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DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND PLAN

TABLE 3.1 Different ways that research may make a contribution to the literature

Type of issue	Example
Select a hypothesis that is viewed as important by the literature but that is one for which no one has completed a systematic study. Any evidence discovered that supports the hypothesis, or not, will be considered to be a contribution	This might be something like 'increased levels of inbound tourism in developing countries help to stimulate economic growth in these countries'
Finding a hypothesis that appears to be accepted in the literature which we contend may be false, or one that lacks appropriate verification, and investigate it	This could be something along the lines of 'The speculation that the banning of smoking in public places, such as bars, pubs and restaurants, will result in a decline in business'
Discover a controversy in the literature and undertake a study to either substantiate one side of the argument against the other, or conclude that the controversy is unfounded	For example, an ongoing debate in hospitality is the conflict between the views that, on the one hand, hospitality has unique features not found in other types of business and, on the other hand, that it does not
Identify assumptions in the literature that have not been questioned and undertake research to determine their efficacy	The commonly held assumption that 'High levels of labour turnover in hospitality/tourism businesses are due to low pay' could be explored
Identify a gap in the existing literature characterised by an important issue that has either been ignored or inadequately addressed and undertake a study to remedy this	An example of this would be my research into critical success factors (CSFs) in hospitality businesses because, although CSFs had been researched in many other contexts, there were no systematic studies on this in a hospitality context
Identify theories, models or evidence existing in another body of literature that could be tested for their applicability and efficacy in another field or domain	An example of this would be the SERVQUAL studies, which were developed and tested in other service industry contexts, but the researchers claimed that this model could be used in any service business context
Replicate a study conducted in one context, or time period, and repeat this in another context or time period	This might be a study conducted in another industrial context, such as banking or retailing, or in another country or culture



To get you thinking even more about this aspect of the research proposal you may wish to view the two videos via the Video Links Section of the Companion Website (study.sagepub.com/brotherton) that deal specifically with developing good research questions.

Technique Tip 	Specifying a Research Project's Aim and Objectives
Aim To evaluate the critical success factors (CSFs) for cruise line operations.	Objectives [1] To conduct a literature review to identify the nature of CSFs in general and in relation to cruise line operations. [2] To develop a theoretical framework/conceptual model of the CSFs from the literature review and produce associated hypotheses. [3] To collect empirical data from appropriate cruise line organisations and/or individuals. [4] To analyse the empirical cruise line operations data and test the study's hypotheses. [5] To produce conclusions and recommendations for further research into cruise line operations.



To develop your thinking on this task you may find it useful to view the video dealing with the issues, stages and questions involved in developing a research proposal and plan that is available via the link in the Video Links Section of the Companion Website (study.sagepub.com/brotherton) and the links in the Web Links section relating to this process.

Research Action Checklist




Checking Your Research Proposal


Does my proposal


- ✓ provide a clear and appropriate context for the research question/s?
- ✓ make the boundaries/parameters of the research clear and are these appropriate and feasible?
- ✓ include a clear and focused research question(s) and appropriate aim and objectives?
- ✓ provide a clear, coherent and persuasive rationale for undertaking the research?
- ✓ cite landmark studies and researchers?
- ✓ present accurately and succinctly the major theoretical and empirical contributions from previous studies?
- ✓ focus sufficiently on the major issues and not include unnecessary detail on the minor ones?
- ✓ contain appropriate text and bibliographic citations?
- ✓ make it clear how I am going to design the data collection process and instruments?
- ✓ indicate what type/s of data will be collected and why?
- ✓ contain sufficient detail to inform the reader of how the data collection process will be implemented?
- ✓ specify and explain the sampling strategy and techniques that will be used to select and obtain the sample/s?
- ✓ indicate and justify the procedures and techniques that will be used to analyse the data?
- ✓ hang together as a coherent document?
- ✓ And finally, if someone gave me this proposal would it make sense to me, could I follow it easily and understand exactly what the person was planning to do and why?



See also the video, available via the Video Links Section of the Companion Website (study.sagepub.com/brotherton), dealing with the issues facing a researcher attempting to navigate this journey.

<p>Key Concept</p> 	<p>Non-Harm</p>
<p>Non-Harm – It is a basic principle of research regarded as ethical that the participants should not be open to any potential harm as a consequence of their decision to participate. This, of course, includes physical harm but it is a much wider concept than that. For example, unless otherwise agreed at the outset, it is a basic tenet of research that participants are not named, or able to be identified, from the data they provide and the way the results are presented. Such anonymity not only protects the privacy of the participant but it also tends to encourage them to provide more truthful responses, for obvious reasons. The non-harm principle also applies to potential psychological and/or social harm. Some topics and questions could be highly sensitive and have the potential to distress or embarrass the participant; some might put them in a difficult position in relation to their superiors/subordinates or social networks; some may cause them to lose face or lose their jobs. Similar issues may arise with corporate participants; although you may be unlikely to ask for, or be given, commercially sensitive information there still may be information obtained from companies/organisations that needs to respect the anonymity principle.</p>	

<p>Key Concept</p> 	<p>Informed Consent</p>
<p>Informed Consent – In many ways this is self-evident, however exactly what information should be provided to potential research participants so that they are able to make an ‘informed’ decision is not always self-evident. Naturally you would tell people what the research is about, what it is designed to achieve, why it is being undertaken, what the participant will be expected to do, how much time will be required, who, if anyone, is sponsoring the research and what will happen to the results but would you think about how you are going to record and store the data you collect? Apart from potential legal issues associated with data protection/disclosure legislation the anonymity principle equally applies to this. Although you may feel that using personal descriptors to enter your data into electronic, or any other type of, files is not a problem because they are private to you, this may not be the case. If others could potentially access these files without your consent or knowledge then your actions could, albeit inadvertently, cause harm to those individuals or organisations.</p>	

Research Action Checklist 	Ethical Issues to Consider in Planning Research
<p>Have you considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ potential risks to the researcher, participants, the data collected, your institution?✓ what these risks might be and how they can be addressed?✓ how the data you collect will be protected?✓ how the participants will be identified and recruited?✓ how informed consent will be managed and obtained?✓ how you will ensure that no harm comes to anyone involved in the research?✓ what will be done to ensure anonymity and confidentiality?✓ how you will record, store and, eventually, dispose of the data?✓ the extent to which you may need ethical approval for your work?✓ if there are likely to be any 'sensitivities' you may need to address?	



For further assistance on ethical issues see the 'Research Ethics Guidebook' link in the Web Links section of the Companion Website (study.sagepub.com/brotherton).