
UNIT 5 RESEARCH FOR JOURNALISTIC WRITINGS

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

Research is described as the systematic way of enquiry intended to find truth that includes various sequential steps . Research supports and approves or denies a claim or statement based on a specific idea. It generates answers of some questions and paves way for further researches to be conducted. Research essentially provides new insights and fresh directions to the problems undertaken by researcher. It is an unbiased and logical approach which leads to formulation of theories/laws, establishment of facts, finding numerous answers or finding different dimensions of truth.

Journalists have been using research to generate various stories and such stories have grabbed public attention. A journalist seeks truth without personal bias. A good research assists any story to serve the purpose and intent .You can mention investigative stories as one of the best examples of effective use of research in journalism. After identification of the story, a good journalist opts for a suitable research method/methods to explore various aspects associated with the story than siding with one. Journalistic research is purpose-oriented and by adding value judgement, a journalist often provides unique and appropriate solutions to the existing problems.

5.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- describe meaning and importance of research for journalists;
- use various methods and tools of research used by journalists for presenting a story;
- identify various aspects of research in media industry; and
- differentiate between academic and journalistic research.

5.2 WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Many scholars, institutions, reports, encyclopedia, dictionaries have defined research with different description but establishes the same meaning. If we conclude we can say that research in systematic and logical manner tries to discover truth. Research finds answer of the questions with the help of scientific methods and in this process new theories and principles are formulated, existing theories are re-evaluated to be upgraded and modified, or can be completely rejected.

5.3 IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Research is important for human society as it brings in new knowledge. It happens by putting forward an entirely original idea or theory and by exploring new horizons of knowledge. It gives new insight to the subject and new direction to human thinking and action. Research defines and explores interrelationships between different variables and thus establishes new theories and principles. These theories and principles work as the foundation and influence the development of society. Research makes meaningful contributions by resolving contradictions in the field of knowledge. This is also true for mass communication. Different paradigms of understanding and explaining mass communication have been established, challenged, modified and replaced by great research works. Research is the foundation for all disciplines, development and structural changes and logical answers to questions which are raised in the quest of knowledge.

5.4 TYPES OF RESEARCH

Research is the foundation of every field. Many companies have their own research and development departments. Research is not limited to studies but it enhances the horizons of studying. Let us understand the types of research:

5.4.1 Qualitative Research

Research that explores the variables subjectively and may use methods like observation, In-depth Interviews etc to find answers. It includes patiently studying of subject through different angles and requires deep knowledge of the concerned matter.

5.4.2 Quantitative Research

It requires the facts and figures to be held with utmost sincerity. It may deal with one or more than one variable and study its co-relation. More calculative measure are used in this kind of research. The subject can be quantified in numbers or any other unit of measure.

Research can be further divided into different types on the basis of various factors.

5.5 NEED OF RESEARCH IN MEDIA INDUSTRY

Media is a holistic term comprising of print media, electronic media, cinema, traditional folk media and new media or digital media. Media has influenced the thinking, opinion and perception of human society and is considered as one of the vital institutions in democratic structures. It performs the functions of a watchdog and agenda setter.

Since it is an important discipline to study, media research has become indispensable for all academics, society and the industry itself. Besides communication scholars, scholars from Sociology, Political Science and Psychology are also interested in media and communication research.

Research is essential for journalistic practices too. Now a days screen presentations, lay-out and design of media products are finalized after receiving research based inputs from marketing sections. So many good stories need research support for logical and objective presentation of facts. You might have seen numerous news items based on facts, figures and data. These stories analyse some of the important issues which need research inputs to get meaningful and interesting shapes.

5.5.1 The Need of Media Research

Advertising and promotion is an integral part of media. The reach of newspapers, TV channels, radio channels and these days several OTT platforms is been checked from time to time. To be more accurate the receptivity of particular shows on air and the time slots are been monitored as well. There are various agencies that measure the reach of different media. For e.g. Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) is an industry body founded by stakeholders of advertisers, broadcasters and advertising and media agencies. It is set up for measuring the TV audience in India. Similarly, Media Research Users Council (MRUC) which was set up in 1994 is yet another not-for profit industry body that brings out many research reports regularly. These include the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) which studies and brings out reach and readership of various print media publications. Indian Outdoor Survey which is a measurement system on outdoor media and Indian Listenership track which is a day after recall study of radio listenership. Various marketing research methods are used by media houses to analyse their market presence and develop, change or modify marketing and sales strategies.

5.5.2 Benefits of Research

Research being the basis of decision making requires prolonged and dedicated efforts. Let us understand the benefits of doing a research:

- a) It provides a certain level of accuracy which cannot be achieved by any other method.
- b) It strengthen any viewpoint and gives sustenance to a given statement

- c) It leads to new resolutions to old problems.
- d) It creates a new thought process that can have major impact in different areas of life
- e) It helps in development of technology and makes life easier.
- f) It helps in establishment of new facts.
- g) It serves as basis of formulation of new laws.
- h) It also raises questions on previously established patterns and provide a fresh intake on concerned topics.
- i) It helps replicating the needed result at other places too. Many researches are used as an example for other places. Like a medical drug is developed for curing a deadly virus, now the same researched formula can be used to replicate the result in other labs.
- j) It helps solving crimes, mysteries and other unsolved problems of different areas. There are forensic teams who analyse the data at any crime scene. Also some of world's greatest mysteries lies in the universe. Many scientists have dedicated their lives to finding out the truth.
- k) It helps to identify mass patterns and access the need, likes or dislikes of public. Many product manufacturing or marketing firms perform researches and then sell their product accordingly.

5.5.3 Research and Journalism

New age journalism has grown with strong base of principles and availability of modern research tools and techniques. A Journalist today has been exposed to a situation with multi facets and requires an approach that connects to truth.

A journalist collects first hand information which is known as 'Primary data' and also uses information related to the story which was previously available in form of any photographs, videos, texts or any other means. That data is called 'Secondary data' in the field of research. For example a journalist going and asking members of an area about municipal corporation work makes authorities answerable and can have an practical impact on lives of people. Another example of research can be a sports journalist analysing past games to give insight of otherwise gone unnoticed actions or scenarios. Although ethics should never be compromised while doing a research for any story. Data should be collected in a legal and harmless manner. Research makes story more descript, interesting and meaningful. A well researched piece also catches more eye balls and sometimes may result into bringing big changes in society. Sometimes Journalists uses other's research to generate a much needed story. In such cases it is important to cite the author and organization who has conducted the research, for example of special days like 'World diabetes day' or 'World Mental Health day' researches done by World Health Organization, Indian Council of Medical Research etc are published. It provides meaning and larger perspective to any current happening or in general lets people see the larger picture of an issue. Powerful words integrated with a strong research helps build up a good story.

In the world of Digital media. A lot of data is available on single click. This has made a journalist work easy and difficult at the same time. The access to data is undeniably a strong force but a journalist has to be vigilant about the usage of sources. Many websites even visuals are manipulated and supply wrong information. Without cross verification, no information should be used. One wrong judgement of a journalist can defame people or even disturb harmony at large. Journalists mostly use the tool of survey. In such cases right 'sampling' is required. One has to select the participants that would correctively represent the audience. For example if a story is done on mental health of married women. Then the sample must include housemakers, working women, city women, rural women etc. To get an unbiased and effective result.

You can often find special or short interval volumes of magazines publishing lead stories which are outcome of research. During the time of elections opinion poll based stories get popularity. Such stories are examples of well-planned research work specifically conducted by journalists and research teams of the channel or newspaper. Popular taglines are highlighted and comparison approach is used to present the story. Audience prioritizes these stories when they get to read or see who all stand in the race for prime ministership or which party is predicted to perform well or poorly in which area. General elections are celebrated components of our democracy which are awaited by media industry eagerly. You can observe the increasing presence of these survey based stories in news media well ahead of the actual election.

Another kind of research based story published during election time is exit poll survey. Exit poll is conducted on the election day and mostly just after the electorate has casted the vote. The preferred place to conduct exit poll is the polling station area. Exit polls have helped newspapers and other news organisations to gain viewership/readership and revenue through advertisements. Exit poll is conducted in most countries where democratic election process takes place. News stories based on the exit poll results and associated analysis sometimes influences the voter's decision. This is considered as unethical manipulation by Election Commission of India and they have imposed ban on publishing such analysis unless the last vote is casted. Now a days most of the exit poll survey researches are conducted by professional organisations in collaboration with media houses.

Research is used by journalists to develop stories for the subject of lifestyle journalism too. These stories dealing with subjects like satisfaction with married life, fashion, tour and travel, voting for favourite destinations and role models, etc. Most of these stories are based on survey research and findings are interpreted as per requirement of the media houses. You might have seen famous survey based stories on lifestyle component in some popular magazines of our country. Started with a view to give variety to the readers, these stories and issues have become a regular part of the publication.

You will find a number of news items in news media based on research works done by researchers, scientists, research institutions and labs. These

research works are of vital importance for society as well as help journalists to write stories which are mature and complete. Research findings on health, sanitation, medicines, technological advancements, agriculture and other issues of public interest help journalists to cover these issues more significantly and full of relevant information.

Environmental issues are now top concern for everybody. You must have observed many stories on subjects like climate change, pollution, deforestation, biodiversity, waste management frequently appearing in news. People carefully read these stories and make their opinion for contributions or corrective actions. Most of these stories are developed on research finding and journalists convert or interpret these findings into interesting pieces of writing. Since last few years we have been witnessing lead stories on the pollution index and ranking of most polluted cities of our country. This is a fine example of research based story where figures are turned into interesting, thought provoking journalistic writings. Such findings provide ample scope to journalists to use statistical tools like graph, diagrams, animations, tables and make story understandable, interesting and graspable.

Development journalism is that area of journalism where research helps journalists to present meaningful reports. Research in development journalism is used for both telling the readers latest developments as well as investigating and presenting clear picture on the credibility and usefulness of the development measures. True development journalism is not limited to describing the happening or narrating the version of others with journalistic flair. It includes researching the elements of story including background, exposing if anything unusual or odd is happening and decode the meaning, motives and perspectives of the communication. Research is the key component to present a meaningful and substantial report on the subject.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note:** 1) Use the space given below for your answer
2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Explain usage of Research in Journalism.

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2. What is the most popular research tool used in journalism ?

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5.5 SCOPE OF RESEARCH IN JOURNALISM

The world of media is growing at a fast pace. Public and private broadcasters are expanding the horizons. Print media is revolutionizing and digital media has took over with its speed and accessibility. In such scenario need of research is explicit. Let us take a look at its future prospects.

There has always been a research and reference section in newspaper offices where important information and references are stored. When required, such data base is used by journalists to make their story effective and complete. Normally developing a story starts with collection of information. This collected information is analysed and deduced by journalist according to need and then communicated to the audiences. This process of developing a story is similar to the process of doing research in social and behavioral sciences.

In the age of digital technology and availability of huge data, the use of research techniques in journalistic writings has re-emerged. Philip Meyer in his work Precision Journalism coined the same term (Precision Journalism) to describe the use of social science tools and techniques to present in-depth and accurate stories. Digital media has enabled journalists to gather information with the help of digital media tools. Use of digital technologies to analyse huge data and explore socio- cultural, demographic, political and geographical perspectives behind the issue has increased the quality, intensity and effectiveness of the reports presented to the public. The use of social science techniques to gather and analyze data has transformed the investigative journalism by making it more concrete, precise and comprehensive.

With increasing presence of multiple digital platforms of news dissemination, journalism has turned to be more analytical in nature hence research has become an important tool to develop stories which are fresh, meaningful and exposing new dimensions of the issue. The process of globalization and economic liberalization has also asserted the need to use research in journalistic practices. Segmentation and customization strategies also refer to use of research inputs to develop news stories which are suitable for niche audiences.

Now a days, in the age of big data and internet based information platforms the term 'Data Journalism' has also become prevalent which indicates a process of developing stories with the help of technology by monitoring, compiling, analyzing data through software and journalistic creativity. The journalistic ability of storytelling interestingly is used to visualize and illustrate the findings and perspectives of data. This blend of technological sharpness and journalistic skills have transformed the numbers, and statistical findings into certifiable, reliable, relevant and interesting news stories.

Research is not a new component of journalism. If you ask your parents, they will tell you about analytical stories which have been published in the newspapers since decades. On city page of the newspaper you might have seen news reports narrating rise in the graph of crime in the city. The reporter collects data for the crime reported in a specific period. This crime data is a further divided into categories such as murder, attempt to murder, robbery, crime against women etc. and often shown with the help of graphics or table. The numbers are analysed qualitatively and the reporter ends the story with remarks. The same pattern of developing a story can be seen on many other subjects like pollution level, weather news, economic news, sports news etc. The research tools and procedure followed are almost the same as applied by any researcher to find answer of his or her research question.

Activity – 1

Read one English and one Hindi newspaper/news website. Find and compare survey or data based news stories in them. Write your observations.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Use the space given below for your answer

2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What is the need of research in media?

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

Research plays an important role in journalism. In this unit we have mainly discussed research in the context of journalism. What is the use of research in journalism? How do journalists use various research tools to increase the impact and credibility of their news stories? How is data based news gaining more importance? And how will research get more relevance in journalism in the days to come? We talked about the answers to all these relevant questions in this unit.

5.8 KEY WORDS

Sample: Sample is sub-set of the population. It is unit of the study chosen from the study area.

Hypothesis: Hypothesis is the tentative generalization or assumption of relationship between variables which has got to be tested.

Variables: Variable is any quantity which have different values. Research basically defines correlation between different variables.

5.9 FURTHER READINGS

Klaus Bruhn Jensen (2003). A Handbook of Media and Communication Research. Routledge. New Delhi.

Arthur Asa Berger (2012). Media Analysis Techniques. Sage, New Delhi.

5.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress – 1

1. Research is the key component to present a meaningful and substantial report on any issue. A journalist collects first-hand information which is known as ‘Primary data’ and also uses information related to the story which was previously available in form of any photographs, videos, texts or any other means. That data is called ‘Secondary data’ in the field of research.

Research makes story more descript, interesting and meaningful. A well-researched piece also catches more eye balls and sometimes may result into bringing big changes in society. Sometimes Journalists uses other's research to generate a much needed story.

Journalists mostly use the tool of survey and in-depth interviews. You can often find special or short interval volumes of magazines publishing lead stories which are outcome of research. During the time of elections opinion poll based stories get popularity. Such stories are examples of well-planned research work specifically conducted by journalists and research teams of the channel or newspaper.

Another kind of research based story published during election time is exit poll survey. Exit poll is conducted on the election day and mostly just after the electorate has casted the vote.

Research is used by journalists to develop stories for the subject of lifestyle journalism too. These stories dealing with subjects like satisfaction with married life, fashion, tour and travel, voting for favourite destinations and role models, etc. Most of these stories are based on survey research and findings are interpreted as per requirement of the media houses.

You will find a number of news items in news media based on research works done by researchers, scientists, research institutions and labs. These research works are of vital importance for society as well as help journalists to write stories which are mature and complete. Research findings on health, sanitation, medicines, technological advancements, agriculture and other issues of public interest help journalists to cover these issues more significantly and full of relevant information.

Most of these stories are developed on research finding and journalists convert or interpret these findings into interesting pieces of writing. Since last few years we have been witnessing lead stories on the pollution index and ranking of most polluted cities of our country. This is a fine example of research based story where figures are turned into interesting, thought provoking journalistic writings. Such findings provide ample scope to journalists to use statistical tools like graph, diagrams, animations, tables and make story understandable, interesting and graspable.

All the above points establish that research is very useful in journalism.

2. Survey

Check Your Progress 2

1. Media research has become indispensable for all academics, society and the industry itself. Besides communication scholars, scholars from Sociology, Political Science and Psychology are also interested in media and communication research.

Research is essential for journalistic practices too. Now a days screen presentations, lay-out and design of media products are finalized after receiving research based inputs from marketing sections. So many good stories need research support for logical and objective presentation of facts. You might have seen numerous news items based on facts, figures and data. These stories analyze some of the important issues which need research inputs to get meaningful and interesting shapes.