

Research Basics

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The nature of research

The results of research are all around us... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rl5ebCXe7Hw>

e.g., Politicians often justify decisions on the basis of 'research'

e.g., Newspapers and TV news often report the findings of academic research

e.g., Advertisers may highlight 'research findings' to encourage product sales

Different meanings given to 'research' in everyday speech.

RESEARCH IS NOT...

...Just collecting facts and information with no clear purpose.

(more than reading books and articles, talking with people or asking questions)

...reassembling and reordering facts or information without interpretation.

(more than collecting data from different sources)

...an esoteric activity with no or little relevance to everyday life.

(it should contribute to understand the world)

...a term to get your product or idea noticed and respected.

(it can help with that, but the process needs to be clear and not forthcoming)



The nature of research

Characteristics of Research

- Data are collected systematically.
- Data are interpreted systematically.
- There is a clear purpose.



Research:

- A process that people undertake in a **systematic way** in order to **find out things**, thereby increasing their **knowledge**.
...to discover new things that were previously unknown to human beings. The aim is to advance human knowledge.

Scientific Research

It is conducted within the rules and conventions of science.

- Based on logic and reason and the systematic examination of evidence.
- Ideally, it should be possible to be replicated by the same or different researchers.
- It applies mainly in physical and natural sciences.

Social Science Research

It is conducted using the methods and traditions of social science.

- It deals with people and their (social) behaviour, and people are less predictable than non-human phenomena.
- People can be aware of the research being conducted about them and not being purely passive subjects.
- The social world is constantly changing – may not be possible to produce exact replications.

Business and Management Research

Features of business and management research

- The eclectic nature

It draws upon knowledge from different disciplines. e.g. Sociology, Geography, Psychology, Economy, Sports, Statistics

- High levels of education of both managers and employees

Most have UG and PG degrees

- Expectation for research to have practical implications leading to actions

It needs to be beneficial to the organisation

Business and management management research needs to engage with both the world of theory and the world of practice.



Findings that advance knowledge and understanding, but also address business issues and practical managerial problems.

countries, with positive and significant path coefficients (US: $\beta = 0.17p < 0.01$, UK: $\beta = 0.14p < 0.001$, BZ: $\beta = 0.13p < 0.001$, SA: $\beta = 0.15p < 0.01$). In addition, H₂ was supported across the four countries due to the significant role of effective communications on online event experience, with BZ and US scoring the highest path coefficients (BZ: $\beta = 0.33p < 0.001$; US: $\beta = 0.31p < 0.001$). H₃ was also supported across the four countries, with online content engagement in SA ($\beta = 0.28p < 0.001$) and US ($\beta = 0.26p < 0.01$) showing the strongest effects on online event experience. The relationships between online event experience and behavioural intentions were all positive and significant with US having the highest path coefficients ($\beta = 0.34p < 0.001$) and BZ scoring the lowest ($\beta = 0.22p < 0.01$). Thus, H₄ was supported. Finally, place attachment showed a significant positive effect on both online event experience and behavioural intentions, which indicates its role as a control variable across the four countries. All path coefficients are presented in Table 2 and the revised model with the all significant paths appears in Fig. 2.

Table 2
Summary results of the structural model.

Path	Overall model β	US β	UK β	BZ β	SA β	Hypothesis supported?
a direct positive effect on future behavioural intentions. A plausible explanation for this result could be that when consumers interact online with others in the context of a mega event, they may feel intrinsically motivated to continue the exchange of information and knowledge, which leads to the emergence of communities of interest (Ramchandani, Davies, Coleman, Shibli, & Bingham, 2015). This will likely lead to a consumer's positive psychological state and motivation to follow the event again in the future, not necessarily to enjoy the event itself, but to interact with others who follow the event online. Contrary to previous research suggesting that social interaction during live events influence how consumers evaluate their experiences and subsequent reactions (Biscaia et al., 2017; Kaplanidou et al., 2012), our results indicate that in online environments, interacting with others has no direct effect on the event experience itself, but instead influences consumers' behavioural intentions to follow the event again in the future and recommend it to others.						
Evidence of the relevance of both online contents and their presentation to the quality of consumers' experience is also provided in the current study. This suggests that online event content can generate entertainment benefits (Yoshida et al., 2018) and also have utilitarian value (i.e., helping consumers following the event). We found that online content engagement with specific objects (e.g. videos) promoted by the event on online platforms could lead consumers to have a more positive experience. In addition, online social network platforms contribute to enhancing interaction and knowledge of the mega event, just as they do for the organisation (Filo et al., 2015). This is in line with McMillan, Hwang, and Lee (2003) views that consumer experience is not only created by elements that are controllable (e.g. service interface, atmosphere and price), but also by elements that are not under the control of the service providers, such as the influence of consumers or devices (e.g. mobile devices).						

As also noted in Table 2, the results of the predicted accuracy of the models show that all the resulting cross-validated redundancy Q^2 values were above zero, supporting the model's predictive accuracy. This result was also supported by the R^2 values for online event experience (US = 0.69, UK = 0.71, BZ = 0.76, SA = 0.61) and behavioural intentions (US = 0.64, UK = 0.64, BZ = 0.57, SA = 0.56), which suggest that our proposed model has good in-sample predictive power (Schlägel & Sarstedt, 2016).

5. Discussion

Mega events have acquired a new dimension in its relation with the digital environment. This attains particular importance given that many consumers follow these events online instead of attending live or watching them on TV (Pritchard & Kharouf, 2016). When following a mega event online, consumers often interact with others, receive up-to-date communications, share their views and engage with various

sumers are supportive or their country nosing a mega event from a patriotic standpoint. This is in line with previous studies on 'live events' (Heere et al., 2013; Inoue & Havard, 2014) suggesting that sport events have the potential to promote positive social impact (e.g. community pride and group identity). In addition, because mega events transform the host regions (e.g., new networks, infrastructures, knowledge transfer, facilities for hospitality and accommodation, training for tourism operators, improved international visibility and cultural awareness; Dansero & Puttilli, 2010; Preuss, 2007), our results offer new avenues to capitalise on the events' benefits through online platforms.

5.1. Managerial implications

Due to the importance of the digital environment, managers should invest in the quality of the presence of the mega event in the digital world. Social relationships between consumers need to be facilitated through the creation of opportunities for consumers to develop reciprocal interactions. For example, blogs and forums embedded in the online platform of the mega event may help the audience to optimise their time and reduce effort when searching for information about the event (Chan & Li, 2010). Also, by promoting information exchange between consumers and the organisation, online event managers are likely to provide consumers with more control over their experiences (Kasavana et al., 2010). Investments in the online presence of the mega event could also potentially lead to more opportunities for sponsorship, given that social media sites represent an important communication vehicle for brands (Della & Armstrong, 2015) and mega events often attract large audiences (Müller, 2015).

The positive role of effective communication on online event experience highlights the need for event managers and associated

debook was developed that contained the identified themes with direct quotes representing each theme (cf. Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The initial phase of coding was completed by one member of the research team, and a second researcher provided qualitative feedback on the codebook and identified themes. After a discussion between the researcher team, the revised codebook was used as a guide to review the initial codes. In the second sequence, axial coding, the first researcher examined the data a second time and recoded the initial codes into the themes listed in the revised codebook. Subsequently, the second researcher used the revised codebook as a guide to code

5 | DISCUSSION

The present research findings outline how engagement with game elements offered by a third-party app influences attitudinal loyalty toward a core service. Specifically, these insights gained from longitudinal and mixed-method data respond to calls in the literature for empirical evidence documenting how gamification operates within a business context (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019), the effects of gamified

TABLE 5 Identified themes and coding reliability

Theme	# of mentions	Sample (n = 16) with increased loyalty	Sample (n = 11) without increase loyalty	Index of reliability
Rewards	22	13 (81%)	9 (81%)	0.910
Competition	17	10 (63%)	7 (63%)	0.840
Sense of achievement	16	10 (63%)	5 (54%)	0.875
Gaining knowledge	12	9 (56%)	3 (27%)	0.889
Total	67	42	25	0.878
Engagement	19	12 (75%)	7 (73%)	0.895

explain the various forms of social, economic, and social benefits (Gummerus et al., 2012) consumers extracted from engaging with the third-party app. However, these forms of affordances led to Engagement and Identity with the core service.

The app enabled users to satisfy extrinsic motivations by earning tangible Rewards—such as prizes from their favorite athlete and team—for engaging with the app (e.g. Brown, 2007; Kumar & Reinartz, 2016; Seaborn & Fels, 2015). Additionally, users also identified how non-sport related prizes acted as an incentive to keep them engaged with, and using, the third-party app. Respondents discussed how game elements such as quizzes and check-ins helped to gamify their experience of following their favorite team and leverage the points gained from this engagement into tangible rewards.

The Competition theme reflected how engagement with the app enabled individuals to satisfy intrinsic needs including the need for socialization and competence (e.g., Deterding et al., 2011; Mekler et al., 2017; Seaborn & Fels, 2015). Users explained how the

et al., 2009), which reduced uncertainty through app use (Adjei et al., 2010). Conceptually, this improved knowledge could reinforce or enhance one's position in the group (McAlexander et al., 2002) and enable the consumer to extract more value from their consumption experiences (Dholakia et al., 2009). Based on these findings, practical implications are suggested to guide managers seeking to leverage gamification for relationship marketing purposes.

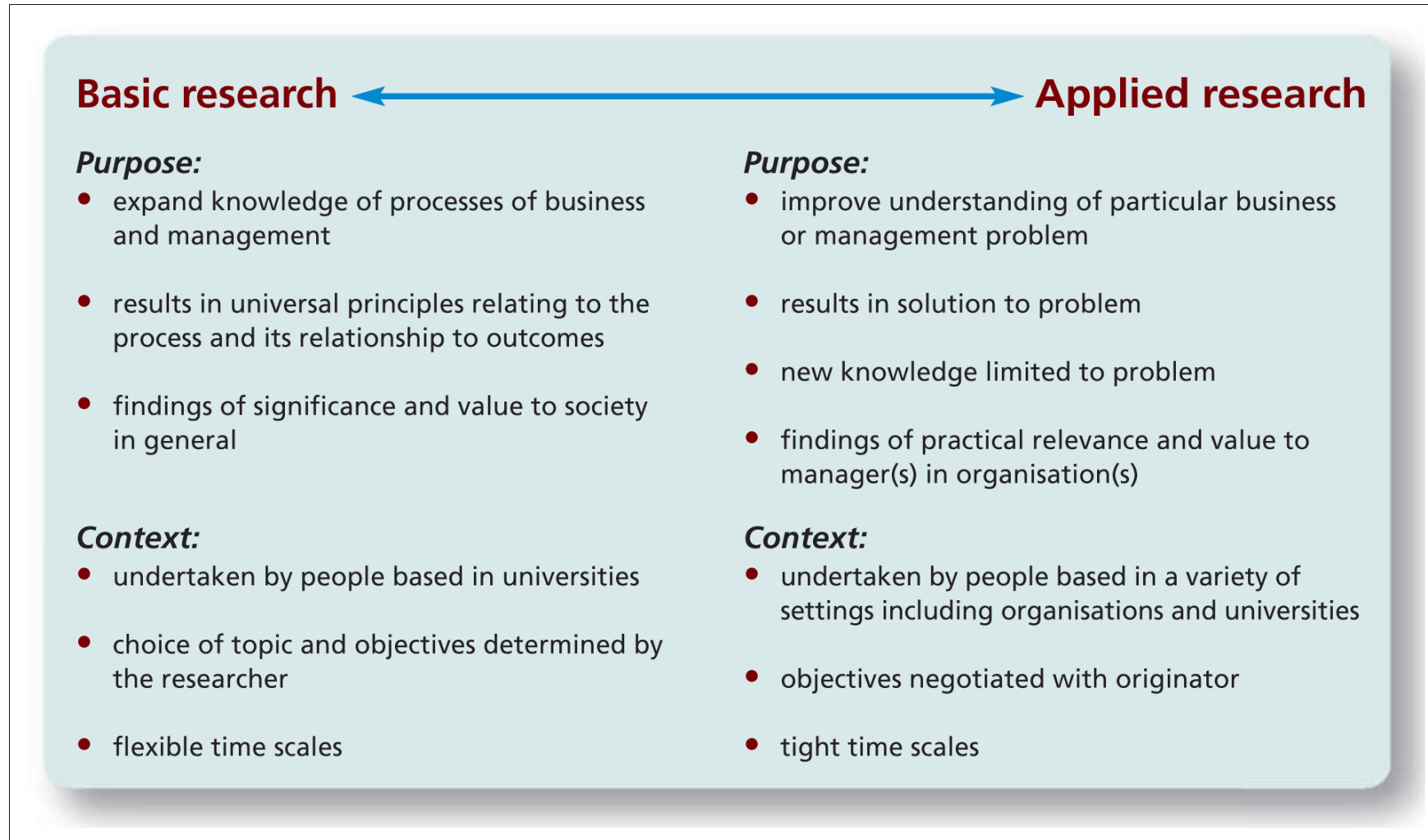
6 | PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Organizations can use this information to engage their consumers using gamified content. Considering that engagement within the app only represents one aspect of behavior toward a sport team (e.g., attending games, following online, etc.), it is remarkable that this engagement explained 11.3% of the change in consumers' loyalty toward their favorite team. Gamified engagement can stimulate

positive emotions, such as a sense of achievement, which can foster consumers' loyalty development, and subsequently influence other individuals may have had different experiences with using the appli-

Business and Management Research

Within the boundaries of advancing knowledge, addressing business issues, solving managerial problems and promoting the common good, the **purpose** and **context** of your research **project may vary considerably**.



Why study research?



To understand and evaluate research reports, articles published in academic, professional and managerial contexts.

e.g., the basis and limitations



To conduct academic research projects.

e.g., MSc thesis...the pursuit of knowledge



Management tool – research for professional reasons.

e.g., Policy-making; planning; market research; evaluation of programmes; etc.

Who does research?

Academics

It is often part of job description.

- Creation of knowledge for its own sake, to teach in academic degrees, to engage with industry and/or benefit the society
- Funded by external organisations vs. University-driven

Students

Coursework; training purposes for academic/research career; professional training.

- MSc and PhD students are major contributors to research

Government, Commercial and non- profit organisations

Research to inform policy; Monitor performance and aid in decision-making; Consultancy.

- It is often descriptive research

Who does research?

Managers

To inform policy, monitor performance and aid in decision-making.

<https://publications.fifa.com/en/sustainability-report/sustainability-at-the-fifa-world-cup/our-sustainability-strategy/>

<https://essma.eu/news/article/fc-porto-s-sustainability-strategy-and-its-main-challenges>

Successful management depends on good information

- Current customers/members
- Market research: potential customers; links with community
- Environmental appraisal
- Organisational performance – e.g., sales, staff performance/motivation
- Competitors
- Products – i.e., existing and new

Consultants

Research under contract to Government, commercial and non-profit organisations

e.g., PwC: <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/entertainment-media/sports.html>

e.g., Deloitte: <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/sports-business-group/articles/deloitte-football-money-league.html>

e.g., Academics doing consultancy

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2020. *Research methods for business students*. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education. **(Chapter 1)**

Veal, A. J. and Darcy, S., 2014. *Research methods in sport studies and sport management. A practical guide*. New York: Routledge. **(Chapter 1)**

Grix, J., 2019. *The foundations of research*. 3rd ed. London: Red Globe Press. *McMillan Research Skills*. **(Chapter 1)**



Research topic formulation



LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

- Identify the attributes of a good research topic.
- Generate and refine ideas to choose a suitable research topic.
- Turn your research idea into a research project with clear questions, aim and objective(s).
- Understand the relationship between research question(s), research aim and research objectives.
- Recognise the role of theory in developing research question(s), research aim and research objectives.
- Draft a research proposal that outlines the main aspects of the project.

Attributes of a good research topic

A research topic must be something you are **capable** of undertaking, that excites your imagination and that is **helpful**.

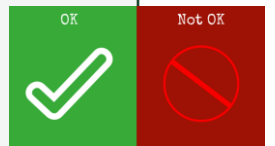
Capability: is it feasible?

- Is the topic something with which you are really fascinated?
- Do you have, or can you develop within the project time frame, the necessary research skills to undertake the topic?
- Is the research topic achievable within the available time?
- Will the topic still be current when you finish your project?
- Is the topic achievable within the financial resources that are likely to be available?
- Are you reasonably certain of being able to gain access to data you are likely to require for this topic?



Appropriateness: is it worthwhile?

- Does the topic fit the specifications and meet the standards set by the course?
- Does your topic contain issues that have a clear link to theory?
- Are you able to state your research question(s), aim and objectives clearly?
- Will your proposed research be able to provide fresh insights into this topic?
- Are the findings for this topic likely to be symmetrical: that is, of similar value whatever the outcome?
- Does the topic match your career goals?



Sources for selecting a topic

Personal interest

(often combined with one or more of the next sources)

Personal involvement in a particular sport or social group based on gender, ethnicity, occupation or any other.

- Advantages: good knowledge of the phenomenon; access to individuals and sources of information; high motivation.
- Disadvantages: bias – lack of ability to view the situation objectively.

e.g., AI and management of sports;

e.g., motivations to attend sport events;

e.g., social and financial impact of certain international sport events;

e.g., effectiveness of sponsorship agreements;

e.g., governance of a specific sport league;

e.g., evaluation of specific sport policies.

✓ Personal interest is important but not enough for a research project

The literature

An analysis of the literature is the most common source of topics for academic research.

- Informal scanning of existent literature
- Critical and focused reading

The focus should not be simply on what was done, but rather on critically evaluating the ideas and identifying the missing pieces.

✓ Personal interest + literature

Sources for selecting a topic (cont.)

Policy or Management issue	<p>These are often specified by an organisation, but can be identified by students and academics (e.g., UEFA vs. Super League)</p> <p>e.g., Why are attendance of league X declining?</p> <p>e.g., What are the sport provisions needed for community X?</p> <p>e.g., How is AI changed the relationships between teams and fans?</p> <p>It can also be driven by your experience working with sport organisations.</p>
Social concern	<p>A wide range of research project can be developed based on issues that are relevant to the researcher and society at large.</p> <p>e.g., The impact of sedentary lifestyles on health</p> <p>e.g., Sport and social inclusion</p> <p>e.g., Diversity in sport organisations</p> <p>e.g., Access to youth sports</p> <p>e.g., Impact of sport on the environment</p> <p>e.g., Impact of AI on engagement with sports</p> <p>It is often related to policy or management issues and the needs and behaviours of certain groups.</p>

Sources for selecting a topic (cont.)

Popular issues on media	<p>Media can inspire research exploring popular beliefs and conceptions</p> <p>e.g., Is public money invested in the Olympics justified? https://www.ecnmy.org/engage/rio-olympics-brazilian-economy/ e.g., Should performance-enhanced drugs be available in fitness centres? https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/38884801 e.g., Are transgender women in sport a threat to female sport? https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/46453958 e.g., Are sport organisations doing a good job fighting racism? https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/57070587 e.g., How is AI changing the sport industry? https://imagination.net/blog/ai-in-sports-industry/</p> <p>It is particularly useful when the issues may be inaccurate or contestable.</p>
Published research agendas	<p>Public agencies, professional bodies and academics often publish research agendas based on the needs of a field.</p> <p>e.g., European Platform for Sport Innovation: https://epsi.eu/strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda/ e.g., UK Sport: https://www.uksport.gov.uk/our-work/international-relations/research e.g., Academic research agenda: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14479338.2016.1244471?needAccess=true</p>
Brainstorming	<p>A group of people bouncing ideas off one another in pursuit for inspiration or solutions for a (sport) problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- It can be seen as a separate source of ideas for a research topic or a way to refine existent ideas from the sources above.
Opportunity	<p>Access to data sources or websites, visits to sport facilities or memberships of an organisation may provide opportunities for research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality of available data is important e.g., Government surveys or team reports available

Generating and refining research ideas: useful tips

Generating research ideas

Rational thinking	Creative thinking
Examining your own strengths and interests	Keeping a notebook of your ideas
Examining staff research interests	Exploring personal preferences using past projects
Looking at past project titles	Exploring relevance to business using the literature
Discussion	Relevance trees
Searching existing literature (academic and industry)	Brainstorming
Scanning the media	

Generating and refining research ideas: useful tips

Refining research ideas

The Delphi technique

- It involves conducting interviews with experts to get their feedback on the topic of interest (more than one round)
- It can be an entire study in itself: <https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/jsm/aop/article-10.1123-jsm.2020-0399/article-10.1123-jsm.2020-0399.xml>

The preliminary inquiry

- Searching and evaluating relevant literature and other related sources (first iteration of critical literature review)
- It may also involve:
 - Informal discussions with knowledgeable people on the topic (e.g. lecturers, industry insiders)
 - Shadowing employees who are likely to be important for your research (i.e. particularly important for applied research)

Integrating ideas

- Integrate the ideas from Delphi technique and/or preliminary inquiry
- “Work up and narrow down”

Refining topics by your organisation

- If you are working on a sport organisation, discuss the ideas with staff
- Find a balance between ‘personal interest’ and ‘organisational interest’ – maybe you can develop a project that combines both interests (research vs. management – RB & SLB)

Turning research ideas into research projects

1. Writing Research Questions (RQs)

“A research question allows you to say what the issue or problem is that you want to study AND what your research project will seek to find out, explain and answers.”

The research question is at the centre of your project

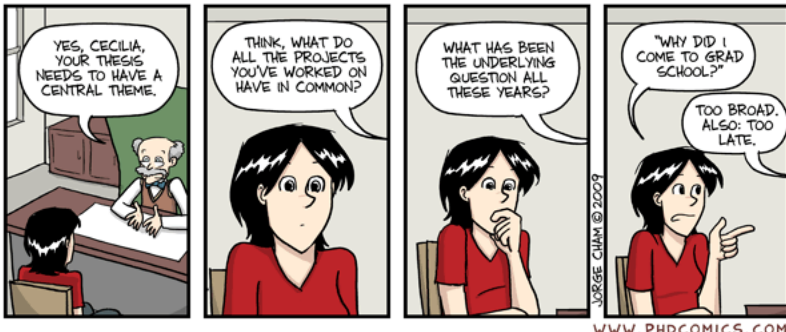
- It influences the choice of literature review, research design, ethics approach, sampling and data collection procedures, and analysis
- It shapes the way you write your research project (i.e., how to answer the RQ)
- It is used to generate the study aim and specific objectives
- For exploratory research (e.g., some qualitative studies), the final research questions may only emerge during the process of data collection and/or data analysis (it can evolve to refine the research direction)



Turning research ideas into research projects

Main characteristics of a research question?

- **Clear:** it provides enough specifics that one's audience can easily understand its purpose without needing additional explanation.
- **Focused:** it is narrow enough that it can be answered thoroughly in the space the writing task allows.
- **Concise:** it is expressed in the fewest possible words.
- **Complex (enough):** it is not answerable with a simple "yes" or "no", but rather requires synthesis and analysis of ideas and sources prior to composition of an answer.
- **Arguable:** its potential answers are open to debate rather than accepted facts.



Turning research ideas into research projects



Research Questions may be related to **exploratory, descriptive or evaluative** research.

- Any research question is likely to begin with or include either “What”, “When”, “Where”, “Who”, “Why” or “How”

- ✓ Some questions are **partially descriptive** or **entirely descriptive**.

e.g., How much did the marketing campaigns of Manchester United cost in 2022?

- ✓ **Exploratory questions** often begin with “How” or “What”.

e.g., How did the move of Cristiano Ronaldo affect the perceived credibility of Saudi football?

- ✓ **Explanatory questions** often commence with “Why” or contain the word within the question.

e.g., Why NBA fans (do not) have an emotional attachment with Stephen Curry?

- ✓ **Explanatory questions** can also begin with “How” or “What”

~~e.g., How much did the marketing campaigns of Manchester United cost in 2021?~~

e.g., How effective were the marketing campaigns of Manchester United in 2021?

e.g., To what extent were the 2021 marketing campaigns of Manchester United effective and why?

Examples of research ideas resulting in general research questions

Exploratory?
Descriptive?
Evaluative?

Research idea	Research question
Media campaign following	How effective is the media campaign designed to increase consumer trust in the NBA following the COVID-19 security measures implemented?
Sport volunteer recruitment via the Internet	To what extent and in what type of context is Internet-based recruitment and selection of volunteers for the Olympic Games effective and why?
Implications of doping on team image	In what ways do the issue of athlete doping affect the associated team's relationship with fans and other stakeholders?
Challenger banks and grassroots sports	How has the emergence of challenger banks impacted upon the financing of grassroots sport organisations and why?

Turning research ideas into research projects

2. Writing a Research Aim and a set of Research objectives

A **research aim** is a brief statement of the purpose of the research project.

- A sentence stating what you intend to achieve through your research

A **research question** and **research aim** are **complementary** ways of saying what the research is about
BUT

Neither gives sufficient detail about the steps needed.

Objectives: evidence of the researcher's sense of purpose and direction

- Research objectives allow to operationalise the Question.



Examples of research questions and related research aims

Research Question	Research Aim
How effective is the media campaign designed to increase consumer trust in the NBA following the COVID-19 security measures implemented?	The aim of this research is to assess the effectiveness of the media campaign by the NBA designed to increase consumer trust in the COVID-19 security measures implemented.
To what extent and in what type of context is Internet-based recruitment and selection of volunteers for the Olympic Games effective and why?	The aim of this research is to understand situations within each Internet-based recruitment and selection of volunteers for the Olympic Games is effective and why.
In what ways do the issue of athlete doping affects the associated team’s relationship with fans and other stakeholders?	The aim of this research is to explore how the issue athlete doping affects team’s relationship with fans and other stakeholders.
How has the emergence of challenger banks impacted upon the financing of grassroots sport organisations and why?	The aim of this research is to explore how the emergence of challenger banks has impacted upon the financing of grassroots sport organisations and why.

QUESTION → AIM → OBJECTIVES

Research Question

How effective are social media platforms used by sport organisations as a means to communicate with fans?

Research Aim

The aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of social media platforms as a means to communicate with fans of <team name>.

Research objectives

- To identify each social media platform used by <team name> to communicate with fans.
- To describe the <team name>'s objectives for each platform (e.g. conveying news; development of ideas; etc.).
- To explore how specific examples of each social media platform have been beneficial to <team name>.
- To explore how specific examples of each social media platform have not been beneficial to <team name>.
- To determine a measure of effectiveness for each platform that shows whether and how it has met, exceeded or failed to meet the objectives set for it.
- To compare measures of effectiveness across social media platforms related to different <team name> objectives.
- To make recommendations about each social media platform's future when communicating with fans.

Review Questions

1. Indicate a list of useful sources to help generate a research topic linked to the sport ecosystem.
2. Explain the differences between rationale thinking and creative thinking in generating and refining research ideas.
3. What are the key attributes of a good research topic? Provide examples related to the sport ecosystem.
4. Explain three key strategies that can be used to refine research ideas.
5. What is a Delphi technique? To what situations should be used?
6. What are the main characteristics of a research question? Select a topic and write down an example of a proper research question an inappropriate research question.
7. Explain the key differences between exploratory, descriptive or evaluative research questions.
8. Explain the linkages between research questions, research aims and research objectives. Provide examples.
9. What is the importance of theory in writing research questions and objectives?
10. What types of theory contribution you may be able to make with your research? Give examples.
11. What are the requirements of a good research proposal? And how should you structure a good research proposal?

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