



UNIVERSITY OF OSLO  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

# Introduction & Key Methods

**MEVIT 4800 – Perspectives and Methods in Media Research**

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# Lectures & seminars

Online information updates:

<http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4800/h10/>

Online teaching plan:

<http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4800/h10/undervisningsplan.xml>

Reading list (revised):

<http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4800/h10/pensumliste.xml>

## According to research

.....carrots will kill you...cannabis is healthy....yogurt keeps you young...

## According to media research

.....TV makes people passive...online games increases violence in society...news is biased..

## Reserach = Powerful

– How do you know which study to trust?

## According To Research From The University Of Navarra, Smokers Have A 41% Higher Risk Of Suffering Depression

Main Category: [Depression](#)

Also Included In: [Smoking / Quit Smoking](#)

Article Date: 25 Apr 2008 - 3:00 PDT

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The risk of suffering [depression](#) increases 41% in smokers, in comparison with non-smokers. This was the conclusion of a study undertaken with 8,556 participants by scientists of the University of Navarra, in collaboration with the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and the Harvard School of Public Health (USA), and which demonstrates, in a pioneering way, the direct relationship between tobacco use and this disease.

The article, whose first author is Prof. Almudena Sánchez-Villegas, is based on research undertaken over the course of 6 years on university graduates with an average age of 42. "Over the course of the tracking and data collection stage, 190 smokers who initially did not present depression were diagnosed with this disease by a doctor. In addition, 65 who were not diagnosed indicated that they were taking antidepressants during this period," indicated Miguel Ángel Martínez-González, director of the research project and Chair Professor of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health.

Among the mechanisms that shed light on this relationship, he points to "genetic and/or environmental disposition, which will increase the probability that the tobacco habit is retained and that the user will suffer depression as an independent issue."

The article indicates that those who had given up tobacco more than a decade previously have a lesser probability of developing depression than those who have never smoked.

In addition, the researchers noted that an increase in tobacco use was correlated with a lessening of physical activity in the smoker's free time.

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# What is research?

## Everyday research

asking friends and opinion leaders  
online reviews and relevant reports  
collecting available information

## Scholarly research

Systematic  
Objective  
Careful  
Correctness  
Thruthfulness



## Everyday research

Intuitive

Common sense

Casual

Spur the moment

Selective (often)

Magical thinking

Flawed thinking at times

Focus is on personal decisions

## Scholarly research

Theory based

Structured

Systematic

Planned Objective

Scientific thinking

Logical to the extent possible

Focus is knowledge about reality

(Berger 2000:6)



# Choice in the research process

Chose and operationalize the **research question**.

Chose **methods** for collecting data.

Chose **material** (data) that can enlighten the research question.

Chose **technoques** for analyzing the data.

Chose **how to present** the data.

(Østby et al 2007:19)



# We seldom get certainty from our research

Statistics – can be interpreted differently

Texts – can be interpreted differently

But that does not imply that anything goes!

We have to justify our conclusions (reasons)

We have to provide evidence for our findings



# The heart of all research: Comparisons and Changes

**Diachronic:** Changes over time (historical research)

**Synchronic:** Changes over distance (comparative studies)

**Example of comparing as a method (investigating TV violence):**

Independent variable:

Exposed to violence (the experimental group). Compare a control group not exposed to violence. Both are tested and compared.





# Binary oppositions

Qualitative

Active

Digital

Beginning

Quantitative

Passive

Analog

End

(Berger 2000:10)



# The main opposition in media and communication studies

## Qualitative study

Asks: "of what kind?"

Evaluates

Aesthetics

Theoretical

Interprets

Weak spot: Interpretation

## Quantitative study

Asks: "how great?"

Counts measures

Processes data collected

Statistical

Describes, explains, and predicts

Weak spot: Methodology

(Berger 2000:14)



# Example – quantitative study

Chose and operationalize the **research question**.

Does UIO–students trust TV 2 news more than NRK?

Chose **methods** for collecting data.

Survey

Chose **material** (data) that can enlighten the research question.

800 students randomly selected from the student register

Chose **techniques** for analyzing the data.

Statistical analysis

Chose **how to present** the data.

Tables in a powerpoint presentation



# Example – Qualitative study

Chose and operationalize the **research question**.

What influences UIO–students' trust in TV 2 and NRK news?

Chose **methods** for collecting data.

Qualitative interviews

Chose **material** (data) that can enlighten the research question.

15 students from different study programs are selected

Chose **techniques** for analyzing the data.

Hermeneutic analysis of interviews

Chose **how to present** the data.

Lecture with quotations that illustrate findings



# The research question

## Descriptive

What characterizes the youth's use of social networking sites?

## Exploratory

Why do girls more than boys use social networking sites?

## Understanding

How can we understand the youth's use of social networking in relation to other social arenas?



# Kinds of sources

## Actors

Participant observation

Structured observation

## Respondents

Semi-structured interviews

Structured questionnaires

## Texts

Qualitative content analysis

Quantitative content analysis

(Grønne 2004:125)



# Basic concepts

## Units of analysis

Objects of investigation (persons, actions, meanings etc.)

## Variables

Characteristics of the units

## Values (categories)

Variations in the characteristics



# Discussion in pairs (5–7 min)

1. Identify units, variables, and values:

“Youth use the internet for democratic participation to a larger degree than older people”.

2. Design a constructed **research question** with units, variables, and values.

3. Discuss what **method(s)** you would use to answer the research question.





# The quality of a study

## Reliability

- accountability in the investigation (collecting, processing, and analysis of data)

## Validity

- data's relevance for the research question. Are we investigating what we claim to investigate?

## Conceptual validity (definisjonsmessig validitet)

- compliance between theoretical and operational definition (is 'democratic participation' defined in a sensible way?).



# Universe and sample

## Universe (populasjon)

- All units that the research question concerns.

## Sample (utvalg)

- The units investigated.

## Statistical generalization

- Concluding from sample to universe.



# Kinds of samples

## Population studies

- all units in universe

## Pragmatic samples

- best judgement

## Probability samples

- all units have a known chance larger than zero to be included in the sample.

## Strategic samples

- sampling from theoretical considerations.

-To tredjedeler av befolkningen over 20 år er overvektige i Nord-Trøndelag. Den andelen er større enn den man finner i USA, opplyser professor Kristian Midthjell, som tror nordtrønderne er representative for landet under ett.

Midthjell er tilknyttet HUNT forskningscenter i Verdal, en del av Institutt for samfunnsmedisin ved Det medisinske fakultet ved NTNU. HUNT forskningscenter gjennomfører befolkningsundersøkelser i Nord-Trøndelag og er i ferd med å bearbeide resultater fra HUNT3.

<http://news.iabc.com/index.php?s=43&item=217>



# Statistical generalisation

## Generalization requires probability sampling

- Simple random sampling (enkelt tilfeldig utvalg)
- Systematic sampling
- Stratified sampling
- Cluster sampling (klyngeutvalg)

In a stratified sample the sampling frame is divided into non-overlapping groups or strata, e.g. geographical areas, age-groups, genders.

A sample is taken from each stratum, and when this sample is a simple random sample it is referred to as stratified random sampling.



# Key methods

## Qualitative

Interviews (qualitative)

Participant observation

Historical analysis

Textual analysis

## Quantitative

Content analysis (quantitative)

Questionnaires (phone interviews, personal interviews, respondents fill in etc.)



# Methods and research designs in media research

## Institutional (policy) level:

- document analysis, archive research, qualitative interviews etc.

## Textual level:

- genre studies, rhetorical analysis, semiotic analysis etc.

## Audience (user) level:

- surveys, focus groups, experiments



# Writing Research Reportes

**Proper references** (to seperate your contribution from previous research e.g. McQuail 2002:16) and “quotations”.

**Formal style** (to generate an air of seriousness in the report, e.g. third person, gender neutrality).

**Transitions** (to guide readers, e.g. first– second–third, one–the–one–hand, this implies, nevertheless etc.)



# Next Lecture

**Subject: Qualitative Interviews**

Lecturer: Tine Figenschou

Time: 7.9 (10.15–12, room 205)

Readings:

Kvale and Birkmann (2009): Chapters 6–11