

Interpretative validity refers to how good the interpretation is. Is the expressed interpretation the correct one? For example, is the explanation regarding technological flexibility suggested above valid?

Theoretical validity refers to the adequacy of our suggested 'theory' on explanation. For example, based on a substantial research effort, a researcher suggests an explanation (a theory) of how firms cope with external uncertainties. Does the suggested theory hold true?

By *generalizable* we mean to what extent the findings from a study can be generalized to other settings. For example, the suggested explanation of how firms cope with external uncertainties was *based* on observation among small firms in one industry. Can the explanation be generalized to hold true also for large firms or firms in other industries?

Validity claims: It is not enough only to talk about validity. Validity must also be *demonstrated*. For example, in a study you claim that 'a power game was going on in the company'. The term 'power game' must be explained (on conceptual definitions, see Chapter 3). Moreover, evidence that the claimed power game really was going on must be reported. Validity claims are responses to the question: How can I trust you?

Analysis of cross-cultural data

Multi-country or multi-cultural data can be involved in quantitative and qualitative research. Analysis of data in these situations becomes more complex due to the existence of multiple units of analysis. In this case the analysis can be conducted in different phases: first within-country analysis and then cross-country analysis. In international research the purpose might be not only to understand each country/market involved but also to assess the extent to which strategies or decisions can be standardized across different markets (Craig and Douglas, 2000).

In qualitative research this issue is particularly important, as one way of handling cross-cultural differences is to collect data through less-structured research. In international business research the focus shifts from within country to between countries variables. Thus country becomes the unit of analysis, and it becomes very important that variables chosen in each country are representative of the country. Figure 12.3 explains the unit of analysis discussion.

In cross-cultural or international business research equivalences of the unit of analysis need to be considered. Moreover, it should be clearly defined and explained so that it is not mixed up and is distinct from other units. Figure 12.3 explains that we need to consider three distinct aspects (Craig and Douglas, 2000: 142-3): the *geographic scope* of the unit, the *criteria for membership* in the unit, and the *situational context*, meaning the particular socio-cultural setting.

Geographic scope helps us to define geographic boundaries of the unit we intend to study. In international business the most commonly used unit is country, and most secondary data is collected on a country-by-country basis. Increasingly,

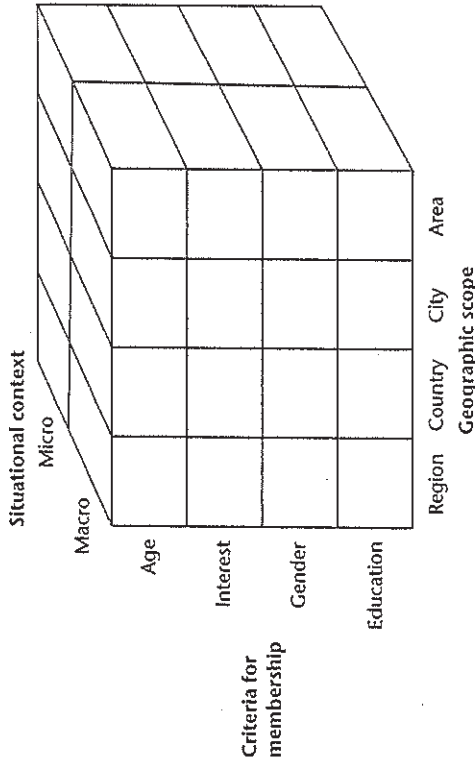


Figure 12.3 Defining unit of analysis

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however, research is being done on a regional basis, such as the European Union, NAFTA or ASEAN. Sometimes we also undertake research in cities and/or in particular industries (e.g. airlines, banking or retailing) in a certain country or due to the size of the countries/companies (e.g. measured as GDP, revenue or number of employees).

Criteria for membership has to be determined for the unit to be studied. Whether it is individuals or organisations we need to decide some criteria for their inclusion. For individuals it could be age or gender, and for organizations it could be businesses or non-profit organizations. For organizations, we could include criteria such as size, industry, origin, internationality, etc.

Situational context can range from broad socio-cultural settings (macro-context) to a specific situation (micro-context). At the macro level our geographic unit is a country, and we should identify country characteristics that might influence the behaviour of the respondent. In the same manner, if we are studying cities, we need to differentiate between rural and urban areas. Moreover, whether we conduct the study in business settings or in social (e.g. at home) settings might have some influence on the data collected.

This means that we need to analyse data within each country and across different countries. Moreover, we need to examine the structure or relationship between variables. Craig and Douglas (2000: 292-3) present this issue as illustrated by Figure 12.4.

There are two phases in data analysis. In the first phase we analyse data within each country. In the second we examine and compare data between the countries involved, to find out similarities and differences. In the first phase relationship

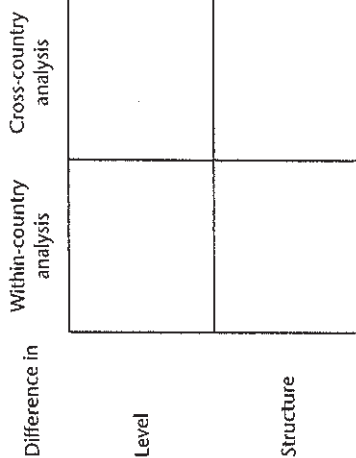


Figure 12.4 Cross-country data analysis

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between different variables is studied (e.g. factors influencing consumer behaviour). In the second stage we compare the findings from different countries. In qualitative research, the observations in each country might be based on subjective judgement and experience. While comparing data from different countries we can apply relatively objective techniques to find out the similarities and differences.

Here we can focus either on level of variables or on the structure of variables. For level issues, we need to find out whether there is a significant difference in a certain variable in the countries compared. If there is a difference then the researcher tries to find out why there is a difference. In structure issues we try to find out whether there is a difference in the relationship between two variables between the countries compared, for example whether high income and gender influence a certain consumer behaviour for a certain product. This type of analysis is more complex, and the complexity increases with the number of variables. Analysis in this case demands more sophisticated techniques and clear definition of the unit of analysis that is consistent across countries (Vijver and Leung, 1997; Douglas and Craig, 1997).

The level of variables between countries can be analysed using cross-tabulation and other statistical techniques. Techniques such as multiple regression and analysis of variance are useful ways to analyse data in international business research (see Chapter 11).

Use of computers in qualitative research

Analysis of qualitative data is tedious and time consuming. However, over the years various software programs have been designed to facilitate data analysis. For example, known by the acronym CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software), a number of programs have been developed over the

past 15 years. A well-known computer program for qualitative research is QSR NUD*IST (see also Chapter 11).

Weitzman and Miles (1995) published a comprehensive and useful guide to computer programs for qualitative data analysis. They categorize the programs into four basic types:

- text retrievers: these programs are useful for finding words, phrases, etc., in one or several data files;
- text-based managers, designed to organize, sort and make subsets of text systematically;
- code and retrieve programs: these are useful for dividing text into segments by theme or category and assigning codes to these;
- conceptual network builders, helpful in building networks and examining semantic relationships between codes.

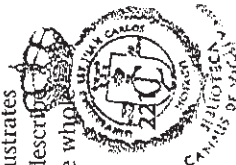
The various programs are rather general, being useful for several of the above tasks. Such programs are designed to do what the researcher might wish to do manually. Software packages are particularly useful where there is a large quantity of data requiring coding, annotation, linking, search and retrieval, development of data display, and so on.

A *word of warning*: to make proper use of such programs, the researcher must of course know how to analyse data and have command over how to use the program. Probably even more important is to have an intimate personal knowledge of the data, so that appropriate trigger codes and responses can be inserted at the outset of data interpretation. Such knowledge can best come from personal involvement in the entire process, from data collection through to analysis.

Case studies and triangulation

Triangulation refers to the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Through triangulation we can improve the accuracy of judgements and thereby results, by collecting data through different methods or even collecting different kinds of data on the subject matter of our study. The discussion on validity (in Chapter 5) is particularly relevant here. Sometimes to enhance the validity of our research we need to collect or analyse data through triangulation. In cases where correctness or precision is important it is quite logical to collect information through different methods and angles. The following story illustrates what we mean.

Three blind men were asked to describe an elephant by touching or feeling only a part of it. We can well imagine what they could have described by touching different parts of an elephant such as a foot, an ear or a trunk. This illustrates that, in many cases, one method alone cannot be enough to explain or describe a phenomenon, and we need to use a multi-method approach to get the whole reality.



The use of multi-methods or triangulation is not new and can be traced back to Campbell and Fiske (1959), who argued that to ensure validation one should use more than one method. The main advantage of triangulation, however, is that it can produce a more complete, holistic and contextual portrait of the object under study. In the case study method this is particularly important as you need to check and validate the information you receive from various sources. For example, you can check the performance of a firm or a project, claimed by the interviewee, from annual accounts or archives or by interviewing another manager or company representative.

Moreover, it is quite useful to use qualitative methods in a pilot study to build hypotheses or propositions and then to use quantitative methods to test these hypotheses. We can call this a two-step study. There are some problems with triangulation. For example, sometimes it can be difficult to judge if the results from different methods are consistent or not. A second problem arises when the different methods come up with contradictory results. Sometimes it is possible that the researchers prefer or emphasize one method over another: for example quantitative versus qualitative. However, all research methods have advantages and disadvantages when it comes to different research problems. Our conclusion is that triangulation or the use of a multi-method approach on the same study object can be useful even if we do not get the same results. It can lead us to a better understanding or to new questions that can be answered by later research.

Triangulation is particularly useful in international business research to check out the method bias. Using multiple diverse methods to examine the same phenomenon and checking for consistencies enhances our confidence in the analysis and results. Here we could compare the data and results obtained through an experiment and through interviews. Convergence of results obtained through these different methods will enhance the reliability and validity of our results. We could also compare results obtained through qualitative methods with statistical analysis.

Note

1. This section builds on Spiggle (1994).

Further reading

- Ghauri, P. (2004) 'Designing and conducting case studies in international business research', in Marshan-Piekkari, R. and Welch, C. (eds), *A Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for International Business*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 109–24.
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 2nd edn, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sinkovics, R.R., Penz, E. and Ghauri, P.N. (2005) 'Analysing textual data in international marketing research', *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1.

Questions

1. What do you consider to be key characteristics of qualitative research?
2. Explain what is meant by coding. Also explain the role of coding in analysing qualitative data.
3. What is meant by suggesting that qualitative data are 'attractive nuisance'?
4. What do you think are the main advantages and disadvantages in departing from theory in qualitative research?
5. How can triangulation make our research more reliable?

Exercises

1. You wonder whether young women and young men differ in their evaluations and behaviours in their purchase of a new car. Suggest how you would design a study to explore your research problem. Also explain what data you will gather and how to do this to solve your research problem.
2. Assume you decide to gather information through un(modestly) structured interviews. Prepare, conduct and tape-record one such interview. Transcribe the interview, read it, code and analyse it.

Writing the final report

After completing the data collection and data analysis, we have to put the research problem, the data collected and the findings into a logical, consistent and persuasive report. Fortunately, as with research proposals and methodology, research reports conform to a fairly standard format. In many cases an oral presentation is also made to present your findings and research. We deal with both of these aspects.

Purpose and importance of a written presentation

Before starting to write the final report, we should consider its purpose and to whom it is addressed. Research reports typically start with an executive summary providing the important points from the report. After the summary, a preface is normally written where we explain the course of the study and thank individuals and organizations who have been helpful in data collection, funding, etc.

If the purpose of presenting a report is a Master's thesis, it may look different from a report that is presented to a company/manager on a specific issue. In the latter case, the report can be very concise and to the point, so that the manager can easily comprehend it and use the results in decision making. On the other hand, if the report is a thesis or project work, it has to be more detailed and written in a systematic manner. In this case all the details regarding problem formulation, data collection, the method of analysis and conclusion should be presented. In fact, a report written to 'sell' an idea to management should also be very detailed and convincing, with regard to concepts used, comparison with present systems/ideas and the benefits of the new system/ideas (Sekaran, 1992). We believe that a report needs to be detailed, argumentative and convincing in both cases. Another type of report is an academic paper written with the purpose of getting it published. We will deal with this type of report separately.

You must also realize that your report, project work or thesis will be assessed according to the criteria set by your institution or supervisor. Before working on the final report, you must revisit these criteria. Several authors (Bloom et al., 1971; Easterby-Smith et al., 1991; Saunders et al., 2000) provide educational objectives for different levels of research and report. For lower levels, your report should demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the topic. At a higher level,

your report should demonstrate not only that you have knowledge of the topic but also that you can apply it to a concrete problem, having analysed the situation. At a still higher level, in addition to the above you have to demonstrate that you can synthesize, evaluate and analyse to draw conclusions.

The process of writing up a report is complex and sometimes tedious work. The report should be concise, and the findings and arguments presented in a convincing and consistent way. It is also important to present the research methodology and results in such a way that the reader can judge the validity and relevance of the findings.

A report needs to be argumentative and convincing, whether it is to be submitted to a company or as an academic thesis.

We should give an account of our methods' weaknesses and strengths and the necessary details so that readers can make their own judgements on the validity and reliability of our study and findings. We should convince the reader that we have, first of all, done our job as a researcher, investigating a certain problem area with systematic data collection and data analysis, presented in a logical, easy-to-read and understandable report. Secondly, we must show that we have followed the technically correct and consistent method expected of a qualified report; that our hypotheses and/or conclusions are properly supported by existing literature and empirical evidence, and that there is a logical congruence between different parts of the report. We should also be concerned that our report gives due credit to earlier studies we have used and that we refer to all the sources in a proper manner. These two aspects are very important in qualified report writing and are therefore treated separately in this chapter.

Guidelines

13.2.1 Audience

The best reports are those that are written with a particular audience in mind. The contents, the length, the terminology used, the focus and the presentation of data and results all depend upon the audience. In writing a report for a company/manager the tone should be concise and efficient and the writing and usage of terminology should be according to their background, considering how much they already know about the topic. In this case, an executive summary becomes very important, as it provides a summary of the report in a direct and brief manner. Managers can then go into the report fully or into only those parts of it they feel appropriate.

In the case of a thesis, you need to check the rules and regulations of your particular school or supervisor. The guidelines provided later in this chapter on the structure of the report are the most commonly used. The audience influences

the overall presentation, as some audiences are distracted by extensive use of tables and figures and by footnotes. In this case, you have to decide which tables and figures are necessary in the text and which should go into appendices, where those who are interested can look at them. The restriction on number of pages also influences the above. Quite often there is a maximum page limit but no minimum page limit, which shows that a concise report is more useful than an extensive one. In any case, the audience determines the type, the level and complexity of the report. Researchers must make every effort to acquaint themselves with the specific preferences of their audience. They should not consider these preferences unalterable, but any deviation from them should be made with reason and not from ignorance (Boyd et al., 1989; Churchill, 1999).

13.2.2 Good communication

It goes without saying that the report should be readable. Scholars often suggest that the report has to be clear, concise, coherent, focused, lively, exciting, meaningful and without pedantry (Sekaran, 1992; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The main idea is that the text should provide a clear explanation and should entice the readers, making them interested and curious to read the whole report. The assumptions and methods should be clearly stated and explained. There should be a natural and smooth flow from one part of the report to the next. Many researchers use a pedantic writing style to impress the reader with their sophisticated concepts and terminology. In our opinion, such a report does not communicate well. The reader should flow through the report without any hindrance or being stuck in understanding difficult terminology.

The format of the report enhances its readability; the use of headings and subheadings takes the reader through the report step by step. The reader should understand what you are saying and where you are going. As a good communicator, you can 'programme' the reader's mind in a way that he or she reads your report as you want it to be read or as you believe readers would like to read it. Do not expect your reader to read between the lines; you have to use direct and simple language.

You can 'programme' a reader's mind as to how he or she reads your report.

13.2.3 Language and flow

It is not easy to write clear and simple sentences. As Elliot (1980: 18–19) says:

Think what you want to say. Write your sentence. Then strip it of all adverbs and adjectives. Reduce the sentence to its skeleton. Let the verbs and nouns do the work. If your skeleton sentence does not express your thought precisely, you have got the wrong verb or noun. Dig for the right one. Nouns and verbs carry the guns in good writing; adjectives and adverbs are decorative camp followers.

Using difficult language and terminology does not really impress the reader but influences the readability of the report adversely. Good writing does not mean setting obstacles for the reader to overcome.

Sentences and paragraphs should be kept fairly short. The flow of arguments should run logically through the report. A concept or a terminology should be explained when first mentioned in the report.

In our opinion, the fewer the words the better the report. Several short sentences are better than one long sentence. Do not torture the reader by explaining your difficulties in collecting data or interviewing prominent business executives; just say what you have done and how you have collected your data. If you are using a concept to explain a certain situation, use the same concept every time you want to explain that situation. In verbal language, when we explain a certain situation we repeat facts and stories to make sure that the listener has heard and understood what we mean. This is not necessary in written language, and you should always avoid repeating things. Reports and theses are never judged according to their length or weight.

As stated previously, people have a tendency to use difficult words and terminology to impress the reader. We strongly recommend using simple terminology and easily understandable words. Always keep the reader in mind. The business executive who is expected to benefit from the project report might not be aware of textbook or other professional terminology. In the final report always use complete sentences; they should have at least one subject and one predicate and should stand alone as having meaning.

When starting a new subject or a new issue or aspect, use a new paragraph. Normally we do not start a sentence or a paragraph with 'But', 'Because' or a number. If it is necessary to start a sentence with a number, it should be expressed in words: for example 'Fifty per cent' instead of '50 per cent'. Whatever rules are used, the most important aspect is to be consistent in writing, spelling (for example UK English versus US English), terminology, usage of headings, and figures and tables.

Using difficult language and terminology does not really impress the reader.

The report, especially the descriptive part, should be written in the first person. Some people believe that impersonal language presupposes objectivity and suggest writing in the third person. We, however, advise that the third person observer/researcher be referred to as 'I' and that participants or respondents, etc., be referred to as 'we' or 'them'.

13.2.4 Form and style

The question of form and style is often more a question of likes and dislikes or individual styles than a matter of rules. However, the following are common mistakes and should be avoided (Grønhaug, 1985: 71):

- ▶ *Telegraphic style.* This means that a report is written in sentences which are not connected to each other with any logical consistency.
- ▶ *Long and complicated sentences.* Reports are sometimes written in long sentences that are not comprehensible unless we read them several times. Some students also have a tendency to use difficult and complicated words. Writing short and concise sentences is, however, a good way of writing reports.
- ▶ *Usage of terminology and differences between spoken and written language.* When using textbook or other terminology, you should be sure that the reader will understand their use in the same way. It is quite common for students to use a spoken language form in their report. In report writing you should follow the rules of writing and avoid using a spoken or slang version.
- ▶ *Shortage of tables, figures or other illustrations.* You should try to simplify, highlight and complement the important and interesting parts of the report with figures and tables or other illustrations. It is important to point out that these tables and figures should not replace the text. They are used to complement or further explain the text or the point being made.

Our experience as researchers is that we have to write and rewrite reports at least four or five times before they are in a final shape. This is the working draft, and after writing this you should go through the material once again, along with the data and findings, to see if there is something that has been missed and which should be included in the report. Then read the draft again and start correcting it as you read. Add the information you think is missing and delete the information you feel is irrelevant. At the same time, check that the information is correctly placed; if not, reshuffle the text. This process is repeated three to four times before you have an almost-ready report. Finally, you should check the language and ideally have someone else read the report. It is quite common that, having read and re-read the report several times, you become blind to drawbacks or mistakes.

Before submitting the report, have someone else read it through.

The appearance is very important. It does not matter how well written a report is if it does not look good; it leaves a bad impression on the reader. Here the title page, the quality of typing, the margins and the structure of the report are very important. It is easier to read double-spaced reports than single-spaced ones. It is common practice to use double spacing and indent the first word of each paragraph. In the case of single-spaced reports, double-space between the paragraphs to mark the new paragraphs. Regardless of whether the report is single-spaced or double-spaced, the following documents should always be typed single-spaced: letters, displayed quotations, footnotes (but use double spacing between them), tables and figures (Murphy and Hildebrandt, 1988).

13.2.5 Headings

The headings serve as an outline of a report and should be clear, meaningful and consistent. We often number headings to highlight different heading levels, but numbers are not essential. It is possible to use different styles of type to make these levels explicit. One way is to use the heading style used in this book. The most important aspect is not to use too few levels of heading as the reader should be able to differentiate easily between different levels of headings and subheadings.

Structure of the report

The following outline is a commonly used format for a research report. The chosen format is, however, dependent upon the reader for whom the report is prepared. Our common format is as follows:

1. Title page
2. Table of contents
3. Executive summary
4. Introduction and problem statement
5. Theoretical background
6. Methodology
7. Findings or empirical study
8. Conclusions and recommendations
9. Footnotes
10. Bibliography or references
11. Appendix.

13.3.1 Title page

The title page should indicate the topic of research and the name(s) of the researcher(s) (authors). Secondly, it should indicate the name of the organization where the report has been prepared and for what programme, if appropriate; for example, 'MSc Thesis for the Manchester Business School'. If it is a research project ordered or demanded by a company or any other organization, the company's or organization's name should also appear on the title page. Moreover, if the project has received any financial help from an institute other than the school or university, this name should also appear on the title page.

13.3.2 Table of contents

The table of contents lists the contents of the report with page numbers. Here, the headings and subheadings are presented. The reader should be able to differentiate the headings and subheadings both in the table of contents and in the

	Page no.
PREFACE	i
SUMMARY	ii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Purpose of the study	3
1.2 Research problem	3
1.2.1 Research questions	4

Figure 13.1 An example of a table of contents

report (see Figure 13.1). The table of contents should also include tables and figures with page numbers.

13.3.3 Executive summary

A summary provides the important aspects of each part of the report. It is often stated that a summary should be *self-sufficient* because most of the readers, especially business executives, often read only the summary (Churchill, 1999). The summary thus should highlight the whole report. However, it should be based on the main report and should not include any new material. The data we have collected, presented and analysed in our report are often buried in the middle or at the end of it and have to be brought forward in the summary so that the reader can quickly and without any trouble perceive the message of the report (Bolsky, 1988).

The length of a summary depends upon the complexity of the original material. Normally we should reduce material in a summary to, at the most, 5 per cent of the report's full length or to a couple of pages. An ideal length is two to three pages.

13.3.4 Introduction and problem statement

An introduction to a research report should present what the study is about and what the purpose of the study is. This background will provide the reader with the necessary information to understand and comprehend the rest of the report.

The objectives and the purpose of the study should be clearly mentioned in this section. After reading this section, the reader should have complete information on what the report deals with, why we are studying a particular problem and what can be expected in the rest of the report. Here all the unfamiliar terms should be clarified and the concepts of the research problems defined. Some account of what has already been done in this research or problem area is presented. This section should also explain how the report is organized, so that the reader's mind is programmed accordingly.

13.3.5 Theoretical background

Here the theoretical background to the problem area as well as to the study design is presented. If we are using hypotheses or a priori assumptions there has to be proper reasoning with the help of previous studies and findings. Depending upon the research orientation, as covered in Chapters 2 and 3, the importance of theory and its use is different. It is therefore important to be consistent in our report and we should check this section with our research orientation and design.

13.3.6 Methodology

In this section we inform the reader of our research design, whether it is exploratory, descriptive or causal, and why a particular design is chosen. We should state the design requirements and how they are met. Different research designs require different methods, as explained in Chapter 5. The research designs, exploratory, descriptive or causal, would also suggest whether we should use qualitative or quantitative methods for our data collection and analysis. This then influences the structure of our report. We have to ensure these consistencies.

We should also inform the reader about our primary and secondary sources of data along with arguments and justifications. When discussing the primary sources, we should explain how we collected information and discuss our population and sampling, and in the case of in-depth case studies, how the cases were selected and why. When writing about data collection, we have to explain what we have done, how we did it and why we have used this particular method. We should also explain which methods of data analysis have been used; if statistical methods, why these particular methods; if qualitative methods, then how we operationalized different concepts, from where the models came, and what types of conclusion could be drawn through this type of analysis.

13.3.7 Findings

The empirical study, what we have found out from our data collection, is presented here. This section is often a major part of the report as the findings are presented in detail with supportive tables and figures. Here we have to refer back to our research questions or hypotheses and present our findings in accordance

with these in a systematic, structured and logical manner. The findings, tables and figures should follow a systematic, chronological or psychological order. The most important job is to prune out irrelevant information and findings.

How to arrange and present the findings of our study is a difficult issue. There are no rules for this, but we should refer to the purpose of the study and the report when it comes to what we want to communicate and to whom. We suggest that researchers should be systematic and choose one of the following methods of presentation:

- *By order of occurrence.* Here you present the findings chronologically. This is particularly suitable when you are working with case studies or when you have a process or longitudinal approach: for example, when explaining the process of negotiations and factors influencing this process (see, for example, Ghauri, 1983).
- *By criteria or topics.* You may use your own headings – for example from the questionnaire or problem statement – as a format to present the findings. You may have some criteria on what affects what – for example independent and dependent variables – which can be used as headings to present the findings. You might number your research questions or hypotheses 1, 2, 3 . . . and then discuss each of these in the same sequence.
- *By order of location.* You can present your findings from different parts of the country or world in different sections and use these as headings: for example findings from the south, east or central parts of the country, or findings from different countries or continents.
- *By order of importance.* Quite often it is advised that you present findings in order of importance. The most important and interesting findings should be presented first, followed by the less important issues. When listing criteria, you can list them according to their importance.

13.3.8 Conclusions

In this section evaluated facts are discussed, but these evaluations should only be made from the data presented in the earlier sections; the author's biases and desires should not influence these conclusions. You should state your conclusions systematically for each study objective, research question or hypothesis. The best way is to refer back to the objectives or research questions and check whether or not you have provided conclusions for each of these. If the data collected and the analysis do not provide enough information or support required to draw conclusions, you should clearly state that. It is important to be specific and concise. We suggest the following format for conclusions:

'Based on our findings our conclusions are: . . .'

or

'We have found that: . . .'

Recommendations for future research or implications for business executives should be based on the findings and conclusions. There should be a logical congruence between conclusions and implications or recommendations. If recommendations or implications are given throughout the report, for example while presenting findings, these should be summarized and highlighted in this section. We suggest the following format:

'The implications of CI are: . . .'

13.3.9 Footnotes

As mentioned earlier, the value of a report also depends upon argumentation and sources. Proper credit to these sources is given in two ways: the bibliography or references listed at the end, and the footnotes or references given throughout the paper. The footnotes specifically and individually document the facts and opinions referred to in the report (Berry, 1989).

In most reports and theses, footnotes are used primarily for three reasons:

- footnotes giving credit to the source or earlier study we have used;
- footnotes directing the reader to another section of the same report, also referred to as cross-references;
- footnotes to explain, discuss or provide additional information on a particular concept or issue.

In research reports a separate reference list or bibliography is provided. In that case we only need to mention the surname of the author and year of publication or source in footnotes: for example, 'Grønhaug, 1985'. These references may also be bracketed within the text at the appropriate point, as in this book.

The type of information that should be documented is a difficult question. A fact that a reader already knows need not be documented: for example, the year when the Second World War ended. However, facts that are not common knowledge have to inform the reader how we arrived at a certain point. It is also important for the sake of intersubjectivity. For example, the result of a study on the buying behaviour of a certain segment needs to be documented with the year of the study because the buying behaviour might change at different times. The behaviour can change due to awareness about environmental pollution, oil crises or any other major incident.

Whenever we bring in and use a paraphrase or quotation from another source it has to be documented with a footnote, together with the page number in the book. This goes for articles or any other source we have used: for example, 'Grønhaug (1985: 18)'.

There are several forms of footnotes. One form is to use a single numeral typed as a superscript at the end of the quotation or information to be documented. The same numeral is then repeated at the bottom of the page or at the end of the report, with the source or explanation. Where the footnotes are given at the

bottom of the page, they are normally consecutive (1, 2, 3), and new numbers allotted for the next page starting with 1. When footnotes are gathered at the end of the report, consecutive numbers are used for all the footnotes in the report. Even for page-to-page footnotes, one can use consecutive numbers for the whole report.

The most important rule is to use the same method throughout the report; different forms should not be mixed up in the same report. When using the form where footnotes are presented at the end of the report, these should come before the list of references or bibliography. Some authors advise using different forms for different types of footnotes: for example, footnotes where we only want to document and mention the source might be gathered at the end, while footnotes where we need to explain or discuss a concept should be mentioned at the bottom of the page (Berry, 1989). It is advised that one consistent method should be used for all types.

There should also be internal consistency. For example, if footnotes are given at the bottom of the page, they should be consistently separated from the main text with double spacing (double the spacing in the text). The footnotes themselves should be in single spacing, while giving double space between two footnotes. The margins and numbers should also be consistently at the same place, not only on the same page but throughout the report. For cross-referenced footnotes or references to other parts of the same report, you should avoid referring to later pages, as the reader is not yet aware of what is coming. On the other hand, it is acceptable to refer to previous pages: for example, 'see item 2, p. 10'.

13.3.10 Bibliography or references

Bibliographies are lists of books (and other material) on a particular subject and should include *at least* all the sources that have been cited in the report. A list of references, on the other hand, includes *only* those sources cited and should not include books and other sources consulted but not used. All references should be listed in alphabetical order with authors' surnames coming first. If there is no author, the issuing organization's name should come first in the alphabetical order: for example the European Commission or, in the case of an *editorial* in a periodical, *The Economist*. In the case of a reference to an *article* in a periodical, the author's name should come first.

The most popular format is to place the first word of the first line (e.g. surname) at the left-hand margin, while the rest of the lines are indented by several spaces. Remember, however, that for footnotes, especially those at the foot of the page, the opposite system is often used: the first word of the first line is indented, while the rest of the lines start at the left-hand margin. This system is used for each and every source. The bibliography or references, like footnotes, should be typed in single spacing while giving double spacing between two references. Where there is more than one author in a source, it is possible to reverse the names of all authors. However, it is quite common to reverse just the

first author's name for the sake of alphabetical order and mention the rest of the authors with their first name (or initials) first. Both systems are correct, but for the sake of consistency you should use only one system in the same report.

The titles of books, names of journals, periodicals and newspapers and titles of published government reports are often underlined, italicized or typed with capital letters. In the case of edited books, if the references come from a chapter written by another author, the reference should start with the author's name and not with the editor's name, and the title of the edited volume or book should be underlined or italicized. The title of articles and chapters from edited books and journals should be indicated by quotation marks (' ') and be typed exactly as the original. If the title is in a different language, such as Dutch or Norwegian, it should be mentioned in the original language. Some common examples of references are provided here:

Buckley, P. and Ghauri, P. (eds) (1999), *The Internationalization of the Firm*, 2nd edn, London: Thomson.

Ghauri, P.N. and Usurier, J.-C. (1996), *International Business Negotiations*, Oxford: Elsevier.

Grønhaug, R. and Haukedal, W. (1989), 'Environmental imagery and strategic action', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, vol. 4, nos 1-2: 5-17.

Dunning, J. (1980), 'Towards an eclectic theory of international production: some empirical tests', *Journal of International Business Studies*, Spring/Summer, 1: 9-31.

United Nations Center on Transnational Corporations (1985), *International Accounting and Reporting Issues*: 1984 review, New York: United Nations Publications.

As mentioned earlier, there are a number of methods and styles that are correct in listing the bibliography. The most important thing, however, is to use one form throughout a report and not to mix up different styles. Moreover, be consistent even within the style you are using.

For the format and structure of the report, also check the rules of your institution.

Oral presentation

Often you have to present your report in front of not only your supervisor but also company executives or members of an evaluation committee: people who have not been involved in your project. As in writing a report, the first important issue is to know your audience, as that will decide the level of your presentation. It should not be too technical or academic in nature, especially if people from outside (companies, etc.) are present.

The presentation has to be organized in the same manner as the written report. First, the main objectives and the specific research questions should be presented, as well as why these questions are interesting or worth your study. You should relate your study to earlier work on the topic, and demonstrate how your study differs from that work. You should also state your limitations and constraints.

Secondly, you have to explain 'how' you have done the study: how you have collected the information and how you have analysed it. Here again you should explain your limitations and constraints. This will adjust the expectation level of the audience as well as help them to make their own judgement as to the reliability of your study and its conclusions.

Finally, the findings and conclusions can be presented in a simple and straightforward way. These conclusions should be discussed in cases of unexpected results and other surprises. The conclusions should also be related to your objectives and research questions. If you have not been able to answer all your questions, this should be explained. In the case of a research project regarding specific company problems, you need to also present your recommendations or solutions and argue why, in your opinion, these are the best solutions or recommendations.

The most important issue, however, is the presentation itself: how you are going to use transparencies, an overhead projector, PowerPoint presentations, etc. With transparencies, we recommend that you use a minimum amount of text, preferably just points, and then talk about it. Technical or difficult terminology and concepts should be avoided and, if used, should be explained. Use of illustrations, tables and figures is a good strategy to support your arguments, though figures and tables with lots of numbers and characters should be avoided. If used, the part of the table/figure explaining your point should be highlighted.

Use of graphics and charts facilitates understanding. Listeners in this case can easily see the whole picture and make comparisons more quickly and easily. Otherwise, they will have to make such evaluations themselves, which is often difficult, if not impossible, during the presentation.

Use simple and direct language when presenting, language that is normally used in your field. Speak slowly and articulate your words properly – say the whole words. Do not rush through the presentation, in order to say a lot of things. Listeners will not follow most of it if you do this. If possible, make copies of your slides and distribute them.

Time management is one of the most important aspects of your presentation. Practise rehearsing your presentation so that you can explain the issues clearly without the need to rush. Do not forget that one of the major purposes of the presentation is for the audience to ask questions. You have to plan question and answer time into your presentation. In the case of a 30-minute presentation, we suggest you divide your time as follows:

- 5 minutes to present the objectives and the research question; also, to relate your study to earlier work and explain its importance;

- 5 minutes to present how you have carried out the study, your information sources and arguments;
- 10 minutes to present the findings and conclusions;
- 10 minutes for questions and answers.

Rehearse your presentation and, while presenting, speak slowly and clearly.

Writing for publication

If you are writing a report with an intention of getting it published in a journal, the report needs a separate structure. The first thing to consider is the journal you are aiming at. Most journals demand a certain format for the papers submitted to them with regard to length, headings, use of footnotes and references and the emphasis on methodological rigour. The starting point is thus first to decide where you want to publish your paper and look through its criteria and format requirements.

Most academic journals look for well-focused research that can contribute something to existing knowledge in the particular field. Many journals also value contributions towards managerial practice, so-called managerial implications. In business studies, the knowledge developed by researchers is rather more quickly applied to practice than in many other fields. The research, whether developing theories or testing existing ones, contributes considerably towards the furthering of knowledge. This is the main objective of most academic journals: to further knowledge in their respective field.

Considering the above, a report written for publication needs first to establish the objective of study and emphasize the gap it will fill or the new knowledge it will lead to. Secondly, it has to be related to existing knowledge in the field. Thirdly, the methodology needs much more argumentative explanation to convince the reader that, for the particular research problem, this is the most appropriate method. Here the discussion on internal validity, for example of the measurement instrument, and external validity, for example the generalizability or managerial implications, is much more important than in other reports (Huiff, 1999).

A report written for publication need not have headings and paragraphs on all the above issues, but nevertheless the argument in the methodology section and on measurement should satisfy all concerns regarding them. A paper/report written for publication is normally written with the following headings:

- Introduction, which introduces the topic and explains the research problem and objective;
- Literature Review, either as a separate section or while building/presenting hypotheses and propositions;
- Method/Model/Measurement, where you have to explain how you have done the study (data collection and data analysis) with all the argumentation mentioned earlier;

- Findings, where the results are presented according to the method chosen (quantitatively or qualitatively);
- Discussion and Conclusion, where the conclusions are drawn out of the findings and unexpected or drastic results are discussed.

Finally, with or without a heading, the contributions (theoretical as well as practical) of the study are presented in a convincing manner. A reference list is attached at the end, following the formatting instructions of the journal or the publisher.

Once the report is ready it should be read by at least a couple of colleagues, especially your supervisor if you have one. The colleagues should have some experience of reviewing papers for the journal being considered, or for similar journals. The criticisms and comments given by these colleagues should be taken seriously and the paper should be revised before you send it to the journal. It goes without saying that the language used and the writing style should be adapted to the journal and its audience. In this respect, see earlier sections on writing a report with regard to form and style. Huff (1999: 173) provides some salient points that should be considered while writing academic papers:

1. Writing is conversation – you are unlikely to write a publishable report if you are talking to yourself.
2. Writing is a form of thinking that is intrinsic to scholarship; it cannot be put off until the end of a research project.
3. You need to use your management skills (when, where, what material and so on) to write fluently and smoothly.
4. Advice from others is essential for successful writing. It is easier to get it and use it if it is sought early.
5. Straightforward styles normally suit academic writing best.
6. It is necessary actively to choose to write and not to write considering it a burden.

Further reading

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Questions

1. What are the differences in writing a company report and a thesis?
2. What are the most important issues to be considered while writing the final report for a research project?
3. Is writing for publication different from writing up the thesis? How?

Exercises

1. Pick up a Master's thesis from the library and prepare a 15-minute presentation.
2. Pick up a Master's/PhD dissertation and write a two-page executive summary.
3. Work in groups of two, read each other a report and give critical comments regarding the structure of the report and the language flow.

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