

# Research Topic Development Five-Step Cycle.

Dr. Anand Bajpai

Al Sharq Studies Institute, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.  
Akamai University, Hilo, HI.

E-mail: [bajpaianand24@gmail.com](mailto:bajpaianand24@gmail.com)  
Telephone: +971 56 7058214

## ABSTRACT

Typically, researchers try to generate the most significant findings in their research but sometimes it becomes difficult if they have not chosen the right research topic or they have lost their research direction during the research process. Even though there are many ways to arrive at an appropriate research topic, the novice researcher may often face this problem. Selection of a research topic is a very fundamental stage of research planning. Keeping in view the factors involved for the researchers while choosing the topic, the author has developed a research topic development five-step cycle to arrive at an apt research topic. The factors considered in this paper include the researcher's intent of doing the research, the scope of the research, limitations of the research, implications of the research, controls, etc.

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## INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Formal processes for the development of research topic development have not been well explored in the literature. There have been a few papers written on this area but they have primarily discussed tips to choose the research topic, steps to choose research topic, answering the set of questions to choose the topic, etc.

Most of universities research portals provide some information or steps on how to choose a research topic (usually characterized as "How to select a research topic", "How to find the right research topic", etc.). Examples include:

1. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, MA) where the primary library portal

has mention of "Choosing an interesting research topic is your first challenge. Here are some tips" <http://libguides.mit.edu/select-topic>.

2. University of Michigan (Flint, MI) provides several tips some tips to its undergraduate and graduate students on "Selecting a research topic" <http://www.umflint.edu/library/how-select-research-topic>

Despite these pragmatic guidelines, there has been no literature found by the author which reveals a comprehensive research topic development cycle to find out the most apt research topic. The author has explored tertiary institutions and universities in Dubai but there was no such information found on this topic. Hence, the author has developed and presents the research topic development cycle in order to facilitate the novice researchers.

The following points need to be considered:

- One needs required to do thorough analysis in his/her areas of expertise (subject domain)
- Review of the literature in relevant online research data bases, portals etc. (Exhibit 1).

## DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH TOPIC DEVELOPMENT 5-STEP CYCLE

All cycles are described in order to facilitate the researcher and to explore the most apt research topic.

### Cycle 1: Know the Intent of Doing the Research

In Cycle 1, know your overarching intent of doing the research. To recognize your clear intention

**Exhibit 1: Some On-line Research Databases that can be searched to explore the Existing Literature within the Researcher's Area of Interest.**

<p><b>a. Free Databases:</b></p> <p>Google Scholar (Multidisciplinary), Research Gate, Academia.edu, PubMed &amp; PubMed Central (National Library of Medicine database of biomedical literature citations from MEDLINE, life sciences journals, and online books), Medline Plus (Medicine), Zotero, ERIC-Education Resources Information Center (U.S. Department of Education database of education-related literature, including journal articles, conferences, government documents, reports, books, and bibliographies), SCIRUS (Search the Web for journal content, institutional repository and website information), Index Copernicus (Scientific journal database called multidisciplinary science) PubPsych (Psychology). SSRN (Social Science Research Network), Journalist's Resource (<a href="http://journalistsresource.org">http://journalistsresource.org</a>), etc.</p> <p><b>b. Paid Databases:</b></p> <p>EBSCO, MEDLINE (Database of biomedical journals), PsycINFO (For Psychology), SCOPUS (Scopus, a product of Elsevier Publishing Co., was commercially launched in November 2004 as "the world's largest abstract and indexing database," reputedly spanning the full spectrum of science-technology-medicine (STM) literature plus more limited coverage of the social sciences, Multidisciplinary), Web of Science (Science), Web of Knowledge (Multidisciplinary), Science Direct (Database of science, technology and medicine journal articles and book chapters), JSTOR (Multidisciplinary (Historical)), INGRAM, Springer (Multidisciplinary), etc.</p>
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towards the research, one needs to come out with a set of questions in relation to the research. The following are a set of questions derived in order to find out the intent of doing the research and finding out the most apt research topic:

- What are your major interests in your identified discipline?
- What personal experiences have you had that were particularly significant or meaningful for you that are relevant to your discipline?
- What theories and concepts are most interesting to you?
- Are there some ideas that you have studied that you are curious about and want to explore in greater detail?
- What bodies of literature have you encountered that intrigue you?

- With what kinds of data do you enjoy working on?
- Do you have ideas for specific data, texts, or artifacts you would like to study?
- What kinds of methods would you like to use when you would do the research?

Now you need to come out with the specialization in the particular discipline/area that you intend to do. This will enable you to boil down to the topic of a Ph.D. research topic.

**For example:** My specialization is Management (Marketing), and I have gone through the research papers and articles on internet sources about the Expo 2020 in Dubai. I want to develop my research to know and recognize the effects of Expo 2020 on UAE economy in order to measure the growth aspects in different sectors of businesses.

Some theories like BCG matrix, GE matrix, Gap analysis, Strategic fit, Balanced Score card, etc. are interesting to me as I have discovered during my MBA.

Literature and books written by Philip Kotler were the most influential and motivational for myself in order to achieve the expertise in the domain of Marketing.

**Cycle 2: Develop Research Questions in Order to Develop your Topic.**

Develop research questions to explore and to judge the scope as well as to get new insights about your intent of finding out the right research topic.

**For example:** Research questions would be as follows:

Q.1 What are the factors that are influencing the Expo 2020 in terms of Growth.

Q.2 What are the key factors of it and how much do they weigh?

Q.3 How many sectors are participating and what are the strategies they are coming with to participate in the Expo 2020?

Q.4 What are factors which attract the international market to get their businesses to Dubai in order to get the growth of the UAE economy?

Q.5 Which sectors would be the more influential and attractive based on the Expo's organized by Dubai?

Q.6 What are the strategies planned and should be planned in order to attract world over market.

Q.5 Would Expo 2020 benefit UAE or not?

- To measure each factor in order to find out the effectiveness and weight.
- To recognize the sectors of businesses and their strategies towards Expo 2020.
- To find out the factors attracting the international market.
- To analyze the past expo's of Dubai in order to the impact on the UAE economy and International market.
- To identify the more influential sectors of businesses in the Expo 2020.
- To recognize the strategies formulated and also come out with new strategy in relation to Expo 2020.
- To identify whether it will benefit or not.

**Cycle 3: Develop the Aim and Objective of the Research.**

After developing the questions, one needs to develop the aims and objectives of the research. Firstly, develop the overall aim of the research. On the basis of the aim, develop the objectives to achieve the aim. Objectives show the pathway to achieve the aim of the research.

Research Aim = Research objective 1 + Research objective 2+ .....& so on.

**Sub-Cycle 3.1: Know the Difference Between Research Aim and Objectives.**

Research Aim	Research Objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An intention or aspiration; what you hope to achieve.</li> <li>• Aims are statements of intent, written in broad terms.</li> <li>• Aims set out what you hope to achieve at the end of the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A goal or a step on the way to meeting the aim; how you will achieve it.</li> <li>• Objectives use specific statements which define measurable outcomes.</li> <li>• What steps will you take to achieve the desired outcome?</li> </ul>

In general words, the aim indicates what you want to achieve and the objectives describe how you are going to achieve the aim.

**For Example: (Aim)**To investigate the impact of Expo 2020 on the UAE economy in order to attract the international market.

**(Objectives)**

- To find out the factors influencing the UAE market in terms of Growth perspective.
- To find out the key factors effecting the Expo 2020.

**Sub-Cycle 3.2: Check Whether Objectives Formulated are Based on Smart Target.**

**Hints about how to check:**

- Specific – Be precise about what you are going to do.
- Measureable – You should know when you have reached your goal.
- Achievable – Don't attempt too much. A less ambitious but completed objective is better than an over-ambitious one that you cannot probably achieve.
- Realistic – Do you have the necessary resources to achieve the objective? For example: time, money, skills, etc.?
- Time Constrained – determine when each stage needs to be completed. Is there time in your schedule to allow for unexpected delays?

**Cycle 4: How Many Aims or Objectives Should There Be?**

There should be one aim and a sufficient number of objectives. Some scholars are happy with one clear strong aim, whilst others like to see a main

aim supported by at least two subsidiary aims. You will be required to produce sufficient objectives to be able to measure progress towards meeting the aims.

### **Cycle 5: Finding Out the Research Topic.**

Now finalize the topic based on the Cycle 1, 2, 3 and 4 and identify the constrained scope and limitations of the proposed study.

**For example:** Based on the examples given for Cycle 1, 2, 3 & 4, the final research topic would be as follows:

A study of investigating and measuring the impacts of Expo 2020 on the UAE economy in order to attract the international market.

### **CONCLUSION**

The above research topic development five-step cycle explains how to arrive at an apt research topic and presents a clear set of examples for defining and narrowing a concise and achievable research topic for novice researchers and scholars. If any query arises to the above process, please feel free to contact the author at [bajpaianand24@gmail.com](mailto:bajpaianand24@gmail.com).

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### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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