
UNIT 17 WRITING REPORTS-4

REPORTING SURVEYS

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17.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall show you how to conduct a survey and how to report it. After completing the unit, you will be able to write reports on surveys conducted by you.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Although a survey report may be written for a variety of reasons, it is often produced in response to a request for information. You might be asked, for instance, to conduct an opinion survey among consumers about the sales of a particular product, to check the range of prices that various companies charge for a particular item, to study the feasibility of establishing a branch of your organization in a town, and so on. You would then conduct a survey and present your findings in your report.

17.2 VARIOUS STAGES IN CONDUCTING A SURVEY

Stage 1

Survey reports are produced in response to specific demands. Usually you will get clear instructions, called Terms of Reference, which tell you what you are required to do.

Though the terms of reference will guide you in your job before you begin to collect data, you should spend some time in working out the exact scope of your report. In case the instructions are vague, you should seek clarifications before making a start.

Stage 2

A report is always written with an audience in mind. In some cases it may be just your immediate boss who requires information on some aspects of work with which you are connected. At other times it may be a number of readers to whom your report will be circulated. You will find that your report generally has any or all of the following four kinds of audience :

- i) Your superiors
- ii) Your colleagues
- iii) Other organizations engaged in similar activities
- iv) Consumers

If your report is to be based on instructions from an individual, it would not be difficult to find out its objectives. If, however, the audience is large and varied, you should try to find out what they want to know. The presentation and style of your report will depend on your readers' exposure to the subject of your report. To overcome the difficulty of catering to the needs of a varied readership, you should keep in view the people who may not be very well-informed about your subject.

Stage 3

After the objectives have been defined and the audience fixed, the next step is to gather the relevant data.

17.3 COLLELCTION OF DATA

There are a number of methods and sources which will help you in collecting data. They are :

- i) Personal Observation
- ii) Interviews
- iii) Questionnaires
- iv) Official Records
- v) Libraries

17.3.1 Personal Observation

Some data will be based on your personal observation. Suppose you have to conduct an opinion survey (about a particular product) among consumers. When you meet people, you should study not only their words but their gestures also. You must develop the habit of careful observation and accurate recording. (Please refer to the units on note-taking.)

17.3.2 Interviews

Another method of collecting data is an interview. Interviewing is an art and demands courtesy, patience, and tact on your part. Even though you need one type of data, you should remember that all the individual persons cannot be dealt with in an identical manner. You should be sensitive to the reactions of the person you are interviewing and make him open out to you and give the information you require. (For a detailed discussion on the technique of interviewing, refer to Unit 16.)

17.3.3 Questionnaires

When you want to contact a large number of people for some information, the most convenient method is to send questionnaires to them. You should take the utmost care in preparing a questionnaire, since you cannot give further clarification — unlike in the case of an interview. The following hints will be of help to you :

- i) Each question should be precise and clear, and not broad or vague. For example, if you ask 'Do you see plays regularly?', your respondent will not understand what you mean by 'regularly', and suppose he says 'yes', how will this answer help you? But if you say, 'How often in a month do you see a play?', then he will understand what you want to know and his answer will be useful.
- ii) Avoid leading questions — questions which anticipate or suggest answers and thus prejudice the respondent's mind. For example, 'Do you read *The Times of India*?' is an attempt to lead the respondent. 'Which newspaper do you read?' is a better question.
- iii) Arrange your questions in a logical order. Leave sufficient space for answers.
- iv) You should include a covering letter to motivate the respondent to answer the questions. An example of a questionnaire used by All India Radio, New Delhi is given below :

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ALL INDIA RADIO
(AUDIO RESEARCH UNIT)

Field study on the extent and nature of utilisation of the University of the AIR

Sample Information

Name of the respondent

Address

1 Sex 2 Age 3 Course of Study

4 Subjects Offered 5 Medium of Instruction

6 Year of study 7 Occupation

SCHEDULE

1 Are you answer that AIR Delhi broadcasts the 'University of the AIR' programme for students of correspondence courses of Delhi University?

Aware 1 Not Aware 2

2 If aware, how often do you listen to the University of the AIR?

Regularly 1 Occasionally 3 Never 5
Frequently 2 Not often 4

3 If you do not listen often or do not listen at all, what are the reasons?

Not aware 1 Lectures do not have enough material 4
Time not suitable 2 Any other 5

Have other engagements at that time 3

4 If you listen at least occasionally, what programmes do you generally listen to?

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5 Lectures on Economics, History, Political Science and Commerce are broadcast in both Hindi and English. Would you like us to continue in both, or only in one of them?

Hindi 1 English 2 Both 3

6 Do you find the number of lectures devoted to different subjects adequate?

Adequate 1 Not adequate 2

7 Are you satisfied with the following aspects and find them suitable?

- a) Time of Broadcast — Yes/No
If not, suggest alternative time
- b) Duration of lecture (20 mts.) — Yes/No
If not, suggest duration
- c) Style of presentation — Yes/No
If not, mention alternative format
- d) The talker presenting the lecture — Yes/No
If not, what was missing or lacking?
- e) The selection of topics — Yes/No
If not, what other topics would you suggest?

8 Do you find the lectures useful? Yes/No

If yes, in what manner?

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If not, why not?

9 All India Radio has been putting out three times a day a special programme (Review Lectures) on the University of AIR Programme since 15th April 1986. Would you like to mention the details of the programmes you listened to during this week?

Date..... Time..... Topic.....

10 Any comments and suggestion for improvement?

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17.3.4 Official Records

Every organization records its activities in written documents — memoranda, letters, reports, contracts, agreements, etc. If you read these documents, you are most likely to find some of the data you are searching for.

17.3.5 Libraries

A library is a place where you will find books and journals on various topics. There may be a number of libraries in your town or city. You are likely to find some relevant material in some of the libraries.

17.4 REPORTING A SURVEY

Most survey reports — especially those that are long and complex — require a carefully planned structure that helps the reader. Such long reports are divided into three main parts — front matter, body, and back matter — each of which, in turn, contains a number of elements. Variations in structure can be made according to the subject, the length, and the contents of your report. (For short reports, you may follow the pattern discussed in Block 1 Unit 6.)

17.4.1 Contents of a Long Survey Report

The following list includes all the elements that a long survey report should contain :

- a) **Front matter**
 - i) Title page
 - ii) Preface
 - iii) Table of contents
 - iv) List of illustrations
 - v) Summary
- b) **Body**
 - i) Introduction
 - ii) Discussion
 - iii) Conclusions and recommendations
- c) **Back matter**
 - i) List of references
 - ii) Bibliography
 - iii) Appendix (ces)
 - iv) Glossary

Now we shall discuss all these elements at length.

a) **Front matter**

The front matter serves several purposes : it gives the reader a general idea of what the report is about and of the author's purpose in writing it; it provides lists of

contents and illustrations and thereby gives the reader a chance to determine whether the report contains the kind of information he is seeking.

i) *Title Page*

The title page should contain the following information :

- 1 Full title of the report.
- 2 Principal investigator's or author's name.
- 3 Date of submission of the report.
- 4 Name of the organization for whom the author writes.

ii) *Preface*

The preface is a statement by the author of the purpose, background, or scope of the report. It may contain acknowledgement of help received during the course of the survey or in the preparation of the report. It may cite the permission obtained for the use of copyright material.

iii) *Table of contents*

A table of contents lists all the sections of the report in their order of appearance, along with their page numbers.

iv) *List of illustrations*

This list includes all charts, drawings, graphs, maps, photographs, and tables that appear in the report, along with their page numbers.

v) *Summary*

The summary states — usually in a hundred words — the subject of the report. Along with the table of contents, the summary helps the reader to preview the contents of a report and to assess its value.

b) **Body**

i) *Introduction*

The main function of the introduction is to say what the report is about, what work has already been done on the subject and what new grounds are covered in the present study.

ii) *Discussion*

The main function of this part is to present the collected data in an organized form and analyse the results of the survey. Usually it has several sections grouped under different heads and sub-heads.

iii) *Conclusions and recommendations*

This section contains the inferences drawn on the basis of the analysis of the data presented in the report, and your suggestions for a future course of action.

c) **Back matter**

The back matter is composed of supplementary information material that may shed some additional light on the topic.

i) *List of references*

If, in your report, you refer to material in, or quote directly from, a published (or unpublished) work, or you want to give a brief explanation, you must provide a list of references (or footnotes). The attention of the reader is drawn to this list (or footnotes) either by putting a mark (say, an asterisk) or by writing a number at a suitable place in the text.

ii) *Bibliography*

The bibliography is the listing, in alphabetical order, of the sources of information (published or unpublished) in your report.

iii) *Appendix*

An appendix contains explanations that are too long for footnotes but are helpful to the reader seeking further clarification or assistance. A report may have one or more appendices, and each appendix contains one type of material. Material like texts of interviews, copies of questionnaires, relevant correspondence, summaries or results achieved by other organizations, or views of others on similar topics is generally included in the appendices.

iv) *Glossary*

A glossary is a list of words and expressions that may be unfamiliar to the intended audience, and their explanation. Arrange the terms alphabetically.

17.4.2 Examples of Reports

Here are two sample survey reports. The dates, figures and names mentioned in them are fictitious.

Example 1

Title page

VIJAY VANASPATI COMPANY
ADILABAD

A SURVEY REPORT ON
REFINED COOKING OIL

Prepared

by
VIDYASAGAR
Sales Manager

5 September, 1987

Preface

About a month ago I started surveying the markets in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka with the following objectives :

- i) To find out the extent of the prospects of refined oil as a cooking medium.
- ii) To know the reasons for the popularity of Surya refined oil.
- iii) To study the feasibility of launching a new brand of refined oil.

The data were collected largely through personal contact.

I hope that the conclusions I arrived at will help our organization to decide to manufacture a new brand of refined oil.

I acknowledge the help and cooperation of the Managing Director, the Chief General Manager and other members of the staff.

Table of contents

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Summary

In India all sections of society consider refined oil a suitable medium for cooking. Surya refined oil has become popular among upper class consumers. The survey done by us

reveals that another brand of oil with qualities similar to Surya oil will become popular among the middle as well as lower classes. It will be profitable for our organization to manufacture such an oil.

Introduction

In India ghee and oil have been the cooking media for centuries. Ghee was used by the well-to-do and oil by the poorer classes. However, with industrialization and the urbanization of society, a new product, sometimes called 'vegetable ghee' or Vanaspati and commonly known as 'Dalda' replaced ghee as a cooking medium. Dalda, which was in fact the brand name of a particular make of hydrogenated oil, was cheaper than ghee and it soon became popular.

Our company manufactures Vijay Vanaspati. Due to intermittent supply of edible oil the manufacturing of Vanaspati is getting delayed and the output has been reduced. We came to know that a new kind of oil, called Surya refined oil, had become popular partly because of the prevailing uncertainty in the supply of Vanaspati and partly because doctors considered it safer for the heart than ghee or Vanaspati. The Managing Director of our company wanted to explore the possibilities of taking up the production of a new brand of refined oil. He ordered a market survey with the following objectives :

- i) To find out the extent of the prospects of refined oil as a cooking medium.
- ii) To know the reasons for the popularity of Surya refined oil.
- iii) To study the feasibility of manufacturing and marketing a new brand of refined oil.

Discussion

i) Selection of a Sample

We conducted a survey in March 1987 among consumers in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. We distributed copies of a questionnaire in some districts selected at random. Consumers belonging to different occupations, age-groups, and income-groups were chosen as respondents. We interviewed a few hoteliers and shopkeepers. The district-wise break-up of the respondents was as follows:

District	No. of respondents
Adilabad	30
Hyderabad	80
Krishna	80
Chittoor	30
Jhansi	50
Bhopal	50
Aurangabad	40
Manmad	40
Gulbarga	50
Mysore	50
Total	<u>500</u>

ii) Findings

- a) Ghee is considered rich in nutritive values. So, as a cooking medium, ghee is the first choice of every household. However, as it is very expensive, its consumption is confined to the upper classes.
- b) Vanaspati is also popular, but it is used mostly for frying. It is popular only because it looks like ghee and is less expensive than ghee.
- c) Mustard oil is used as cooking medium by the lower class people.
- d) Refined oil is preferred by all sections of society as it is free from bad smell and can be used for all cooking purposes. Doctors now recommend it in preference to animal fats like ghee and butter.
- e) The restaurants find refined oil suitable for the preparation of both sweets and salted snacks. They are forced to use it more as the supply of vanaspati is irregular.

(f) Consumers gave the following reasons for their choice of Surya refined oil :

Food fried in Surya oil is tasty because it remains crisp for hours.

Surya oil does not add unwanted fat to the body and thus it is less harmful than ghee and helps those who care for their health.

Conclusions and recommendations

All sections of society prefer refined oil for different reasons.

Surya refined oil has become popular with the upper and middle classes as it meets their needs.

Because of the shortage in the supply of 'Dalda', the restaurants have found an alternative in Surya oil.

Another brand of refined oil having the same qualities as Surya oil will be acceptable to all sections of consumers. As our company already has a good reputation, the new venture will bring us profits.

Exercise 1

1 Prepare a questionnaire to study the attitude of your fellow students to the board and lodging facilities available in your hostels. In the questionnaire you may ask questions related to the type of accommodation provided, rooms, general maintenance, vegetarian and non-vegetarian food served in the hostel messes, the mess bill, etc.

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2 Choose a topic of your interest on which you may have to write a report. Discuss briefly the sources or the methods you would use to collect your data. You may use all or a few of the methods discussed earlier.

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- 3 Make a comparative study of the savings schemes available in one of the nationalized banks and the Post Office. Present your findings in the form of a report. You may discuss schemes like Recurring Deposit, Fixed Deposit, Cumulative Time Deposit, and National Savings Certificates.**

Self-check Exercise 2

Read Example 1 given in Section 17.4.2 and answer the following questions :

1 What were the objectives of the survey undertaken by Vijay Vanaspati Company?

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2 Which were the states chosen for the survey?

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3 Which brand of refined oil was found to be popular?

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4 What was the method used by the surveyor for collecting data?

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5 State briefly the findings of the survey.

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6 What were the conclusions?

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Example 2

You may sometimes have to write short reports on the surveys you conduct. The following will be useful to you as an example of a short survey report.

We visited NOIDA on 18th August in search of suitable accommodation for K. T. P. C. employees. The findings are as follows :

- 1 Noida has all the necessary infrastructural facilities, namely, schools for children, private medical clinics, a government hospital, shopping centres in every sector, a few cinema halls, playgrounds, restaurants, and regular supplies of water and electricity.
- 2 Though there is a considerable distance (20 k. m.) at present between South Delhi and NOIDA, the distance will be reduced after the completion of a bridge between Sector 15 of NOIDA and Okhla. This bridge will, hopefully, be ready for use in a year.
- 3 A number of D. T. C. buses ply regularly between NOIDA and different parts of South Delhi. It seems there are a few chartered buses for the use of office-goers.

- 4 With the help of a knowledgeable person (who resides in NOIDA) we combed different sectors of NOIDA. Our observations are as follows :
- i) M.I.G. and H.I.G. type flats are available in Sectors 21 (Jalvayu Vihar) and 26; but the house rents quoted by the property dealers are on the higher side—for M.I.G. about Rs. 1,500/- and for H.I.G. Rs. 2,000/-.
 - ii) Sectors 12 and 22 may be good for Class III and Class IV employees but not for Class I officers.
 - iii) In Sectors 28, 29 and 37 a number of (about 30) excellent M.I.G. and H.I.G. flats are readily available. Even the rents quoted by the property dealers are reasonable—for M.I.G. Rs. 1,200/- and for H.I.G. Rs. 1,500/-.

The terms of the landlords and the property dealers are as follows :

- i) 1 or 2 months' rent in advance as security for the landlords.
- ii) 15 days' rent as commission for the property dealer.

Enclosures :

- i) The time table of D.T.C. buses.
- ii) The visiting cards of three property dealers; among them we recommend V.K. and Company as they appeared to be quite reasonable.

Exercise 3

Read the report given above as Example 2 and answer the following questions :

1 What are the facilities available in NOIDA?

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2 In which sectors of NOIDA are the H.I.G. and M.I.G. flats available at reasonable rates?

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3 What are the terms of the landlords and the property dealers in NOIDA?

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17.5 LET US SUM UP

A survey report may be written for various reasons: (i) To find out the opinions of consumers about a particular product; (ii) to check the range of prices; (iii) to study the feasibility of establishing a new branch, etc.

These are different stages in conducting a survey. In the beginning, you should know the scope of your survey and have an idea of the types of audience you will have. Then you should decide which of the following methods you will choose for collecting data : (i) personal observation, (ii) interviews, (iii) questionnaires, (iv) official records, (v) libraries.

Long survey reports usually contain three major parts : Front matter, body, and back matter.

The front matter may include a title page, a preface, a table of contents, a summary, and a list of illustrations.

The body may contain an introduction, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

The back matter may include a bibliography, a list of references, appendices, and a glossary.

Short survey reports open with a statement of the information the writer has tried to collect and goes on to include the findings, the conclusions, and the recommendations.

17.6 KEY WORDS

ac, commo'dation : living premises

ap'pendix : something added at the end of a book or document

, bibli'ography : a list of books on any subject

'interview : a meeting of persons face to face

, obser'vation : careful watching

, question'naire : a list of questions to be answered by a group of people, especially for a survey

, recommen'dation : advice regarding what should be done

'sample : specimen

'survey : an investigation of the condition of something; a general view

17.7 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Exercise 2

- 1 The objectives were : to find out the prospects of refined oil as a cooking medium; to know the reasons for the popularity of Surya refined oil; and to study the feasibility of launching a new brand of refined oil.
- 2 Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- 3 Surya.
- 4 Questionnaires.
- 5 As a cooking medium, ghee is the first choice of every household. Vanaspati has become popular as it is less expensive than ghee. Refined oil is preferred by all sections as it is free from bad smell and can be used for all cooking purposes. Surya oil has become popular as food fried in it remains crisp for hours.
- 6 The restaurant owners and other sections of society have found an alternative in Surya oil because of the shortage in the supply of Vanaspati.

Exercise 3

- 1 Regular supply of water and electricity, shopping centres, schools for children, playgrounds, and restaurants.
- 2 Sectors 28, 29, and 37.
- 3 The terms are :
 - i) 1 or 2 months' rent in advance as security for the landlords.
 - ii) 15 day's rent as commission for the property dealer.