Essentials of Research Ethics

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Introduction

Access and ethics are critical aspects for the success of any research project

Universities (and an increasing number of organisations):

- Researchers are required to obtain formal <u>Ethics approval</u> by a Committee

Ethical <u>guidelines</u> are important to <u>protect everyone</u> involved (participants, researchers, University,...)

- Business and management research almost inevitably involves human participants
- There are <u>always ethical concerns when human participants are involved</u>

A question of ethics…

Scenario 1: You are conducting research into abuse in sport. One of your interviewees becomes upset during the interview, visibly shaking and crying.

a) What should you do?
b) Suppose the interviewee names an abuser – what should you do?

- **Scenario 2**: You are conducting research in schools. You decide that you want to interview both teachers and pupils.

a) How would you get access to the participants?
b) What ethical issues do you need to consider?

Ethical issues in research

Social benefit

How may your research contribute to the sport sector?

Researcher competence

Vital to have appropriate levels of training, qualifications and experience (including familiarity with ethical issues).

Risks may be related to:

- Wasting resources of funding organisations
- Wasting the time of subjects
- Abusing the goodwill of subjects
- Misleading the users of the research results
- Damaging the reputation of the research organisation

Free choice

Subjects should not be coerced to participate in the study, but there are some grey areas.

Captive groups

e.g., Sometimes, students are required to be available for certain amount of experimental or survey work by academic staff (credits associated in many occasions)

e.g., medical patients or members of sport organisations whose participation is agreed at institutional level.

Ethical issues in research

Free choice (cont.)

Children

Research with children may raise ethical issues (e.g., at what age should they give informed consent? How is that related to parents' obligations?) - check guidelines from institutions

Official surveys

e.g., Population Census forms? Typically fall under the "social benefit" label

Observation

e.g., crowd behaviour – can subjects express their free choice? But if they are aware, the behaviour may change

Informed consent

When there are risks for participants, they should be fully aware and give informed consent.

Ethical issues in research

Risk of harm to the subject

It may occur during the <u>collection of the data</u>, in its <u>storage</u> and <u>handling</u>, and in <u>publication</u>

Data collection process

- e.g., if the subject's wellbeing is at risk (e.g., injuries, identification, etc.) – informed consent form is vital

- e.g., stress during the interviews

- e.g., anxiety about how data will be used / if subjects may be somehow identified

Data storage and handling

Hard-copy materials (e.g., questionnaires, experimental results) and digital materials (e.g. audio and video recordings, transcripts)

- Anonymous subjects

- Partial anonymity

- Identified subjects

Publication

Typically, issues arise before (not at the publication stage)…

…BUT researchers must be prepared, in ethical terms, for identifying or not identifying anymore the subjects

Ethical issues in research

Honesty/rigour in analysis, interpretation and reporting

Results **must not** be fabricated.

- Elimination of Outliers: often accepted, but dependent on the type and objective of the research
- "*Negative findings*" are still findings

Authorship and acknowledgement

Everyone who works should get credit for it.

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https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/jsm/27/4/article-p288.xml

have used purchase intentions as the final indicator to evaluate sponsorship effectiveness (e.g., Alexandris et al., 2007; Madrigal, 2001). However, most studies refer to generic sponsors, rather than focusing on actual sponsors associated with a team (Hong, 2011). Thus, the current study considers purchase intentions as the endpoint of sponsorship effectiveness to understand the relationship between team loyalty and fans' evaluation of actual sponsors of professional team sports. The hypothesized model guiding this research is presented in Figure 1.

Method

The current research was conducted in the setting of the top Portuguese soccer league, with the team Sport Lisboa e Benfica (SLB) and two of its main sponsors. Henseler et al. (2011) maintain that the higher ranking of the league in which the team is playing, the higher the appeal of the sponsorship. The top Portuguese soccer league consists of sixteen teams, and in 2011 was ranked as the fourth best league in the world by the International Federation

At time of data collection, SLB had twelve official sponsors, and the two sponsors appearing on the team shirt were selected for this study. These sponsors have had contracts with SLB since 2004 and in addition to the logo on team shirt, each sponsor has naming rights in one of the stadium's stands. Still, these sponsors differ in terms of product-category, specifics of the partnership deal, and market prominence. Due to proprietary information and to ensure anonymity, the sponsors in this study are referred to as Sponsor A and Sponsor B. Sponsor A is an alcoholic beverage brand and has no sponsorship deals with other Portuguese soccer teams. This brand was a leader in the Portuguese market during 2011, enjoying about 46% of market share and developing an increased presence in international markets (Económico, 2012). In turn, Sponsor B is a television and internet-service provider, which has sponsorship deals with the two major rival soccer teams of the league. In terms of market share, this brand occupied the second position in its segment during 2011, with about half of subscribers than the market leader (Jornal de Negócios, 2011).

Adapted from Veal and Darcy, 2014

Key principles…summary ideas

Principle 1: Participant right to autonomy and self-determination

a. Consent

- Freely chosen (voluntary)
- Fully informed

b. Freedom

- Withdraw consent
- Ask questions
- Manage involvement
- To be forgotten

Principle 2: Participant right to privacy

a. Anonymity (data use)

- Protection of participant identities
- Names and contextual identifiers
- Exposure by association

b. Confidentiality (data management and storage)

- Non-disclosure of personal information
- Names, contact details of participants
- Data not used for purpose of study

Principle 3: Nonmaleficence

a. Evaluation and mitigation of risk

- Type of harm
- Who is it at risk?
- Likelihood and magnitude

b. Fair and equitable treatment

- Equal access to benefits
- Not subjected to bias or prejudice
- Proportionate remuneration

Issues associated with gaining traditional access

The ability to obtain either primary or secondary data will likely depend on gaining access to an appropriate source or sources.

Types of access

Traditional access

- Face-to-face interactions (e.g., experiments, interviews, focus groups, observations or deliver questionnaires)
- Telephone conversations (e.g., telephone interviews)
- Correspondence (e.g., postal questionnaires)
- Visiting data archives (e.g., organisational archives not available online)

Internet-mediated access

- It involves different computing technologies (e.g., Web; email; webcams; Instant messaging) to gain virtual access to deliver questionnaires, conduct archival research, discussions, experiments, interviews, etc.

  #### Intranet-mediated access

  - Virtual access as an employee (or student) using its intranet)

Hybrid access

- It combines traditional and Internet-mediated access

Issues associated with gaining traditional access

Physical access

For much secondary (and primary) data, gaining access may be difficult.

- Organisations may not be willing to spend time and resources to give you access to data
- There may be gatekeepers (what is the perceived value of the study for the organisation? Sensitivity of the topic? Credibility of the researcher?)
- Organisations may not be interested in the research.

Continuing process (of access)

1. Access may be an iterative and incremental process (trust is important for the next step)
2. Those from whom you may wish to collect data may be a different set of people to those who agreed to your request for access (e.g., management vs. staff)

Cognitive access

- Important to gain acceptance and trust of, as well as consent from, intended participants within the organisation or group to gain actual access to the data.

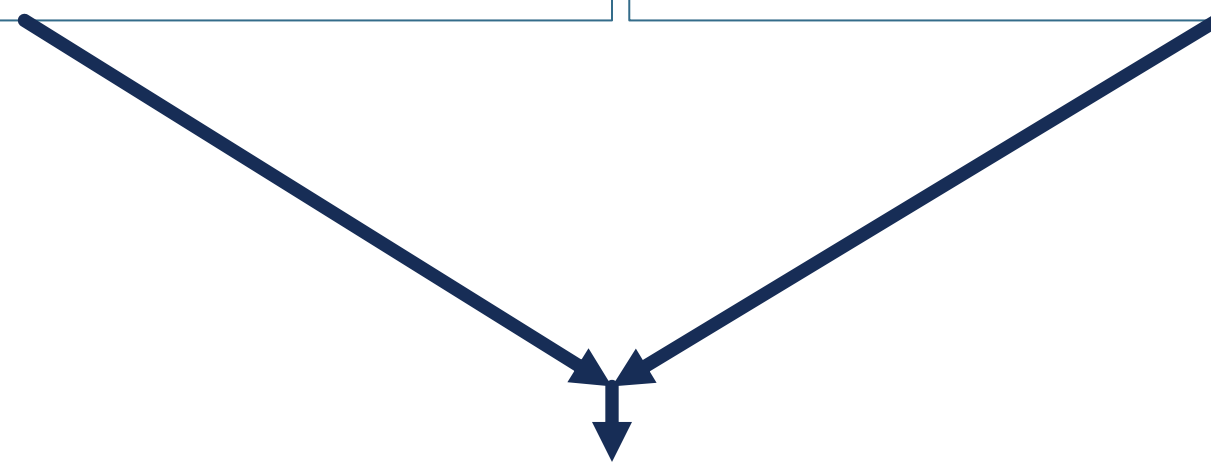# Issues associated with gaining traditional access

Feasibility

Is it practicable to negotiate access for your proposed research project?

- After developing what you believe to be a feasible proposal, you need to be able to gain sufficient access.

Sufficiency

The extent to which the access will enable the proposed research project to be achieved.

- Can you address all research questions with the data you have access to?

***Feasibility** and **Sufficiency** will likely determine the construction and refinement of your research questions and objectives*

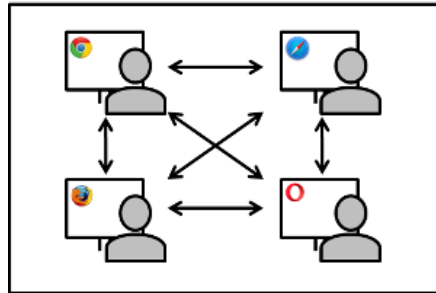e.g., what I want to do vs. what I can do

Issues associated with Internet-mediated access

The Internet enables access to research data and to research participants in a variety of ways BUT is also raises several data quality and ethical issues.

Online questionnaire

Online experiments

Online interviews and discussion groups

Email

Online newspapers

Social network sites

Online communities

Blogs

...

Internet-mediated methods are subject to the same issues that affect traditional methods to gain research access.
- In some instances, issues may be exacerbated using Internet-based methods

Strategies to gain access to appropriate data

The applicability of the strategies below depend on the nature of the research design, the research strategy, data collection methods and whether you are an internal or external researcher.

Strategies to gain access
• Ensuring you are familiar with the organisation or group before making contact
• Allowing yourself sufficient time
• Using existent contacts and developing new ones
• Providing clear account of the research purpose and the type of access required
• Overcoming organisational concerns about gaining access
• Identifying possible benefits to the organisation
• Using suitable language
• Facilitating replies when requesting access
• Developing access incrementally
• Establishing credibility

Why to act ethically

Ethics?

It refers to the <u>standards of behaviour</u> that guide your conduct <u>in relation to the rights</u> of those who become the <u>subject of your work</u> <u>or</u> are <u>affected by it</u>.

- All research projects must be conducted in a manner that is not harmful for the participants or the researcher.

The appropriateness of a researcher's conduct is influenced by broader social norms of behaviours

(UK vs. Portugal vs. USA vs. China vs. India vs. Japan vs. etc.)

Social norm: type of behaviour that a person ought to adopt in a particular situation

Codes of ethics

Exist to overcome ethical dilemmas arising from different social norms and philosophical approaches

- Often includes a list of principles to guide a researcher's conduct

https://library.novasbe.unl.pt/ethics/

British Educational Research Association: https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online

Why to act ethically

a. **Integrity and objectivity of the researcher** – it influences the quality of the research (be accurate, open and truthful; report conflict of interested)

b. **Respect for others** – the conduct of the researcher entails social responsibility and obligations to those who participate in the study of are affected by it.

c. **Avoidance of harm** – harm may occur through risks of wellbeing, physical or mental health, group cohesion, etc.

d. **Privacy of those taking part** – privacy of the participants is a key element that links with all the other ethical issues

e. **Voluntary nature and right to withdraw** – everyone should have the right not to participate or to withdraw at any moment. Voluntary participation is vital.

f. **Informed consent of those taking part** – researchers must provide sufficient information for individuals to decide whether or not they want to participate in the study and the value for everyone

g. **Confidentiality of data and maintenance of anonymity of those taking part** – research questions should guide the study – not what specific individuals say. Every participant and organisation involved must have the right to be anonymous.

h. **Responsibility in the analysis of data and reporting of findings** – data must never be falsified; findings must be reported accurately, regardless of the initial expectations

i. **Compliance in the management of data** – data management regulations must be followed (e.g., anonymity of participants; data destruction, etc; see p.e. https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/data-protection-at-the-university/)

j. **Ensuring the safety of the researcher** – research design should consider risks to both participants and researchers – e.g., Denver)

Why to act ethically

a. **Scope for deception** – be clear about your role when joining online communities (e.g., work/ask permission to online community managers)

b. **Lacking respect and causing harm** – do not harvest data in online communities without permission

c. **Respecting privacy** – respect individuals' rights to not (e.g., delete online conversations if the individuals ask for that)

d. **Nature of participation and scope to withdraw** – ask consent whenever possible and always be prepared for withdrawals

e. **Informed consent** – e.g., online surveys also require a signed informed consent

f. **Confidentiality of data and anonymity of participants** – the same principle that applies to off-line environments

g. **Analysis of data and reporting of findings** – when data is harvested without consent, the identities of the individuals should not be released

h. **Management of data** – follow data protection guidelines as for off-line environments

i. **Safety of the researcher** – be diligent when setting up access rights and protect your privacy
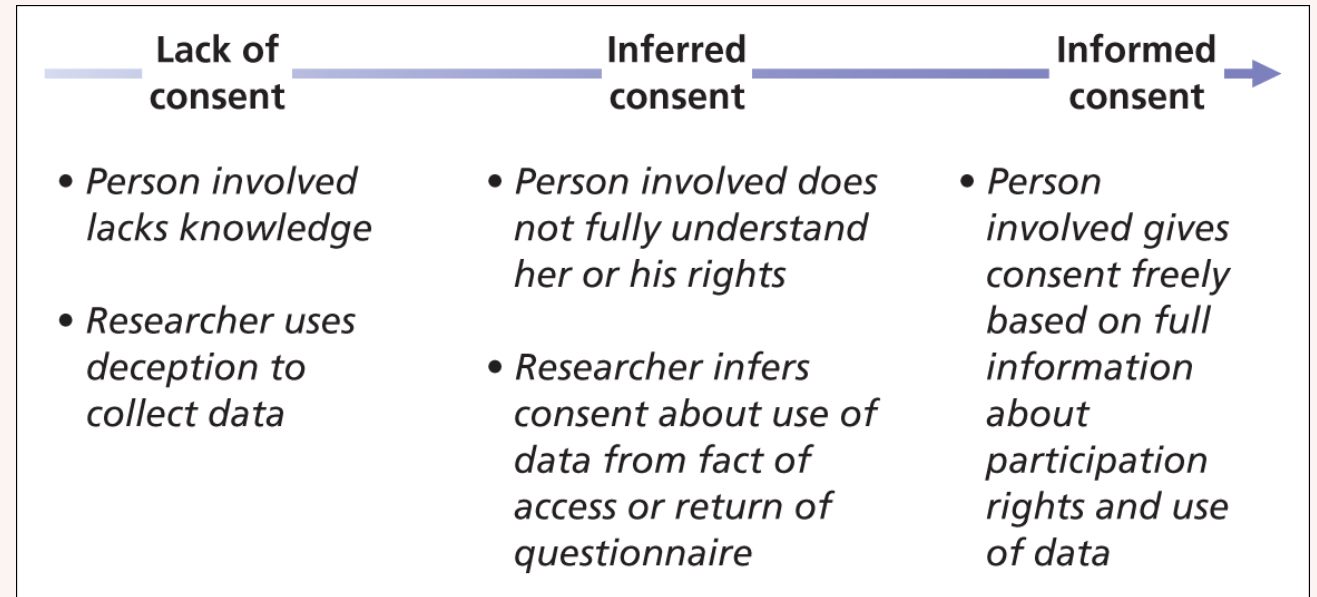
Saunders et al., 2020, pp. 246-248

Ethical issues at different stages of the research process

A. Research Design and Access to Data

Most ethical issues can be anticipated and dealt with during the design stage of any research project.

- *Follow University guidelines*

Consent to participate in a research project

Lack of consent	Inferred consent	Informed consent
• Person involved lacks knowledge • Researcher uses deception to collect data	• Person involved does not fully understand her or his rights • Researcher infers consent about use of data from fact of access or return of questionnaire	• Person involved gives consent freely based on full information about participation rights and use of data

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project title: (your project title)
Researcher: (name and student ID number)

Please tick the box if you agree with the following statements:

1. I have been provided with information explaining what participation in this project involves.
2. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this project.
3. I have received satisfactory answers to all questions I have asked.
4. I have received enough information about the project to make a decision about my participation.
5. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent to participate in the project at any time.

Ethical issues at different stages of the research process

A. Research Design and Access to Data

The information that is required for prospective participants to reach a fully informed decision about whether or not to participate in the study should be produced formally through a **participant information sheet**.

- It may be given to prospective participants, emailed of made available online
- It should information about:
    I. The nature of the research
    II. The requirements and implications of taking part
    III. Respondents' rights
    IV. How data will be analysed, reported and stored
    V. Whom to contact in case of concern

The nature of the information required for informed consent may vary according to your research strategy, as will the way in which you seek to establish consent

Example – information sheet

Box 6.15 Checklist

Requirements for an information sheet

Organisational 'gatekeepers' (discussed earlier in Section 6.4) and intended participants need to be informed about the following aspects of the research. This information can be drawn together in a participant information sheet.

About the nature of the research
- ✔ What is its purpose?
- ✔ Who is or will be undertaking it?
- ✔ Is it being funded or sponsored – if so, by whom and why?
- ✔ Who is being asked to participate – i.e. broad details about the sampling frame, sample determination and size?
- ✔ How far has the research project progressed?

About the requirements of taking part
- ✔ What type of data will be required from those who agree to take part?
- ✔ How will these data be collected (e.g. interview, observation or questionnaire)?
- ✔ How much time will be required, and on how many occasions?
- ✔ What are the target dates to undertake the research and for participation?

About the implications of taking part and the rights of those taking part
- ✔ Recognition that participation is voluntary.
- ✔ Recognition that those taking part have the right to decline to answer a question or set of questions; or to be observed in particular circumstances.
- ✔ Recognition that those taking part have control over the right to record any of their responses where a voice recorder is used.
- ✔ Recognition that those taking part may withdraw at any time.
- ✔ What will be the consequences of participating – possible risks, depending on the nature of the approach and purpose and expected benefits?
- ✔ What assurances will be provided about anonymity and data confidentiality?

About the use of the data collected and the way in which it will be reported
- ✔ Who will have access to the data collected?
- ✔ How will the results of the research project be disseminated?
- ✔ How will assurances about anonymity and confidentiality be observed at this stage?
- ✔ What will happen to the data collected after the project is completed?
- ✔ Where data are to be destroyed, what is the date by which this will happen?
- ✔ Where data are to be preserved, where and how will these be stored securely, who might be given access to them, and what safeguards will be established to ensure the continuing future confidentiality of these data and anonymity of those taking part?

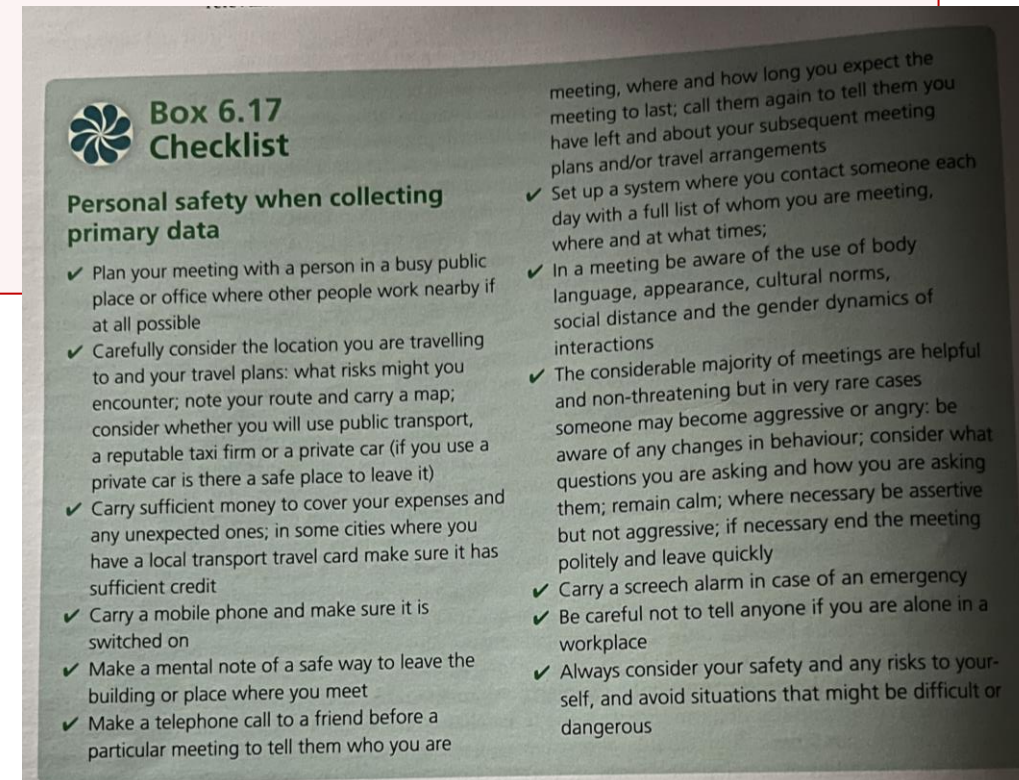**Whom to contact to raise any concerns and questions about the research**
- ✔ Have you established how you will provide those taking part with a person to contact about the research, including name, work address, email and contact phone number?

Ethical issues at different stages of the research process

B. Data collection

- Some ethical issues will likely apply to whatever technique is being used to collect data (e.g., are people being honest?)

- Some issues are specific to certain techniques (e.g., observational studies).

- Some issues may relate to protecting the safety of the researcher while collecting data (e.g., https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/21/british-academic-matthew-hedges-accused-of-spying-jailed-for-life-in-uae)

  - Collect data accurately & maintain objectivity

  - Never 'fabricate' data

  - Maintain confidentiality and anonymity whenever required

    (QUANT & QUAL)

Box 6.17 Checklist

Personal safety when collecting primary data

✔ Plan your meeting with a person in a busy public place or office where other people work nearby if at all possible
✔ Carefully consider the location you are travelling to and your travel plans: what risks might you encounter; note your route and carry a map; consider whether you will use public transport, a reputable taxi firm or a private car (if you use a private car is there a safe place to leave it)
✔ Carry sufficient money to cover your expenses and any unexpected ones; in some cities where you have a local transport travel card make sure it has sufficient credit
✔ Carry a mobile phone and make sure it is switched on
✔ Make a mental note of a safe way to leave the building or place where you meet
✔ Make a telephone call to a friend before a particular meeting to tell them who you are

meeting, where and how long you expect the meeting to last; call them again to tell them you have left and about your subsequent meeting plans and/or travel arrangements
✔ Set up a system where you contact someone each day with a full list of whom you are meeting, where and at what times;
✔ In a meeting be aware of the use of body language, appearance, cultural norms, social distance and the gender dynamics of interactions
✔ The considerable majority of meetings are helpful and non-threatening but in very rare cases someone may become aggressive or angry: be aware of any changes in behaviour; consider what questions you are asking and how you are asking them; remain calm; where necessary be assertive but not aggressive; if necessary end the meeting politely and leave quickly
✔ Carry a screech alarm in case of an emergency
✔ Be careful not to tell anyone if you are alone in a workplace
✔ Always consider your safety and any risks to your-self, and avoid situations that might be difficult or dangerous

Ethical issues at different stages of the research process

C. Data analysis and reporting

The maintenance of your research objectivity is vital during the analysis stage to ensure data is not misinterpreted and conclusion distorted

- <u>Do not be selective</u> about which data to report
- <u>Be accurate</u> in every single analysis – **researcher's integrity is vital**
- <u>Confidentiality and anonymity</u> must be kept if that was previously agreed (individuals and organisations)
- <u>Some organisations accept to be identified</u> – written permission is often used (e.g., DC's PhD thesis)

set, evoking reflections that focused upon the perceptual sensations and emotive qualities attached to nature, often utilizing the term 'romantic' to identify with this particular (re)presentation of the nation:

> Actually, I think Scotland has a romantic atmosphere. Its sea and many other things make it a place that I am looking forward to visiting. And I like Scotland, not just its scenery, but also its romance. (Video diary)

> I have always liked Scotland, in my mind it has always been poetic, romantic and strong all together, this exhibition made me realise that Scotland's romanticism can only truly move you when you stand in front of these oil paintings. (Graffiti note)

> My main impression of Scotland is that it's romantic. The style and feelings it gives you make you relaxed. I quite like that kind of atmosphere. Bye bye. (Video diary)

Adhering to sensitivities toward structures of feeling emerging from within the data (Johnson et al., 2004), visitor perceptions prompted reflections connected to a quest for a sense of peace, tranquility and simplicity; aspects of the visitor experience that shaped reflections surrounding individual desires and the perceptions of the destination image:

> I like Scotland because it's a world of tranquillity and fairy tales. (Video diary)

> Scotland: classical, dreamlike, simple and unsophisticated, I want to go there. Come on, come on, come on! (Graffiti note)

> The beauty of simplicity. The most peaceful and tranquil scenery. (Postcard)

> The castle of Scotland is similar to the idyllic life of Jiangnan (江南), poetic and romantic, yearn for a simple life. (Graffiti note)

> The scenic mountains and rivers of Scotland make people feel relaxed. I hope there will be a chance for me to see Edinburgh with my own eyes. (Graffiti note)

RESEARCH PAPER

...o aware ...y are ...at ...itself ...en ...n ticket ...owledge ...onment ...likely ...s ...lgeable ...sorship ...sumers, ...ation ...akefield ...tual ...ered

...the role ...d the ...aviour

...sponsorship deals for actual corporate sponsors of football teams.

Methodology

Context of the research

The current research was conducted with a Portuguese professional football team located in Lisbon which, at the time of data collection, had 12 official team sponsors. This research was authorised by the club managers and conducted in partnership with them. Due to proprietary information, both the team and its sponsors are referred to anonymously. It is important to highlight that the team's history consists of several national and international titles, while also enjoying enormous fan support worldwide. The average attendance at home games during the 2011/12 season was over 40,000 spectators per game, thus highlighting the popularity of the team. Further evidence of the club's popularity is provided by the fact that it owns and operates a club television channel and was one of top clubs in Europe, in terms of overall revenue, during 2011 (Deloitte, 2012b).

Box 6.19
Checklist

To help anticipate and deal with ethical issues

✔ Attempt to recognise potential ethical issues that will affect your proposed research.

✔ Utilise your university's code on research ethics to guide the design and conduct of your research.

✔ Anticipate ethical issues at the design stage of your research and discuss how you will seek to control these in your research proposal.

✔ Seek informed consent through the use of openness and honesty, rather than using deception.

✔ Do not exaggerate the likely benefits of your research for participating organisations or individuals.

✔ Respect others' rights to privacy at all stages of your research project.

✔ Maintain integrity and quality in relation to the processes you use to collect data.

✔ Recognise that more intrusive approaches to research will be associated with greater scope for ethical issues to arise, and seek to avoid the particular problems related to interviews and observation.

✔ Avoid referring to data gained from a particular participant when talking to others, where this would allow the individual to be identified with potentially harmful consequences to that person.

▶

✔ Only consider covert research where reactivity is likely to be a significant issue and a covert presence is practical. However, other ethical aspects of your research should still be respected when using this approach and where possible debriefing should occur after the collection of data.

✔ Maintain your objectivity during the stages of analysing and reporting your research.

✔ Maintain the assurances that you gave to participating organisations with regard to confidentiality of the data obtained and their organisational anonymity.

✔ Recognise that use of the Internet may raise particular ethical issues and dilemmas. Anticipate these in relation to your project to determine how you will conduct your Internet-mediated research ethically. You should be able to justify your approach to those who review and assess it.

✔ Where you use Internet-mediated research, seek informed consent and agreement from those taking part; maintain confidentiality of data and anonymity of participants, unless they expressly wish to be acknowledged; consider issues related to copyright of Internet sources.

✔ Avoid using the Internet or email to share data with others taking part.

✔ Protect those involved by taking great care to ensure their anonymity in relation to anything that you refer to in your project report unless you have their explicit permission to do otherwise.

✔ Consider how the collective interests of those involved may be adversely affected by the nature of the data that you are proposing to collect, and alter the nature of your research question and objectives where this possibility is likely. Alternatively, declare this possibility to those whom you wish to participate in your proposed research.

✔ Consider how you will use secondary data in order to protect the identities of those who contributed to its collection or who are named within it.

✔ Unless necessary, base your research on genuinely anonymised data. Where it is necessary to process personal data, ensure that you comply carefully with all current data protection legal requirements.

Saunders et al., 2020, pp. 260-261

Review Questions

1. Identify 5 common ethical issues in research.

2. Elaborate on the ethical issue related to free choice and give one example of how it may apply in a sport management-related research project.

3. How can you differentiate different types of access, and why it is important to do this?

4. What do you understand by the use of the terms 'feasibility' and 'sufficiency' when applied to a question of access?

5. Which strategies to help gain access are likely to apply to the following scenarios:

    a. An 'external' researcher seeking direct access to managers who will be the research participants.

    b. An 'external' researcher seeking through an organisational gatekeeper to their intended participants or respondents.

    c. An 'internal' researcher planning to undertake a research project within their employing organisation

6. What are the principal ethical issues you will need to consider irrespective of the particular research methods that you use?

7. What problems may you encounter in attempting to protect the interests of participating organisations and individuals despite the assurances that you provide?

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2020. *Research methods for business students.* 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education. **(Chapter 6)**

Veal, A. J. and Darcy, S., 2014. *Research methods in sport studies and sport management*. A practical guide. New York: Routledge. **(Chapter 4)**

Gratton, C. and Jones, I., 2015. *Research methods for sports studies*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge. **(Chapter 7)**

Grix, J., 2019. *The foundations of research*. 3rd ed. London: Red Globe Press. McMillan Research Skills. **(Chapter 8)**

Collis, J. and Hussey, R., 2014. *Business Research: A Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students.* 4th ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. **(Chapters 3)**