# A Study on the Pros and Cons of Online Research

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**ABSTRACT** *In this age of information and communication technology (ICT), the use of the online research has become the custom for number of researcher around the world, for them the online research has become an indispensable component of their research work. And seldom, the search engines that help them to navigate through the overabundance of pages, images, video clips, and audio recordings found on the World Wide Web have also become essential. More or more, consumption of various databases has become a hybrid of both online and offline research. Such blending of research approaches is intertwined with the development of various resources through print, broadcast and online technologies The explosive growth of mobile computing and wireless networks has helped researcher to  stay at the forefront of this changing world. For research to be reliable, it must be based on reliable information. Scholars need quick and easy access to this information. The online research has been useful to the researcher both in the developed and the developing nations of the world. The study is to determine the impact of Internet usage among the researcher on research work. The quality of the research project is to a large extent dependent on the quality and quantity of resources consult and cited. The use of the online research plays a major role in helping researchers' to access large number of materials from different parts of the globe. In view of the above, this study evaluates the use of the Online Research and its pros and cons for research.*

## Introduction:

Based on over a decade of research regarding the benefits of technology integration in today's research work, there is overwhelming evidence that supports the use of technology to raise researcher's achievement. As an increasing amount of communicative activity takes place through this new medium, there has likewise been a significant increase in primary research on virtual communities, online relationships, and a variety of other aspects of computer-mediated communication (Flaherty, Pearce, & Rubin, 1998;) The Internet has become an invaluable tool for research, teaching, training learning, and development. Although the Internet is quite different now from what it was in 1996, it's advantages–communicating with anyone around the world, consuming all kinds of content and getting information quickly–haven't fundamentally changed. The benefits are so great that there is no sphere of life without an Internet application. The online research has changed the research work, create and share information, and organize the flow of information, ideas, and things around the globe. Yet the magnitude of this transformation is still underappreciated and numerous researchers in diverse disciplines may be ignorant of the advantages and disadvantages associated with conducting survey research by using internet and its services. Advantages include access to individuals in distant locations, the ability to reach difficult to contact participants, and the convenience of having automated data collection, which reduces researcher time and effort. Disadvantages of online survey research include uncertainty over the validity of the data and sampling issues, and concerns surrounding the design, implementation, and evaluation of an online survey. But still internet accounted for major percentage of GDP growth in mature economies over last 5 years. Today billion's of people are connected to the internet and almost trillion's of them exchange hands each year through e-commerce. This study considers and evaluates the advantages and disadvantages related to online research identified in previous research. In addition, it reviews the use of internet and its services, and their advantages and limitations. The purpose of the study is to provide an overview of issues and resources in order to assist researchers in their research work, and to guide them in the selection and use of online survey techniques.

## The purpose of the Study:
- To determine the extent of accessibility and utilization of the online research by the researcher.
- To identify the advantages and disadvantages related to the online research.
- To ascertain the impact of the online research on the research work.

## Research Methodology:

For the purpose of this paper secondary data was used. Information and Communication technology, Research Methodology textbooks were the main sources used. A diminutive number of related journal articles were reviewed.

## New Online Qualitative Research Tools:

In recent years, the qualitative research field has seen an explosion of new online tools that make it possible to collect data in ways we couldn't before. The popularity of online qualitative research (OQR) has grown substantially in recent years. Not so much for cost-saving purposes, but when done for the right reasons, for its benefits. OQR might just be the smart approach. Choosing the appropriate methodology as per your research objectives is a key question for researcher. In such situation OQR is a powerful tool to have in your toolbox for the right situations – particularly when it comes to research work. Either as a qualitative researcher or as a client, you face the difficult task of choosing the best methods and the most appropriate tools to meet your research objectives. Some of the newer qualitative research techniques are:

- Bulletin boards
- Immersion IDI's
- Mobile qualitative
- Quantitative-Qualitative hybrids
- Real time chats
- Research blogs

As well as:
- Research communities
- Social network monitoring
- Video journals
- Webcam focus groups
- Web-Intercepts/chats3

These innovative qualitative research techniques have over and over again prepared qualitative research better, faster and cheaper. Underneath are some of the most frequently used online qualitative techniques, their advantages, disadvantages, and applications.

| Techniques | Advantages | Disadvantages | Applications |
|---|---|---|---|
| Webcam interviewing | • Real-time • Get sights & sounds • Flexible whiteboard • Set appointment time | • Some of the body language nuances are lost since the webcam often focus on the faces | • IDI/Focus Group Replacement • Website Usability • Concept Testing • CPG Product/ -Packaging Testing |
| Online Journaling | • Deep feedback • Longitudinal insights • Unstructured • No moderation required | • There is no moderation and no control of the data collection environment | • Longitudinal studies • Face-to-Face "Homework" • Sensitive topics |
| Bulletin Boards Focus Groups | • Deep feedback • Longitudinal insights • Can use Multi-media • Most flexible platform | • No top-of mind feedback as participants have time to think and react | • Longitudinal studies • Iterative Development • Sensitive topics • Contacting difficult groups |
| Online Research Communities | • Deep, engaged conversations • "Listen in" • Fast panel access | • Can be very expensive • Requires constant management and maintenance | • Tactical Research • Listening • Preliminary Research Testing |
| Social Network Monitoring | • Free • Authentic • Anyone can participate | • There are not tools yet for managing all the data social media generates | • Listening to brand and product attitudes • Discovering trends |

Source :-www.surveygizmo.com/survey-blog/online-qualitative-research-tools/

**THE PROS AND CONS OF ONLINE RESEARCH:**
The increase of online research is inescapable when the Internet penetration in many countries keeps on growing. An additional aspect is the rise of user-generated media, such as blogs, social networking sites, micro-sites, etc. The Internet no longer belongs to just the technologically savvy. It is made up of ordinary people using the Internet everyday. All these factors allow Internet Research to progressively mature and intensify its share of market research spending. To choose the right method, it is important to evaluate the specific research objectives for each study. Well-constructed online surveys can be effective market research tools, but they do have some disadvantages. Looking closely into its advantages and possible disadvantages can make this technique of researching clear and acceptable to the majority of individuals involved in commerce, education, governance, and other aspects of life.

**Pros of online research**
Many tools and techniques are available online, you only have to master their uses and off you go to find, evaluate, and use these data according to your need. In addition, aside from simply making the internet a place for your storing your research materials, you can use it to access a large range of respondents; save on time and finances; and interact with respondents and authors. Moreover, you can easily disseminate the result and conclusion of your study to the right audience and other researchers.

**Easy Access:** The Internet is available 24 hours a day and lots of information is available to access too many newspapers, magazines, journals, and encyclopedias and takes the advantage of the ability of the Internet to provide access to groups and individuals who would be difficult, if not impossible, to reach through other channels (Garton, Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 1999; Wellman, 1997). In many cases, communities and groups exist only in cyberspace. For example, it would be difficult to find a large, concentrated group of people conducting face-to-face discussions of topics such as cyber-stalking, online stock trading, and the pros and cons of virtual dating. While people certainly discuss such

issues among friends, family members, and co-workers, few meet face-to-face in large groups to discuss them. One advantage of virtual communities as sites for research is that they offer a mechanism through which a researcher can gain access to people who share specific interests, attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding an issue, problem, or activity. For example, researchers can find a concentrated number of older individuals who use computers on the Internet-based community Senior Net (Furlong, 1989; Wright, 2000a, 2000c).

**Speed:** Information from around the world can be accessed within second and may save time for researchers. As already noted, online surveys allow a researcher to reach thousands of people with common characteristics in a short amount of time, despite possibly being separated by great geographic distances (Bachmann & Elfrink, 1996; Garton et al., 2003; Taylor, 2000; Yun & Trumbo, 2000).

**Global Communication**: You can communicate with respondents throughout the world speedily, effortlessly, and good for sensitive subjects, since respondents complete the surveys themselves and tend to respond more honestly.

**Web sites:** It can be persistently updated to provide breaking news and timely information.

**Multimedia:** Offers a complete multimedia experience, with text, video, interactive features, audio, hyperlinks, and graphics all in one place.

**Interactivity:** There are many interactive applications on the internet like, Hyperlinks which is understood as an underlined text that connect you to different web site. Chat room which type the messages and communicate it within seconds. E-mail electronic letter to anyone in the world etc.

**Convenience:** You can access many website by using internet and allow respondents to answer the survey at their convenience, so answers tend to be more considered.

**Online storage:** Even if you will be storing your research online, you can always put security and limitation on the access to it. One advantage of storing online is that your data collection is centralized and simplified. In addition, you can access it anywhere you go and through other computers when you are out of town.

**Cost:** Online survey researchers can also save money by moving to an electronic medium from a paper format (Bachmann & Elfrink, 1996; Couper, 2000; Llieva et al., 2002; Yun & Trumbo, 2000). Paper surveys tend to be costly, even when using a relatively small sample and the costs of a traditional large-scale survey using mailed questionnaires can be enormous. The use of online surveys circumvents this problem by eliminating the need for paper and other costs, such as those incurred through postage, printing, and data entry (Llieva et al., 2002; Watt, 1999; Witmer et al., 1999). Correspondingly, conducting online interviews, either by email, or in a synchronous "chat" format, offers cost savings advantages. Costs for recording equipment, travel, and the telephone can be reduced. In addition, transcription costs can be kept away since online responses are automatically documented.

**Cons of online research**
There are some disadvantages that should be considered by researchers while using online survey methodology. There can be a problem of loss of control of by the researcher and may be inable to meet all demands and questions at all times. There is also the issue about integrity of the data as well as the increased possibility of multiple submissions, data security and incomplete responses. In addition, there is a slight difference in the response rates and attrition. Studies have shown that there is a lower response rate for emails rather than the usual "snail mail" or telephone surveys which may be because of the increase in the use of email for com-

munication. Moreover, conducting surveys and experiments online involves a several concerns similar to the usual research for instance, the response rate and selection of respondents. Other concerns are issues of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.

- Has no system that catalogs and organizes all resources.
- Difficult to manage for some specific types of studies where the sense of sniff, taste or touch is required
- Anyone with an Internet connection can publish a Web site.
- What you see today may not be what you see tomorrow. There is nothing to prevent the author from changing tomorrow what you quoted today and hence reliability of information is not guaranteed.
- Archived materials might only date back several years.
- Media available in different formats may require software not available on your computer.
- Most journals and magazines are not available on the Internet except through databases which require a paid subscription.
- Internet access is often not free.
- When conducting online research, investigators can encounter problems as regards of sampling (Andrews et al., 2003; Howard, Rainie, & Jones, 2001). For example, relatively little may be known about the characteristics of people in online communities, aside from some basic demographic variables, and even this information may be questionable (Dillman, 2000; Stanton, 1998). A number of recent web survey services provide access to certain populations by offering access to email lists generated from other online surveys conducted through the web survey service. Some offer access to specialized populations based on data from previous surveys. However, if the data were self-reported, there is no guarantee that participant from previous surveys provided accurate demographic or characteristics information.

- Respondent's response to invitations to participate in a survey on community bulletin boards, discussion groups, and chat rooms sometimes may consider this type of posting to be "spam".
- Researchers can sometimes become the targets of abusive individuals who resent the invasion of privacy when they encounter an online survey. Hate email or worse types of abuse can occur if some individuals on the Internet find online surveys offensive.

**CONCLUSION:**
The internet has opened up a vast world of information for todays yet researcher's digital literacy skills have yet to catch up. The online research had many different effects on research. While there have been many positive effects, the negative contributions tend to even out the score. The online research is certainly changing the way in which researchers learn, but the debate over this will have to wait a few years until the true effects on research are unveiled. Surfing the web for information is simple, and yields incredible amounts of websites dedicated to any given topic. Fewer researchers, but still a majority of them, agree with the assertion that today's technologies make it harder for them to find credible sources of information. Online research has the qualities of cost saving, generate results very fast, avoid the interruption and disruption that phone surveys can create, allow participants to complete surveys whenever and wherever it is most appropriate for them, allow brief information such as text, illustrations, pictures, video, or podcasts to be presented during the survey when necessary. Furthermore, using these products and services does not necessarily avoid the disadvantages of online surveys, including issues related to sampling frames, response rates, participant deception, and access to populations. In short, researchers should view current web survey products and services as another research tool that-like the online survey itself-has its own unique advantages and disadvantages.

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