CHAPTER – III
RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

Corporate communication occupies an enviable status in the process of organizational management in the age of globalization. Corporate communication has become more research-oriented in recent years all over the world. The primary objective of the present study, as has been made clear in the previous chapter, requires investigating the corporate communication system, process and practices of select public and private corporate houses in the state of Karnataka. The forms of communication which link the various stakeholders to the mainstream of management of select corporate houses were also investigated by the researcher. This chapter enumerates the corporate communication research, focus of the study, hypotheses of the study, study variables, study sample, research design, primary data collection, secondary data collection, computation of data, statistical analysis, period of the study, limitations of the study and definitions of the terms used in the study.

3.2 Corporate Communication Research

Scientific research facilitates systematic diagnosis of a system, identification of strengths and weaknesses, prescription of suitable remedies and application of appropriate strategies which would improve the system in all spheres of life. Corporate communication field also demands constant and consistent research support for better performance in letter and spirit. Basic research in corporate communication creates knowledge that cuts across corporate communication situations. It is required to examine the underlying processes and construct theories that explain the corporate communication process. Introspective research also examines the field of corporate communication systematically in several ways. Applied research examines specific practical issues which are done to solve a specific problem. Strategic research tells modern organizations as to where they should be in the future and how to get there. Evaluation research is done to assess the effectiveness of corporate communication practices in modern organizations.

Modern organizations require effective corporate communication support in order to achieve their goals. Eminent practitioners Cutilip, Center and Broon (2004) emphasize the significance of corporate communication research thus: “For years, executives and practitioners alike brought the popular myth that corporate
communication deals with intangibles that cannot be measured. With each passing day it becomes increasingly difficult to sell that position to result-oriented management. Even though it will not answer all the questions or sway all decisions, methodical systematic research is the foundation of effective corporate communication”.

The trend toward corporate communication research is continuing. The Corporate Communication Research Annual was started in 1989. A 1990 issue of Corporate Communication Review was devoted to research. Several books and professional journals on corporate communication research have been published over the years all over the world. A study by Lindenmann (l979) revealed that 75% of corporate communication practitioners agreed that research was an integral part of the corporate communication process. Today, several methods such as historical study, survey research observation, content analysis, experimental research, case study etc. are widely employed in the field of corporate communication.

A survey conducted by Ryan and Martinson (1990) found that focus groups were widely used by corporate communication professionals (61%), followed by mail surveys (60%), telephone surveys (57%), personal interviews (55%), content analysis (29%) and participant observation (23%). All these methods are employed for a highly specific reason: to improve communication with various publics in a corporate set-up. Formal and informal research methods are used to study the effectiveness of corporate communication in modern organizations. The more formal methods of research provide objective and systematic information from representative samples. These methods include the familiar survey, tracking study, content analysis, secondary analysis of existing data and panel studies. Some more common informal methods used in corporate communication research are personal contacts, expert opinion, focus groups, community forums, call-in telephone lines, mail analysis and examination of media contents. The major problem associated with these informal techniques lies in the selection of the respondents.

Experts have identified five major categories of corporate communication research namely: environmental monitoring programme, public relations audits, communication audits, social audits and evaluation research. Researchers use environmental monitoring programmes to observe trends in public opinion and social events that may have a significant impact on an organization. Early warning phase and environmental monitoring phase are involved in general.
The corporate communication audit is a comprehensive study of the status of the corporate communication practices of an organization. Such studies are used to measure a company’s standing both internally (in the eyes of its employees) and externally (in the eyes of constituent publics - stockholders, suppliers, financiers, consumers, media, government and others). In the first stage, the researchers list the segments of the constituent publics who are most important to the modern corporate houses. In the second stage, the researchers determine how the corporate houses are viewed by each of these constituent publics.

The communication audits evaluate the internal and external means of communication used by an organization rather than the organization’s entire corporate communication programme by making use of readership surveys, content analysis and readability studies. The social audit is a small scale environmental monitoring programme designed to measure an organization’s social performance - i.e., how well it is living up to the public expectations, obligations and responsibilities. Evaluation research refers to the process of judging the effectiveness of programme planning, implementation and impact. Corporate communication professionals are relying more on the techniques of social science in their evaluation efforts.

In this age of competitiveness, modern organizations cannot achieve their goals without effective corporate communication. Hence, these organizations are relying upon corporate communication professionals to reach out to constituent publics, to enter into the good books of constituent publics, to enlist active participation of constituent publics in the process of organizational development and sustain organizational development by obtaining the patronage of constituent publics. The effectiveness of corporate communication is measured by the researchers. Systematic research is the foundation of effective corporate communication. Hence, corporate communication research assumes great significance in the present times since it provides scientific insight and inputs which would ultimately enhance the reputation of corporate houses and facilitate the progress of modern corporations.

3.3 Focus of the Study

Investigations dealing exclusively with corporate communication system, process and practices with special reference to public and private corporate houses in Karnataka State are scanty as seen through the review of literature. The corporate communication system, process and practices of modern corporate houses need to be
examined meticulously in order to enrich their foundations and practices. Hence, the primary tasks of the investigation are concerned with identifying a reasonably representative sample of internal and external publics in order to assess the status of corporate communication system and operations of select corporate houses in Karnataka State.

3.4 Hypotheses of the Study

The present study is based upon the following set of hypotheses. They include:

- **H1.** The public and private corporate houses have developed healthy employee relations initiatives and tools.
- **H2.** The public and private corporate houses have developed meaningful financial relations initiatives and tools.
- **H3.** The public and private corporate houses have developed positive customer relations initiatives and tools.
- **H4.** The public and private corporate houses have developed constructive government relations initiatives and tools.
- **H5.** The public and private corporate houses have developed sound media relations initiatives and tools.
- **H6.** The public and private corporate houses have developed congenial community relations initiatives and tools.

3.5 Study Variables

Keeping the above hypotheses in view, the following variables were selected for the present study on the basis of review of literature and discussion with subject experts.

3.5.1 Independent Variables

- a. Gender
- b. Age
- c. Education
- d. Professional Status
- e. Financial Status
- f. Public/Private Corporate Background

3.5.2 Dependent Variables

- a. Employee relations practices and tools
- b. Financial relations practices and tools
c. Customer relations practices and tools

d. Government relations practices and tools

e. Media relations practices and tools

f. Community relations practices and tools

3.6 Study Sample

Internal and external publics of select corporate houses who were available at Bangalore were approached for the purpose of primary data collection. Internal publics and external publics namely financiers, consumers, media representatives, government officials and representatives of community residing in headquarters were selected as per the stratified sampling procedure since they are familiar with the corporate communication set up, goals, functions, practices and effects.

Stratified sampling technique was followed in selecting 60 each representatives of external publics of select corporate houses namely, media professionals, financiers, customers, government officials and local community members numbering 300. Quota sampling was adopted in respect of internal publics, representing top management (20), middle management (160) and employees (60). It may be noted that all the top executives, representatives of middle management and employees were selected on the basis of quota sampling since they are working in headquarters. They are also aware of the nature, functions and practices of corporate communication in select corporate houses at Bangalore. These respondents were fully competent enough to make their comments upon the system, process and practices of corporate communication of select corporate houses. Hence, the internal and external respondents were considered for the purpose of primary data collection. This method of selection gives significantly correct results with much less time, money and material. Therefore 240 internal publics working in the headquarters and 300 external publics of select corporate houses were selected for the purpose of primary data collection. An exhaustive and intensive study was not possible because of large numbers, time and resource constraints.
Table 3.1 – Distribution of the Study Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Groups</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Customers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Local Community</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Representatives of Financiers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Media Professionals</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Government Officials</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Employees</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>356</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
<td><strong>540</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3.1 – Distribution of the Study Sample

3.7 Research Design

The present study approached the problem through a systematic survey method, which is popular in Mass Communication and Journalism and other branches of Social Science. The development of corporate communication in India and abroad was traced and documented by following historical research methodology. The system, process and practices of corporate communication in select public and private undertakings were evaluated through a scientific empirical investigation. A structured and pre-tested interview schedule was administered to the representative sample consisting of both internal and external publics. Appropriate statistical tests were conducted to analyze the primary data, draw inferences, test the hypotheses and make recommendations.
3.7.1 Survey Research Method

Two levels of structured and pre-tested schedules were administered to the internal publics and external publics of select corporate houses. Primary data were collected through questionnaire and interview tools personally by the researcher. The one administered to the internal publics of select corporate houses consisted of specific questions on fundamentals of internal communication, tools of employee relations and channels of employee communication at select corporate houses. It was designed to explore the understanding of these internal publics have of the corporate communication system, process and practices. Other interview schedules were administered to the various external publics namely, customers, financiers, media professionals, government functionaries and representatives of local community. These questionnaires consisted of specific questions on different types of corporate communication practices at select corporate houses. They were administered to these external publics who were available in Bangalore city. There were specific questions on various corporate communication policies, approaches, tools and practices of select corporate houses.

3.7.2 Case Study Method

Besides survey method, case study method was also used to study the corporate communication system, process and practices of select corporate houses. The case study is another tested and tried qualitative research technique in the field of corporate communication. Simply put, a case study uses as many data sources as possible to systematically investigate individuals, groups, organizations or events. Case studies are performed when a researcher needs to understand or explain a phenomenon. They are frequently used in the sphere of Social Science. Case study is defined as an empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. Documents, systematic interviews, direct observations and survey research were incorporated suitably into the present study on corporate communication system of select corporate houses. The entire study was exploratory in nature. Several ideas which emerged during the course of informal discussions with the experts and fellow researchers were also incorporated into the research design. Therefore, research methods were designed on the basis of flexibility, adaptability, ground realities and professional considerations.
3.7.3 Pre-Test

Before administering the questionnaire to the respondents of the study, a pre-test was conducted in the month of June 2011 after choosing the respondents (internal publics and external publics) in Mysore city, a non-sample area. The contents of the questionnaire were subjected to modification in order to avoid ambiguity in the light of the pre-test.

3.8 Primary Data Collection

The primary data was gathered by administering the interview schedules to the internal and external publics of select corporate houses who were directly associated with the corporate communication system, process and practices. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the subjects. Further, the study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, general information regarding the profile and performance of public and private undertakings were collected from the respective corporate communication departments. In the second phase of the study, the standardized interview schedules were administered to the respondents in order to understand the basic and applied corporate communication in select public and private undertakings of Karnataka State. Thus, primary data was collected from 540 internal and external stakeholders of corporate communication management.

3.9 Secondary Data Collection

The present study was also systematically carried out on the basis of relevant secondary data such as – annual reports of select public and private undertakings, articles of professional journals, proceedings of national and international seminars and conferences, media reports and other publications related to the research topic. These sources naturally contained authoritative comments and criticisms on various aspects of corporate communication management in the new millennium. The writings which were found from all these sources were also systematically analyzed for the purpose of gathering additional information and drafting the foundation chapters namely – introduction, review of literature and profile of select corporate houses.

3.10 Computation of Data

The primary data gathered from the survey from about 540 respondents on the system, process and practices of corporate communication in select corporate houses of Karnataka State were consolidated and computed by using descriptive analyses
which consisted of parametric statistical tests. The statistical tests revealed the relationship between the independent and dependent variables considered in the study.

3.11 Statistical Analysis

The study being descriptive in nature, no parametric statistical tests were involved to draw inferences based on the sample results. The interpretation of the chi-square and contingency table analysis justify the assumption of independence which was primarily carried out at the 0.05% level of significance. A brief description of the statistical tests applied given below:

a. Frequencies and Percentages

The frequencies procedure provides statistics which are useful for describing many types of variables. A perusal of the primary data collected on corporate communication practices at select corporate houses clearly suggests the application of the frequencies procedure as an appropriate statistical test.

b. Chi-square Test

The Chi-square test procedure tabulates a variable into categories and computes a chi-square statistics. This goodness-of-fit test compares the observed and expected frequencies in each category to test either that all categories contain the same proportion of values or that each category contains a user-specified proportion of values. In the present study chi-square test was applied to find out the significance of difference between frequencies of various responses under each statement, tool or channels of communication.

c. Contingency Table Analysis

The cross tabs procedure forms two-way and multi-way tables and provides a variety of tests and measures of association for two-way tables. The structure of the table and whether categories are ordered determine what test or measure to use. In the present study contingency table analysis was applied to find out the association between independent variables like – age, gender, educational qualification, professional status, marital status, and so on with the responses obtained (5 point scale) under each statement, tool or channels of communication.

3.12 Period of the Study

The actual data collection from the selected respondents in the sample area was done during June – December 2012.
3.13 Limitations of the Study

The usual limitations of the survey method and case study, namely time, human inadequacies, resource constraints, recollection and communication were experienced by the researcher. It was practically not possible to contact all the internal and external stakeholders due to lack of time and resources. An exhaustive and intensive survey as well as case study was not possible because of large numbers and above practical constraints. Stratified sampling was followed in selecting the respondents since this method of selection also gives significantly correct results with much less time, manpower, money and materials. Though much care was taken to collect the data, the memory bias on the part of the respondents cannot be completely ruled out.

3.14 Definitions of the Terms Used in the Study

3.14.1 Communication

Communication is a basic human need. It is the lifeblood of all modern organizations. It is a critical factor in the processes of personality development, organizational development, community development, national development and so on. It is also a key to the door of information, education, entertainment, participation and progress. Thus, communication essentially means transmission of information, education and entertainment. The process of communication includes – source, message, channel, receiver and effect.

3.14.2 Corporate Communication

The concept of corporate communication as a two-way persuasive communication is still used by many to define corporate communication. This mutual dependence of people and organizations – government, business, political, industrial, voluntary and the like have necessitated the practice of corporate communication all over the world. Corporate communication is indeed an art and craft of enabling modern organizations to adjust themselves to the changing environment in order to gain public consent, cooperation and patronage.

3.14.3 Internal Publics

The internal publics are those who are directly responsible for the establishment, maintenance and development of any organization. They include: board of management, divisional heads, managers, supervisors and workforce who belong to engineering and non-engineering sectors. The select corporate houses
cannot sustain their progress in the absence of effective internal communication. In the present study, primary data were gathered on various aspects of internal communication and employee relations from the representatives of top management, middle management and employees by applying quota sampling technique.

3.14.4 External Publics

The external publics are those who are associated with the organization in different capacities, namely, financiers, customers, local community, government functionaries and media professionals. The select corporate houses cannot sustain their progress in the absence of effective external communication, environmental support and active participation of the external publics in the processes of organizational management and development. In the present study, five categories of external publics namely, customers, financiers, media professionals, government officials and local community publics were approached for the purpose of primary data collection on various aspects of corporate communication practices at select corporate houses.

3.14.5 Employee Relations

Employee relation is sustained in modern organizations with a view to boost the morale of the employees and makes them active partners of organizational development. The employees should also be kept fully informed about various organizational activities including employee welfare programmes and roles and responsibilities of employees. Select corporate houses have to enlist the active support of the employees in order to sustain their progress. Thus, maintenance of mutually beneficial relationship between select corporate houses and the employees is defined as employee relations. In the present study, employees include – representatives of top management, middle management and employees who have first hand experience of corporate communication practices at select corporate houses.

3.14.6 Government Relations

The government relations come from the need to marshal political and administrative support for the policies, programmes and functions of the modern organizations which are at the receiving end. Select corporate houses are known for their institutional reputation and social credibility in the state of Karnataka. These organizations have to enlist the active support of central and state governments in order to sustain its progress at all times. Thus, maintenance of mutually beneficial relationship between select corporate houses and other government agencies is
defined as government relations. In the present study, government officials from various departments were approached for primary data collection since they are familiar with government relations and corporate communication activities of select corporate houses.

3.14.7 Customer Relations

Customers are the backbone of modern industrial and business organizations. Customers cannot be taken for granted in the present times especially by the public and private undertakings. The goods and services should be manufactured and delivered in accordance with the preferences and demands of customers who matter most in the present business world. The management must realize the importance of customer relations and serve them to the best of its ability. The select corporate houses have to enlist the active support of various customers in order to sustain their progress.

3.14.8 Community Relations

No organization can sustain its progress without enlisting the active patronage of the local community which provides land, labor, capital, consumers, financiers, image builders and other angel guardians of organizational development. The local community practically feeds, guides and leads the modern organizations in letter and spirit. Hence, modern corporate houses should also contribute notably toward community welfare. The select corporate houses have to enlist the active support of the local community members in order to sustain their progress.

3.14.9 Media Relations

Media organizations are utilized by modern organizations for image building activities. These organizations cannot always depend on their own corporate communication networks and channels which are known for limited influence and transactions. Mass media organizations can reach out to unlimited geographical areas and sections of society. The media institutions can also be utilized effectively for image building activities by the corporate communication professionals and organizational leaders. The select corporate houses have to enlist the active support of various media organizations in order to sustain their progress.

3.14.10 Financial Relations

The public and private corporate houses are required to develop a viable network of financiers in order to mobilize adequate financial resources. The community of financiers should be persuaded to procure funds from different
financial institutions. The select corporate houses have to enlist the active support of various financiers in order to sustain their progress. In the present study, the financiers of the goods and services of select public and private undertakings were considered.

3.14.11 Survey Research

Survey research method is very popular in the field of Social Science including corporate communication. It is very widely used research technique for the purpose of conducting empirical study. It is nothing but surveying the minds of the people who matter most from the point of view of achieving organizational development. It is a systematic and scientific research method which facilitates generation of comprehensive authentic data on various aspects of organizational management and development. Primary data from about 540 internal and external constituent publics was gathered on the basis of survey research methodology.

3.14.12 Case Study

The case study is another tested and tried qualitative research technique in the field of corporate communication. Simply put, a case study uses as many data sources as possible to systematically investigate individuals, groups, organizations or events. Case studies are performed when a researcher needs to understand or explain a phenomenon. The present study is also based on case study method which has facilitated better understanding of corporate communication system of select corporate houses in Karnataka State.

3.14.13 Headquarters

Bangalore city is the capital of Karnataka State. It is also the headquarters of the select corporate houses. The head office houses various technical and non-technical departments. All major activities are undertaken in the head office. The select corporate houses namely: Bharat Earth Movers Limited, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Mphasis and Biocon have different branches of organizational management such as human resources development, finance management, corporate communication, engineering department, security service and other departments. These departments are functioning in the head office at Bangalore. This head office is known as headquarters of select corporate houses.
3.15 Summary

The corporate communication system, process and practices with respect to public and private organizations in Karnataka State and other regions of Indian Republic are less understood due to lack of comprehensive and scientific communication investigations. The primary data were gathered from 540 respondents who represented the internal and external publics of select corporate houses which are based in Bangalore city. The respondents were selected on the basis of stratified and quota sampling techniques. The present study approached the problem through a systematic survey method. Besides survey method, case study method, non-participant observation, informal discussion and secondary sources of information were also used as other methods to study the system, process and practices of corporate communication in select corporate houses of Karnataka State.