



Online market research

How has the internet revolution impacted on traditional research techniques?

Lindridge:

That's interesting Peter. How then has the traditional face-to-face marketing research perspective, or a traditional questionnaire being posted out, responded then to how the Internet is, I guess for want of a word, revolutionising the market research industry?

Jackson:

That was the second question that I asked the online company this morning, and the Managing Director's answer was that the traditional quantitative companies and the traditional qualitative companies have gone into online themselves and tried to do online as well as they could, but they couldn't ignore it. So, for instance, the traditional omnibus companies who've got the big omnibus surveys that are going on as we speak, 24/7, will have gone into online and tried to do it better, tried to be structured in the way they do it, try to seek honesty from their respondents but, nevertheless, they have also gone into this field, and the biggest problem continues to be we are not face-to-face with the respondent. So they will also try to sell, and I'm sure, this is interesting because in Research Magazine, which is the Market Research Society's quasi-serious newsletter, there are articles almost every month on how we seek to give quality to online panels, how we seek to give quality to online omnibuses, how we seek to give quality to online ad hoc surveys, and it is the vetting, the screening process, all of those things.

Lindridge:

If you can't physically see somebody, can't see their facial expressions, their body movements, is that really important?

Jackson:

As a traditional qualitative researcher, who's run more focus groups that I care to mention, on more subjects that I could care to mention, you see people face-to-face. In qualitative research, in a traditional focus group, you've always been able to see the respondent, you've always been able to see them stroke their chin and think that they're possibly lying and thinking about things a bit too hard. You've also been able to see the way they dress. So if you recruited a group of 18-24 year old females, you can see they're 18-24 year old females, or have a pretty good idea of that. Online, just think about it for a moment, how do we know that 18-24 year old female is a) 18-24, and b) female. Once we've got people into a focus

group studio, wherever it's held, we're talking to them face-to-face, we're trying to build a trust with them, but I think, with the best will in the world, an online interview can't have that same degree of trust, you can't lean forward, you can't lean back, you can't call people by their first names, you can't be sure who's there and whether they're there.