

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Lecturer:	Dr Andrew Chan	Internal Verifier:	
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Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 50%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

Reflection

Introduction

The Quantitative Research module has developed my understanding on the processes through which our research ought to be conducted, highlighting the rationale underpinning these approaches. Knowledge of these research techniques has given a new angle to my literature review in the project report as it allowed me to evaluate not only the content but also the methodology of previous research, particularly in terms of sampling. Furthermore, in the process of developing and analysing the pilot study survey, I gained valuable insights into the development and refinement of the questionnaire item pool. Overall, this reflective report elucidates the abovementioned learnings through evaluating the project report and the module with a view to improving future research.

Research methodology – sampling

Sampling is a core component of the methodology in our research as it has considerable impact on the outcome of the study. Prior to taking this course and planning for this assignment, I had not been fully aware of the great number of sampling methods. Having the advantages and drawbacks of the different sampling methods in mind improved the way I planned the survey in the quantitative research assignment. Even though the small sample size and snowball sampling method in pilot study were major shortcomings of the survey, I fully recognised that in the full-scale survey those methods would not suffice. It was good exercise that we had to also plan for the full-scale survey as it allowed me to carefully think about current limitations and how the real research should be carried out.

In addition, as I became more acutely aware of research sampling, my literature review became more robust on the grounds that I could also examine the methodology of the sources to assess the extent to which the results are credible. Even though every piece of research is bound to have its own limitations, it is crucial that I can identify and understand the implications embedded in these limitations, thereby coming to my own judgment on how much weight to put on these sources and where the research gaps are. For instance, during literature review of the report, I noticed that in fact many previous studies had not included airport passengers' perspectives in their research samples and relied solely on experts and consultants when discussing airport services. Even though passengers are not the only party that determines the perception of the service quality, they are nevertheless a key stakeholder on this topic that has often been neglected in a number of research. Thus, to further improve the research conceptualisation in my future studies, I aim to fortify not just the content of the literature's findings, but also the examination of the respective methodology, which is an area that I had not fully addressed previously.

Development of item pool and survey instrument

Data analysis after a pilot study is an important part of refining the survey instrument. For example, in this module, we learnt that the closer the mean to the middle of the instrument's scale and the larger the standard deviation, the better. This is because the items should have sufficient discrimination power or variance to ensure that the instrument can detect relevant values. If the results are strongly skewed towards either end, I would be alert of any bias caused by my instrument or even the sample. Although discrimination power is only one of the many aspects considered while developing the instrument, it is still a good indicator that reminds us of potential issues with certain survey items that we might need to address.

However, as the previous surveys that I had been engaged with had mostly been commercial research, such as surveys on customer satisfaction and customer needs conducted internally or sometimes on a larger scale by industry institutions, I was used to interpreting the scores very much in a literal sense. That is, from a service provider's point of view, a low mean score of a particular item would flag issues and indicate room for improvement in service quality, while a high score would simply mean that the airport is doing well. Thus, now that I understand the underlying concept of variance, I would pay closer attention to both the selection and phrasing of the questionnaire items.

This further prompted me to research about whether commercial surveys or other surveys commonly used in the industry should be used to generate the item pool in academic research. Seeing that commercial surveys are often vendor-driven or commissioned by business units, the scope and methodology might be vastly different in nature. Price (2015) gives a clear view of the gap between academic and commercial research, underlining the "insurmountable differences in research philosophy" between the two fields (p.169). It is highlighted that empirical projects in academic research is marked by the transparency and full disclosure of methodology and analysis, but in contrast, the greatest value of commercial reports lies in its confidentiality (Williamson, Cloonan and Frith, 2011). As such, the way that commercial research is designed might obscure the basis on which the research is built. Having said that, however, the fact that commercial reports are often conducted or commissioned by industry insiders adds to the weight of such research. While such research might not always be generalisable, it could serve as a good pointer when considering what relevant items to include during scale development, as long as the entailed limitations are fully assessed and acknowledged.

Conclusion

Quantitative research plays a pivotal role in allowing researchers to objectively generalise the results from a sample a larger population. Looking back at the project report in this module, the sampling

techniques not only allowed me to better design my own research, but to also critically review the way that previous research was carried out during the literature review stage, so that I could identify the strengths and limitations of those research findings. In addition, while conducting the pilot study in the project report, I experienced how various data analysis methods shed light on the refinement of the questionnaire item pool, as well as how academic and commercial research could be used to form the current research instrument. All in all, the project report has allowed me to reinforce the insights and put the learnings in this module into practice, thus better preparing me for future research.

References

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