

# CHAPTER 1: PRELIMINARIES

## INTRODUCTION

Proposal and thesis writing are areas of research that have caused many challenges to scholars and researchers. These challenges are at times caused by the researcher's inability to clearly define what is expected in a research proposal or thesis. Proposal and thesis writing constitute part of the research process. This chapter, therefore, gives a brief overview of research proposal and thesis writing and the differences therein.

## THE CONCEPT OF RESEARCH

The term 'research' means to look for, examine, investigate or explore. Research is the process of solving problems and finding facts in an organised way. According to Waltz and Bausell (1981) research is a systematic, formal, rigorous, and precise process employed to gain solutions to problems or to discover and interpret new facts and relationships. Kothari (2006) defines research as a pursuit of truth with the help of study, observation, comparison and experiment, the search for knowledge through objective and systematic method of finding solutions to a problem. Payton (1979) describes research as the process of looking for a specific question in an organised, objective, and reliable way. Kerlinger (1973) defines research as a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena.

Research involves the following components:

1. **It is systematic.** Research attempts to solve problems whether social, economic, political, and cultural or health related in a systematic way. It is systematic in that a general system is followed. This involves identification of the problem, review of related literature and data collection. The process of data collection requires proper organisation and control so that the data will enable valid decisions to be made about the research problem at hand. This is followed by data analysis, conclusions and recommendations.
2. **It is objective.** Research attempts to find an objective, unbiased solution to the problem. Research involves gathering new data from primary sources (first-hand) and secondary sources (using

existing data). It attempts to find an objective unbiased solution to the problem.

3. It is based on **observable experience or empirical evidence**. It demands accurate observation and description.
4. It employs carefully **designed procedures** and **rigorous analysis**.

## TYPES OF RESEARCH

Research can either be qualitative or quantitative.

### 1. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and participation observation. The sample size is typically small, and respondents are selected to fulfil a given quota. Sometimes qualitative research is called naturalistic inquiry or field studies.

**Table 1.1:** Advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research

Advantages of qualitative research	Disadvantages of qualitative research
<input type="checkbox"/> Rich, in-depth detail is possible (e.g., participants can elaborate on what they mean) <input type="checkbox"/> Perceptions of participants themselves can be considered (the human factor) appropriate for situations in which detailed understanding is required <input type="checkbox"/> Events can be seen in their proper context / more holistically	<input type="checkbox"/> Not always generalisable due to small sample sizes and the subjective nature of the research <input type="checkbox"/> Conclusions need to be carefully hedged <input type="checkbox"/> Accusations of unreliability are common (different results may be achieved on a different day/with different people)

Qualitative research includes the following:

1. Ethnographies that are observation of groups.
2. Phenomenological studies which study subjects over a period of time through developing relationships with them and reporting findings based on research experiences
3. Case studies which use various data to investigate the subject over time and by activity.
4. Netnography which includes observation of behaviour of internet users online.

## **2. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**

Quantitative research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics. It is used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other defined variables and generalise results from a larger sample population. Quantitative research uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research. Quantitative data collection methods are much more structured than Qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data collection methods include various forms of surveys – online surveys, paper surveys, mobile surveys and kiosk surveys, face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, longitudinal studies, website interceptors, online polls, and systematic observations. Quantitative research is often associated with the theory-testing.

**Table1.2:** Advantages and disadvantages of quantitative research

<b>Advantages of quantitative research</b>	<b>Disadvantages of quantitative research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Larger sample sizes often make the conclusions from quantitative research generalisable</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Statistical methods mean that the analysis is often considered reliable</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate for situations where systematic, standardised comparisons are needed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not always shed light on the full complexity of human experience or perceptions</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Can reveal <i>what / to what extent</i>, but cannot always explore <i>why</i> or <i>how</i></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> May give a false impression of homogeneity in a sample</li></ul>

### **3. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**

Qualitative and quantitative approaches and researches are complimentary. Where appropriate, they should be combined to maximise the strength and minimise the limitations of each. For example, in a study on the enhancement of sustainable tourism education and training to primary school level and rural communities in Zimbabwe (Marunda, 2014), the researcher used qualitative and quantitative methodologies to allow the limitations of each approach to be transcended by comparing findings from different perspectives. Population of the study was from four clusters (Harare, Eastern Highlands, Bulawayo and Victoria Falls). The sample of the study was derived from this population, face to face interviews were carried out and self-administered questionnaires were administered to different respondents.

**Table 1.3:** Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research

<b>Qualitative</b>	<b>Quantitative</b>
Depth of understanding	Level of occurrence
Asks 'how' and 'why?'	Asks 'how many' and 'how much'
Studies motivation	Studies events
Subjective	Objective
Enables discovery	Discovery and proof
Exploratory in nature	More definitive
Interprets	Describes

### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

To propose means to put forward, suggest, intend or advise. Proposals therefore refer to suggestions, intentions, plans or schemes. A research proposal can consequently be referred to as a research plan, request or suggestion. It is a plan since it puts forward for consideration one's plan of intent. It is a suggestion as it attempts to persuade people reading to do something. This is either to fund a study, recommend that research should be carried out or to

recommend the implementation of a project. Therefore, a research proposal is a request to implement a programme/ study.

A research proposal includes the core elements of the four main chapters found in a thesis (Introduction, Review of related literature, Research methodology and Data presentation and analysis). The first chapter is introduction; it consists of the background to the study, statement of the research problem, purpose and objectives of the study, hypothesis, and conceptual or theoretical framework. The second chapter is the review of related literature while the third chapter deals with the research methodology and the fourth chapter presents the data collected and how it is analysed to give it meaning and sense to reach meaningful scientific conclusions. References and appendices are included at the end of the proposal. A research proposal is not written in chapters; however, its key elements are the ones that lead to the build-up of the thesis.

#### **CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF A GOOD PROPOSAL**

A good proposal clearly states:

- i. What is being proposed and what the project is about?
- ii. How it will be carried out?
- iii. When it will be carried out?
- iv. How much it will cost?

#### **RESEARCH THESIS**

A research thesis is a written scientific report that deals with concerns related to a problem or series of problems in one's area of research. A thesis consists of the first three chapters of the proposal, plus the research findings, conclusions and recommendations. The structure of the thesis includes the following:

Chapter one: Introduction

Chapter two: Literature review

Chapter three: Research methodology

Chapter four: Research findings

Chapter five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations.

It also includes references and appendices. A thesis also includes an abstract. The past tense is used in the thesis. This a general guide, however on Chapter two, if it is a lengthy thesis, the literature review can extend to more chapters where each chapter will be reviewing literature as per given objective(s). Chapter three also can be split into more than one chapter according to one's methodology. For instance, if a mixed methodology is adopted in research, a chapter can be written up for each methodology used. Even Chapter 4 can be split into more than one chapter to show each type of data analysis used in different chapters and discussion separately. Hence, a thesis can have more than five chapters depending on the presentation style adopted in the write up.

The thesis paper should begin with an introduction of the subject matter being explored; provide background information related to the subject and provide the reader with information regarding the significance of the subject. The author should present the reader with supporting documentation that either proves or disproves the theory being presented. A discussion of the findings and conclusions sums up the paper. The final thesis report can only be written after data collection, analysis, conclusion and recommendations. The thesis focuses on presenting a unique and original idea to the audience that the author intends to prove. It should focus on issues of concern in society, particularly what is already known about the issues, what the author did about solving the problem, what the author thinks results mean, and where or how further progress in the field can be made. The author is expected, through the thesis to make an original contribution to human knowledge.

#### **CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF A GOOD RESEARCH THESIS**

Philip & Pugh (1994), Saunders *et al.* (2007) point out that a good thesis should have the following characteristics:

- a) It should be contestable; that means, it should propose an arguable point with which people could reasonably disagree.
- b) It should be provocative: it takes a stand and justifies the discussions and conclusions the author presents, but also allows

readers to analyse the findings and make their own conclusions either in support or against.

- c) It should be specific and focused. There is systematic link from the research title, problem statement, objectives, data collection and analysis, and the conclusion.
- d) It should be flexible. The evidence may lead one to a conclusion one did not expect.
- e) It avoids vague language (like 'it seems') and avoids the first person ('I believe', 'In my opinion').
- f) It should add to the existing body of knowledge.

### **TOPIC SELECTION**

The term 'topic' refers to subject, issue or area under discussion. The topic one selects is essential to the success of the research project. This is mainly because one's interest in the topic will sustain research. If a researcher is interested in a particular area, he or she will enjoy reading material related to the subject and will put time and effort into work. The researcher will be keen on collecting the required data, analysing it and finding out results. All research requires painstaking thought, writing, and reading before the proposal or thesis is finalised. If the researcher is interested in the topic, this will be an exciting venture. It is therefore imperative that the researcher selects a topic that interests him or her. The following are some of the steps that should be followed when looking for a thesis topic.

#### **i. IDENTIFY WHAT INTERESTS ONE IN AN AREA OF STUDY**

There are many issues in life that may interest a researcher. These may be social, economic, health, political or cultural issues. However, it is important to identify a puzzling aspect in one's area of study. This not only enables the researcher to go in-depth in one's professional area, but also to defend the researched work with authority.

For example, in identifying an area of study student in the Tourism and Hospitality may be interested in outbound travel as to why people travel for holiday outside the country despite having better tourist attractions in the country. A student in the department of Business

studies may be interested to know why small business are not sustainable though the government supports the small businesses. An educationist may be interested in free primary education and school accessibility, retention and performance. A doctor may be interested to understand why, despite awareness creation on malaria prevention and the provision of mosquito nets to a certain district, malaria prevalence was still high. These are fertile grounds in which students can identify research topics.

## **ii. IDENTIFY KEY WORDS FOR TOPIC**

The researcher should then focus on the real aspect interesting him or her and express in key specific words what the study will investigate. These words can include words representing the issue that has interested the researcher. For example, if the researcher has interests in outbound travel, the key words may be increase of outbound travel. Key words for the student in Business Studies Department may be failure of small businesses despite government support. The doctors key words may be awareness creation versus malaria prevalence. The researcher should think on what to concentrate on based on key words.

## **iii. DEFINE TOPIC**

After identifying the keywords, the researcher wants to concentrate on, he or she must define the topic. Defining the topic involves analysing the selected words keenly. For example, on outbound travel the researcher must decide on what to concentrate on, whether it is causes, effects or the costs. At this point the researcher must filter and come up with the topic to be studied. For example, on the issue of primary education, the researcher may decide to concentrate on free primary education and student accessibility, or free primary education and student retention or free primary education and learner's performance or all of the above, thus analysing free primary education and school accessibility, retention and performance. The researcher must identify specifically what he or she wants to concentrate on. This enables the study to be focused.



#### **iv. FORMULATE THE TOPIC**

After identifying and defining the topic, the researcher should formulate it. For example, the outbound travel in Zimbabwe. The researcher should search for articles and other materials relevant to the research topic. This information will assist the researcher develop clarity over topic selected. This will also assist the researcher in the formulation of the research problem later. The researcher should take notes, paraphrase and summarise what has been read on relevant materials. This will be included in the literature review. Relevant information related to the selected topic can be found in libraries or internet.

#### **ELEMENTS OF A GOOD RESEARCH TOPIC**

A good research topic has the following elements:

- a) It is researchable: That means it is a subject where the research instruments can be easily formulated, and the study population sampled. The objective that will be formulated based on the topic are measurable.
- b) It captivates the researcher: The topic selected should be one that the researcher has interest in.
- c) It contributes to knowledge: A good research topic is one in which the researcher is aware that the findings of the study will contribute to the body of knowledge.
- d) It is provocative: It is open to varied views and interpretations.
- e) It is clear and focused: The topic is not vague or alien to the researcher.
- f) It is broad but not too broad.

#### **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN TOPIC SELECTION**

Selecting a topic in research is essential and requires much care. This is because a topic selected has much influence on the success of the study. There are various challenges encountered in topic selection and some have resulted in researchers quitting the project halfway, or the project taking longer to be completed than anticipated. The following are some of the problems encountered in topic selection.

**a) CHOOSING A TOPIC THAT IS TOO WIDE**

A researcher may select a research area that is too wide and fail to limit the scope. This occurs due to underestimating the dimension of the topic. For example: *The Effects of Tourism*. This topic may be problematic since the effects of tourism vary by region and type of tourism. The effect of tourism in Zimbabwe specifically in Victoria Falls may be different to effect of tourism in Domboshava. The topic should contextualise city, country or continent. It may also be vague since the effect of tourism on politics may be different on its effect on environment. To avoid selecting a topic that is too wide, the researcher should be very clear and focused on what they want to research on. If it is issues related to effects of tourism, then they must be very certain on what they want to investigate in relation to tourism and make that focus on the study.

**b) CHOOSING A TOPIC THAT IS TOO COMPLEX**

At times a researcher may choose a topic that is too complex for research at the level of the student. This complexity is because some of the research may require large samples. For example, a study on Tourists' reaction to price increases may require a large population sample. A study on the lack of skilled labour in hospitality industry is complex in that it requires a clear definition of the term 'skilled' and 'hospitality industry'. A single researcher may not undertake this type of research. It may require different approaches, many a capital and expertise. This topic may present the researcher with problems particularly during data collection and analysis.

**c) POOR TIMING**

Most research work has limited time span for which data should be collected and presented. Failure to adhere to this may lead to disqualifications or penalties. Some topics, for example *Effects of Increase in Accommodation tax over five years* may not be feasible for a masters' programme. This is mainly because these programmes at most cover span of two years. If for some reasons, gathering information will take many months or even years, then the topic may

not be suitable, particularly if the researcher has a specific deadline to meet.

**d) LIMITED ACCESSIBILITY TO MATERIALS AND RESPONDENTS**

A particular topic may prove unsuitable simply because there is no ready accessibility to the requisite source materials. It is common for some source materials not to be made available for some years after an event or during lifetime of an individual. In Zimbabwe, for example details on the death of Hebert Chitepo in 1989 were not released until 2018 after Robert Mugabe was no longer president of the country. Other details may not be available in libraries and or changed due to political issues.

The topic selection is vital in proposal writing as it contributes to the success of the research. The researcher should therefore ensure that he or she is certain about the topic to be researched, is interested in the topic to be researched, interested in the required materials and resources available.

**TITLE SELECTION**

The name 'title' refers to heading, tag or label. The title of the proposal or thesis describes what the study is about. The title is a mini abstract. It portrays a quick summary of the key idea(s) in a proposal or thesis. For example, the following title by Marunda (2014), *The enhancement of sustainable tourism education and training to primary school level in rural communities in Zimbabwe* indicates that the study is on tourism education. It also indicates that the researcher will analyse tourism training in primary schools in rural areas of Zimbabwe. Examples of titles:

- Factors contributing to the late adoption of quality management systems in Zimbabwe hotel industry, (Basera, 2021)
- The online marketing strategies of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) and South Africa Tourism (SAT): A comparative study, (Basera, 2014)
- The development of a universal accessibility framework for National Parks in South Africa and Zimbabwe, (Chikuta, 2015)

- An assessment of the innovative measures employed by small to medium size hotels in Harare, Zimbabwe, (Ndhlovu, 2015)
- An investigation of the causes of non-adherence to set quality standards in lodges in Zimbabwe: A case study of operators in Harare, (Maphosa, 2014)

In title selection, a researcher may discuss topical issues in society. This may include issues such as tourist attractions that are declining in business, the effect of tourist attraction location on the success of a destination, the tourist security and success of destination. In tourism and hospitality, a researcher may analyse factors hindering success of travel agents. The title should be formulated after the researcher has identified the research topic.

The following steps are essential in title selection:

□ **IDENTIFY KEYWORDS FOR TITLE**

Before selecting the title, the researcher should identify the key issues in the topic the researcher is interested in.

□ **REFLECT ON KEY ISSUES**

The researcher should brainstorm key issues identified. This includes attempting to find out the independent and dependent variables. For example, if one is interested in transport price increase and holiday travel, questions that the researcher should attempt to answer are:

1. Does transport price increase affect holiday travel?
2. Does transport price increase influence holiday travel?
3. Does holiday travel influence transport price increase?

The researcher will attempt to find out how these issues can be linked to for a title.

□ **FORMULATE A TITLE**

After the researcher is clear about independent and dependent variables, the title can be formulated. The formulation of the title involves trying to link the key variables. This can be formulated by using terms such as *The effect of...*, *An assessment of...*, *The effect of transport price increase on holiday travel* or, *The effect of holiday travel on transport price increase*.

## □ **EVALUATION**

After formulating the title, the researcher must ensure that it is clear and specific. This means the independent and dependent variables are easily identified (variables will be discussed later). For example, if the title is on the effect of transport price increase on holiday travel the researcher may specify it as: *The effect of public transport price increase on holiday travel in Zimbabwe.*

## **ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE TITLE**

An effective research title should have the following elements:

- a) It should be brief and specific: For example: *The impact of three tier pricing for tourist visiting Victoria Falls.* This brevity makes the title stand out and have strong impact. It is easier to identify the independent and dependent variables. The title becomes clear and focused.
- b) It should be in line with the set objectives: The title is a brief summary of what the study is about. It should portray the aims and objectives of the study. The words used in the title should clearly reflect the focus of the study.
- c) It should be clear and unambiguous: The title should not lead to various interpretations of the study.
- d) It should reflect the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, for example the effect of price increase on holiday travel.
- e) The title should portray an issue that is researchable. The aspects in question should be measurable.
- f) It should focus on contemporary issues

## **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN TITLE SELECTION**

There are various challenges encountered by researchers in title selection. These include the following:

### □ **CHOOSING A TITLE THAT IS NOT SPECIFIC**

A researcher may choose a title that is open to varied interpretations. For example, *Crime in Zimbabwe* is a wide title that is open to various interpretations. This is because there are also varied forms of crime. For it to be effective it must be specific. To avoid this in title selection,

the researcher should be very clear and focused on what the independent and dependent variables of the study are:

□ **WRITING A TITLE THAT IS TOO WORDY.**

A brief title is more effective than a long one. This is because variables are easily identified. Some titles must use many words. To avoid this, researchers should ensure that words that are not necessary for understanding the title are omitted. Example of a too wordy title, *The effect of duty free on importation of capital goods on the performance of five star hotels and four star hotels and their product pricing models in Zimbabwe*. The topic can be summarised as, *The effect of duty free on the performance of hotels*. A two-part title can be used with the parts separated by a colon if reducing the wording fails.

□ **POORLY FORMULATED TITLES**

Some titles are difficult to comprehend for example, *Understanding dark Tourism in Zimbabwe*. It is difficult to comprehend what the term 'understanding' means.

□ **LACK OF CONSISTENCY**

Some study titles neither tally with the research objectives, nor with the problem statement or methodology applied. For example, a researcher who is in a study on; *The effect of transport price increase on holiday travel in Zimbabwe* concentrates on finding out about transport operators road indiscipline during holidays.

## **VARIABLES**

The term variable is derived from variations. This refers to differences. Variables are attributes or qualities of the cases that we measure or record. For example, if the cases are persons, the variables could be age, sex, height, weight, level of empowerment, ability, and so on. They are referred to as variables because it is assumed the cases will vary in their scores on these attributes. For example, if the variable is age, we obviously recognise that people can be of different ages. In any study, variables can play different roles. For example, the reaction of travellers towards transport price increase may vary according to type of travellers, their origin, purpose of travel and mode of transport. An increase in A1 jet fuel prices may be viewed positively by those who do not travel by aero-planes but negatively by those that use aero-

planes to travel. There are two major forms of variables: the independent and dependent variables.

### **INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**

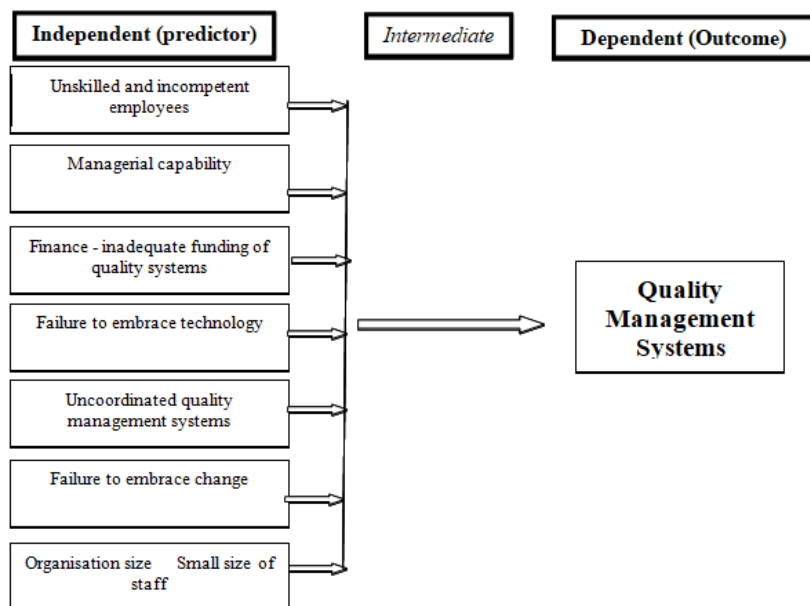
Independent variables are also known as the predictor or explanatory variables. These are the factors that the researcher thinks explain variation in the dependent variable. In other words, these are the causes. In Figure 1.2, the internal factors affecting adoption of quality management systems in hotels, the internal factor is the independent variable. If a study is on; *The impact of transport price increase on holiday travel in Zimbabwe*, then the price increase is the independent variable. This is because it can explain or affect the increase or decrease in holiday travel.

### **DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

Usually there is one dependent variable, and it is the outcome variable the researcher is attempting to predict. In Figure 1.2, the internal factors affecting adoption of quality management systems in hotels, the researcher attempts to predict the adoption of quality management systems in hotels. The quality management systems in hotels are the dependent variable. In the study on, *The impact of transport price increase on holiday travel in Zimbabwe* more specifically its transport price decrease or increase is the dependent variable. In other words, the dependent variable 'depends' on the independent. For instance, the fluctuation in holiday travel is seen in so far as it is caused by the transport price increase – independent variable – which is expected to change or alter in some way the dependent variable.

To understand the independent and dependent variables let us analyse the example below:

In this title: *The internal factors affecting adoption of quality management systems in Hotels in Zimbabwe*, there are two keywords, internal factors and quality management systems. In this study an attempt is made to find out how the internal factors influence the adoption of quality management systems. This can be put in a diagram as shown in Fig 1.2:



**Figure 1.1:** Internal factors affecting quality in hotels (Basera, 2019)