

# **An empirical comparison of traditional and web-based experimental survey administration: Could it be that spamming is OK after all?**

*Bernhard F. Frey<sup>1</sup>*

This paper reports the results of a randomized vignette- and questionnaire-based research project over the World Wide Web investigating the influence of an informational construct (Moral Intensity; MI) on ethical decision making in a business context. Analysis of quantitative results indicated that three of the six MI components were particularly important determinants of several outcome variables. This pattern of results essentially replicated that yielded by a previous mail administration of the survey, even though a relatively smaller, but with respect to other relevant research comparable, amount of variation in the outcome variables was accounted for. Neither occupational background (unexpectedly) nor the region of origin of participants (expectedly) measurably influenced results.

Second, a qualitative analysis of e-mail responses is used to provide insights into the reactions and responses of participants to both the research method, and the topic of research. Accordingly, it is suggested that the considerable time and effort involved in software preparation and responding to e-mail communications means that in many instances there will only be small, if any, time savings. However, the quality and increased flow of communication associated with the method is argued to be beneficial in terms of the feedback gained. Finally, in contrast to what appears to be currently accepted opinion, the data showed that the method of randomly selecting individual e-mail addresses to receive invitations to participate in research is both successful and acceptable to all but a very small minority of recipients. Recommendations with regard to the content of such invitations are made.

---

<sup>1</sup> Massey University at Albany, Private Bag 102 904, North Shore MC, Auckland, New Zealand,  
Telephone numbers: +64-(0)9-443 9363, fax: +64-(0)9-443 9650, mobile: +64-025-349 996  
b.f.frey@massey.ac.nz  
<http://www.massey.ac.nz/~bffrey>

Keywords: Ethical decision making, informational determinants, research method, participant reactions.