Apply

# Exercise 2.1

Listed below are three examples of research topics and design:

1. Consumer motivations for content creation in online social networking exploring users’ unconscious motivations in semi-structured interviews including techniques like word association and sentence completion. 24 Participants will be chosen based on contribution frequency [high, medium and low] and gender [Lucy Miller, Marketing, Macquarie University].

2. Are organizations’ decisions about adopting social media for external communication more influenced by institutional pressures rather than driven by economic factors? Content analysis of four online social media followed by telephone interviews with key personnel [Kim MacKenzie, Accounting, Queensland University of Technology].

3. The role of trust and distrust in relationships between two business organizations is based on the assumption that trust is influenced by the personalities of the employees involved. Interviews with 65 pairs of individuals in contact with each other while working for different firms [Angelos Kostis, Umeå School of Business and Economics].

Now answer the following questions:

a. Which of these topics and designs are best suited to qualitative research?

b. Which are better suited to quantitative research?

c. Suggest ways to redefine the topic and/or research design in a manner suited to qualitative research.

# Exercise 2.2

Here are examples of research topics:

 The business strategies of tuna fishermen in Vietnam [Lan Ho, Business, Australian National University]

 Adolescents’ perspectives on care practices in child welfare institutions [Marianne Buen Sommerfeldt, Oslo and Akershus University College of applied sciences. Faculty of social sciences]

 The healthcare needs and experiences of women leaving prison [Penny Abbott, Medicine, Western Sydney University].

What would you gain and lose by using a mixed methods research design for each of these topics?

# Exercise 2.3

In relation to your own possible research topics:

 Explain why you think a qualitative approach is appropriate.

 Would quantitative methods be more appropriate? If not, why not?

 Would it make sense to combine qualitative and quantitative methods [mixed methods]? Explain your answer.

## Suggested Answers for Exercise 2.1

a. None of these topics and designs are ideal for qualitative research. ‘Unconscious’ motivations and the use of word association are usually the concerns of the ‘psy’ professions rather than qualitative researchers [Example 1]. Example 2 seeks a correlation between factors in order to answer a ‘why’ question and uses content analysis – all drawn from quantitative research. Similarly, Example 3 wants to correlate researcher-defined variables.

b. As presently formulated, all of these topics and designs are better suited to quantitative research.

c. To make the topic and design more suited to qualitative research, Topics 1 and 2 might be redefined in terms of a focus on describing how people talk about products on social media, analysing such media in their own right. Topic 3 should abandon pre-definitions of ‘trust’ and distrust’ in favour of studying the communications between employees of different firms in order to describe the categories they actually use.

N.B. None of the above is meant as a criticism of these three studies. They all work perfectly well as currently conceived. All that is needed is a better fit between the topic and the methodology selected.