

Using online survey methods in long-term research projects

Erwin Karreman and Orland Hoeber
University of Regina
hoeber @ cs.uregina.ca

Traditional survey research methods use mail, telephone, and face-to-face communication to recruit, manage and interact with participants. Recently, online survey research methods using the web and email have become popular alternatives to these traditional methods.

Compared to traditional methods, online methods offer a number of important advantages. There can be significant savings in time for the researcher when the online surveys are used since the data is automatically saved in electronic format. Further, there is a financial benefit in the reduced printing and mailing costs. The surveys can be administered instantly regardless of the location of the participants, and can be set to expire at a specific date and time. In long-term research projects, matching multiple responses from participants, and managing the participants over the lifetime of the project, are well suited to the online methods.

A long-term research project concerned with attitudes towards body checking in minor hockey is currently underway. In this project, both traditional survey and online research methods are being used simultaneously. In comparing the responses between these methods, a number of important conclusions about the use of online surveys can be made. The ability to ensure that the surveys are completed correctly is an important benefit of the online surveys, as are the costs and time savings. Email reminders proved to be less effective than the traditional methods for ensuring continued participation. As a result of this comparison, combining the positive features of online and traditional survey research methods is recommended.