Internet Surveys -
Potentials For Use in Scientific Research

Mirta Galešić

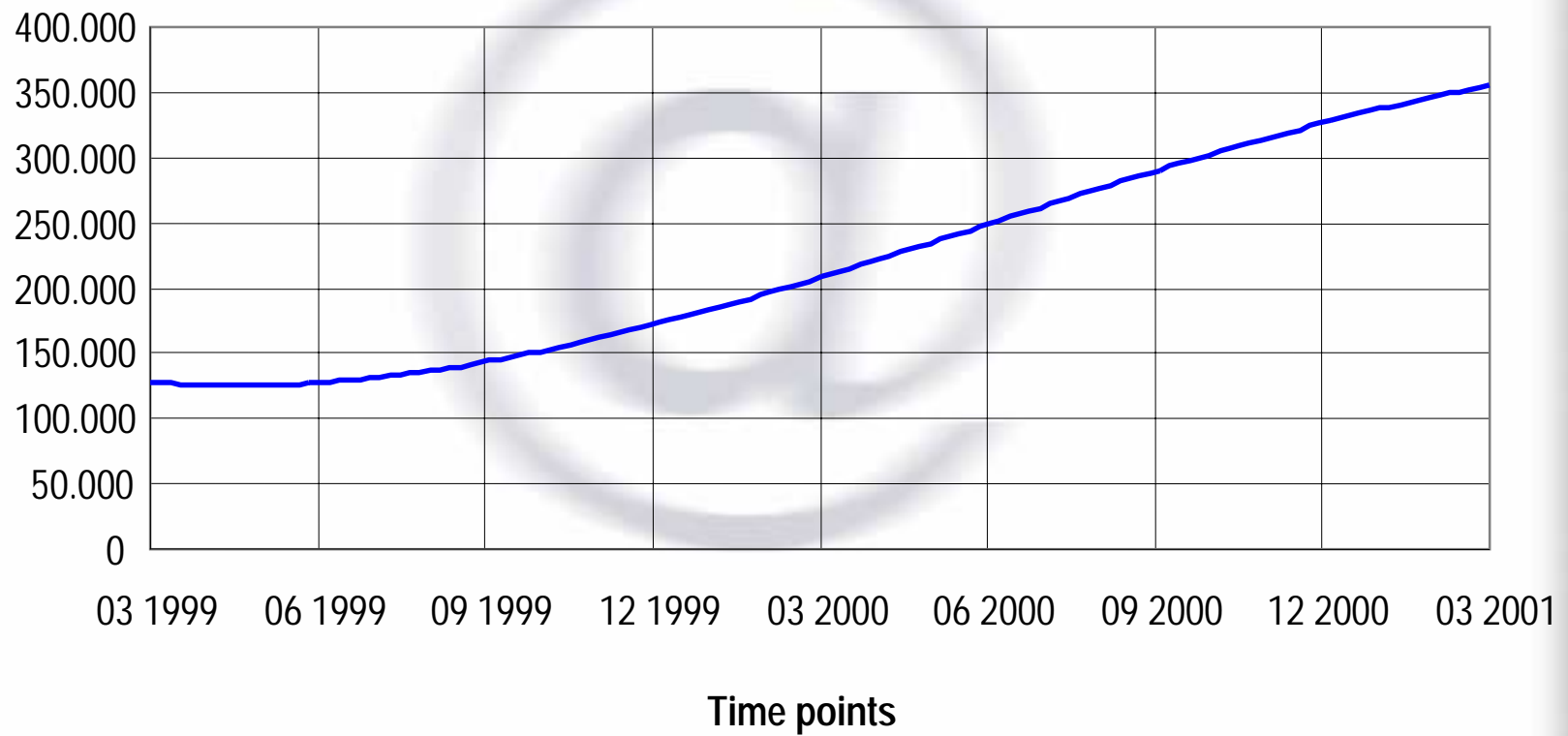Department of Psychology - University of Zagreb - Croatia

Internet in the world

- Access: 420 million people or 7% of world population

- Active users: 236 million people

by Nielsen, 2001

Internet in Croatia

Internet users

by Proof, 2001

Internet research in social sciences

Most advanced in the fields of:

- Consumer behavior
- Social psychology and sociology
- Work and organisational psychology
- Experimental psychology
- Computer mediated communication studies

- On-line surveys

  - Mail

  - Web

- On-line experiments

  - Web based, interactive applications

- On-line individual and group interviews

  - Real-time: chat, virtual worlds

  - Delayed: forums, e-mail discussion lists

Internet Research: Basic Advantages

- Fast and low-cost data collection

- Larger samples: greater statistical power

- Greater diversity of respondents than in traditional studies

- Easy access to geographically dispersed groups

- Easier access to certain social groups

- Limited projectability of results

- Autoselection of respondents

- Concerns about respondents' identity

Internet Research: Drawbacks? But:

- Limited projectability of results

  - Only when projecting on total population

  - Diminishes with greater Internet penetration

- Autoselection of respondents

  - Present also in all other research methods

  - On the Internet, it is measurable

- Questionable respondents' identity

  - Eliminated with the use of on-line panels

Internet research: Other advantages

- More convenient and comfortable for the respondents

- Enhanced discussion of socially sensitive issues

- No human intermediaries between researcher and respondent

- Easy manipulation/adjustment of questions

- Possibility of presenting various audio-visual material

On-line Research in Practice

On-line Research in Practice

- On-line research agency, Zagreb, Croatia

- Surveys on its own <u>on-line panel</u>:

    - Database of Cro. Internet users, volunteers for participating in research studies

    - Built by advertising on main web pages and via (solicited) newsletters

    - March 2001: 4500 members

On-line Research in Practice: Topics

- Since summer 2000 studies on:

  - Internet users' profile: demographics, attitudes, behaviors

  - Use of the Internet: ways, intensity, places

  - Interest in on-line services: ISPs, Internet banking, WAP, e-commerce

  - Use of various products: mobile phones, cars

  - On-line promotion effectiveness

  - On-line relationships

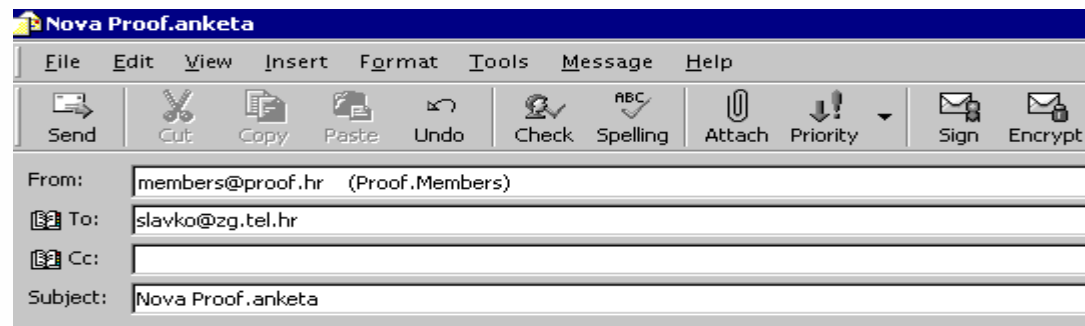# On-line Research in Practice: Methodology

- Surveys available only to members of the panel, invited via e-mail

- Unique URLs guide respondents to the survey

- Interactive modification of survey questions depending on previous answers

- Possibility of building specially designed - targeted samples

On-line Research in Practice: Panel Structure

		Croatian population	Croatian Internet users	Online panel N=4500
Age	15-25	15 %	47 %	44 %
	26-35	15 %	27 %	33 %
	36-55	26 %	24 %	22 %
	56-65	12 %	2 %	1 %
Gender	Male	49 %	65 %	70 %
Education	Higher	20 %	42 %	42 %

March 2001

On-line Research in Practice: E-mail Invitation

Nova Proof.anketa

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Message Help

Send | Cut | Copy | Paste | Undo | Check | Spelling | Attach | Priority | Sign | Encrypt

From: members@proof.hr (Proof.Members)
To: slavko@zg.tel.hr
Cc:
Subject: Nova Proof.anketa

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      ::: [ kliknite na anketu ] :::
http://www.proof.hr/a/o/oswb1.php?id=5dce7beedbc0324769b8500aa3147832
      ::: [ kliknite na anketu ] :::

:) Pozdrav Slavko!

Pokrenuli smo novu Internet anketu. Anketa je
kratka i nagradna!
Trajati ce izmedju 05.11.2000 i 10.11.2000.

Pozivamo vas da ispunite svoju prvu anketu!
Proof je u ovoj anketi po prvi puta upotrijebio
usavrseni sistem anketiranja. Proof zajednica
sada broji 4.300 clanova. Nas je cilj prikazati
stanje na Internetu u Hrvatskoj!

Trenutno u Hrvatskoj Internet koristi 300.000 korisnika,
tako da danas Hrvatska ima jednak broj korisnika
Interneta kao i susjedna Slovenija.
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On-line Research in Practice: Survey

Internet Research Laboratory

- Department of Psychology, University of Zagreb

- Comparisons of classic and on-line methods
  - examining differences in projectability of results, quality of answers, data structure
  - validating classic instruments for on-line use
  - developing proper weighting procedures for projecting the results to broader populations

Internet Research Laboratory

Research on work-life balance in Croatia:

- Comparison of Field and On-line Survey

- Samples equivalent in age, sex and education structure

- Different methods of examination:

  - Field: face-to-face interviews conducted by students; N= 81

  - On-line: sample selected from online panel; N=81

Internet Research Laboratory

Comparison of main results (arithmetic means)

		Field sample	On-line sample
Life Balance & Satisfaction	M	2.8	2.8
Job Involvement	M	3.2	3.1
Family Involvement	M	3.4	3.3
Family-to-Work Conflict	M	1.5	1.5
Work-to-Family Conflict	M	1.9	1.9

+ Richer answers on open questions in on-line survey

Other Applications
of Internet for Research
in Social Sciences

Experiments Over the Internet

- Computer aided experiments in social sciences started in 1970s

- First web experiments in 1995

- Topics: from music recognition to female attractiveness

- Flourishing - enabled by new software solutions (Macromedia Authorware) and enhanced bandwidth

- Demonstration:
  http://mrav.ffzg.hr/CUC01/MR.htm

Experiments Over the Internet: Basic Advantages

- Greater diversity of respondents

- Larger samples - higher statistical power

- Faster (24 hours / day)

- Cost savings of premises, research personnel, research material, administration and analysis

Surveys on Hard-to-reach Social Groups

- Internet enables research on social groups once hard to reach:

    - Persons who suffer from certain diseases: AIDS, tumors,..

    - Persons with specific physical or psychological problems: overweight, panic attacks, depression,..

Surveys on Hard-to-reach Social Groups: Examples

- Persons who engage in socially unacceptable or illegal behaviors: pedophilics, hackers, drug-dealers,..

- Persons who share specific attitudes: political, gender-related, nationalistic,..

- Various other specific groups: homosexuals,.., experts in certain scientific/business fields,.. unemployed,..

Access possibilities

News groups

- Examples:

  - tumors - sci.med.diseases.cancer, hr.alt.med

  - overweighted   - soc.support.fat-acceptance

  - "hackers"   - alt.hackers, hr.alt.hackers

  - drugs   - alt.drugs.cocaine, hr.alt.drugs

  - homosexuals   - alt.homosexual, hr.alt.romance

  - NN experts   - comp.ai.neural-nets

Access possibilities

Specific web pages

(regularly visited by members of certain groups)

- Examples:

  - AIDS   -   www.thebody.com

  - panic attacks   -   www.panicattacks.com.au

  - depressive   -   www.depression.org

  - ultra-nationalists -   www.americannaziparty.com,
                                      www.ustasa.net, www.chetnik.com

  - unemployed   -   www.moj-posao.net

Access possibilities

- And then?

  - Posting a survey on the news group

  - Implementing a survey on the web site, or

  - Advertising a separate survey site via the news group / web page

    Important: Netiquette!

Thank You!

Mirta Galešić

mirta.galesic@ffzg.hr

Department of Psychology

University of Zagreb

Croatia