UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

Bachelor of Business Administration (Semester V) Examination, 2021

MKT 3313 – Research Methods (Part II)

One and a half (1½) Hours

There is **one case study** in this paper with **six (6)** questions.
Answer all questions

Mr Perera, a 55-year-old senior government servant, retired from his job at the end of 2018. Using some savings and money received from the Employees' Provident Fund at his retirement, in January 2019, he started a medium-scale supermarket in the small town he lives in.

None of the big supermarket chains (Cargills, Keels, etc.) have outlets in the town and Mr Perera felt that his supermarket would perform well. He knew that most of the rich people would drive to the bigger towns close by to visit big supermarkets. However, there was a large group of middle-income earning consumers living close to the town, who were working as teachers, clerks, sales executives, and junior managers. He felt that these people were likely to become his customers. Most of them were between 30-45 years old and were married. He felt that they would purchase household grocery products and fresh products such as vegetable and fruits from his supermarket; therefore, he sold these items in the supermarket. He had noticed that it is mostly the women who were shopping for these items (about 75% of the shoppers), at his supermarket as well as in other places of the town, although there were some men shoppers too (about 25%).

In early July, 2019, Mr Perera realised that in the first six months of its operations, sales of the supermarket have not been as good as he had expected. Therefore, he asked Sithumini, a neighbour who is a BBA Marketing undergraduate, to do a research to find out how he could improve the sales of his supermarket. In order to begin the study, Sithumini first asked him some questions.

"What are the other places from which your target consumers buy these products?" she started. "Well, there are two large grocery shops in the town. There is also a Sunday fair (Pola) in the town and farmers in close by villages come and sell their fruit and vegetables there. I think those are the places people go to." Mr Perera answered.

"What products categories are selling well in the supermarket, Mr Perera, and which ones are not selling?" Sithumini asked next. "I haven't checked that" Mr Perera said.

"In your opinion, what could be the reasons why people are not buying products from your supermarket?" asked Sithumini. "I don't really know. I sell many different brands of different products in the supermarket. The two grocery shops don't have that many brands. I've been wondering whether those shops are giving discounts for some grocery products, like milk powder. Perhaps it's cheaper to buy those products from them" Mr Perera said. "But those shops have very few brands" he said again. "Also, they don't sell vegetable and fruits."

"Do you think people are buying vegetable and fruits from the Sunday Pola? Are the prices cheaper there?" Sithumini asked. "I really don't know," said Mr Perea. "Prices might be lower. But, even if prices are low, at the Pola buyers can't really select good vegetables and fruits, you know. Sometimes the sellers give you rotten ones too, but here people can select and pick out the good ones" He continued. "But the vegetable and fruits at the Pola are probably fresher than those in the supermarket. Don't you think?" asked Sithumini. "Hmm. Yes. That could be true. Most farmers pick the vegetables and fruits the evening before Pola day. I usually buy my stocks from Pettah Manning market twice a week. So, their products are probably fresher."

"One last question. Do you have any sales records and stock records of the past few months?" "Of course," said Mr Perera. I have all the records for the past six months."

"Okay. This is what I will do," explained Sithumini. "I will first do a _preliminary study_. I can start with _analysing some secondary data_, and then conduct a few _interviews_ with about 10 of your target consumers. I will have to prepare _an interview guide_ for that. I will also try to collect some information in _some other ways._ These things to will help me to define a good _research problem and objectives._ That way I'll be able to do a good research to help you." Mr Perera looked surprised. "Do you have to do all these things _before you identify the research problem_?" he asked. "Oh yes. If I am to do a good research to find a solution to your problem,

I have to do a thorough _background investigation_ first, to identify the research problem and objectives." Sithumini answered. "I don't understand. Why is that?" Mr Perera asked.

1. What are the _secondary data_ available to Sithumini? (One sentence is sufficient)

   (03 marks)

2. _Briefly_ explain how analysing the secondary data you identified in (1) above could help Sithumini in defining a good research problem.

   (05 marks)

3. Describe the socio-demographic _characteristics of participants_ Sithumini should include in her _preliminary study_ of interviewing consumers, and justify your answer.

   (06 marks)

4. Give _three (03) questions_ you think Sithumini should include in her _interview guide,_ and explain why _each question_ is important.

   (12 marks)

5. Based on the information given in the case, explain _one other activity_ (in addition to discussions with Mr Perera, interviews and secondary data analysis) that Sithumini could undertake to collect some information to help her with defining the research problem and objectives.

   (04 marks)

6. Imagine Sithumini asked for your help to explain to Mr Perera why it is important to do a good _background investigation_ for defining the research problem and objectives. Outline the key points that you may include in your explanation to Mr Perera, and explain them briefly, using information in the case, as required, to support your explanation.

   (10 marks)

(Total 40 Marks)

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