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Abstract

In September 2005 ESOMAR released the international Guideline on Conducting Market Research via Internet and on Assuring the Quality of Internet Access Panels. The Guideline should act as an objective quality mark for rating the online panels. Andera Gadeib from the Dialego AG on the impact of the Guideline on the professional practice.

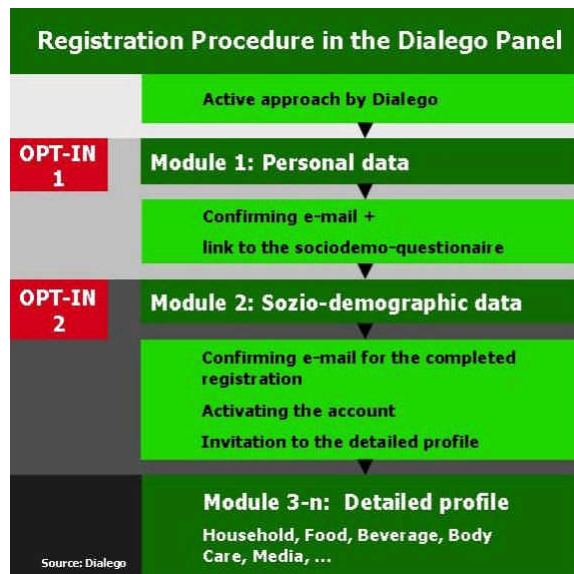
On the Course

Professional Practice and Standards in Online Panel Management

As online research has increasingly established itself as a research method, its quality assurance standards have been more and more refined. Taking a diary of a panel manager as basis, Andera Gadeib in brief shows the relevance of the ESOMAR Guidelines for online access panels.

Beside ADM's Quality Assurance Standards for Online Surveys, in September 2005 ESOMAR released its international Guideline on Conducting Online Market Research and Assuring the Quality of Internet Access Panels. The Guideline should act as an objective quality mark for rating the online panels, enabling each panel to fulfil its objectives. Panel recruitment, project management and panel maintenance are the most affected by the Guideline.

Beside the representativeness of the survey, the ESOMAR Guidelines also mention aspects of the authenticity of the test subjects and the quality of the panel the test subjects are selected from. For example, in the section "Panel Recruitment" the Guideline stipulates a "double opt-in". It also prescribes - in addition to the demographic and other background information about panel members, which so far has always been considered a matter of course – the disclosure of recruitment sources to the client as far as appropriate.



According to the “Project Management” section, panel owners should also ensure that individual panel members participate only once in the survey, and should record the frequency of invitations and the refusals (the so-called “screenout”). Furthermore, the client is to be provided with the record of the invitation letter, the start and the closing of the field work, as well as of other aspects of the survey.

“Panel-Monitoring” describes the answering profile of each panel member in single parameters. “Panel Maintenance” defines the standards for active panel members: the maximum frequency of questioning, the regularity of updating background information and the maximum period of panel membership. The section “Privacy and Data Protection“ stipulates that the national privacy policy should be adhered to. It also specifies the criteria for the appropriate handling of data of each single panel member.

Search Person	Edit Person	Account	Survey Behaviour	Panel Behaviour	PTTS-History
Panel Profile		Response Profile		Enlisting Friends	
Date of entry:	25.09.2001 = 1521 day(s) · 4,2 year(s)	Response-Rate (RR):	90,5%	0 friends enlisted yet, 0 enlisting friends invitations were sent.	
Source:	Stammdatenerneuerung 2004	Number of Invitations:	42		
Account balance:	427 points	Number of Reactions:	38 90,5%		
Internet speed:	not available	Number of Completes:	12 31,6%		
		Number of Screenouts:	9 23,7%		
		Number of Fieldblocked:	8 21,1%		
		Invitation ⌀	every 36, day		

Screenshot Panel-Monitoring: Test person related data – anonymised (Source: Dialago)

The ESOMAR guidelines are extremely well-suited for strategic and operational processes within the panel management because they describe operationalized objectives. This enables the panel owners to systematically prove the quality of the panel on the basis of rating parameters. Clients benefit from the new ESOMAR guideline since it produces a healthy transparency which is likely to lead to an increase of trust in online research.

In Germany, online researchers have founded a working group called "Online-Panels" from the NEON-plenum to analyze the ESOMAR guidelines. Among its other activities, the group has conducted a comparison to the panel-overlap, a test to find out how many multiple registered members are found in the panels. Besides, the idea of using the ESOMAR guidelines as a kind of checklist for the sample quality when co-operating, or especially when purchasing samples, has already been discussed. This is also to be recommended as a quality assurance tool to each client buying a full-service online market research.



Andera Gadeib is founder and CEO of Dialego, Aachen, Germany. Dialego AG is a full-service providing global player in the market research industry with 30 employees in the field of online market research. Dialego's services are characterized by innovative survey tools on the basis of carefully validated, qualitative and quantitative methods particularly suitable for branded companies.
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www.esomar.org
www.adm-ev.de

From the Diary of a Panel Manager

A day in November 2005. At 08:35 a.m. I come to my office and switch on the computer. A quick glance at the statistics tells me we have had 89 new registrations in the international panel since last midnight. I'll analyze the split by countries and the origin of the single participants later. Yet I feel, instinctively, that our e-mail recruiting campaign in the UK yesterday wasn't as successful as we were hoping. Actually, we were expecting the number of new registrations to be somewhere about 200 this morning. I keep in mind that our partner will be continuing his phone recruiting campaign today, and that makes me feel good again.

My task is to enlarge the panels. That's nothing special really, just continuous work. But the project management has signalled to me that a new study is to go online next week and that there might be a shortage of samples. We have already conducted numerous studies in that category this year and want to make sure the participants are not asked about the same topic more than once within three months. So, we need new test subjects. As is mostly the case, we need household heads aged between 18 and 49. And we need them very soon...

The “Flashlight” statistics also show that we sent 3423 invitation e-mails yesterday and carried out 1221 interviews. Some 35 studies are marked as ‘active’, meaning they are already online or the field work will start soon. The average response differs among the studies and I take a quick look at single active projects to get an overview of the amount and content of the mailings and also of the incidences within the studies. The overall statistics for all panels indicate a response between the good 76 percent in Germany and the poor 15 percent in the UK – being the mean in the past 12 months. Yet, quite soon, I notice that the response rates based on the new data sets (after the update and the re-registration of the UK-panel) have significantly increased within the current projects. Thus, everything is all right.

An average day. The servers are all set on green, meaning that we can continue sending e-mails and surveys can be conducted without any problems. When things get ticklish here, the lights indicating the load jump to yellow or red. At around 9 a.m. my team arrives. With four team members the main languages used in our everyday business are covered: German, French and English, all native-speakers. The logins allow me to see which other employees are ‘virtually’ present. Native speakers from all other nations can log in and answer the e-mails – all from home. That’s quite handy. The team faces the usual business today: answering panel members’ questions, checking new panel members’ data and summarizing feedback-studies for the members. And different recruitment campaigns also need to be realized and maintained...

More information

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