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Experiences with using or planning to use remote methods – telephonic; online; WhatsApp based; etc

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Overview of the presentation

- Research geographical landscape
- Research sample
- Data gathering methods
- Data gathering tools
- Researcher competencies
- Online safety

Research geographical landscape

- Despite being a country with a high mobile phone adoption, South Africa presents a digital divide exacerbated by expensive airtime, mobile data and connectivity.

- Internet access and appropriate hard- and software for online conferencing services are less likely present in resource-constraint communities, making mobile phones (not even smart phones) probably the dominant device. (Prof Minrie Greeff 2020)

- Be mindful of exclusionary factors: In insecure areas, excluded communities - including women - often have less access to technology and this can bias reported outcomes (Chelsky and Kelly, 2020)

Research sample

- Access to the sample by the researcher (gate keepers, updated phone records, ethics).

- Accessing participants virtually may take much more effort, time and creativity on the side of the researcher.

- The recruiting process (purposive, random etc)

- Literacy (comprehension by the participants)

- Messages need to be culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Data gathering methods

- There are three main modes to consider:

     - Short message service (SMS) that use text messaging;

     - Interactive voice response (IVR) or automated voice surveys;

     - computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), which uses a live interviewer.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Email	- It allows for probing. - Participants can respond to email interview prompts at their own convenience at a time - Email interviews save both time and money in transcription costs. - The written responses are easily converted to transcribed data resulting in significant savings	The person being interviewed by email should be comfortable with typing and should be able to express themselves in written language.
Telephone call	- Wide Geographic Access - Cost- and Time-Effective	- you can never truly verify the identity of a respondent. - a survey longer than 15 minutes causing fatigue in the respondent

Method of data collection	Advantages	Disadvantages
Zoom/skype/ Google hangouts	- Observe body language and nonverbal cues. - Geographically flexible	- Being distracted by images of yourself - Connectivity challenges
SMS	- Can leave a message to the person even if he/she is available or not. - One can store the SMS messages for desired duration as per settings in the mobile	- Requires some level of literacy - Access to the correct numbers - The SMS size is limited to about 160 characters. - It is not possible to know whether the recipient person has read the SMS or not.

Data gathering tools

- Align tools with data collection requirements: Many tech enabled tools are better used to verify hypothesis; they are less equipped to harness in-depth participant experiences.

- Tech tools work best as a bundle: For example, earth observation technologies paired with phone-based feedback mechanisms can help verify where assets were delivered, as well as to whom. (Chelsky and Kelly, 2020)

Method of data collection	Advantage	Disadvantage
Semi-structured	The interview is interactive in nature	It is mostly suited to calls and video calls. Questions cannot be shared with the participant to respond alone.
Focus group	- Less time - Costs effective - Makes it possible to reach hard to reach participants	- Senses: no touch, no 3D, no taste: You can't show or pass a physical object to respondents during the online session to touch the product, smell it or try to use it - Unstable connection
Survey/structured	- Fast to conduct and analyse - Cost effective	- Operating System and Web Browser Consistency - Sampling Bias

Researcher competencies

- Researchers should be familiar with the contextual realities and technology ecosystem in which participants are likely to participate. Additional costs will incur when researchers have to support participants with airtime and data vouchers.) (Prof Minrie Greeff 2020)

- Personal challenges e.g. lack of technical skills, limited support over distance, emotional discomfort- lack of technical and computer skills needed to download and manage different online platforms and operate them with limited technical support over distance) (Prof Minrie Greeff 2020).

Safety

- Be aware of the risks of relying on tech-enabled data collection: In order to do no harm, innovative solutions are needed to monitor environmental, social, and conflict related risks, because such monitoring usually requires consultations, rigorous supervision, and citizen engagement processes (Chelsky and Kelly, 2020)

- Concerns have been raised about the security of these platforms during data gathering e.g. the latest hacking of Zoom (Prof Minrie Greeff 2020).

Q&A

THANK YOU

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