RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Chapter III
Research Methodology

3.1 Research in Social Sciences

Research is a systematic investigation to find answers to a problem, which is carried out mainly on social context, with of course few exceptions. Exact prediction in social science is difficult as in the case of science. Whereas the objective of science is to discover, describe and explain the facts, in social science it is to observe, verify and conclude. Social scientists operate through observation and experience; as well as through ideas, theories and models.

Social realities are inherently complex to be grappled in its entirety with one method of investigation. It is so complex that it is impossible to be captured by a single way of data collection or technique. All the existing tools of social science have their own advantages and disadvantages.

Research is a very important part of sociology, psychology, communication and all of the other social sciences. Researchers strive to systematically collect information in order to create accurate and objective descriptions of the social world around. This allows them to draw conclusions on why people act the way they do in all types of situations and also in relation to other people.

Research into communication, mass communication and mass media right from its inception is empirical and theoretical in nature. The application of this quantitative methodology based on empiricism on emerging questions about media and its working in the social context has been the main quest of mass communication research. Thus through induction- hypothesis is first derived, data is collected, which is then subjected to statistical analysis and when hypothesis is proved, it has led to theory formulation.

Over the year’s researchers from other disciplines have entered the domain of mass communication and enriched it with their methods and tools, as also with their perspectives. Thus, mass communication research today is inter-disciplinary and employs research methods from prevalent in other disciplines to provide better and deeper insights.

Mass communication and media research involves scientific quest for knowledge, using both qualitative and quantitative methods in good measure. Quantitative research aims at measurements- useful for situations that can be quantified and measured.
Qualitative research, on the other hand, aims to provide a more descriptive understanding of the topic under consideration. It employs tools of interpretation and is more subjective. The reasons and motives behind human behaviour can be best found out through qualitative research.

In the last few decades, there has been an intellectual debate on whether quantitative or qualitative research is good for studying mass communication and its impact on society. There are forceful arguments on both sides, which brings us to the present research. The researcher would like to employ both quantitative and qualitative methods as one complements the other and a better understanding of the phenomenon under study can be derived.

3.2 Triangulation Method

Triangulation method is used to combine the advantages of quantitative and qualitative methods of research. In social science triangulation is often used to indicate two or more research methods adapted to collect data on the same topic. This may mean using one quantitative method and one qualitative method together for collecting data on the same topic. In a way, it is done to validate research through cross verification from two or more sources.

"By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and empirical materials, researchers can hope to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single-method, single-observer, single-theory studies. Often the purpose of triangulation in specific contexts is to obtain confirmation of findings through convergence of different perspectives. The point at which the perspectives converge is seen to represent reality." -- Jakob, Alexander (2001)

The researcher would like to emphasise that the nature of data required and the theoretical basis for the present study were the reasons for the type of research methods used. The data collection methods, therefore fall under both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It is not just the data collection, but the analysis and interpretation, that prompted the use of more than one methodology.
3.3 Theoretical Framework for the Study

1. Uses and Gratification theory

What mass communication scholars today refer to as the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach is generally recognized to be a sub-tradition of media effects research (McQuail, 1994). Early in the history of communications research, an approach was developed to study the gratifications that attract and hold audiences to the kinds of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs (Cantril, 1942). Most scholars agree that early research had little theoretical coherence and was primarily behaviorist and individualist in its methodological tendencies (McQuail, 1994). Klapper (1963) called for a more functional analysis of U&G studies that would restore the audience member to “his rightful place in the dynamic, rather than leaving him in the passive, almost inert, role to which many older studies relegated him” (p. 527). Markedly, Geiger and Newhagen (1993) credited Klapper with ushering in the “cognitive revolution” in the communication field. From the 1950s forward, cross-disciplinary work between U&G researchers and psychologists has produced abundant research on the ways human beings interact with the media. During the 1970s, U&G researchers intently examined audience motivations and developed additional typologies of the uses people made of the media to gratify social and psychological needs. McLeod, Bybee, and Durall (1982) theoretically clarified audience satisfaction by concluding that gratifications sought and gratifications received were two different conceptual entities that deserved independent treatment in any future U&G research. Another related theoretical development was the recognition that different cognitive or affective states facilitate the use of media for various reasons, as predicted by the U&G approach. Blumler (1979) proposed that cognitive motivation facilitated information gain and that diversion or escape motivation facilitated audience perceptions of the accuracy of social portrayals in entertainment programming.

One basic line of research has investigated the processes through which audience gratifications influence behavior and outcomes. Kim and Rubin (1997) summarize much of this research, noting three ways in which audience activity facilitates media contact and effects. The first of these is selectivity, in which individuals who seek particular gratifications will selectively expose themselves to particular media. For example, a person wanting to escape after a long day at work might choose to watch music videos.
rather than a news program on television. The second process is attention, in which individuals will allocate cognitive effort to media consumption, depending on gratifications sought. For example, a person seeking detailed information will pay more attention to the content in a home improvement magazine than a person merely leafing through the magazine to pass the time. Finally, the third process is involvement with the media, in which an audience member is often caught up in the message and may even develop a “relationship” with media characters. This type of involvement is sometimes called parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

2. Media Dependency theory

Media dependency theory itself posits that media influence is determined by the interrelations between the media, its audience, and society (DeFleur&Ball-Rokeach,1982). The individual’s desire for information from the media is the primary variable in explaining why media messages have cognitive, affective, or variable effects. Media dependency is high when an individual’s goal satisfaction relies on in-formation from the media system (Ball-Rokeach, 1985). Rubin and Windahl (1986) augmented the dependency model to include the gratifications sought by the audience as an interactive component with media dependency. For Rubin and Windahl, the combination of gratifications sought and socially determined dependency produced media effects. They argued that dependency on a medium or a message results when individuals either intentionally seek out information or ritualistically use specific communication media channels or messages. For example, McIlwraith (1998) found that self-labeled “TV addicts” often used television to distract themselves from unpleasant thoughts, to regulate moods, and to fill time. This link between dependency and functional alternatives illustrates how U&G is a theory “capable of interfacing personal and mediated communication” (Rubin, 1994b, p. 428).

In MSD, particular attention is given to the resources of media systems in modern society and the consideration of the conditions which will increase or decrease individuals’ reliance on media systems. In a general sense, MSD theorists see media systems as taking on an increasingly important role as industrialization and urbanization have decreased the influence of interpersonal social networks. As Merskin (1999)
explains, “As society has become more urbanized and industrialized, life has become less organized around traditional social groups, such as the family and the church” (p. 78). In such a social setting, the media control many informational resources through their capacity to create, process, and disseminate information to audiences on a national or even global scale. Because the media control these critical informational resources, individuals develop dependency relationships around the need for understanding (of self and others), orientation (regarding action and interaction), and play (in both solitary and social settings). As Loges and Ball-Rokeach (1993) describe this relationship, “As individuals develop expectations that the media system can provide assistance toward the attainment of their goals, individuals should develop dependency relations with the media or medium they perceive to be the most helpful in pursuit of their goals” (p. 603).

A chief tenet of U&G theory of audience behavior is that media use is selective and motivated by rational self-awareness of the individual’s own needs and an expectation that those needs will be satisfied by particular types of media and content (Katz et al., 1974). Perse and Courtright (1993) concluded that individuals are aware of communication alternatives and select channels based on the normative images those channels are perceived to have.

3. Cognitive Dissonance theory

Cognitive Dissonance theory of Leon Festinger states that if message received is dissonant or contrary to existing belief of the recipient of the message, cognitive and psychological processes take place. Information contrary to the existing beliefs of an individual causes dissonance. Dissonance is a psychological discomfort felt when there is discrepancy between an existing knowledge and belief and new information or interpretation. This occurs when there is need to accommodate new ideas. To eliminate the discomfort or anxiety, the recipients of the message tend to reconcile their thoughts until they establish a state of equilibrium.

The cognitive response theory on one hand deals with the processing of information and emphasises the importance of initial opinion. Message recipients who have negative attitude to new information may retrieve strong opinion stored in long term memory to make counterarguments. If source of information is highly credible, then retrieval of counterarguments is hindered. If the source is less credible, the retrieval of supporting
arguments takes place among those with a favourable original attitude towards the message.

Cognitive response theory holds that when weighing information or making decisions, high credibility sources are more convincing if thoughts are negative while lower credibility sources are more effective if thoughts are positive. It, therefore, proposes that people who initially have a negative opinion or are against an issue are more likely to change their beliefs or attitudes if the source is highly credible. High credibility sources may change negative perceptions. On the other hand, if information presented is congruent or in consonance with belief of the receiver of information, a low credibility source is effective.

These theories will not only guide the research but would be useful in analysing and interpreting the findings of the study.

3.4 Rating Scales

Likert Scale

Various kinds of rating scales have been developed to measure attitudes directly (i.e. the person knows their attitude is being studied). The most widely used is the Likert Scale. Likert (1932) developed the principle of measuring attitudes by asking people to respond to a series of statements about a topic, in terms of the extent to which they agree with them, and so tapping into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes.

A method of ascribing quantitative value to qualitative data, to make it amenable to statistical analysis. A numerical value is assigned to each potential choice and a mean figure for all the responses is computed at the end of the evaluation or survey. Likert scales usually have five potential choices (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) but sometimes go up to ten or more. The final average score represents overall level of accomplishment or attitude toward the subject matter.

Likert Scales have the advantage that they do not expect a simple yes / no answer from the respondent, but rather allow for degrees of opinion, and even no opinion at all. Therefore, quantitative data is obtained, which means that the data can be analyzed with relative ease.
Survey participants’ perceptions of news media credibility can be measured through a series of Likert scale questions ranging from one to five, with the former indicating strong disagreement and the latter indicating strong agreement.

**Semantic Differential**

Semantic differential is a type of a rating scale designed to measure the connotative meaning of objects, events, and concepts. The connotations are used to derive the attitude towards the given object, event or concept, like credibility.

Semantic differential is often referred to as a test, having some definite set of items and a specific score. But, it is a very general way of getting at a certain type of information, a highly generalizable technique of measurement which must be adapted to the requirement of each research problem in question. Therefore, there are no standard concepts and no standard scales, but the concepts and scales used in a particular study depends upon the purposes of the research.

Concept: we generally use the term concept to refer to the stimulus to which the subject’s checking operation is a terminal response. What may function as a concept in this sense is practically infinite. Concepts are often verbal; more often printed than spoken, because of convenience in presentation.

Ideally, we should use one specific scale to represent each of the factors or dimensions of the semantic space, this scale being perfectly aligned with or loaded on its factor and perfectly reliable. Again for simplicity, only three factors are taken into consideration- evaluation (fair-unfair), potency (strong-weak) and activity (active-passive).

The following criterion may be used to select scales:
Factorial composition- usually three scales to represent each factor.
Relevance to the concepts being judged- purpose of the investigator dictates the choice.
Semantic stability- for concepts and subjects in a particular study.
Linear between polar opposites and pass through the origin.
Application of semantic measurement includes attitude assessment, the study of personality traits and dynamisms, studies in psycholinguistics, advertising and in other mass communications.
Bi-polar adjectives in a semantic scale of 1 to 7 were used to examine the degree of student’s perception of the credibility of television news channels. The variables measured three constructs: reporters/anchors’ credibility, medium credibility and news credibility.

3.5 Statement of the Problem

Credibility of media is an essential component in the success or failure of News Organizations, either it is in Print, Online or Television. When people talk about credible News, first thing that comes to the mind is BBC; over a period of time BBC had built its reputation and credibility amongst its viewers and listeners across the globe. To give an example, in 1984 when Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her body guards, it was BBC which first reported about the News, and many people in India came to know about the incidence only through BBC, the Government owned Doordarshan and All India Radio had withheld the information at the instance of the Government. This incidence shows the lack of confidence in govt. controlled news agencies and broadcasters. The proliferation of News Channels, post economic liberation and private participation, the issue of credibility and trustworthiness of the news is essential and critical for the News Channels. Before 1995, Govt. of India was the only one who was authorized to run the news channels, and there was no private participation in dissemination of the news.

This study aims to research on the issue of media credibility. More importantly, how important is credibility of source for audience to accept or reject the information, do only those news channels that are credible succeed in getting acceptance from audiences, and what are the components that make for media credibility? This study specifically looks at the credibility of National News Channels, among the student community, as today’s students have access to faster mediums like social media and online news portal, to which they are connected 24/7 to the flow of information, whether it is for news, entertainment, job or their education.

In addition to these, the study is also an attempt to understand whether credibility is an outcome of long standing presence of the media outlet in the society or a news organization can become credible overnight? Is TRPs a sign of credible media organization or has the proliferation of television news channels nullified the need for a credible and reliable news source? What is the role of advertising when it comes to media
credibility as no private media organization can ignore the importance of revenue that comes from ads? In such a scenario, media credibility is a suspect to advertiser’s influence and power.

The cosmopolitan nature of the student population in Bangalore relies on English news channels for news. Over the year’s television has given rise to many personalities in the field of journalism whose presence or absence can make or break a channel. The case in point is News X that hardly has journalists people can identify with and rely on to deliver objective and accurate news. The question here is whether television personalities determine the credibility of the channels and to what extent people perceive them to be important in that context. These are the main reasons behind this study.

3.6 Quantitative Methodology

Survey research uses scientific sampling and questionnaire design to measure characteristics of the population with statistical precision. It seeks to provide answers to such questions as "How many people feel a certain way?" and "How often do they do a certain behavior?" Survey research enables management to make comparisons between groups. It provides estimates from a sample that can be related to the entire population with a degree of certainty (e.g., 57% of the population +/- 3% will answer the question this way 95% of the time). Survey research requires that respondents are "randomly" sampled - that means that each person in the population has a known probability of being sampled. There are defined techniques, such as random digit dialing and sampling procedures to ensure a scientific sample. In developing a survey, you would normally work with a statistician to build a statistically valid sampling plan, a researcher to develop a survey instrument and research objectives, and a reputable field service that has the capacity to conduct large scale interview projects. It is important to work with experts because the quality of the survey can be affected by the research instrument.

Sampling

As it is not possible to do a survey of the entire population under study, a sample from the population is derived and on the basis of the data gathered, inferences about the population is made. So, the sample is a portion of the population that is administered a questionnaire to capture data.
Stratified Sampling Method

Stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique wherein the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups or strata, then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata.

It is important to note that the strata must be non-overlapping. Having overlapping subgroups will grant some individuals higher chances of being selected as subject. This completely negates the concept of stratified sampling as a type of probability sampling.

Equally important is the fact that the researcher must use simple probability sampling within the different strata.

The most common strata used in stratified random sampling are age, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, nationality and educational attainment.

With stratified sampling technique, you have a higher statistical precision compared to simple random sampling. This is because the variability within the subgroups is lower compared to the variations when dealing with the entire population.

Because this technique has high statistical precision, it also means that it requires a small sample size which can save a lot of time, money and effort of the researchers.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire is the most commonly used instrument of data collection. It contains a set of questions logically related to a problem under study. The aim is to elicit response from the respondents. The content, the response structure, wording of the questions, question sequence should be the same for all respondents.

In-depth interviewing

In-depth interviewing, also known as unstructured interviewing, is a type of interview which researchers use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee’s point of view or situation; it can also be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation. This type of interview involves asking
informants open-ended questions, and probing wherever necessary to obtain data deemed useful by the researcher. As in-depth interviewing often involves qualitative data, it is also called qualitative interviewing. Patton (1987:113) suggests three basic approaches to conducting qualitative interviewing:

(i) The informal conversational interview

This type of interview resembles a chat, during which the informants may sometimes forget that they are being interviewed. Most of the questions asked will flow from the immediate context. Informal conversational interviews are useful for exploring interesting topic/s for investigation and are typical of ‘ongoing’ participant observation fieldwork.

(ii) The general interview guide approach (commonly called guided interview)

When employing this approach for interviewing, a basic checklist is prepared to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. The interviewer is still free to explore, probe and ask questions deemed interesting to the researcher. This type of interview approach is useful for eliciting information about specific topics. For this reason, Wenden (1982) formulated a checklist as a basis to interview her informants in a piece of research leading towards her PhD studies. She (1982:39) considers that the general interview guide approach is useful as it ‘allows for in-depth probing while permitting the interviewer to keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the aim of the study.’

(iii) The standardised open-ended interview

Researchers using this approach prepare a set of open-ended questions which are carefully worded and arranged for the purpose of minimising variation in the questions posed to the interviewees. In view of this, this method is often preferred for collecting interviewing data when two or more researchers are involved in the data collecting process. Although this method provides less flexibility for questions than the other two mentioned previously, probing is still possible, depending on the nature of the interview and the skills of the interviewers (Patton 1987:112).
3.7 Research Design

A logical and systematic plan prepared for conducting a research study is usually known as the research design. It not only specifies the objectives of the study but details the methodology and techniques to be used in achieving the same. It is like a blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. A research design in other words is the programme that guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting observations.

**Essentials of a research design**

A research design should have the following features:

1. A plan that specifies the objectives of the study and the hypothesis to be tested.
2. An outline that identifies the source and types of information relevant to the study objectives.
3. A blueprint that specifies the methods of data collection and analysis.
4. Finally, a scheme that defines the domain of generalizability- whether the obtained information can be generalized to a large population or to different situations.

The research design, though indispensable, is not a precise and specific plan but only a tentative one that is subject to modifications. There may be a situation that demands a modification in the sampling technique or the need to narrow the scope of the study. It means that the design should be geared to the needs of the researcher’s ability and the availability of time and other resources.

**Research Plan**

A research plan is a pre-drawn plan that will provide a direction to the study and in knowing what has to be done and how and when it has to be done at every stage. It enables the researcher to consider beforehand the decisions to be made: what are the objectives of the study, the investigative questions, the sources of data, the universe of study, the appropriate sampling method and so on.

The research design helps an investigator to proceed in the right direction by preventing him/her from a blind search and indiscriminate gathering of data. A research plan on the other hand prescribes the boundaries of research activities and enables the researcher to channel his energies in the right work. The design will also aid the
researcher in anticipating the potential problems of data gathering, operationalization of concepts, measurements, and so on.

**Research Type**

Exploratory Research: Exploratory research is research conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined. It often occurs before we know enough to make conceptual distinctions or posit an explanatory relationship. Exploratory research helps determine the best research design, data collection method and selection of subjects.

Descriptive Research: Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred. Rather it addresses the "what" question (What are the characteristics of the population or situation being studied?). The characteristics used to describe the situation or populations are usually some kind of categorical scheme also known as descriptive categories.

**Sources of Data**

Primary Source: Questionnaire - A semi structured questionnaire will be used to collect the information on college student’s perception of the credibility of English national television news channels.

A total of 44 questions were validated and used in the survey. A pilot study was conducted in the month of October 2014 and questions were modified accordingly. The actual survey was conducted in the months of December 2014 and January 2015. The questionnaire was administered in three ways to cover the entire sample of 800 students spread across 660 colleges in the city of Bangalore. First the researcher personally administered the questionnaire and then a soft copy was e-mailed to those who could not be reached or contacted in person. Finally, Facebook was used to target the rest of the college students.

Secondary Source: Magazines, Newspapers, Articles, Research Papers, Case Studies.

**Expert Interviews**

In order to get an insider perspective of the news media industry, six industry experts were interviewed using a set of twelve standardized questions. The interview was
also important from the point of view of generating the right amount and type of questions for the audience survey. Literature is usually dated and getting to know the way the news industry in India works today is very pertinent for the study.

Over the two-year period starting 2013 and ending 2015 a total of six prominent journalists associated with the television news channels were interviewed by the researcher. A visit to the CNN-IBN office in Noida in November 2012 and meeting with the Managing Editor Vinay Tiwari again gave an insight into the working of one of the major Television Networks in the country. Also, a chance meeting in the same year with CNN International New Delhi Bureau Chief Phillip Turner provided a comparative understanding Indian and Western news channels.

To get a critical view of the working of the national English news channels, the researcher met with Prof. Raghava Chari, Head of Broadcast at Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi and Dr. Farhat Bashir Khan, founding Director MCRC, Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi. Later, the researcher had the opportunity to speak to Vijay Grover, the then Bureau Chief of News X, Hyderabad.

Researcher should have an objective understanding of the broadcast news industry and these experts with their immense knowledge helped the researcher with the much needed background material for conducting the perception research on the television viewing audience here in Bangalore. The information also came in handy when preparing the questionnaire.

**Questionnaire Design**

Questionnaire has 40 questions. It has both open ended and closed questions, along with Likert and rating scales to capture the subjective information of the respondents. Questions mainly concentrate on the usage pattern of media by the student community, specifically relating to the use of social media, print and television media, with reference to News and Current Affairs. The Likert scale used are bi-directional, which measure two semantics related to the credibility of the news and other parameters associated with different mediums of news dissemination. Questions from 1 to 9 collects the information related to demographics, from questions 10 to 27, the media habits of the respondents are captured. And from questions 28 to 40, information related to trustworthiness and reliability of mediums Newspaper, Television and Internet are
collected. Questions 33 to 39 uses seven-point Semantic Differential scale and question 40 uses five-point Semantic Differential scale.

**Sampling Plan**
Sample Population: College Going Students
Sampling Plane: College Students in the City of Bangalore
Sample Size: 750
Sampling Method: Stratified Random Sampling

**Tools for Analysis:**
Descriptive Statistics: Frequency, Percentages
Causal Relations: Correlation & Regression
Hypothesis Testing: t-test, Chi-Square, ANOVA

Frequency analysis is done to obtain insight into how often a certain phenomenon (feature) occurs. This may help in describing or explaining a situation in which the phenomenon is involved. Frequency analysis would be run to describe general situation of respondent’s mass media use, media reliance and media credibility perception. Cross tabulations are used to study the frequencies of multiple factors.

Bivariate statistics would be applied to the data under question. The data collected would be analyzed to see if there is a correlation between the importance given to a particular medium and its credibility. Usually, social researchers use the T-Test to test for significant differences between means observed for two independent groups. T-test would be conducted to find if there is significant difference across media types.

Hypothesis Testing: Hypothesis testing refers to the process of choosing between competing hypotheses about a probability distribution, based on observed data from the distribution.

Generalization of the finding over the entire student population of Bangalore would be possible as extra care has gone into choosing the sample to be as representative as possible.
3.8 Objectives of the Study
1. Media consumption habits of college students of Bangalore
2. Which medium do they consider to be more credible?
3. Is there a relationship between the reliance on a medium and its credibility?
4. Is there a role for interpersonal communication in credibility perception?

3.9 Hypotheses
For the study following set of hypotheses proposed for the study:
1. H1₀: Selection of news media during conflict and gender are independent of each other
   H1₁: Selection of news media during conflict and gender are dependent on each other

2. H2₀: Relying on a particular media and gender are independent of each other.
   H2₁: Relying on a particular media and gender are dependent on each other.

3. H3₀: Gender and Favorite News media are independent of each other.
   H3₁: Gender and Favorite News media are dependent on each other.

4. H4₀: Women rate newspaper and television equally
   H4₁: Women rate television lower than newspaper

5. H5₀: Sting Operation has no impact on the credibility of the News Channel
   H5₁: Sting Operation has impact on the credibility of the News Channel

6. H6₀: Political Leanings have no impact on news channel’s credibility
   H6₁: Political leanings will have an impact on news channel’s credibility

7. H7₀: Business Houses have no impact on news channel’s credibility
   H7₁: Business houses have negative impact on news channel’s credibility

8. H8₀: TRP’s have no impact on news channel’s credibility
   H8₁: TRP’s have impact on news channel’s credibility
9. H$_{90}$: Professional Conduct of channels has no impact on credibility
   H$_{91}$: Professional Conduct has impact on improving the credibility

3.10 Limitations of the Study

1. The opinions of the individuals may be biased.
2. It is limited to the college students in Bangalore city.
3. The sample size could have been much bigger.
4. The research was only on perception of television viewers; content analysis was not used as a research method.