

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

Owing to the constraints in getting respondents, the exploratory approach would be more preferable in this study. Blumer (1969), explained clearly the purpose of an exploratory investigation. :-

*The purpose of exploratory investigation is to move toward a clearer understanding of how one's problem is to be posed, to learn what are the appropriate data, to develop ideas of what are significant lines of relation and to evolve one's conceptual tools in the light of what one is about the area of life. (Blumer, 1969, p. 40)*

Therefore, qualitative research is recommended to carry out in this study by using the in-depth interview approach to find out the inner experience from the respondents. The rationale for this approach is for the researcher to understand the personal experiences of the respondents in innovation management related to the research objectives of this study.

Jennifer Mason (Jennifer Mason, 2002, p.1 ) mentioned qualitative research is important, inspiring and exciting because the researcher would be engaged with things that matter, in ways that matter. Qualitative research is capable to produce “the general picture” of how things actually work. The author explained one can explore the experiences and opinions of research participants/respondents. In addition, Jennifer (2002, p.3) further identified qualitative research as a method of data generation from the collected data which is flexible and sensitive in the social context.

Moreover, Eileen and Mary (Eileen and Mary, 2001, p.257) highlighted that qualitative research has to be used properly in order to give us a richness and depth in information than any other methods.

In this chapter, the research will describe in detail the research design, data gathering methods, descriptions of the interviewees, themes of the interviews obtained and analysis techniques utilized for the qualitative data in this study.

### **3.1 Research Design**

One of the most commonly recognized forms of qualitative research method according to Jennifer is interviews.(Jennifer Mason, 2002, p.63). It help the researcher to approach the inner questions in different angle in order to obtain sufficient information from the respondents.(Jennifer Mason, 2002, p.66). However qualitative interview requires a lot of planning. A set of semi-structured interview questions has been prepared in order to carry out a purposeful interview. (Please refer to Appendix C & D)

The purpose of the interviews is to understand the issues or challenges faced by the woman entrepreneurs among the sole proprietors and copreneurs. From the interview, the researcher is required identify the difference of how woman entrepreneurs solve the problems/challenges which they faced in the enterprise when they were involved in either sole proprietorship or copreneurship in relation to innovation management.

### **3.2 Data Gathering Methods**

The 'open-ended questionnaire' was designed according to women entrepreneurs involvement in sole proprietorship and copreneurship respectively. The interview questions listing is only a guideline for the researcher to follow as it relates to the research objectives because the questions might change according to respondents' business nature and background.

However, the interview questions had been set according to the research questions of this study. The category of the questions were based on the tables as shown below : entrepreneurial intention, type of innovation, reasons for carrying out innovation, innovation management issues in business that they faced and how they solve the challenges. Finally, researcher also asked the preference of the woman entrepreneurs involvement in sole proprietorship and in copreneurship respectively.

Research questions in this study :-

- (i) What is the difference of issues faced by women sole proprietors and copreneurs ?
- (ii) How do women sole proprietors solve the issues faced by them as compared to copreneurs ?
- (iii) What are the differences in innovation management process between woman sole proprietors and copreneurs ?

Table 3.2

<u>Question Category</u>	<u>Sample Questions</u>	
	<b>Sole Proprietor</b>	<b>Copreneurs</b>
Entrepreneurial Intention	<i>Why do you want be a sole proprietor ? When do you first become self-employed ?</i>	<i>What is your main aim/objective when you wanted to start your business as a couple business ?</i>
Type of Innovation	<i>What are the new ideas/innovation did you carry out in your business ? (product, process-method, service, activities)</i>	
Reasons for carrying out innovation	<i>What is the major factor you considered when starting an innovation in your business ?</i>	
Innovation management issues/problems in business	<i>Do you foresee any problem if you undertake innovation in your business ?</i>	
	<i>Do you face any problems/issues when you are doing your business ?</i>	
How to solve issues/problems	<i>How do you solve issues/problems that you face in your business ?</i>	

In addition, various administrative procedures have been carried out before the interviews were conducted. A certification letter from Universiti Malaya was required for conducting the interviews. The prospective respondents were identified based on the two business categories : retail and service industries which mostly involved women entrepreneurs. The respondents were introduced through references and appointments were scheduled according to the respondents' convenience. Sometimes, the interviewees might not turn up due to their engagement in business. Then, the researcher would be

required to fix another appointment with them. In addition, souvenirs were prepared and distributed to interviewees as a token of appreciation.

The interview was scheduled from February 2009 until June 2009. Suitable spots or locations had been identified for the interviews to be carried out smoothly. The interviews were being conducted in the respondent's business premises or at selected restaurants. The face-to-face interview was conducted in oral question and answer format and the conversations were intended to be tape-recorded for transcription purposes. This was useful for recalling and retrieving the information of the responses. However, not all interviewees were willing to be tape-recorded because some of the information provided by the respondents were confidential in nature. Therefore, it was important that prior permissions were sought from the respondents for this purpose. There were only three out of eleven interviews that were allowed to be taped-recorded during the data gathering process.

### **3.3 Description of the interviewees (Respondents' Demographic Profile)**

The in-depth interviews were conducted among 11 respondents. During the interview and the interaction with the respondents, the researcher had to be sensitive to the interviewees' circumstances, experiences based on what the researcher had already known about the respondents as mentioned by Jennifer Mason. (Jennifer Mason, 2002, p.74).

Eleven women entrepreneurs had been interviewed face to face in this study. Six of them were woman sole proprietors whereas another five woman entrepreneurs were in

the category of copreneurship. The respondents in copreneurship category were teamed up with their spouses in the business.

Most of the respondents are in their late twenties and early thirties. However, there was only one respondent at retirement age of 60 years old. Her business duration is approximately 12 years (case G). Three respondents (case F, case J and K) were moving towards retirement age. The duration of business of the respondents was between 5 months to 20 years. Service and retail were the two major business categories of the interviewees. The business nature of the interviewees were quite diversified. For example, accessories, car spare parts, salon, dentistry, medical, fruit retailing, traveling and dancing.

The interviewees were targeted based on different ethnic groups which provided distinctive responses in the interview based on the 'open-ended' interview questionnaires. Most of the women entrepreneurs who participated in the interviews were married and have children. They have diverse educational background, from primary levels to degree levels. The respondents were selected from residents in Klang Valley for convenience sampling purpose.

Fourteen respondents were targeted, however, three respondents rejected the interviews because they were quite conservative and were not willing to reveal their business information even after the researcher explained and clarified the interview was just for research purposes only.

The researcher visited some business location of the respondents and observed the way they were serving customers. This was a great exposure the researcher had to

observe the women entrepreneurs in cases A, E, G and J. She saw different types of innovation to handle challenges faced in the business were utilized. For example, the woman entrepreneur in case A managed to settle her own problems because she operated from a different business branch from her husband.

### **3.4 Themes of the interview**

After the interviews were carried out, the data was then transcribed. The tape recorded interviews were retrieved to obtain information and personal experience from the interviewees regarding various perspective of women entrepreneurs (Bulmer, 1979; Strauss, 1987; Maxwell, 1996). According to Patton, (1990), the use of inductive analysis from the raw data collected through qualitative research, themes will emerge out of the data. Hence, open coding method or latent coding (Shapiro and Markoff, 1997) was implemented for theme inducement. Word-based repetitions technique was chosen among the useful techniques to determine themes from the transcribed data. D'Andrade (1995, p.294) noted that the recurrence of associative linkages may be identified as the simplest and most direct sign of representation society in naturalistic communication. The identification of themes and issues from the respondents was according to the grounded theory of the researchers, Strauss and Corbin (1997). Therefore, based on word-based techniques, several themes were identified from the transcribed data which resulted from the common answers from the respondents. The identified themes were then compiled and became the major findings of this study.

### **3.5 Analysis of Qualitative Data**

From the in-depth interview, common themes were compiled to identify the innovation management aspects of women entrepreneurs in Klang Valley.

Besides, journals, literatures, publications and reports were collected to provide secondary information for this study. The supplementary information was collected in order to furnish more details and to discover the truth of the innovation management adopted by sole proprietors and copreneurs.

From the response of the interviewees such as tones of language, body language and facial expression, the researcher may obtain 'depth' of information about the answers they have provided based on the semi-structured questionnaires. This analysis will provide comprehensive details to contribute to this study.