

# Research Methodology Considerations

In order to determine the most suitable research technique to meet objectives, a number of options can be considered.

First method may be to look at the type of question being asked and the nature of the data to be collected.

Strategy	Form of research question	Requires control over behavioural events?	Focuses on contemporary events?
Experiment	how, why	yes	yes
Survey	who, what, where, how many, how much	no	yes
Archival Analysis	who, what, where, how many, how much	no	yes/no
History	how, why	no	no
Case Study	how, why	no	yes

(after Yin 1994)

The popular methods for Dissertations are Case Study and Survey.

For surveys these tend to be Interview or Questionnaire - in making the choice consider the following

- Available resources - How much money, time and personnel you have at your disposal. Interviews consume more resource than questionnaires.
- Establishing contact - The practicality of locating and obtaining an audience with busy people counts against interviewing as a technique.
- Ease of completion - Questionnaires can be completed at leisure, when convenient.
- Bias - Interviewer variability of interpretation can be an issue. This would be minimised in this case as there would only be a single interviewer, but there is still a risk.
- Method familiarity - The members of the sponsoring organisation are familiar with the use of questionnaires. Their is widespread as preparation for personal development programmes and cultural evaluation. Informal interviews are also commonplace, though a process of intensive data gathering would be less familiar.
- Response rate - Questionnaires are criticised for low response rates. This is less of a problem within the sponsoring organisation as the respondents would, in many cases, know the author. For the external benchmarking exercise this is definitely a disadvantage, although the possibility of obtaining interviews with external organisations suffers the same problem.
- Question limitations - Statement assessment lends itself to questionnaires, the gathering of new data regarding original insights into the subject area is more suited to interviews.
- Impersonalisation - Questionnaires are not a personal media for contact, some people resent this (unlikely to be a problem in the sponsoring organisation where e-mail is the primary form of communication!).
- Questionnaire length - Written questionnaires can be completed faster than person to person surveys, although the quality of feedback is diminished.

List extracted from Berdie, Anderson and Neibuhr (1986) and others.

When selecting Questionnaires it will be best to do some research on questionnaire design