

UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

Bachelor of Business Administration (Semester V) Examination, 2022

MKT 3313 – Research Methods

Three (03) Hours

Answer Four (04) Questions in all including Question No. 1 and any other Three (03) questions

1. Read the case and answer the questions given below.

Vishwa is a student reading for the BBA degree, and he has been looking for a suitable research problem to conduct a pure research for his final year research project. One day he was at a Coffee Bean coffee shop and overheard a conversation between some young men at a table close by. One of them pointed at some other people at another table and said “look at those guys; they are trying to show that they belong to the upper class by coming to these coffee shops. But I heard one of them ordering at the counter. He couldn’t even properly read the names of the different types of coffee written on the board. Real third-class people; they just want to copy what the upper class is doing.” All the young men at his table laughed at this comment. Vishwa thought that while the other group of people were trying to show status by copying the upper class, these young men were also trying to show status by identifying themselves as the ‘true upper class’ and laughing at the others as lower class people just trying to pretend they were upper class. He thought that it was interesting how different people were using a simple act of drinking coffee to show their class and social status. He asked his Seminar on Research lecturer if he could do a research about this.

“That is a very interesting idea,” the lecturer said. “Read some literature and see if you can find a knowledge gap.” “I’ve tried madam,” Vishwa replied. “But it’s very difficult to find literature. I could find only a few papers.” “Use the *reference lists* of the papers you have found to find more articles. You can also try the ‘*Cited by*’ link on Google Scholar,” the lecturer advised. With these suggestions Vishwa managed to find many good research papers. Following are three examples of such papers:

- “A Place in Town: Doing Class in a Coffee Shop” written by Carrie Yodanis, published in 2006
- “Coffee as a Social Drug” written by Steven Topik, published in 2009
- “Coffee brands, class and culture in a Canadian city” written by Sonia Bookman, published in 2013

When reading the articles he found, he identified that several *key themes* were discussed in many of them. (For example, four such themes were, ‘Coffee brands are used to show social status,’ ‘Coffee shops are used to show social status,’ ‘Coffee drinking is a habit of Western countries,’ and ‘Developing country consumers copy Western habits’.) Using these, as well as a number of other themes, he developed a *synthesis matrix* to *summarise* individual research papers and to *synthesise* the ideas in all the papers he read. After reviewing the literature, he identified a knowledge gap: He couldn’t find any papers that discussed how people in non-Western, developing countries used coffee drinking in coffee shops as a form of showing social class and status. Being a non-Western, developing country, Sri Lanka was a good place to do this study. Therefore, he developed the following research problem: “How do Sri Lankan consumers use the consumption of coffee in coffee shops to show their social status?”

In the literature, he also found a good theory that explains how people show social status through different consumption practices. This theory had two key concepts – Social Emulation (lower classes copying the consumption habits of upper classes) and Social Differentiation (upper classes trying to differentiate themselves from the lower classes). He felt that he could use this theory to provide a possible new theoretical explanation of how Sri Lankan consumers use coffee consumption to show status.

When Vishwa showed his research problem and the theory he selected to his lecturer, she was very happy. “Well done, Vishwa,” she said. “Now break this research problem down into a few objectives that show your *specific areas of investigation*. Try to develop the objectives in such a way that they are *informed by the theory* you plan to use for giving the new theoretical explanation.”

As instructed by the lecturer, Vishwa developed three research objectives as follows:

- a) Do Sri Lankan consumers use consumption of coffee in coffee shops to show their social status?

- b) How do Sri Lankan consumers use consumption of coffee in coffee shops as a form of social emulation in showing their social status?
- c) How do Sri Lankan consumers use the consumption of coffee in coffee shops as a form of social differentiation in showing their social status?

Now he is ready to proceed with the project.

- i. The lecturer suggests that Vishwa uses the *reference lists* of papers he has read, and the *Cited by* link in Google Scholar to find more articles. Explain how he could find more research articles by using these two methods.

(08 marks)
- ii. Vishwa uses a *synthesis matrix* to *summarise* individual research papers and to *synthesise* the ideas in all the papers he read. Explain how a synthesis matrix could be used to summarise individual research papers and synthesise ideas in different papers. Use the research papers and themes given in the case to create an outline structure of an example synthesis matrix to support your answer.

(12 marks)
- iii. Explain *two* purposes of *synthesising* literature in *pure* research, using information in the case to support your answer.

(10 marks)
- iv. The lecturer instructs Vishwa to develop research objectives that show the *specific areas of investigation* of his study and advises that his objectives should be *informed by the theory* he plans to use for *giving the new theoretical explanation*.
 - (a) Briefly explain why a research problem is broken down into objectives that show a few specific areas of investigation.

(06 marks)
 - (b) Are Vishwa's research objectives informed by the theory? Explain briefly (in about two or three sentences).

(04 marks)

(Total 40 Marks)

2.

- i. ‘Spicio’ is a brand of savoury biscuits, and it has recently been losing sales. The sales staff say it is a market-wide situation; they argue that because of the prevailing economic conditions of the country, consumers have reduced biscuit consumption. However, the brand manager of Spicio believes that competing brands are still doing well in the market though Spicio is losing sales. He has requested the Department of Marketing of a reputed university to conduct a research in relation to this.

Is this a pure or applied research project? Explain with reference to the characteristics of *pure* and *applied* research.

(8 marks)

- ii. “In *applied research*, the *management decision problem* is *action oriented*, whereas the *research problem* is *information oriented*.” Explain this statement. Use the problem you analysed in your assignment or a hypothetical (made up) example to illustrate your answer. (Examples used in class or given in a case study in class will not earn you marks.)

(12 marks)

(Total 20 Marks)

3.

- i. “In *semi-structured interviews*, the *questions* on the *interview guide* only provide ‘guidance’ to the interviewer. The interviewer does not always ask the questions in the exact way they appear on the interview guide when interviewing a research participant. Also, the guide could change during the project. This nature of semi-structured interviews is helpful in doing what *interpretive researchers* attempt to do.” Explain this statement with reference to how *semi-structured interviews* are used in research and what *interpretive researchers* attempt to do.

(16 marks)

- ii. “When writing about data collection, students often make the mistake of stating that they used *secondary data* because they have read many research papers. Although research papers contain data, *reviewing literature* is *not* using *secondary data*.” Briefly explain this statement (in about two to three sentences).

(04 marks)

(Total 20 Marks)

4. There are some differences between quantitative and qualitative research in the way you present data analysis and findings; there are also differences between pure and applied research in presenting data analysis and findings.

i. In quantitative research dissertations there are usually two chapters called data presentation and data analysis. In qualitative research dissertations one cannot find a data presentation chapter. Instead, there may be one or more findings/data analysis chapters.

a. Explain data presentation and data analysis (activities and chapters) in quantitative pure research

(10 marks)

b. Briefly explain (in two to three sentences) why there is no data presentation chapter in qualitative research dissertations.

(04 marks)

ii. Explain why recommendations are an important element in the final chapter of an applied research report, whereas there is no section for recommendations in the final chapter of a pure research dissertation.

(06 marks)

(Total 20 Marks)

5.

i. “In both pure research proposals (and dissertations) and applied research proposals (and reports), the first chapter contains a section on ‘Background’. However, the function performed by this section is different in pure and applied research.” Explain this statement

(08 marks)

ii. Briefly describe what you would include in each of the following sections of a final chapter of pure research dissertation/applied research report. (Two to three sentences each is sufficient).

a) Theoretical contributions (pure research dissertation)

b) Managerial implications (pure research dissertation)

c) Recommendations with possible action plan (applied research report)

(12 marks)

(Total 20 Marks)