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Methodological Aspects of Diaspora Research Through Web-Surveys

Online survey research owes its popularity primarily to cost-effectiveness and unbridled territorial coverage, including the possibility of reaching otherwise inaccessible (or difficult to reach) populations. Additionally, there are also certain important technical advantages, which can improve not only the quality of the survey procedure, but also the subsequent handling of data and findings. Due to the increase in coverage, the adopted Internet-use habits, the increase in computer literacy and the accumulated methodological experiences, the representative ambitions of such research are becoming justified: In terms of validity and metric qualities, such research has in many cases reached (and in some cases even surpassed) classical techniques. Since they are not hindered by a large territorial dispersion, as other methods may be, online surveys are particularly suitable (in many ways the only suitable method) for diaspora research. However, two main obstacles need to be faced. The first is insufficient knowledge of the population (its size and structure) as a whole and of the majority of the narrowly-targeted subpopulations. The second is the lacking sampling framework. Both of these obstacles make it difficult or even impossible to choose samples that would justify a wider generalization of the findings.

The methodological features, advantages and disadvantages of online survey research are examined in the first part of this paper from the perspective of total survey error, which, in addition to the psychometric or measurement error, also includes self-selection, coverage and sample errors. In the second part of this paper, the main possibilities and scope of diaspora research are presented, especially taking into account the indicated limitations that hinder their representative ambitions.

Key words: survey, internet, diaspora, survey error, representativeness