


From: 
To: [Manston Airport](#)
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I wish to add the following to comments about the Azimuth Report (AR) the use of the qualitative method, plus possible bias.

Volume 3 para 2.1.6 of the AR addresses a charge of optimism bias. However, it seems to concentrate on quality review once the report is being written and at the end, rather than designing out bias from the beginning. Furthermore, to rely on peer review as a quality control is a problem. Peer review is no check on rigour, quality or honesty of the data. Professor P Boghossian of Portland State University, (see www.nytimes.com/2018/1004/arts/academic-journals-hoax.html) is an expert in submitting nonsense research papers, with fictitious empirical evidence, getting them peer reviewed and published or at least commended! Also, review by the RiverOak Consultancy Team, invites the problem of Groupthink (see www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/groupthink). Groupthink causes well intentioned people to make irrational or sub-optimal choices.

A report this complex and lengthy obviously needs project managing and that involves risk management. A risk register, based on the likelihood and impact of risks, would have identified bias as high on both counts. Control measures should have been put in place from the report's inception to eliminate, control or mitigate that. This is particularly the case as the Report's author was previously a senior manager with PlaneStation with responsibility for Manston Airport.

Moreover, the qualitative method chosen is itself subjective. That is witnessed by the leading work on the sorting of the data: the Handbook of Thematic Content Analysis (CP Smith Cambridge University Press 1991), which lists 14 different ways of sorting the data!

Response bias (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/response_bias) is an ever present problem. Face to face interviews if not conducted by a neutral third party with the results anonymised and the order of questions can be problematic. (See www.simplypsychology.org/questionnaires.html) AR Volume 2 figure 7 questions 12-18 highlight that. The use of Manston would possibly be better at the beginning of the section, rather than possibly appearing as a solution at the end. Also, for some reason, the simple question: " Did you use Manston Airport when it was open? Why? Has anything changed now?" was not used.

Finally, Professor N Taleb is a world renowned expert in statistics, forecasting and probability risk assessment. He created the concept of the Black Swan Event. He maintains that unless there is a downside risk for people answering questions, you cannot rely upon their answers. (See Skin in the Game Hidden Asymmetries in Daily Life, Allen Lane 2018). What downside risk did the respondents in the AR primary collection data questionnaire

have?

Of course, If bias did occur in compiling the AR, the effect would be cumulative and compounding.

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