Theme 09: Methodology

Methodology Chapter: Samples

**Task 1:** Identify which of the samples below belongs to (a) Primary Social Science Research, (b) Secondary Social Science Research, (c) Secondary Medical Science Research and (d) Arts and Humanities Research.

**Task 2:** Read the Task Instructions and Marking Criteria (‘Assessment’ folder on the VLE). Do the samples contain all the necessary elements listed there?

# SAMPLE 1

**1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain in detail the research methods and the methodology implemented for this study. This chapter will outline the research strategy, the research design and the research approach. This will be followed by a discussion of the methods of data collection, the selection of the sample, the research process, and the type of data analysis employed by the author. It concludes with the ethical considerations and the research limitations of the project.

**2 Research design**

In order to satisfy the objectives of the dissertation, a qualitative research was conducted. The main characteristic of qualitative research is that it is mostly appropriate for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and quantifiable. Its basic advantage, which also constitutes its basic difference with quantitative research, is that it offers a complete description and analysis of a research subject, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of participant’s responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003: 126).

However, the effectiveness of qualitative research is heavily based on the skills and abilities of researchers, while the outcomes may not be perceived as reliable, because they mostly come from researcher’s personal judgments and interpretations. As it is more appropriate for small samples, the results of qualitative research cannot usually be perceived as reflecting the opinions of a wider population (Bell, 2005).

**3 Data collection method and instrument**

For the purposes of this research, in depth interviews were used. In depth interviews are personal and unstructured interviews, whose aim is to identify participant’s emotions, feelings, and opinions regarding a research subject. The main advantage of personal interviews is that they involve personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees, as well as eliminate non-response rates, but interviewers need to have developed the necessary skills to successfully carry an interview (Fisher, 2005, Wilson, 2003). What is more, unstructured interviews offer flexibility in terms of the flow of the interview, thereby leaving room for the generation of conclusions that were not initially meant to be derived regarding a research subject. However, there is the risk that the interview may deviate from the pre-specified research aims and objectives (Gill & Johnson, 2002). As far as data collection tools were concerned, the conduct of the research involved the use of semi-structured questionnaires, which were used as an interview guide for the researcher. Certain questions were prepared and were designed for the DMO managers to discuss in detail Athens’ current image as a tourist destination and how the city could be more effectively marketed. Also, additional supplementary questions were spontaneously addressed to participants as a follow up to responses encountered during the interviews.

Some sample questions that were included in the semi-structured questionnaire were the following:

• Question 1: What do you think about the popularity of Greece as a tourist destination?

• Question 2: What do you think about the popularity of Athens as a tourist destination?

(A detailed form of the interview guide is presented in Appendix A)

The researcher had initially considered using a focus group as a possible research method as this can be an appropriate discussion forum for small groups of participants, typically of six-twelve, who have similar levels of status and experience (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 505). However, partly because of time constraints this method was discarded, as it soon became evident that it would be difficult to arrange for all of the participants to attend at a convenient point. Also, another limitation of focus groups is that they encourage certain ‘group effects’ which may lead to certain members of the group dominating the discussion or uncritical acceptance of ‘culturally expected views’ (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 516).

**4 Sample strategy selection**

The method of purposive sampling was used to develop the sample of the research under discussion. According to this method, which is a non-probability sampling technique, sample participants are selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject (Freedman et al., 2007). In the current study, the respondents who were selected had a close relationship with the phenomenon under investigation, sufficient and relevant work experience in the field of tourism, active involvement in several tourism initiatives and partnerships, as well as proven research background and understanding of raw data concerning destinations. Within this context, the participants of this study were executives of six well-known DMOs operating both generally in Greece and specifically in Athens.

**5 Research process**

Ten DMOs were invited to participate in the research but only six were willing to take part. Meetings were held during April and June of 2014 with the executives of the six DMOs named above, so as to gain acceptance of their participation in the research. More specifically, the researcher contacted the respondents by email and asked them to participate in the research after explaining the nature and the scope of the study. All respondents that were approached were willing to participate in the research and the interviews were conducted between May and June of 2014. The discussions took place at the offices of the executives and lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes. During the course of the interviews, respondents were free to express their views even in topics which were not included in the discussed areas which were mentioned in paragraph 3.5. Finally, it should be noted that the interviews flowed smoothly and pleasantly, and were recorded and transcribed by the researcher

**6 Data analysis**

Content analysis was used to analyse the data which was gathered from personal interviews. According to Moore & McCabe (2005), this is the type of research whereby data gathered is categorized in themes and sub-themes, to be able to be comparable. A main advantage of content analysis is that it helps in data collected being reduced and simplified, while at the same time producing results that may then be measured using quantitative techniques. Moreover, content analysis provides researchers with the ability to structure the qualitative data as it is collected in a way that satisfies the accomplishment of research objectives. However, human error is highly involved in content analysis, since there is the risk for researchers to misinterpret the data gathered, thereby generating false and unreliable conclusions (Krippendorff & Bock, 2008).

**7 Ethical considerations**

The current study was subject to certain ethical issues. As it was mentioned earlier, all participants reported their written acceptance regarding their participation in the research, through a signed Consent and Briefing Letter. At the same time, sample members were asked to sign a Debriefing and Withdrawal Letter. The aim of both letters was to reassure participants that their participation in the research is voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from it at any point and for any reason (both letters can be found in Appendix B). In addition, the privacy and confidentiality policy of all of the organisations had to be taken into consideration as well, as Greek employers have a very strict policy for access to their employees for research purposes. Therefore, the researcher had to sign consent forms for confidentiality and privacy with the companies whose employees and managers agreed to participate in the study.

In addition to this, participants were fully informed regarding the objectives of the study, while they were reassured that their answers were treated as confidential and used only for academic purposes and only for the purposes of the particular research.

**8 Research Limitations**

The researcher encountered several problems and challenges while conducting the research for this dissertation. In terms of the methodology chosen, the size of the sample was relatively small: 6 participants. Thus, it is difficult to generalise the findings on a broader scale. A bigger sample would probably enhance the reliability of the research

Also, qualitative research does not allow the measurement of the examined problems

There were other possible limitations concerning the nature of the topic investigated and the actual sample that participated in the research. The analysis of the role of the DMOs in the promotion of Athens as a tourist destination may be influenced by factors which were not mentioned in this project. Also, specifically concerning the sample, in some cases participants who are employees may be reluctant to speak very critically of their organizations. Although some of the interview questions invited respondents to suggest how their employers could improve their performance, respondents may have avoided transparency even though the researcher guaranteed total anonymity

Another weakness of the methodology was related to the fact that the researcher used interpretivist approach, which was determined by the nature and the objectives of the research. In this sense the results and the achievements of this project can be deemed as biased, because the connections between the different variables have been determined not on the basis of empirical evidence, but on the basis of the analytical and judgmental skills of the researcher, in the context of a particular academic field.

**Adapted from:**

**Langos, S. (2014). *Athens as an international tourism destination: an empirical investigation to the city’s imagery and the role of local DMOs*. Unpublished MSc dissertation. Derby: University of Derby.**

# SAMPLE 2

Comparative education can be defined as the analysis of education systems and problems in two or more national environments in terms of social, political, economic, cultural, ideologies and other contexts (Brickman & Fraser, 1968). This paper will look at the higher education systems of China and Kenya separately, and then explore their strengths and critics from experts’ opinions in order to draw a comparison for future policy formation. The comparisons drawn from this study will not be used to judge which system is ideal or superior to the other, but rather to understand the factors underlying the similarities and differences so that each country can learn from one another. The reason for studying other societies’ educational system is to discover what can be learned that will contribute to improved policy and practices at home (Arnove et al., 2013).

This study used documentary study review method to collect and analyse data. Documentary review method of research involves the analysis of texts and documents that contain data in line with the research problems (Gaborone, 2006). Documentary research is concerned with analysis, synthesis and interpretation of data to find patterns and generalized results so as to address research questions. We conducted a literature search for qualitative studies published within the discipline of higher education from Huazhong University of Science and Technology’s library educational databases and computer search function provided by Baidu, Google and Google scholar. In selecting the articles, we limited the span to 2005–2015; however, articles published earlier than 2005 which were highly relevant to this study were also considered.

The present study employed critical case sampling that involves selecting a small number of important cases to yield the most information with greatest impact on the development of knowledge (Palinkas et al., [2015](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1201990)). The sample was limited to published, peer-reviewed journal articles and government documents because they have generally attained higher quality standards and they are a principle source of scholarly evidence (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015). The samples selected were those that are highly cited based on Google scholar. A total of 57 documents searched were obtained and read with only 24 articles selected for final analysis owing to their relevance and depth. We employed qualitative test analysis to identify the history, strengths and challenges faced by higher education in both countries (Kuckartz, 2014).

**From:**

**Malechwanzi, J.M., Shen, H. & Mbeke, C. (2016). Policies of access and quality of higher education in China and Kenya: A comparative study, *Cogent Education*, 3:1, DOI:**[**10.1080/2331186X.2016.1201990**](https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1201990)

# SAMPLE 3

This thesis offers a predominantly stylistic, world-based approach to the language of comic narratives, complemented by psychological theories which are used to account for the emotional experience of humorous narrative worlds. Below, I outline my choice of comic narratives, the stylistic and linguistic tools used in the analysis of their language, as well as the psychological concepts which allow me to discuss their emotional qualities.

### 1 Texts

The humorous narratives which inform this study are the novels and short stories which have been found to be described as ‘funny’, ‘humorous’ or ‘comic’ by readers and critics in a number of – mostly UK-based – rankings and listings. The majority of the books analysed here (a, b, c, e, g, i, l from the list below) can be found on the list of *Top 10 Funniest Books According to the British* provided by the bookseller ABE Books, based on a survey of 555 of its British customers. The other narratives were listeners’ suggestions mentioned on the website of the BBC Radio 4’s *Open Book* (‘Funny Books Special’) (d, k), shortlisted for the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction (h), and voted for by the users of the online reading community Goodreads in a ranking of Best Humorous Books (j, f). While the various lists understandably mention a number of the same, much-loved comic texts (a, e, and g, for example, appear in the both the ABE and Goodreads ranking), the newer narratives (h and j) do not reoccur. Drawing on a few different listings, therefore, allowed me to compile a list which, although predominantly composed of classic comic novels, includes a number of lesser-known humorous texts:

1. Adams, D. (2002 [1979]) *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. London: Picador.
2. Amis, K. (2000 [1954]) *Lucky Jim*. London: Penguin.
3. Fielding, H. (1998 [1996]) *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. London: Picador.
4. Haddon, M. (2007) *A Spot of Bother*. London: Vintage.
5. Heller, J. (1994 [1961]) *Catch-22*. London: Vintage.
6. Hornby, N. (1995) *High Fidelity*. London: Penguin.
7. Jerome, J.K. (1993 [1889]) *Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog!).* Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited.
8. Lewycka, M. (2006 [2005]) *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*. London: Penguin.
9. Milligan, S. (1971) *Adolf Hitler: My Part in His Downfall.* London: Michael Joseph Ltd.
10. Sedaris, D. (2002 [2000]) *Me Talk Pretty One Day*. London: Abacus. (‘The learning curve,’ ‘Jesus shaves’ and ‘Me talk pretty one day’)
11. Townsend, S. (2002 [1982]) *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13¾.* London: Puffin.
12. Wodehouse, P.G. (2008 [1934]) *Right Ho, Jeeves.* London: Arrow Books.

Out of these twelve texts, nine are comic novels which can be classified as fiction, while the remaining three (*Three Men in a Boat*, *Adolf Hitler: My Part in His Downfall* and *Me Talk Pretty One Day*) are autobiographical works. *Me Talk Pretty One Day* is the only collection of short stories analysed here, and, next to *Catch-22*, one of only two texts by American writers. In fact, the great majority of the narratives used here have been written by British – or more specifically, English – authors and are set in England, where they follow the lives of English characters. This cultural bias, as I suggest further (see ‘Further directions’ in 6.3), could be addressed by a cross-cultural examination of humorous texts written in languages other than English. In this thesis, however, I found it useful to conduct text analysis on the linguistic layer of narratives which have not been altered through translation. Aside from creating an Anglo-centric bias, the decision to rely on those existing rankings and listings of the best comic texts resulted in all but three books analysed (c, h, k) being written by male authors (out of ABE’s top ten funniest books, for example, only *Bridget Jones’s Diary* was written by a woman). Despite this lack of symmetry regarding authorship, the twelve chosen texts have been found to provide ample material for the analysis of language in written comic narratives.

### 2 Analysis

This thesis, although it draws from a range of disciplines, is rooted primarily in a stylistic analysis of written humorous narratives. While I address the issue of the experience – as shaped by linguistic cues – of the *whole* narrative in the course of reading, I support my argument with analyses of short narrative extracts chosen from full-length texts. Those passages were selected as they exemplify the types of cue that, as I have found in my analysis of a number of texts, commonly reoccur in comic novels and short stories.

The narrative examples analysed here are considered from a predominantly (cognitive) stylistic perspective. The stylistic analysis includes both standard linguistic features such as register, sentence length, voice and tense, discourse analysis concepts like modality or patterns of text organisation, and narrative analysis terms like point of view, speech/thought representation and focalisation. The cognitive stylistic approach, which includes all of the above, additionally introduces concepts such as text worlds, foregrounding and schema theory. To complement the cognitive stylistic analysis, references are also made to linguistic theories of humour (with terms such as incongruity or irony), as well as pragmatics and conversation analysis (e.g. impoliteness, turn-taking).

While the analysis of examples is mostly language-based, it opens the discussion to more psychologically-motivated considerations of the potential experiential qualities of the stylistic organisation of the text. In this thesis, theories and concepts from various branches of psychology (most notably, psychology of humour and psychological approaches to literature and the media) are applied to the stylistic analysis of humorous extracts to explore the potential emotional effects of the language of comic narratives. Psychological research on, amongst others, negative affect, embarrassment and suspense is also discussed in relation to the non-humorous experiential qualities of humorous worlds, thereby allowing me to pose hypotheses which inform the core of this study.

**Adapted from:**

**Marszalek, A. (2016). *Beyond amusement: language and emotion in narrative comedy*. PhD thesis. Glasgow: University of Glasgow.**

# SAMPLE 4

**4. METHODS**

**4.1 Data Source**

The data source used for the study was taken from the Scottish Morbidity Record (SMR). The SMR is a very important episode-based record of data managed by the Information and Statistics Division (ISD), sponsored by the Scottish Executive and Department of Health. It is divided into different sections based on data source and numbered sequentially SMR01, SMR02 and so on. SMR01 comprises data from acute admissions and day-cases to Scottish hospitals. It does not include psychiatric (SMR04) or obstetric (SMR02) data. Data is recorded when a patient is discharged, changes consultant or moves to another hospital or department. The record contains both clinical and non-clinical data such as demographic details, procedure and diagnostic codes. These codes are taken from the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Diseases revisions 9 and 10 (ICD-9 & ICD-10). ICD-10 represented a significant expansion on the codes available in ICD-9 and was used in SMR data from 1996 onwards. From January 1980, SMR01 data has been linked with General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) death registrations. This is achieved by use of a computer probability matching algorithm which calculates and compares a score derived from patient identifiers (name, sex, age, date of birth, date of death, postcode and so on). The accuracy of SMR data is regularly reviewed by ISD. Main diagnosis coding was found to be accurate in 88% of a 1.75% sample of 3 months’ data checked in 2007. Although in a database of this size, inaccuracies will inevitably occur, SMR is regarded as a very useful source of data for large retrospective studies. With particular regard to stroke, Davenport et al found it to be satisfactory for this type of study.

**4.2 Extraction of study data**

All patients with a main diagnosis of stroke leading to admission to a Scottish hospital between 1986 and 2005 were identified. Using the linkage system, deaths linked to any of these admissions were identified up until 31st December 2005 (after which cases were right-censored). For the purposes of this study, only a patient’s hospital episode with first ever stroke was counted. All other stroke hospitalisations were excluded. Comorbid conditions are determined from up to five ICD-9 or 10 codes associated with each SMR entry. These diagnoses are extracted from case notes at the time of SMR data collection. These records, including clinical coding, dates of admission and demographic data were extracted into a separate database by the University of Glasgow Public Health unit. In the separate database of stroke hospitalisations made available to me, individual records were anonymised using unique identifiers for each case and postcode data converted to Carstairs deprivation categories.

**4.3 Statistical analysis**

Further cleaning of the data and analysis was performed using Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois) version 15. Comorbid conditions and ICD codes for cause of death were transformed into categorical variables. Only the primary cause of death was used in the analysis. For example, death by pneumonia secondary to stroke would be listed as pneumonia alone. Each case was allocated only one cause of death.

The date of death or censoring was used to calculate time to event from the admission date. The variable “respiratory comorbidity” was computed from ICD-9 and 10 codes for COPD, bronchiectasis and asthma. This group was then extracted from the main data for both separate analysis of summary statistics, demographics, comorbidity and cause of death and for comparison with the remainder of the dataset (those without these conditions). This group may be referred to as those with “respiratory comorbidity” rather than “COPD, asthma and bronchiectasis” in the remainder of this text. Kaplan-Meier plots were generated to determine if there was a significant difference in survival between patients with or without comorbid chronic respiratory conditions. The log rank test was used to confirm the statistical significance of any difference. Crude annual incidence rates were calculated using the GROS116 mid-year population estimates. Standardisation to European and World population figures was undertaken using tables supplied by the University of Glasgow Public Health unit. Tables and charts were created using Microsoft Office Excel 2007 (Microsoft Corporation), with the exception of the Kaplan-Meier curves generated by SPSS.

**4.4 Ethical Considerations**

Any identifiable information from records in the SMR was removed during creation of the database for the study. After the records have been linked with the GROS death certificate data, each one becomes a sequential case number in the new database. This information cannot be directly used to identify individual patients. Therefore, there are no ethical concerns arising from this study and the use of the database for these purposes.

**Reference:**

**Embley, M. (2010). *The effect of chronic lower respiratory tract disease on survival of patients hospitalised with stroke in Scotland.* MSC (R) thesis. Glasgow: University of Glasgow.**[**http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1836/1/2010embleymsc.pdf**](http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1836/1/2010embleymsc.pdf)