

Book Review

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Sabine Häder, Michael Häder, and Mike Kühne. *Telephone Surveys in Europe: Research and Practice*
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Sabine Häder, Michael Häder, and Mike Kühne (Eds). *Telephone Surveys in Europe: Research and Practice*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2012. ISBN 978-3-642-25410-9, 326 pp, €139.05.

The goal of *Telephone Surveys in Europe* is to provide a European perspective on the subject matter. The authors acknowledge the size and impact of American literature's contribution to the topic area but emphasise the distinctiveness of Europe and the need to consider the impact of cultural differences from the USA. This provides the motivation and key focus for the book.

The book is divided into five parts, covering: the development of telephone surveys in a selected number of European countries; associated sampling solutions; issues around weighting and nonresponse; data quality and finishes with recommendations. A useful summary of the book's contents and objectives is provided at the start of the book.

Part one of the book provides a collection of views and research evidence focused on the development of the design and implementation of surveys across Europe. The geographical and individual infrastructure of the respective countries covered within the book is used as an explanation of how surveys have developed. Researchers and national scientific institutions provide perspectives from Russia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Italy, Portugal and the UK.

In Chapter 1, the Russian contribution to the book provides an interesting overview of how and why face-to-face surveys have continued to dominate in Russia, despite the rapid expansion of landline and mobile coverage. The author cites the impact of geography, availability of technology, political landscape and culture on dominant modes of data collection. Consideration is given to the challenges of producing adequate samples for telephone surveys due to landline coverage and lack of a national telephone register. While this makes for an interesting read, it was neither apparent at whom this level of detail is aimed nor where the information could be usefully applied.

Chapter 2 from the Netherlands was easy to read and informative. The author, Beukenhorst, provides a clear explanation of the popularity of face-to-face interviewing and the emergence of telephone interviewing. This provided a nice contrast to the scene set for the previous chapter in Russia, where telephone penetration had not reached the levels

of the Netherlands, and the later chapter from Finland, where attitudes to mobile phone registration differed from the other countries presented within the book.

An interesting debate is presented by Beukenhorst around the possibility of an increase in satisficing from those respondents who answer a mobile phone when on the move as well as issues around associated bias. This was quite thought provoking.

The contribution from Switzerland (Chapter 3) sets out some unique country-specific elements of telephone surveys, but in general a similar picture to that in other countries is presented. It was reassuring to find such commonalities across countries. However, it would have been good to see the key points from each chapter combined into a succinct position across Europe and contrasted with the USA. There are some good points made within part one of the book, but these are buried under detailed information that at times feels quite repetitive.

Contributions of particular note were those from Beukenhorst around satisficing (Chapter 2); Poggio and Callegaro's assertion of mobile and internet access rather than ownership as a better indicator of survey response (Chapter 6); Vicente and Reis's discussion of respondent distraction and multitasking when using a mobile phone and differences in completion rates (Chapter 7).

Part two of the book is divided into three chapters that look at the difficulty of contacting people by phone, sampling frames from a market research perspective, and mobile- and landline-onlys in dual-frame-approaches. The aim of Chapter 8 is to determine the potential bias caused by variations in accessibility and inclusion in telephone directories. Social integration, political opinion and sociodemographic characteristics are considered. The authors present a well thought-out and executed piece of research that utilises two large Swiss surveys (the ESS and EVS) and the EVS nonrespondent survey. A measure of the thoroughness of this work is the acknowledgement of the impact of the quality of questions on analysis. The authors use the reliability of questions across all modes to help inform which variables to include in their analysis; this serves as an important reminder to the reader. The results from the analysis are clearly illustrated through a series of tables and figures throughout the chapter.

Chapter 8 makes for an informative, well-written read that stimulates both thoughts and questions. A reasonable critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the work is provided. The authors provide the acronyms rather than providing the full survey title for the surveys. It would have been useful for the surveys' full titles to have been provided to enable readers to find out more about these surveys to further critique this work. While the book itself sets out to inform the methodology on telephone surveys, this chapter provides a nice platform for the debate on mixed mode data collection.

Similarly, Chapter 9 considers characteristics of respondents, but this time in relation to respondent mobile network connection and type of contract. The authors discuss the sampling frames and parameters of five European countries based on market research. This is where the book would have benefited from stronger links to earlier chapters. The discussion around the challenges of using telephone directories and random digit dialling is quite limited compared to some of the earlier discussions in part one of the book.

The introduction of weighting to the book begins with a discussion from Germany on the benefits of weighting for unequal inclusion and nonresponse using a dual frame sample. The chapter is clearly written and draws on research presented in an earlier

chapter. Reasons behind the methodology, the process of review and refinement and final conclusions make for an informative read.

The aim of the final part of the book is to make recommendations based on information in earlier chapters. However, the links between the last three chapters and earlier contributions is at times quite tenuous. Chapter 17 introduces a new concept of reciprocity based on the author's experimental work. This chapter links to earlier parts of the book, in that respondent reluctance to participate in surveys is raised. However, the discussion around this important topic is limited to the initial contact with respondents. This is followed by a discussion around the statistical and cost-related problems of an "optimal" dual frame approach to sampling and data quality. This chapter (Chapter 18) nicely sums up discussions from previous chapters, although it provides a further option rather than any firm conclusion from earlier discussions. The concluding chapter again introduces a new dimension rather than drawing together the proceeding chapters with a detailed account of an approach to fieldwork management.

The authors note that the book is written for "scientists and practitioners who deal with theory and application of telephone surveys in academic and market research". It would be helpful if the audience for this book were clearly identified and the structure appropriately tailored. There would also be great benefit from providing cross references between chapters to help the flow for the reader.

There are some useful contributions in this book but it appears to be more of a compendium of research findings. On average each chapter is approximately eight pages in length; this does not give the sort of depth required by survey professionals. Given the way the book is organised, it provides a useful compendium of research findings and discussions that may be useful to "career young" professionals looking for a general overview of telephone survey methodology.

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