

Social Media Ads for Web Survey Participant Recruitment

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Speaker

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- ▶ Research fellow in the BMBF Project "Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Diversity in Focus: Participation and Diversity in Human Beings" (SOEP-GeSMin)
- ▶ PhD student at BGHS, Bielefeld University. Dissertation subject: Using Social Media for Recruitment of Rare Populations
- ▶ Research interests: survey research (esp. online surveys), social media research, digital behavioral data, experiments, social inequality and discrimination

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Recruiting research participants through Social Media
3. Setting up a Facebook Campaign
4. Practical Session
5. Campaign Examples
6. Q&A

Introduction

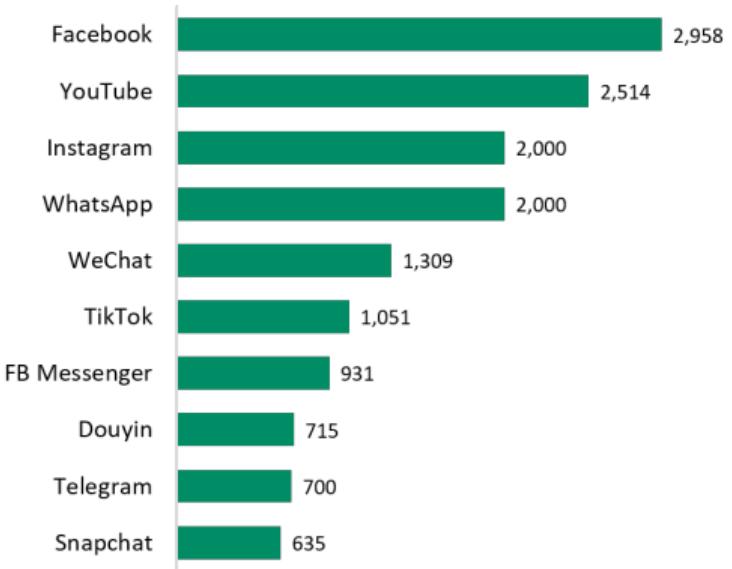
Social Media is a worldwide phenomenon

- ▶ 4.76 billion, i.e., 59.4% of the world population uses social media
- ▶ 2h 31m average daily time spent using social media
- ▶ Social media are used, i.a., to keep in touch with friends and family, to read the news or simply to fill spare time.



Worldwide Social Media usage

The world's most used social platforms (Jan 2023)



Source: Kepios et al. Jan 2023.

New forms and fields for social science research

Social Media as a data source

- ▶ Extracting readily available data, such as digital behavioral data

Social Media as a research subject

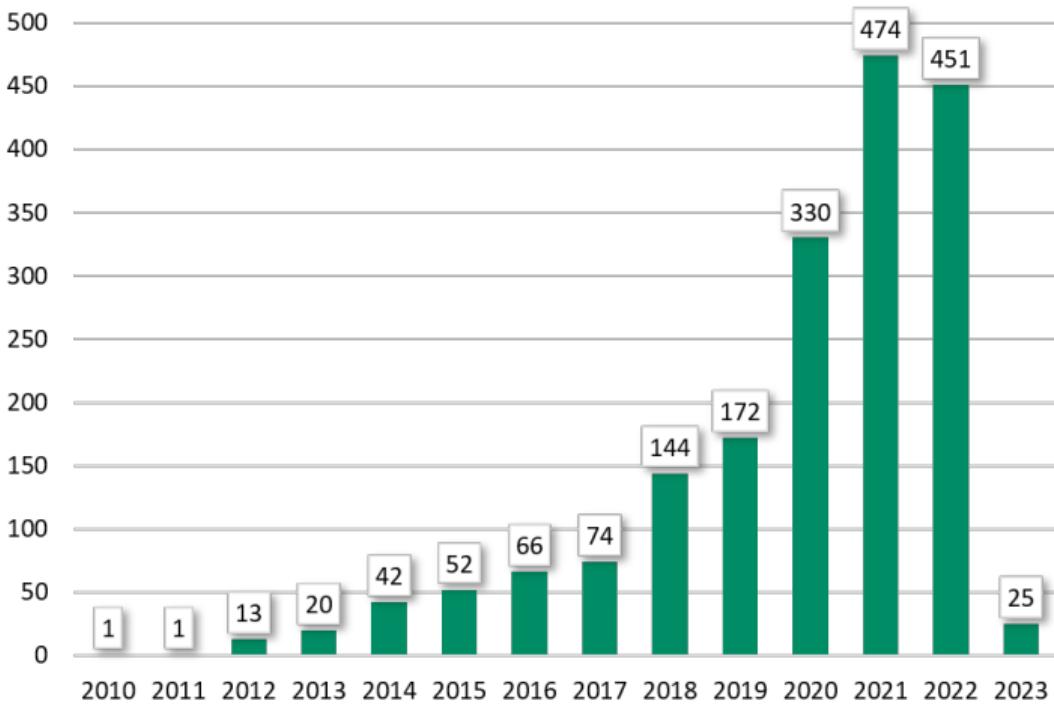
- ▶ Direct manipulation through experiments, such as exposure studies

Social Media as a recruitment tool

- ▶ Reaching study participants for, e.g., conducting a survey

Recruiting research participants through Social Media

Publications Over Time



**Number of publications
that refer to Social
Media recruitment in
the abstract**

Source: Web of Science search
as of March 2023; using
Boolean operator, narrowed to
years 2002-2023 and journal
articles in English only.

(Potential) Advantages of Social Media Recruitment

- ▶ **Costs:** Comparatively inexpensive compared to other strategies (online and offline)
(Ali et al. 2020; Webler et al. 2020)
- ▶ **Reach:** Direct and easy access to hundreds of millions of individuals worldwide
(Bennetts et al. 2019; Admon et al. 2016)
- ▶ **Fast Turnaround:** Virtually no setup time; Able to start recruiting in less than 48 hours
(Zhang et al. 2020; Reuter et al. 2019)
- ▶ **Targeting options:** Vast amount of auxiliary information available, allowing for targeted recruiting
(Harfield et al. 2021; Pötzschke & Braun 2017)
- ▶ **Ease of use/Conversion:** Almost exclusive access via mobile devices eases the transition from ad to online survey - just a thumb-click away
- ▶ **Follow-up:** May provide the option to easily (re-)contact participants for follow-up studies
(Ersanilli & van der Gaag 2022)

Limitations of Social Media Recruitment

► (Potential) Coverage bias

- ▶ Under-coverage of different population members due to unequal access to the Internet, different usage style, and frequency (*Lehdonvirta et al. 2021; Rosenzweig & Zhou 2021*)
- ▶ Over-coverage, e.g., by recruiting a large number of ineligible accounts, such as bots, fake accounts, and troll accounts (*Burke-Garcia et al. 2020; Pozzar et al. 2020*)

► Sampling error / (Self-)Selection Bias

- ▶ Bias due to algorithm used to spread ads on platform (*Pötzschke & Braun 2017*)
- ▶ Competition with various other digital content for the attention of potential survey participants (*Lehdonvirta et al. 2021*)

→ often low data quality and high potential for biased estimates

Literature Review - October 2021 (an excerpt)

Publication	Target population	Country	Social Media Platform	Platform Performance			Costs (in U.S. \$)		
				Impressions	Users reached	Link Clicks	Overall	CPC	CPP
Admon et al. 2016	18+ years, women, African American or Hispanic, interested in pregnancy	U.S.	Facebook	NR	364,035	9,972	11,103.25	NR	14.63
Ahmed et al. 2013	16-25 years, women, English speaking	Australia	Facebook	36,154,610	469,678	8,339	NR	0.67	20.14
Akard et al. 2015	18+, parental caregiver of children with cancer	U.S.	Facebook	3,897,981	NR	1,050	1,129.88	1.08	<17.00
Ali et al. 2020	18+ years, U.S. population	U.S.	Facebook	NR	236,017	9,609	906.00	0.09	0.18
Bold et al. 2016	18+ years, English-speaking, Facebook users	U.S.	Facebook	102,697	NR	1,781	480.89	0.27	4.37
Cavallo et al. 2020	14-28 years, reported smoking 2+cigarillos/week	U.S.	Facebook & Instagram	1,027,738	NR	8,507	NR	0.81-1.32	33.82
Crosier et al. 2016	18+, confirmed experience of auditory hallucinations	U.S.	Facebook	186,430	199,928	NR	2,150.00	0.17-0.36	8.14
Folk et al. 2020	28+, caregiver of youth involved with the justice system	U.S.	Facebook	NR	500,208	NR	1,802.72	0.53	10.73
Garey et al. 2020	14-16, English-speaking, interacted with e-cigarette content	U.S.	Facebook & Instagram	1,853,110	445,272	7,288	2,607.21	0.33-0.50	NR
Harfield et al. 2021	16-29, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-indigenous people	Australia	Facebook & Instagram	173,452	98,445	3,190	631.90	0.20	NR
Perrotta et al. 2021	18+ years	Various European countries + U.S.	Facebook	19,300	NR	NR	NR	0.17	1.25
Pötzschke & Braun 2017	18+ years, Polish migrants	Various European countries	Facebook & Instagram	173,084	90,436	5,080	557.00	0.13-0.25	0.52
Shaver et al. 2019	35-65+ years	Canada	Facebook	132,021	34,012	2,316	1,365.00	NR	1.30

For more information, see Zindel 2022.

Literature Review - October 2021

Key findings:

- ▶ In most cases, compared to other recruitment strategies, recruitment via ads is more effective in recruiting a large sample.
- ▶ Social media recruitment is very cost-effective, even when reaching very specific target groups.
- ▶ Successful recruitment for very specific target groups, e.g.:
 - ▶ Young LGBT adults (*Guillory et al. 2018*),
 - ▶ Polish expats in several countries (*Pötzschke & Braun 2017*) or
 - ▶ Victims of sextortion (*Wolak et al. 2018*)

BUT: Systematic comparisons with traditional (online-based) sampling methods and a uniform framework for publishing data are still missing so far!

For more information, see Zindel 2022.

Setting Up a Facebook Campaign

Steps in Creating an Ad Campaign

1. Preparation

- ▶ Accounts (and optional verification)
- ▶ Project's Facebook & Instagram page
- ▶ Host online survey externally

2. Campaign Creation

- ▶ Overall campaign settings
- ▶ Define target groups and create ad-sets
- ▶ Select images/videos and create ad texts
- ▶ Create Ads

3. Monitoring

- ▶ Monitor costs, ad(-set) performance, and subgroup sizes
- ▶ Moderate, hide, or delete comments

1. Preparation

Preparation - Account Setup and Requirements

- ▶ Set up an account on Facebook
- ▶ Identity confirmation (optional)
 - ▶ Necessary for ads about social issues, elections or politics, see <https://en-gb.facebook.com/business/help/167836590566506?id=288762101909005>
 - ▶ A "sponsored"- disclaimer is added to each ad
 - ▶ Social issues for ads in the European Union: civil and social rights, crime, economy, environmental politics, health, immigration, political values and governance, security and foreign policy
 - ▶ For cross-national surveys: You need to verify an account for each country via a natural person who has a permanent residence in the country

Preparation - Facebook Page



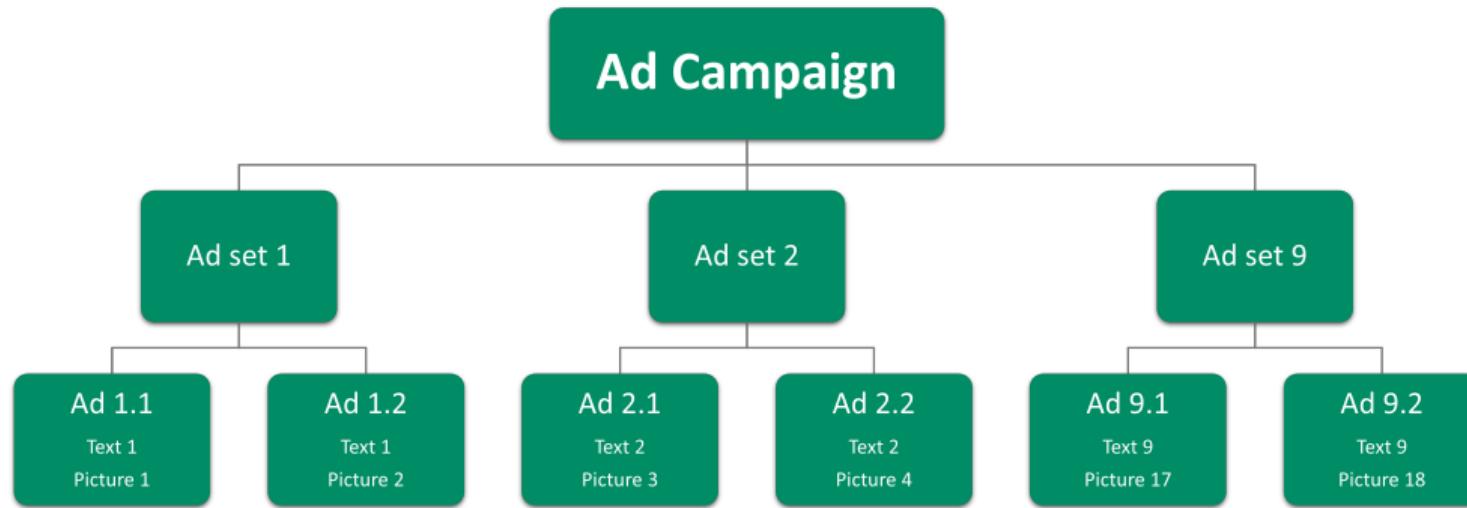
- ▶ Create a Facebook page that represents the research project or organization/institute
- ▶ All ads need to be linked to a Facebook page - this is a technical requirement
- ▶ You should provide information about your study and research group in order to gain trust in your ads

Preparation - External Online Survey

- ▶ The online survey must be hosted externally, i.e., via a survey platform independent of Facebook
- ▶ Facebook does not have access to the survey data at any time - it only serves as a provider for advertisements
- ▶ A simple click on an ad will forward a user to your externally hosted online survey

2. Campaign Creation

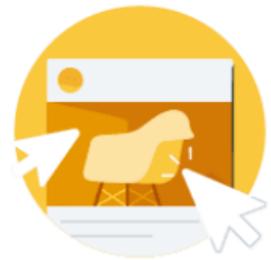
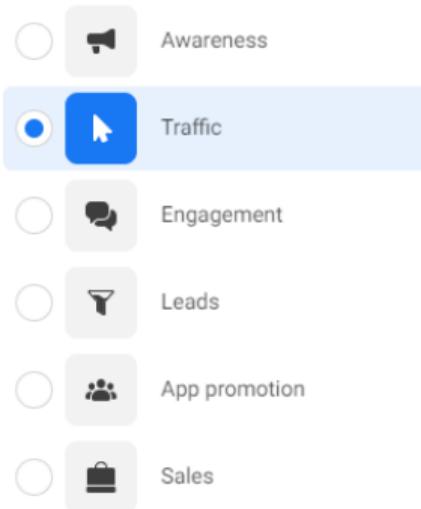
Campaign Creation - Hierarchical Campaign Structure



Campaign Creation - Overall Campaign Settings

- ▶ Choose an overall campaign objective: awareness, traffic, engagement, leads, app promotion, or sales.
 - ▶ **Recommendation:**
Traffic → send people to a destination, i.e., the online survey website
- ▶ Declare whether the ads are related to social issues, elections, or politics
- ▶ Set an upper limit for campaign spending

Choose a campaign objective



Traffic

Send people to a destination, like your website, app or Facebook event. [Learn more](#)

Good for:

[Link clicks](#)

[Landing page views](#)

[Messenger and WhatsApp](#)

[Calls](#)

Campaign Creation - Ad Set Settings

- ▶ Setting the budget for the ad set, i.e. for all ads within an ad set
 - ▶ **Note:** A new ad account initially has a spending limit for all campaigns
- ▶ Setting the ad set schedule, i.e. the start and end dates of the ads
 - ▶ **Note:** An ad set should run for at least 24 hours to ensure the best possible delivery of ads
- ▶ Setting the target group for the ads based on targeting parameters available in the Facebook Ad Manager, such as:
 - ▶ location, language, age group, gender, specific other demographic information (e.g., education, life events, relationships, etc.), interests or behavior on the platform

Having multiple ad-sets for target sub-populations will give you control about your campaign goals and fieldwork success!

Campaign Creation - Ad Set Settings

- ▶ Defining the placement of ads - here you can choose from the family of services: Facebook, Instagram, Audience Network as well as Facebook Messenger
- ▶ Different placements are available on each of the platforms or applications
 - ▶ **Note:** For ads marked as politically relevant, there is only a small selection of placement options
- ▶ Selecting ad optimization, i.e., the event for which ad delivery should be improved - either optimization for link clicks, landing page views, impressions or daily unique reaches
 - ▶ **Recommendation:** Link click
- ▶ Determining when to pay for an ad - either pay for impressions or pay for link clicks
 - ▶ **Recommendation:** Link click

Campaign Creation - Ad Design



displayurl.com
Headline
Facebook Feed link descri...

Learn more

Like Comment Share

- ▶ Images, videos and texts allow to tailor the ads to specific target groups and attract attention among the mass of other ads
- ▶ Selection of images and texts should always be based on whether they appeal to the target audience
 - Ads as a tailored survey invitation letter following the Leverage Saliency Theory (*Groves et al. 2000*)
- ▶ Please make sure to not violate the guidelines on ad content:
https://m.facebook.com/policies/ads/prohibited_content/personal_attributes
- ▶ Each ad will be checked and approved based on Facebook's automated and manual procedures before it can be shown to users. This can take up to 48 hours.

Campaign Creation - Ad Design

Facebook ad library

Launched February 2023

Active

Started running on Feb 24, 2023

Platforms:

ID: 162751112829417

117 ads use this creative and text

[See ad details](#)

Centre for Research on Peace and Development - CRPD
Sponsored

How do you feel about inequalities in Nigeria?

Sign up now to take part in our survey. It consists of three rounds and selected participants will get 500 Naira worth of airtime after each round.

We are looking for adults (18+) residing in Nigeria to share their opinions. This project is approved by the K...

Active

Started running on Feb 28, 2023

Platforms:

ID: 1260782938150222

[See ad details](#)

Social Change
Sponsored

People of Lincoln - we want to hear from you! We want to know what's important to you, your priorities and hopes for the future.

Share your thoughts and be in with a chance of winning up to £200 in shopping vouchers!

Active

Started running on Feb 27, 2023

Platforms:

ID: 1701031456960519

2 ads use this creative and text

[See ad details](#)

GLAD Study
Sponsored

Want to make a difference? Simply taking part in this King's College London study can help us to understand the causes and improve prevention and treatments for anxiety and depression in the future.

3. Monitoring

Monitoring - Costs, Performance, and Subgroup Sizes

- ▶ Evaluate the cost per click and costs per completed interview
- ▶ Monitor the performance of ad sets and ads (remove or strengthen certain ad sets/ads)
- ▶ Review the actual survey data and net sample composition:
 - ▶ Do ads with high performance (thus, higher costs) also recruit the desired target groups?
 - ▶ Are target sub-populations represented in sufficient size in the survey data?

Based on this: Make adjustments to the distribution of daily campaign budgets across ad sets.

Monitoring - Moderation of Interactions

- ▶ Answer questions posted underneath your ads.
- ▶ Moderate comments and discussions OR even hide or delete certain undesirable comments (e.g., hate speech).
- ▶ **Recommendation:** As little intervention as possible but taking action in the case of serious insults or inhuman statements.



Practical Session

Campaign Examples

Project 1 - LGBielefeld

- ▶ Online-Survey, in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer people, and rainbow families in Germany were recruited
- ▶ Recruitment via ads on Facebook and Instagram
- ▶ Targeting parameters: gender, location and age

Recruiting Phase:
July 3rd - August 2nd, 2019



Befragung von Lesben, Schwulen, Bisexuellen,
Trans- & Queer-Personen in Deutschland

Joint project with Simon Kühne, Lisa de Vries and Martin Kroh (Bielefeld University).

Examples of the Ads on Facebook & Instagram



Campaign Results - Clicks, Respondents, & Costs

- ▶ Costs for ads: 2,710 €
- ▶ 784,820 impressions and 335,461 individuals reached
- ▶ 43,063 link-clicks (80% through Instagram)
- ▶ 12,263 started the questionnaire
- ▶ 7,129 complete interviews
 - ▶ Only 1.7% reporting a heterosexual orientation
 - ▶ 28.4% living with children in household
- ▶ Average net cost for a complete interview: **38 Cents**
- ▶ 98 percent used a smartphone

For more information, see Kühne & Zindel 2020.

Data Quality - Sample Composition (unweighted)

Variable	LGBielefeld		SOEP-Q	
	n	%	n	%
Sexual Orientation				
<i>Heterosexual</i>	121	1.7	85	17.8
<i>Homosexual</i>	4,294	60.3	198	41.5
<i>Bisexual</i>	1,867	26.2	171	35.9
<i>Other Orientation</i>	811	11.4	17	3.6
Gender				
<i>Male</i>	2,748	39.4	245	51.6
<i>Female</i>	3,778	54.1	203	42.6
<i>Trans</i>	133	1.9	9	1.9
<i>Other Gender</i>	324	4.6	15	3.1
Total n	7,129		477	

Data Quality - Sample Composition (unweighted)

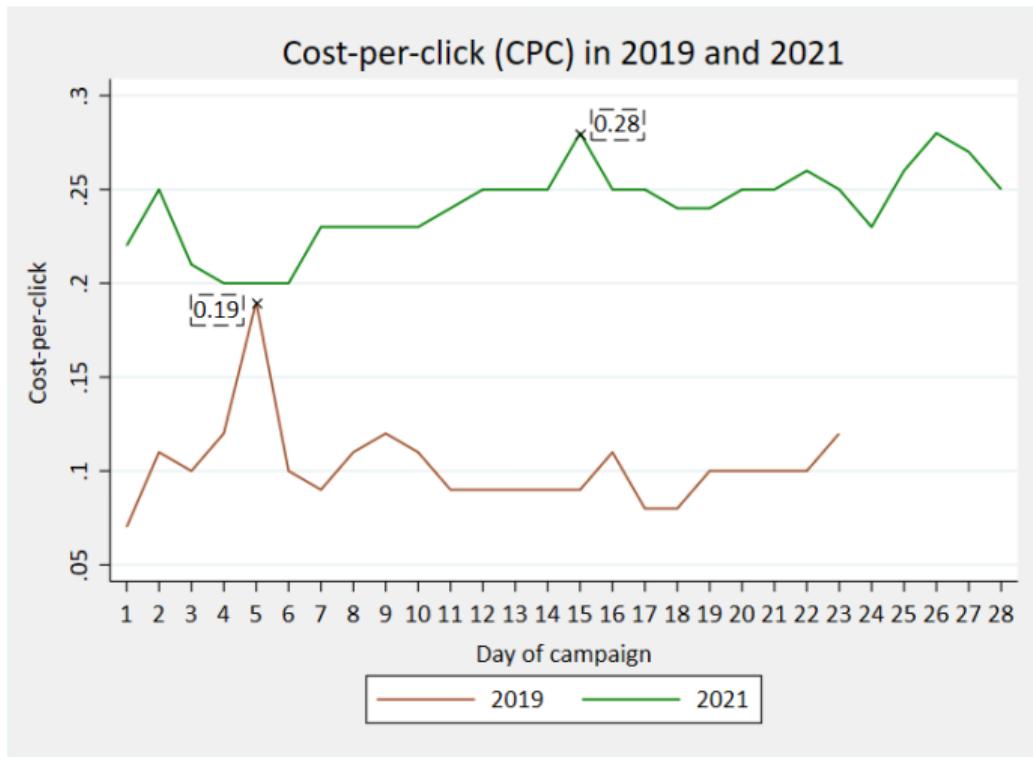
Variable	LGBielefeld		SOEP-Q	
	n	%	n	%
Age				
18-24	4,159	59.9	57	12.0
25-34	1,550	22.3	90	18.9
35-49	748	10.8	123	25.8
50+	484	7.0	207	43.4
School Education				
<i>Lower</i>	331	4.7	62	13.0
<i>Medium</i>	1,288	18.2	139	29.2
<i>Higher</i>	4,687	77.1	250	52.5
Total n	7,129		477	

Second wave

- ▶ Recruiting Phase: September 3-30, 2021
- ▶ Online survey with LGBTQI* people living in Germany
- ▶ Recruitment via ads on Facebook
- ▶ 7,607 completed interviews
- ▶ Costs for ads: 8,352.91€
- ▶ Average net cost for a complete interview: 1.10€

Joint project with Simon Kühne, Lisa de Vries and Martin Kroh (Bielefeld University), as well as, Mirjam Fischer (Goethe University Frankfurt/Main), David Kasprowski (DIW) and David Richter (SHARE Berlin). For more information, see Zindel et al. 2023.

Second wave



Project 2 - Showing Your Religion

- ▶ Online survey on experiences of discrimination in the employment history of Muslims in Germany
- ▶ Recruitment via ads on Facebook's Timeline (Desktop and Smartphone)
- ▶ Recruiting Phase: January 15th - February 14th, 2021
- ▶ Targeted to muslim women with and without headscarves, muslim men and non-muslim population living in Germany
- ▶ Targeting parameters: gender, location and age

Joint project with Simon Kühne (Bielefeld University), and Magdalena Krieger (DIW), as well as, Zerrin Salikutluk, Rahua Mesghina, and Björn Scheffler (Humboldt University Berlin).

Examples of the Ads on Facebook

 Empirische Sozialforschung - Uni Bielefeld
Gesponsert · Finanziert von Universität Bielefeld · ⓘ

Du bist Muslim? Dann nimm jetzt an unserer Befragung zum Thema „Arbeitswelt und Jobsuche“ teil!



_infos zu dieser Werbe...

WWW.UNI-BIELEFELD.DE
Hier geht es zur Umfrage.
Befragung der Universität Bielefeld

MEHR DAZU

5 Kommentare 1 Mal geteilt

Gefällt mir Kommentar Teilen

 Empirische Sozialforschung - Uni Bielefeld
Gesponsert · Finanziert von Universität Bielefeld · ⓘ

Nimm jetzt an unserer Befragung zur Situation von Musliminnen auf dem deutschen Arbeitsmarkt teil!



_infos

WWW.UNI-BIELEFELD.DE
Hier geht es zur Umfrage.
Befragung der Universität Bielefeld

Mehr dazu

153

37 Kommentare 13 Mal geteilt

Gefällt mir Kommentieren Teilen

Campaign Results - Clicks, Respondents, & Costs

- ▶ Costs for ads: 4,259 €
- ▶ 1,068,760 impressions
- ▶ 21,486 link-clicks with 18,040 individual link-clicks
- ▶ 9,282 started the questionnaire
- ▶ 3,120 complete interviews (before first data cleaning)
 - ▶ Overall reached 37.6% Muslim participants
 - ▶ 14.3% female Muslims wearing a headscarf in everyday life
- ▶ Average net cost for a complete interview: **1,53 €**
- ▶ 79 percent used a smartphone

Data Quality - Violation of Quality Indicators

- ▶ During data collection process:
Evidence of systematic manipulation of study results
- ▶ Initial control based on eight known quality indicators, e.g., implausible and inconsistent data, duplicate enrollments, suspicious survey behavior.
- ▶ First results: Suspicious or fraudulent enrollments detected especially in the target group of Muslim men

No. of violated QI	n	%
No violation	2,500	80.13
1 violation	489	15.67
2 violations	104	3.33
3 violations	24	0.77
4 violations	3	0.10
3,120		

Nearly **20%** of all interviews have at least one violated Quality Indicator!

Summary

Research Potential

- ▶ Social Media platforms can be helpful tools for recruiting survey populations quickly and cost-effectively.
- ▶ When targeting rare populations, social media recruitment is often superior compared to other recruitment strategies, such as access panels.
- ▶ The continued growth in the number of Social Media users worldwide suggest that the recruitment strategy will become even more relevant in the future.

Research Gaps:

- ▶ A uniform framework for publishing social media data is still lacking.
- ▶ Clear guidelines are needed for quality control and to prevent malicious falsification.
- ▶ Appropriate weighting and alignment strategies to reduce bias need to be developed.

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Thank you.



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Q&A