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Modern Trends in Research Methodology



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ABSTRACT

Research simply means searching for that which already exists. It is an act in pursuit of Truth. When we talk of Research Methodology, we not only consider the Research Methods but also the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explain why we are using a particular method or technique. The subject 'Modern Trends in Research Methodology' is probably a call to all scholars & students to familiarize themselves with the latest trends & tools associated with research methodology being advocated in the environment. In that context, as a Standard Operating Procedure, one may be inclined towards an academic study by browsing through a long list of these trends. The author, in this paper, seeks a departure in approach & attempts to propagate a central idea which is pivoted around "Trend Setting" as opposed to "Trend Following" and duly supported by Originality. The author suggests an equation to describe Research Methodology wherein it equals to the product of Originality & Context squared. In preparing this Approach Paper, the Grounded Theory approach has been applied to handle the subject at hand. In our context, Research Strategy faces major challenges of Intent Hijack, Deficiency of Consumable Data and Overseas Dependence. In order to neutralize these challenges, a proposal is made wherein certain innovative measures are fused at each stage of the seven step Research Process. The author suggests Eight Trends to include Strategic Intuition, Exploit Latest Digital Tools, Scriptural Reference, Theory Correlation, Leverage Technology, Focus on Personal Observation, Race to the Passes and finally Freedom from Format.

Every single Research Scholar is capable of launching a satellite which would illuminate every dark corner of this world.

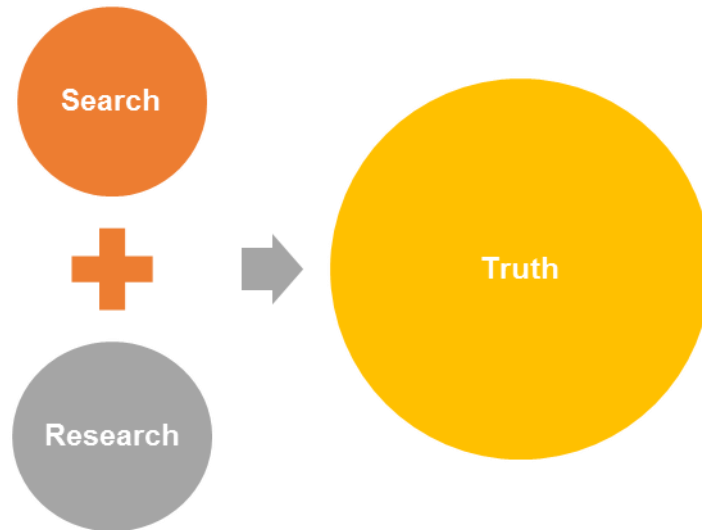
General – What is the Topic All About?

1. Without referring to any Thesaurus, Textbook or Reference Book, a simplistic understanding of ‘Research’ would mean - Searching for that **which already exists** or **Pursuit of Truth**; search **repeatedly** as long as you hit the **truth**. It is ‘Re’- Search’, meaning – search again.

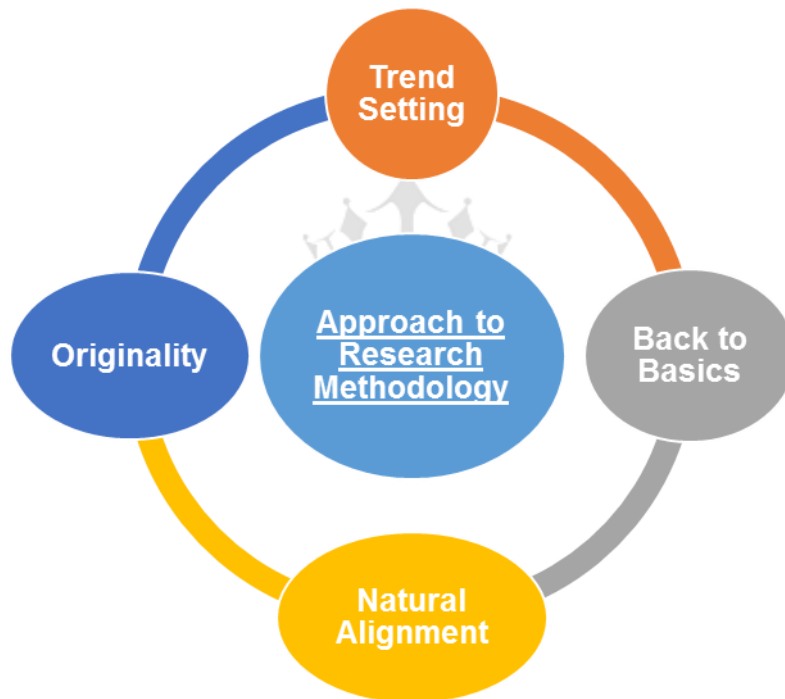
2. **Why Such an Emphasis?** The author takes it as a **consequence** of what he prefers to call an ‘**INTENT HIJACK**’. Sometimes language, the flamboyance of it, and especially if it’s a foreign language; steals, sabotages and robs us of our **original intent**. The jugglery of language **overwhelms** the **original idea** leading us to get lost in myriad of words (predominantly in English !).

3. **Research**. It simply means ‘Pursuing the truth’. It may be emphasized that **Truth needs no evidence**. For example “there was electricity even before the first Scientist discovered it and electrical energy will not be exhausted because of our forgetfulness of its existence....” (Chinmayananda, 2002)

4. **Research Methodology**. It may be a normal tendency that a research student might be susceptible to confuse between **Research Techniques, Research Methods** and **Research Methodology**. Again, this is academic in nature, and enough definitions are available in the prevalent literature. To summarise “Thus, when we talk of Research Methodology we not only talk of the Research Methods but also consider the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explain why we are using a particular method or technique and why we are not using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher himself or by others” (CR Kothari, 2019).



Central Idea



5. **Author's Approach.** The subject "Modern Trends in Research Methodology" is probably a call to all scholars & students to familiarize themselves with the latest trends & tools associated with research methodology being advocated in the environment. In that context, as a Standard Operating Procedure, one may be inclined towards an academic study by browsing through a long list of these trends. The author, in this paper, seeks a departure in approach & attempts to propagate a central idea the tenets of which are explained below:-

(a) **Trend Setting vs Trend Following.** When we say “Modern Trends in Research Methodology”, do we intend to **follow** the trends or do we have a vision that elaborates the trends **to be followed** by the relevant world community. It is proposed that instead of discussing the ‘apparent trends’ in various corners, we give manifestation to our original thoughts on the subject.

(b) **Back of Basics-Scriptural Guidance.** A common trend or punchline is ‘Back to Basics’. As much as a ‘cliché’ that it is, it carries enough weight to stand on its own merit. In pursuit of truth, the author digs deep into various scriptural texts, which are profound in their depth. The scope of this reference is not restricted to a particular sect but transcends the multitude of faiths that exist in this world. Much of it is **quoted** in the text subsequently, as relevant.

(c) **Natural Alignment.** We have some of the most innovative & expensive institutes offering hi-tech courses in **Architecture**. Do we observe a pigeon making her nest? Pay attention to a bee hive, every block of which is precisely, mathematically, symmetrical in design! What universities do these creatures attend? Even physiologically, they are far more marginalized than we humans. Still, they create more perfect structures, much of which we just need to observe. Hence, it may be an imperative for us to align ourselves with nature, all the natural phenomenon.

(d) **Originality.** The ability to think independently and creatively is a great asset. The quality of being novel or unusual is unparalleled and much required in today’s societal system. Therefore, the author’s approach towards presenting this paper is to be **distinguishable** from reproductions or derivative works. It is intended to be a coherent derivative of original thoughts on the subject, not those received from others nor one copied from or based upon the work of others. A work created with a unique style and substance (Anon., 2018).



6. **The Equation.** The author suggests an equation to describe Research Methodology (RM) wherein ‘O’ stands for ‘**Originality**’ & ‘C’ for ‘**Context**’. Research Methodology, in any given period or stage, is directly proportional to the two factors of Originality (which is attributable to the Researcher) and that of context (which is attributable to the situation

causing the Research to be undertaken). While the context of a given Research Project serves as a **constant** but has an exponential impact on the chosen Research Methodology. The originality varies among the Researches as well as within a Researcher depending on his efforts. **Research Methodology therefore equals to the product of Originality & Context Squared.**

Theory

7. **Grounded Theory.** In preparing this Approach Paper, the Grounded theory (Strauss, 1967) approach is being applied to handle the subject at hand. Readers will find enough literature in the environment to familiarize themselves with the current trends being propagated on Research Methodology. That is not envisaged to be reproduced here. The basic position therefore is that based purely on author's observations, certain discoveries/realizations are being made and shared here.

AIM

8. The aim of this paper is **to suggest certain modern trends to be adopted in Research Methodology.**

Challenges/ Areas of Concern

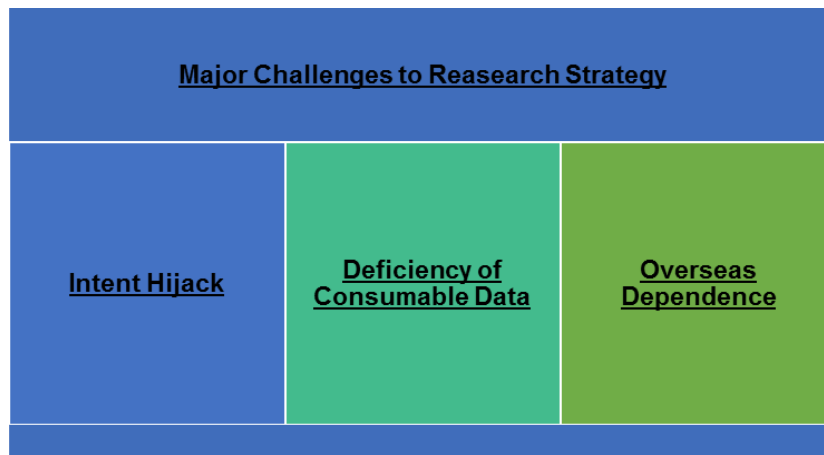
9. Research strategy or the overall orientation of the research work faces following major challenges in our environment:-

(a) **Intent Hijack.** As introduced earlier, this more often than not, is the first challenge to strike, right at the beginning. Simplicity of original thought is surrendered to the complexity of language thus losing own intent in the process. We stop pursuing the intent of our thoughts, get entangled in the traps of language and end up chasing **borrowed alternatives.**

(b) **Deficiency of Consumable Data.** While there is no deficiency in the **amount** of data that exists, its availability in consumable form is a challenge. Our database management is unplanned. Organisations (Educational institutes, Govt Departments, Establishments etc) do not maintain data coherently with a deliberate intent to be analysed in future and obtain insights.

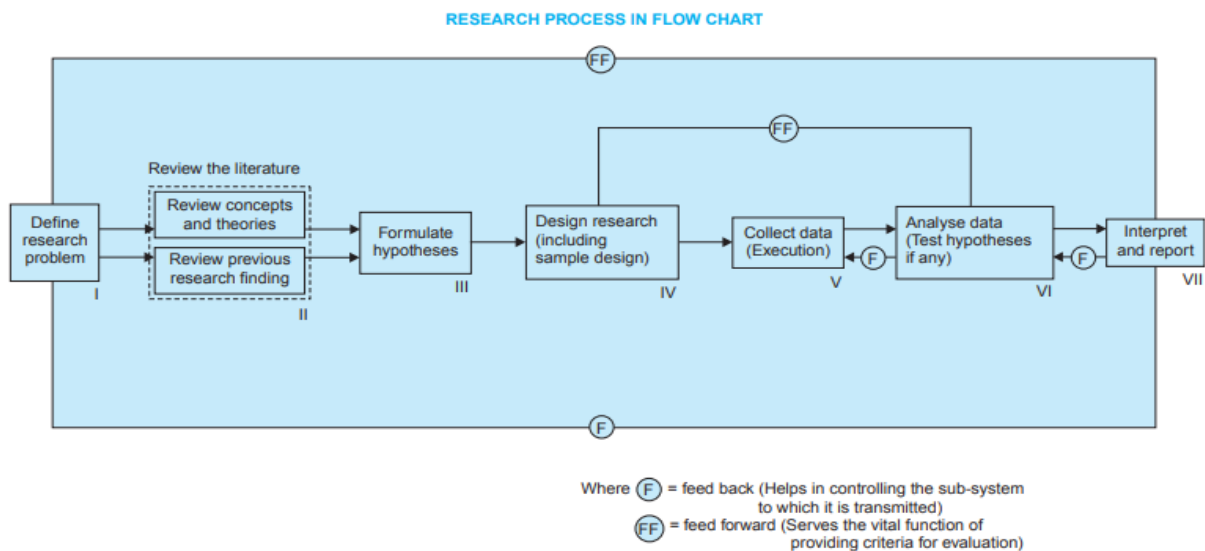
(c) **Overseas Dependence.** We tend to explore foreign concepts, authors, publications & suggestions. There may be some merit in the argument that not enough competent material

for reference originates from our shores. But much of this condition may be attributed to our tendency ‘not to dig deep’ (Ibrahim B. Syed, 1988). Profound knowledge & references are available in our own ancient texts (Bhavna Sharma, 2015). To illustrate-Verse 8 of Sankara’s ‘Vivekachoodamani’ (one of the greatest texts written by Sankara as an introduction to Vedanta) translates as “therefore, the learned seeker who is striving to gain this freedom within & who has renounced all his desires for pleasures in the sense objects, should duly approach a good & generous **Master** & must live attuned to the true significances of the words of the Master (Chinmayananda, 2003). The seeker here can be equated to the Research Scholar & the idea being propagated in the foregoing verse may well be the origin of the concept of a ‘**Research Guide**’ or a **Mentor**.



SUGGESTED MODERN TRENDS

Research Process



10. The seven step Research Process (CR Kothari, 2019, p. 10) is well established & known to all. We will now attempt to achieve fusion of certain innovative measures at each stage of this process.

Define Research Problem

11. **Trend No 1-Strategic Intuition.** Application of Strategic Intuition (Duggan, 2008) at stage one is suggested. William Duggan describes it as “**the creative spark in human achievement**”. He states that “behind every story of major advance is a turning point where **someone has a useful idea** that changes the field or starts a new one”. He emphasises that “it is very different from **ordinary intuition**, like vague hunches or **gut instinct**. Strategic Intuition is the opposite; it’s thinking, not feeling”. Do we remember how in Mahabharata, after the war, while on his arrows deathbed (Anon., 2018), Bhishma gave **deep & meaningful instructions to Yudhishtira on statesmanship & the duties of a king**. An epic example of Strategic Intuition. It will be a **deliberate effort** by a Research Scholar to develop the skills of Strategic Intuition. But “well begun is half done” as they say!

12. **Trend No 2-Exploit Latest Digital Tools.** Word Cloud Analysis, Google Trends, Sentiment Analysis etc, are some of the very effective digital tools available for access to anyone in the current environment. **Sky is the limit to the innovative ways** in which these tools can be applied in a specific context.

Literature Review

13. **Trend No 3-Scriptural Reference.** There is **no problem** in this world, reference of which, in some form, has not been made in our **ancient scriptures**. The identity of faith does not matter. Each provides detailed guidance on the ‘line of operation’ or the ‘Course of Action’ to be adopted to address a particular challenge. Since any specific reference to a part of a scriptural text would be extremely limiting & prejudicial, the author invites the readers/ audience to refer to any text-Bhagavad Geeta, Holy Quran, Guru Granth Sahib, Bible, Tripitaka, the Agams etc. To illustrate. The Almighty says in the Holy Quran;17:36 (Muhammad Athar Uddin, 2011) “O man, follow not that whereof you have no knowledge. Look! The hearing & the sight & the heart of each of these will be asked”. One of the main sources of errors in justification of research is due to the **replacement of knowledge by conjecture**. To quote the Almighty again in the Holy Quran; 53:28, “and they have no knowledge thereof. They follow but a guess and a guess can never take the place of the truth”

(Muhammad Athar Uddin, 2011). So as per Quranic instruction, no research is accepted without proven reason.

Hypothesis Formulation

14. **Trend No 4-Theory Correlation.** Hypothesis is a formal question that a Researcher intends to resolve (CR Kothari, 2019, p. 179). Desired characteristics of Hypothesis are also well known in the academic domain. **Scientific Theories** exist on every possible subject. A Research Design is likely to be more effective if we reinforce it with existing proven theory on the subject. A researcher may identify a particular theory or group of theories, most closely relevant to the Research Topic & establish it as the founding logic for his own Research Design. The selected theory may be seconded or debated, it depends on the context. To take it a level higher, great researchers **in history** have contributed theories that so well explain every phenomenon we experience in our daily lives. Why must this be restricted to history? **Why should every single Researcher not endeavour to produce a new theory, a new equation, a new formulae as an outcome of his Research Work?**

Research Design

15. **Trend No 5-Leverage Technology.** Here, the author takes an exception & encourages the reader to immerse himself in the new age technological tools available so as to make his Research Design impeccable, diverse & up to date. Towards this, following seven trends (Anon., 2018) available in open domain are being suggested:-

- (a) Digital Qualitative Methods.
- (b) Online Interviews & Focus Groups.
- (c) Applied Anthropology methods, qualitative/ ethnography.
- (d) Complexity Theory.
- (e) The Intersection of Qualitative Research Practice with the Sciences.
- (f) Design Based Research.
- (g) Critical Race Theory Approaches to Quantitative Methods.

Data Collection

16. **Trend No 6 – Focus on Personal Observation.** Statistics is the scientific method of collection, classification, representation, analysis & interpretation of numerical data with a view to making meaningful inferences on the objects on which the data were collected (Stephen ARO-GORDON, 2015). But are numbers the end? Far too many reviews are dominated by dry discussions of numbers (Some, 2018). The review needs to be a creative exercise, not a **drill** where people **reproduce data**. A good number of unintentional mistakes are caused by employing the wrong method to address research questions, thereby leading to misinterpretation of results. Hence, **unbiased, non prejudiced, dedicated & focused** observation at personal level cannot be replaced by any external data. To illustrate, if one observes the social behaviour in a Shopping Mall (astride a store, a restaurant, a public convenience, escalator/lift, etc respectively), one may be compelled to conclude that every established theory of social behaviour is **contradicted**.

Data Analysis

17. **Trend No 7-Race to the Passes.** Secret of victory in battles in the high mountains is that who reaches the Passes first wins it. So one may do well to keep himself abreast with the latest techniques available in the environment. The following seven trends are quoted from the open source (Some, 2018):-

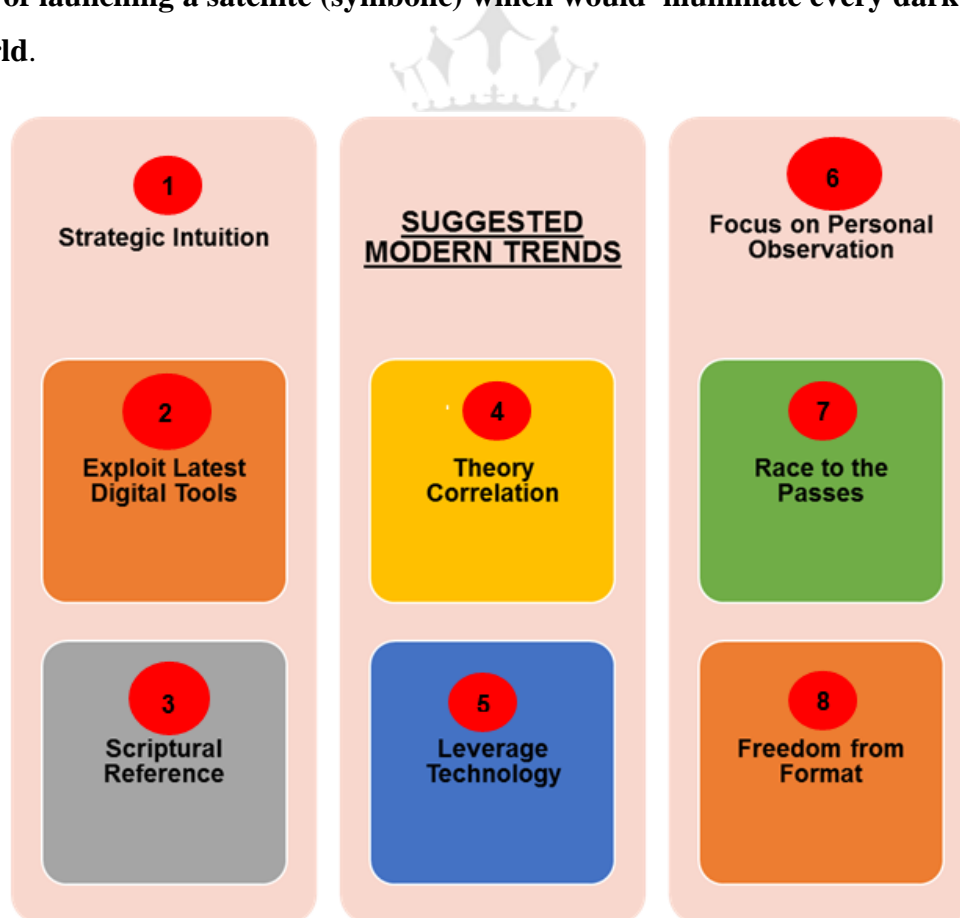
- (a) IoT Networks.
- (b) Predictive Analytics.
- (c) Dark Data.
- (d) Chief Data Officers (CDOs).
- (e) Quantum Computing.
- (f) Open Source.
- (g) Edge Computing.

Interpretation & Report Writing

18. **Trend No 8- Freedom from Format (FfF)**. Format **guides**, but it **binds** too. Freedom is **liberty**. There is no greater blessing than **Free will**. Hence, **departure** from any laid down format should be a welcome practice. The ability to express without influence of any constraint (artificial/ forced) is supreme.

CONCLUSION

20. Finally, what better reference to conclude this paper than a brief debate on ‘the Theory of Everything’. This may sound like ‘Utopia. The Blessed lord says in the Holy Geeta, Chapter II, Verse 2, “whence is this perilous condition come upon thee, this dejection, un-Aryan-like, heaven excluding, disgraceful, O Arjuna? So, if our intelligentsia had a solution to all problems, there would be no ‘Question’, to be answered. But it isn’t So! Hence, while the ‘theory of Everything’ may still sound to be something of an **Utopia** or an aspect belonging to the ‘dream world’, the fact is that, we, each one of us; **every single Research Scholar, is capable of launching a satellite (symbolic) which would illuminate every dark corner of this world.**



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