



Book Review of Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach (9th ed.) by Uma Sekaran and Roger Bougie

Seshika Kariyapperuma

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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ABSTRACT

This review critically evaluates the 9th edition of *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach* by Uma Sekaran and Roger Bougie. As a widely recognized leading textbook in business and management research methodology, this book offers a comprehensive and practical guide to conducting academic and applied research. It provides a strong foundation in research methodology for undergraduates, postgraduate students, and practitioners. The review highlights the structured content of the book, which systematically covers the entire research process, starting from problem formulation, literature review, research design, measurement, sampling, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. A key strength of the textbook is its skill-building orientation, which emphasizes learning through application, examples, and a large number of exercises, making it highly suitable for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Furthermore, the review compares the book with other leading research methodology texts, highlighting its practical orientation over more theory-intensive alternatives. Despite its strengths, the review identifies limitations, particularly its limited coverage of advanced analytical techniques, in-depth qualitative research strategies, and emerging digital research methods. Overall, the 9th edition is a highly valuable book for developing foundational research skills in business studies and remains a widely recommended text for teaching and learning research methodology in higher education.

Keywords: Business research methods, Sekaran and Bougie, skill-building approach, research methodology, academic writing, research design, business research

INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is a critical component of business and management education. It equips students and researchers with the essential skills to investigate business problems systematically and generate valid, reliable, and practical knowledge. Among the widely recognized textbooks in this field, *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach* by Sekaran and Bougie (2025) has established itself as a leading reference due to its practical orientation and structured approach to conducting research. The 9th edition of the book continues this tradition by providing a comprehensive, up-to-date guide to business research, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in a clear, accessible manner (Sekaran & Bougie, 2025).

This book is particularly recognized for its approach to skill-building, which emphasizes learning through application rather than abstract theoretical or conceptual discussion. As a result, this textbook is extensively used in undergraduate and postgraduate business programs throughout the world. For undergraduate students, the structured presentation, accessible language, and step-by-step approach make the complex research process understandable. Students with limited prior experience in research methodology can gain confidence in designing and conducting empirical studies using this textbook. For MBA and master's level students, the book provides an appropriate foundation for completing applied research projects, dissertations, and consultancy-based investigations. The emphasis on problem identification, literature review, measurement, and data analysis directly supports professional research skills. However, for doctoral researchers and experienced academics, the book should be considered as a foundational resource rather than an advanced methodological reference.

Doctoral researchers may need additional sources focusing on philosophy, advanced statistical modeling, qualitative methodologies, and contemporary debates in knowledge production.

The latest edition further strengthens its relevance by incorporating contemporary research considerations such as ethical research practices and improved guidance on data collection and analysis techniques. These revisions reflect the changing nature of business research and acknowledge the growing importance of methodological pluralism in management studies. Nevertheless, the extent to which these additions adequately address contemporary methodological developments, including artificial intelligence, advanced analytics, reproducible research, and open science, requires careful scholarly evaluation.

This review evaluates the key strengths, limitations, and overall contribution of the book's ninth edition in relation to other prominent research methodology texts in business and management studies.

Content

This book is well-structured to guide readers through the entire process of conducting research in a systematic, logical, and progressive manner. The early chapters cover the fundamentals of business research, which include an explanation of what research is, its purpose in business decision-making, and the scientific approach to solving business problems. Additionally, these chapters also help readers understand how to identify and articulate a research problem and develop a clear research framework.

Subsequent chapters focus on the important task of reviewing previous literature and developing a theoretical foundation for the research study. The authors of this book explain how to critically evaluate existing studies, identify research gaps based on prior literature, and build conceptual frameworks that guide the research process. This is followed by chapters that explain research design, in which different types of research, such as exploratory, descriptive, and causal, are explained, along with their appropriate applications in business contexts (Sekaran & Bougie, 2025).

This book then continues with chapters on the measurement and operationalization of variables, in which variables and various scales are explained in detail. Within these chapters, special attention is given to the development of valid and reliable measurement instruments, such as questionnaires and other survey tools. These chapters are essential for ensuring that data collected in business research is accurate and meaningful.

Sampling and data collection methods have been covered in detail in this book. The concepts of probability and non-probability sampling have been elaborated by the authors, along with guidance on selecting an appropriate sampling method based on the research purpose. Various approaches to data collection, such as surveys, interviews, and observational methods, have been discussed in an application-oriented manner.

The last chapters cover the analysis and interpretation of data. Concepts of qualitative and quantitative data analysis have been introduced in an easy-to-understand way so that students can make sense of the collected data. Important topics such as hypothesis testing, basic statistical analysis, and interpretation of results are covered with clear examples and step-by-step explanations.

Finally, the book ends with chapters devoted to writing research reports and communicating research findings. This section prepares readers to write and organize their research reports, theses, and business presentations in an academic format. The book places importance on clear communication of research findings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2025)

Evaluation

The most important contribution of the textbook is its explicit commitment to experiential learning. Instead of presenting research methods as isolated concepts, Sekaran and Bougie (2025) integrate methodological explanations with business examples, worked illustrations, discussion questions, practical exercises, and reflective activities. This instructional design enables students to apply methodological concepts immediately after they are introduced, thereby facilitating deeper learning through practice. Such an approach aligns closely

with constructivist theories of learning, which argue that learners construct knowledge most effectively through active engagement rather than passive reception of information (Biggs & Tang, 2022; Kolb, 2015).

Another main strength of the ninth edition is its balanced treatment of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. Earlier editions were frequently criticised for a predominantly quantitative orientation. The latest edition responds to this criticism by expanding discussion of qualitative inquiry and mixed-methods research, reflecting the increasing methodological pluralism evident within contemporary business and management scholarship. The authors explicitly acknowledge that different research questions require different methodological approaches and demonstrate how qualitative and quantitative evidence can complement one another within a single investigation. Their discussion of mixed-methods research reflects a pragmatic research philosophy in which methodological choices are determined primarily by the research problem rather than allegiance to a particular philosophical paradigm. This perspective is consistent with contemporary management research, where complex organisational phenomena frequently require methodological triangulation (Saunders et al., 2023).

Despite this improvement, the overall orientation of the textbook remains predominantly post-positivist. Considerable emphasis is placed on hypothesis testing, operationalisation of variables, measurement reliability, validity assessment, statistical inference, and objective data collection. Although these components remain fundamental to rigorous empirical research, interpretivist, critical, and constructivist traditions receive comparatively less analytical attention.

For example, qualitative research is presented primarily as an alternative method of data collection rather than as a fundamentally different way of understanding organisational reality. Issues such as reflexivity, researcher positionality, interpretive validity, and the co-construction of knowledge are only briefly introduced. Consequently, students relying exclusively on this textbook may develop stronger competence in designing structured empirical studies than in critically evaluating alternative methodological paradigms.

Similarly, although research ethics is integrated throughout the book rather than confined to a single chapter, a commendable improvement over many competing texts, the ethical discussion focuses primarily on procedural issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, participant protection, and responsible reporting. Broader debates concerning research integrity, reproducibility, publication bias, algorithmic ethics, and responsible artificial intelligence receive comparatively limited attention despite their increasing importance within contemporary research practice.

One of the most important criteria for evaluating a contemporary research methodology textbook is its ability to respond to the rapidly changing landscape of business research. This book also demonstrates continued relevance by maintaining a strong foundation in conventional research methods while acknowledging the changing nature of knowledge creation in the digital era. However, given the speed of technological transformation in research practices, particularly the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), digital research platforms, big data analytics, and open science practices, there remain opportunities for further enrichment in future editions.

A significant contemporary development in business and management research is the increasing integration of artificial intelligence into the research process. AI-supported tools are transforming multiple stages of research, including literature searching, conceptual model development, data cleaning, qualitative coding, predictive analytics, and research communication. Although traditional methodological principles remain essential, researchers increasingly require guidance on the ethical and methodological implications of AI-assisted research. Issues such as algorithmic bias, transparency of AI-generated outputs, reproducibility, data privacy, and responsible use of generative AI have become central concerns in academic research (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Future editions of research methodology textbooks would benefit from dedicated chapters or sections that explain how AI can support, not replace, the judgment of researchers and theoretical reasoning.

Similarly, new digital methods and AI have fundamentally expanded the possibilities for business research. Contemporary organizations create substantial volumes of digital trace data through social media, enterprise systems, online platforms, and customer interactions. Methods such as digital ethnography, social network analysis, text mining, machine-learning-based sentiment analysis, and platform analytics are increasingly

relevant to management scholars. While Sekaran and Bougie (2025) provide comprehensive coverage of survey research, experiments, interviews, and traditional data analysis approaches, a greater emphasis on digital research methodologies would enhance the relevance of this text book for twenty-first-century researchers.

Another important development is the growth of open science practices. The movement toward greater transparency, accessibility, and reproducibility has influenced research design, data management, and publication practices across all disciplines. Practices such as preregistration of studies, open data sharing, open-access publishing, transparent reporting standards, and replication studies are becoming increasingly important in addressing concerns about research credibility and methodological rigor (Nosek et al., 2015). Although the textbook strongly emphasizes ethical research practices, future editions could integrate a more explicit discussion of open science principles and their implications for business research.

When compared with other research methodology textbooks, several distinctive features of Sekaran and Bougie's book become evident. For example, compared with Cooper and Schindler's (2023) *Business Research Methods*, Sekaran and Bougie provide a more user-friendly and accessible presentation of methodological concepts. While Cooper and Schindler offer an extensive theoretical foundation and advanced methodological coverage, their textbook may be more appropriate for doctoral students and highly experienced researchers. In contrast, Sekaran and Bougie focus on simplifying the research process without compromising methodological rigor.

Similarly, when comparing Saunders et al. (2023), "Research Methods for Business Students," known for its Research Onion model, with Sekaran and Bougie (2025), the latter pays more attention to skill development. Saunders et al. (2023) provide detailed information on research philosophies and methodology, while Sekaran and Bougie focus more on assisting students in conducting real-world business research. Thus, the mentioned textbook will suit those students who need assistance with writing their dissertations, theses, or conducting organizational research project.

The book can also be favorably compared with Creswell and Creswell's (2023) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. While Creswell and Creswell provide an in-depth examination of research designs and methodological paradigms, their main audience consists of social science researchers. Sekaran and Bougie (2025), on the other hand, maintain a very strong business and management orientation, ensuring that examples, cases, and applications are directly relevant to business researchers and practitioners.

LIMITATIONS OF THE BOOK

Despite its significant contributions, the textbook has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the book maintains a relatively traditional view of business research. While this approach provides strong methodological foundations, contemporary management research increasingly involves complex phenomena such as digital transformation, sustainability, artificial intelligence, organizational ecosystems, and societal challenges. These emerging topics require methodological approaches beyond conventional survey-based research.

Second, although the book provides valuable coverage of quantitative methods, discussions of advanced analytical techniques could be expanded. Contemporary business researchers increasingly use structural equation modelling, multilevel modelling, longitudinal analysis, machine learning techniques, and mixed-methods designs. While some of these approaches are introduced, more detailed guidance with practical examples would enhance the book's usefulness for postgraduate researchers. For example, despite being published in 2025, the textbook fails to meaningfully address how artificial intelligence has transformed contemporary research practices. It provides little guidance on using Large Language Models (LLMs) for literature discovery, the ethics of AI-assisted synthesis, or the use of automated coding software such as NVivo and ATLAS.ti and machine learning in predictive business analytics.

Third, the treatment of contextual and culturally embedded research could be further developed. Many management theories originated in Western institutional contexts and may not fully explain organizational

realities in developing economies. Researchers working in Asian, African, and Latin American contexts increasingly emphasize the need for indigenous perspectives, local knowledge systems, and context-specific theorizing (Tsui, 2004). A stronger discussion of contextualization would make the textbook more globally relevant.

Fourth, although ethical considerations are addressed, the contemporary research environment requires deeper engagement with issues such as research integrity, responsible AI use, data ownership, privacy concerns, and ethical challenges associated with digital data collection.

Finally, while the book provides excellent guidance for student researchers, it may provide limited methodological depth for experienced doctoral researchers seeking advanced philosophical debates or specialized analytical techniques.

Overall Conclusion

This textbook remains one of the most influential and accessible textbooks for business research methodology. Its greatest contribution lies in transforming research methods from an abstract academic subject into a practical skill-building process. The logical structure, extensive examples, pedagogical features, and emphasis on research quality make it highly valuable for students and early-career researchers.

The ninth edition successfully preserves the strengths of previous editions while maintaining relevance in a changing academic environment. Nevertheless, future editions could be strengthened by incorporating deeper discussions of artificial intelligence, digital research methods, open science practices, indigenous methodologies, and advanced analytical approaches.

From a business education perspective, particularly in developing-country contexts such as South Asia, the textbook provides an excellent foundation for research training. However, educators should supplement it with additional readings on contextualized management research, alternative epistemologies, and emerging methodological innovations.

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