but also critical of the positions and biases that other researchers might have had before. As we discussed when introducing the issue of decolonialization, all research is *situated* – both in terms of how it relates to previous research and theorizing and also in the way it is derived from or conducted in a particular context.

One of the most important aspects of academic research (if it is to be deemed of high quality) is its *logical consistency* and *methodological coherence*. That is to say, the research should be coherent and consistent in its application of methods and in terms of its findings. It needs to deliver a story that makes sense and delivers a new insight and/or explanation. This aspect of scholarship we will return to in the chapters on philosophy, design, and analysis. For now, let us have a closer look at the aims of an academic research project.

Aims of a Research Project

The aims of an academic research project usually relate to three aspects: the contribution to knowledge, the research methodology, and impact. We believe that students conducting a dissertation project should be aiming to achieve *one or more* of the three elements illustrated in Table 1.3. Let us have a closer look at each of these three elements.

Table 1.3 What are the aims of a research project?

Aim	Description
Contribution to knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem and context: relevant and clearly identified • Theorizing: pattern recognition and theory development • Generalizability: extending conclusions from a study conducted on a sample to the population at large • Transferability: findings can be applied to other settings
Research methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate research design and methodology • Adherence to relevant quality criteria
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications of findings as part of the overall conclusions • Dissemination of findings, knowing how impact might be achieved • Actually bringing about some kind of change or benefit

Contribution to Knowledge

Good research starts with a relevant and well-defined research problem and/or question, which is addressed in a systematic research process. This process needs to deliver findings which constitute a contribution to knowledge. One way we can think about knowledge in academic research is by using a cooking analogy. At the undergraduate level, students study seminal cookbooks (existing knowledge as documented in the literature), and they learn how to find and select a recipe, and the skills needed to follow such recipe. At the postgraduate level, students are then expected to choose the right recipe for a list of ingredients, and the skills needed to combine and integrate different recipes, perhaps add a personal twist. At doctoral level, researchers need to be confident to evaluate the quality of different recipes before they develop their own recipe book (i.e. an original and publishable theoretical contribution). Practitioner researchers are, in contrast, less concerned with recipe books (i.e. theory), as they tend to focus on the use of particular recipes and the optimization of related processes and outcomes. (Of course, having the right recipe book to begin with still makes for a better start ...).

'Theoretical contributions' can be created in various ways, from recognizing new patterns and associations between data, developing and testing hypotheses, and making comparisons between a number of carefully chosen case studies. Usually, students at the undergraduate and master's level are not expected to develop theoretical contributions of universal applicability. However, they need to demonstrate that they understand how generalizable their findings are, and why. We will return to this important point on generalizability versus transferability in Chapter 3 (Research Philosophy), Chapter 4 (Research Design) and Chapter 12 (Writing up).

Research Methodology

There are only few examples of individuals getting a Nobel Prize for their undergraduate or graduate research. After all, research within an academic course should be about training in research! This is why we recommend that if the research is for a university audience, students should write their experience and learning into the final dissertation or thesis as opposed to sweeping all the problems they encountered under the carpet as though they never happened! An undergraduate dissertation may be evaluated as a first test output, a doctoral dissertation as a final apprenticeship piece.

Of particular importance here is learning about methodology. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to really understand the topic of methodology in advance of doing some research, so reflecting on what was done, what might have been done, what went wrong, and what might have been done better is essential. Demonstrate that you understand and can justify the methodological choices you made, and that these are manifest in the way the research has been designed and conducted. Finally, we need to know how to assess the quality of research. As we will discuss later in the book, qualitative and quantitative research are evaluated using different quality criteria.

Impact

Researchers often face conflicting demands when carrying out research projects. There is pressure to deliver parsimonious and abstract theory to contribute to academic debate, while, at the same time, there is an expectation to provide detailed solutions to practical problems. Closer linking of research to societal needs or challenges is again becoming more important as increased emphasis is placed by research funders on relevance to real-world problems. At the same time, academics are often required to publish in leading academic journals, many of which are difficult to access without access to a university library. This means that many researchers must balance the time they spend on academic outputs and the dissemination of findings to practitioners whether through other publications, social media, events, and other means.

It has been argued that undertaking research differently – by researching collaboratively and focusing on problems that really matter to practitioners – could be a way in which management and business researchers can both write scholarly papers and, at the same time, (co-)create ‘useful’ knowledge. As we will discover later, practitioner inquiry, participatory and action research are common approaches to conduct research with the aim of achieving some more direct form of impact or change.

Exercise 1.2

Research with Impact

- 1 As part of the British evaluation programme for academic research in the UK REF 2021, universities submitted ‘Impact Case Studies’ that describe how some of the research conducted at their institution impacts on the real world. These case studies can be accessed by the public and offer some insights into how management and business research can benefit the economy and society at large. Look up the website and select two cases of interest to you.
- 2 Determine (a) what impact was achieved, (b) how it was achieved, and (c) how it was demonstrated.
- 3 Present your example in class. What kind of evidence is provided for the research having achieved an impact?
- 4 Discuss research and impact in relation to the job of academics and different practitioners (for example, Head of Marketing, CEO, Data Analyst). What are the main similarities, and what are the differences?

WRITING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

We are now shifting our attention to *how to conduct management and business research*. As we've seen, it's essential to be clear about the type of research you aim to undertake and the academic goals you aspire to achieve. Equally important, however, is understanding how to effectively plan and execute your research. This next section will introduce you to two useful tools for the development of your research project: the **research proposal** and the **research plan canvas**. Whether you're a seasoned researcher or a student just starting out, these two documents will constitute your roadmap, enabling you to conduct a meaningful inquiry and deliver results with impact. Let's start by examining what you need to know to turn your research ideas into a research proposal.

research proposal a structured plan that outlines what a research project intends to investigate, why it is important, and how the research will be conducted

A proposal, at its core, is a plan designed to persuade an audience – whether you're proposing a research project or something more personal, like marriage! When you propose a research project, you need to outline what it involves, and convince your supervisor, committee, or funder of the value and soundness of the research and your plan for carrying it out. All research, whether completed by an academic, a student, or a practitioner, should begin the development of a research proposal. The proposal is an opportunity for the researcher to carefully consider the framing of the research to be undertaken, what has gone before, why this new study is important, what new knowledge could potentially be revealed, resolved, or explained, and what methods or approaches would give the best results. Even when there is no formal requirement to produce a research proposal, the exercise of writing one can help you to draw together what you already know and make more explicit your ideas. There is some truth in the saying that 'you don't know what you think until you see what you say'! So, for many, writing a proposal offers the opportunity to begin to see how elements of the research come together, and to seek feedback from others. The example in the Research in Action box on page 00 offers an insight from a practitioner-turned-academic on the differences between academic and business proposals.

Elements of a Research Proposal

Although the requirements for research proposals differ from institution to institution, there are some common elements. After a title and an introduction, all research proposals should identify clear research questions and objectives. They should provide a summary of the background of the research (usually in the form of a literature review) and articulate both the conceptual framework and the design and methodology of the research. A good research proposal should further emphasize the significance of the proposed research without denying its limitations and potential ethical issues. Finally, a research proposal should not only convince the reader of the usefulness and desirability of the research but also of its feasibility. A detailed work plan, often structured in the form of successive work packages and milestones, accompanied by a research timeline, is part and parcel of any research proposal. In this way, research proposals are not that dissimilar to business proposals, as discussed by Tony Morgan in the box below.

Research in Action

Writing Proposals for Business and Academia



Tony Morgan

After a successful professional career as IBM UK's technical leader for the consumer industry, Tony Morgan returned to academia, where he works as Associate Professor in Innovation Management Practice at the University of Leeds. Tony is passionate about driving innovation and has written books on collaborative innovation and design thinking for student projects.

In your experience, what are the main differences between business and academic proposals?

Creating a well-written proposal is a key communication skill. The major differences between a business and an academic proposal are likely to include the objectives and the audience. However, many of the important factors will be the same, such as clarity

of objectives, ensuring the proposal meets these objectives and is written in a manner that is easy to read and consume.

The objective of a business proposal is often to 'sell' a compelling idea, solution or service to a client. The audience will usually consist of key client sponsors (decision-makers) and stakeholders (decision influencers) in the client organization and sometimes third-party organizations, for example advisory companies.

What makes a good business proposal?

A 'winning' proposal must demonstrate a clear understanding of the challenge or opportunity being addressed. It must show how and when the challenge will be addressed and articulate the net benefit and business value to the client.

The proposal must be easy to read, so key points can be quickly extracted by busy business executives and subject matter experts.

In competitive situations, a business proposal must also differentiate the submitting organization by communicating how the idea, solution, or service is better than the competition's. Including a 'wow factor' can give the proposal greater impact and make it stand out from the crowd.

Top Tip

Have empathy when writing a proposal. Put yourself in the reading glasses of the receiver. Verify what you'd wish to be included if you were that person.

Table 1.4 Elements of proposals

Elements of a research proposal	Elements of a business proposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title • Abstract • Introduction • General research question and objective • Literature review • Conceptual framework (theory and hypotheses) • Specific research questions • Methods • Significance • Limitations • Ethical issues • Work packages and timeline • References • Appendix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title • Summary • Situation appraisal • Objectives and deliverables • Value of achieving objectives (benefits) • Process and timeline • How to evaluate success • Timing • Resource commitments • Credentials • Appendix

Exercise 1.3

Proposal Writing

- 1 What are the functions of each of the elements of an academic research proposal? (Why do we need an introduction? What is the literature review for? Why is it important to highlight limitations? etc.)
- 2 In pairs, or on your own, draw up a list of the similarities and differences between writing proposals for business and research. Take notes and develop a visual illustration, table, or figure that illustrates these differences.
- 3 Look online for some examples of student research proposals in management and business studies. Study the examples carefully. Are all main points covered? Does the author convince? If so/not, why?
- 4 Tony Morgan argues that good proposals are built on empathy. He highlights the importance of understanding your audience. In practice, this can sometimes be difficult to achieve. Have a look at the scenarios outlined below. Make a list of activities you can pursue to find out more about the intended audience.
 - You are a new business consultant, and you are asked to write a proposal for a consultancy for a vegan fast-food chain you know relatively little about. They are interested in ways to enhance their online order and delivery service.
 - You plan a research project on women leadership in the IT industry. As part of your research, you would like to observe team meetings, but you need to establish field access.
 - You are asked to write a research proposal for a dissertation project on sustainable supply chain management in the apparel industry in China.

Research Questions and Objectives

When developing a research proposal, one usually starts with a research problem. Greater clarity in relation to the focus of the research is then achieved by setting out the main research questions to be investigated and describing the aims that will link to the outcomes of the research. Expressions such as 'to investigate' or 'to study' are not aims in themselves and should be avoided. We discuss clear research questions and objectives in the following Chapter 2. At this stage, let's just emphasize that the aims of a given research project need to be both clear and consistent with the method or methodology adopted; in other words, they need to be capable of being achieved using the proposed methods. Please note, overly general or ambitious aims can be very problematic. There have been many occasions when supervisors have been heard to remark that, for this research to be completed, six researchers would need to work on it for a lifetime! Therefore, ambition only works to your advantage when you can convince the reader that what you seek you can deliver.

Building on Previous Work

Understanding the literature in the area is an important prelude to a research project. We need to know what work has been undertaken on the subject before we can determine the focus of our study and how we may be able to conduct it. As noted before, when developing their research, most academics 'stand on the shoulders of giants'.

At every level – undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctorate – there will generally be an expectation of evidence that a proposal is grounded in a good understanding of the relevant literature. Evidence should be produced to indicate that there is a question to be answered. While nobody can read everything written on a topic, a simple test would be to reflect on whether the research proposal would convince someone with a good knowledge of the area that the individual has a sufficient grasp of the relevant current literature to claim that a topic warrants further research.

Research Design and Methods

The third important element of a research proposal is a concise statement of the design to be adopted and the methods that will be used to meet the objectives. It is essential that the proposed design and methods of enquiry are appropriate to answering the research question(s). Figure 1.3 illustrates the balance that should be struck between the **research design** and the most appropriate methods to meet its requirements; the research questions asked within the field; the research it builds on; the setting or context in which it is conducted; and the skills and resources available to the researcher to carry out the research, undertake the analysis, and communicate the results.

research design a strategy that lays out the principles of the research methodology for a given study. It articulates methods and techniques for all stages of the research process and justifies their appropriateness in relation to both the research question or hypothesis and the research context

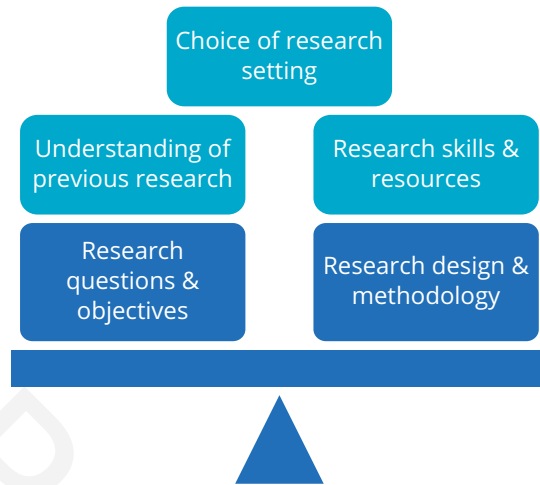


Figure 1.3 Finding the right balance

The Research Plan Canvas

Developing a research proposal is a crucial milestone in launching a research project, but it's important to recognize that academic research is often more fluid than it seems. As any experienced researcher will tell you, the decisions made in the early stages of your proposal are just the beginning – they will likely evolve as your project progresses. For instance, further engagement with the literature might lead you to refine your research question, or new opportunities for data collection might arise unexpectedly. At times, your initial plans may need to be rethought entirely, especially when unforeseen challenges, like the global disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, force you to pivot.

Just because our ideas, aims, and methods may change, this does not mean that working on a proposal is in vain. The key contribution of a proposal is that it documents our key decisions so that we can communicate our research plans and receive feedback.

However, whenever we make changes to the plans documented in our proposal, we need to *think through* what the implications are for our research project as a whole. In this book, we therefore recommend the development of an initial research proposal alongside a shorter *Research Plan Canvas*, which you continuously update as your project develops.

On **PLACEHOLDER**, you can download a template version of our Research Plan Canvas, which you can use for your own research projects.

The concept of a Research Plan Canvas is inspired by the widely used Business Model Canvas, originally developed by Alexander Osterwalder (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2005). Akin to the Business Model Canvas, and Punch (2016) 'Questions to Guide Proposal Development', the Research Plan Canvas will help you to identify, keep track of, and align the key elements of your project, from understanding your audience to the *what* and *how* of your research, and *why* this is worth doing it (in your eyes and that of your audience). The Canvas will also help you to identify potential trade-offs and draw your attention to gaps and inconsistencies.

Research Plan Canvas: Title, Author, Date














<p>Research Problem/Question What is the problem I want to address? What do I really want to know?</p> 	<p>Phenomenon What is the phenomenon I am investigating in this project? What is the unit of analysis?</p> 	<p>Setting/Context In what context am I investigating this phenomenon?</p> 	<p>Paradigm & Assumptions What is my paradigmatic stance? What are my underlying assumptions? What lens(es) am I using?</p> 	<p>Limitations & Challenges What are the known and accepted limitations and what are the potential problems and weaknesses that need to be addressed? What ethical issues could arise?</p> 
<p>Motivation Why is it important to address this problem? Value/benefits?</p> 	<p>Literature What literature does this build on? What literature do I need to review? What type of literature review do I want to conduct?</p> 	<p>Theory What is the role of theory in this research (framing/applying/testing/extending/creating theory)? What theories are relevant/drawn upon/discussed? Theories that might be 'in use' by practitioners? Any theoretical ideas I want to pursue.</p> 	<p>Research Design What is my overall design? What types of data and data collection methods: census, sampling strategy, administrative data, real-time data, big data, (co)created data, lived experience? What are my data analysis methods?</p> 	<p>Resources & Skills What resources and skills do I need to succeed? How much time have I got for the different stages of the research process?</p> 
<p>Target Audience & Outputs Who is this research for? What academic or professional community, specific users such as a company or policymaker? What will be the main outputs of this research? (Thesis/article/book/practitioner report/podcast... or change in mindset of decision makers through their involvement?)</p> 	<p>Team With whom am I conducting this research? Who are the stakeholders involved? (Co-investigators? Supervisors? External partners and potential beneficiaries? Coproduction with users?) What are their roles, interests, and responsibilities?</p> 	<p>Contributions What literature/debate/intervention do I want to contribute to and how? Theoretical/phenomenon-related/methodological/practical contributions? Generalizability/transferability?</p> 		

Figure 1.4 Research Plan Canvas

Using Generative AI for Writing Research Proposals

Generative AI, particularly large language models like ChatGPT that we used to create Figure 1.1, are becoming increasingly popular digital writing assistants. Indeed, they can be an invaluable tool to sharpen and proof-read your narrative and critically reflect on the structure and wording of your proposal. But you must use it **ethically and thoughtfully** to maintain academic integrity and produce high-quality work. With detailed prompts about the main focus of the study, its theoretical basis and novel contribution, generative AI can outline a tentative structure that you can then take away, refine, and reformulate. Once you have a full draft of the proposal or its specific sections, you can ask AI to proofread your text. It is perfectly ethical to ask ChatGPT or other AI assistants to evaluate your writing and suggest how the text can be improved. Modern generative AI models are generally reliable when it comes to paraphrasing your original text and reducing the word count, a problem commonly faced by academic researchers. Yet, you should always double-check the outputs to make sure your original ideas have not been distorted.

In writing research proposals and academic texts more generally, AI cannot replace your critical thinking, creativity and analysis. Texts fully generated by AI are often standardized and devoid of your personal, critical outlook that is essential for high quality academic and practical research. While generative AI is getting better at summarizing existing academic work, it only does so in a very basic, superficial manner often misplacing, misinterpreting, or generating false references. Reading, summarizing, and critically reflecting on existing literature remains your responsibility and is still one of the most important elements of an academic endeavour.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book follows roughly the research process in that it starts with the research proposal (this chapter) and methods for conducting a literature review (Chapter 2). As all research is anchored in more fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge, Chapter 3 examines the philosophy of management and business research. A good research design is fundamental to achieving high quality research, and so in Chapter 4 we have brought together an analysis of design principles and applications in different areas of research. By developing an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of these different perspectives, you will be able to appreciate how different philosophical assumptions directly impact on research design, and how the quality of the design proposed might also be judged differently. Chapter 5 then focuses on the research process and some of the principal challenges faced by those conducting management and business research. The chapter provides guidance on how to achieve access to research settings and engage with research participants. It demonstrates the importance of being aware of the politics and power in research. The chapter also provides a comprehensive introduction to ethical issues and how they can be detected and addressed.

Qualitative Methods

Chapters 6 to 8 form the qualitative research section of this book, diving deep into the richness of qualitative data and its analysis.

Chapter 6 introduces the essence of qualitative data, exploring both primary and secondary textual sources. We look at how data is generated through language – whether in real-time

interactions like interviews or through asynchronous exchanges, such as emails or online forum discussions. A key focus of this chapter is the **research interview**, where we discuss how to effectively conduct interviews to gather rich, detailed insights into participants' experiences and understandings.

research interview directed conversations evolving around questions and answers about a certain topic, whereby rich and detailed information can be gathered from respondents on their experiences and understandings

Chapter 7 shifts the focus to the creation of qualitative data through observation and interaction. We showcase various participatory tools that can help researchers engage with participants and elicit meaningful responses. We highlight important ethical considerations and invite you to reflect on your role as a researcher – how your presence, perspectives, and decisions influence both the research process and its outcomes. This kind of self-awareness, known as reflexivity, is essential when conducting qualitative research and will be a recurring theme in your journey as a researcher.

Chapter 8 concludes this section with an overview of methods for the analysis of different qualitative data, explaining how these link to different traditions and will enable you to identify meaningful patterns in your data. We examine how patterns within the data can be identified. While a systematic approach is critical, we also encourage flexibility and creativity in qualitative data analysis. The chapter offers an overview of various analysis tools, guiding you in selecting the right software for your qualitative research project. Lastly, we emphasize the dynamic relationship between theory, data, and analysis in qualitative research, and discuss key criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research.

Quantitative Methods

Chapters 9 to 11 detail the opportunities, expectations, and methods that would be required if you were to decide to undertake research within a quantitative tradition. **Chapter 9** builds on the foundations laid down in Chapters 3 and 4, and focuses on causal, hypothesis-testing research alongside data-driven quantitative research design. The advantages and disadvantages of primary and secondary sources of quantitative data are discussed. We then consider the key stages of questionnaire design and give some examples of useful, open-source, secondary data repositories.

The next two chapters cover more specific analytical techniques and methods. Here, we follow the same principle as everywhere else in the book, by focusing on understanding why particular methods are used rather than simply knowing what to do. Comments in a research proposal such as 'analysis will be undertaken using statistical methods' or 'the analysis will be undertaken using R' will detract from the credibility of the research. Like SPSS, R is one of many software packages for analysing quantitative data, and it almost never matters what software is used to achieve a result. What matters much more is the kind of analysis to be undertaken and how that analysis enables you to answer the research questions specified in the proposal.

Chapter 10 discusses causal **inference** focusing on statistical significance, its uses and misuses. Statistical significance is a fundamental concept that allows you to generalize from a relatively small sample to the general population. The chapter highlights the importance of

referring to theory to ensure the **validity** of empirical findings. It provides detailed guidelines for conducting basic tests of statistical significance and constructing more sophisticated multi-variate models.

inference drawing conclusions about a population based on evidence from a sample

validity the extent to which measures and research findings provide an accurate representation of the things they are supposed to be describing

Chapter 11 covers data analytics, a type of quantitative research design where algorithms are utilized to draw meaningful insights from raw data. The chapter provides a gentle introduction to some of the most popular machine learning techniques. We include it in the book because data-driven decision-making is the present and future reality of much business research and practice.

Chapter 12 covers strategies and techniques for writing up management and business research. This final chapter provides guidance on the requirements of different forms of output, most importantly a student dissertation or thesis. It examines how research outputs are evaluated and also addresses the important issue of plagiarism and how it can be avoided.

Exercise 1.4

Engaging with Management and Business Research

- 1 In her poignant autobiography, novelist and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston writes that 'research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose' (Hurston, 1942: 143). In groups of three or four, discuss this statement with a view to your understanding of management and business research. Why are we curious? What is the purpose? Why is it important that research is 'formalized'?

CONCLUSION

As you come to the end of this first chapter, please take a moment to consider the direction you want your research to take. This book is here to guide you through the many choices ahead and will help you navigate the complexities of conducting meaningful research. Your work will build upon the foundations laid by those before you, pushing the boundaries and inspiring fresh perspectives. The next generation of management researchers, which includes you, will play a crucial role in shaping innovative approaches and practices that meet the evolving demands of today's landscape of management and business research.

FURTHER READING

A collection of chapters for readers who are exploring areas for critical research in business and management:

Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H. (eds) (2003) *Studying Management Critically*. London: Sage.

The following article discusses the role of relationships between practitioners and academics in generating and disseminating knowledge across 'the Great Divide':

Bartunek, J.M., Rynes, S.L., and Daft, R.L. (2001) 'Across the Great Divide: knowledge creation and transfer between practitioners and academics', *Academy of Management Journal*, 44: 340–55.

This is a step-by-step and very readable guide on how to conduct a research project:

Bell, J. and Waters, S. (2018) *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers*, 7th edn. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

As it says on the label, this book provides a succinct overview of theories of management and organization, and it is reasonably priced. It adopts a critical view in the sense that it has a slight preference for the perspectives of those who are managed, rather than the managers themselves:

Grey, C. (2021) *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Studying Organizations*, 5th edn. London: Sage.

This book illustrates the value, practicalities and challenges of using data driven, analytics focused research in organizations. With a specific focus on workforce analytics, the book provides a conceptual rationale for using analytics and practical case studies underpinned by the analysis of real-world organizational data:

Edwards, M.R., Minbaeva, D., Levenson, A., and Huselid, M.A. eds, 2025. *Workforce Analytics: A Global Perspective*. London: Taylor & Francis.

A useful guide to developing research proposals:

Punch, K.F. (2016) *Developing Effective Research Proposals*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

For students who are more comfortable with Chinese or are planning to conduct research in a Chinese context, we recommend the following book with additional explanations in Chinese alongside English-language content, making it a helpful companion for navigating key concepts:

Xian, H. and Meng-Lewis, Y. (2018). *Business Research Methods for Chinese Students: A Practical Guide to Your Research Project*. London: SAGE.