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Qual-Online the Essential Guide: What Every Researcher Needs to Know about Conducting and Moderating Interviews via the Web: A Book Review

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Abstract

Technology has become an increasingly valuable tool to the field of research. However, researchers must be provided with training to conduct ethically sound qualitative research in online settings. Jennifer Dale and Susan Abbott provide such preparation in their book, *Qual-Online the Essential Guide: What Every Researcher Needs to Know about Conducting and Moderating Interviews via the Web*. This guidebook explains the purpose, process, and resources associated with conducting and moderating online interviews, and provides novice to experienced qualitative researchers with practical examples and tips for implementation.

Keywords

qualitative research methods, qualitative interviewing, conducting and moderating online interviews

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Qual-Online the Essential Guide: What Every Researcher Needs to Know about Conducting and Moderating Interviews via the Web: **A Book Review**

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Technology has become an increasingly valuable tool to the field of research. However, researchers must be provided with training to conduct ethically sound qualitative research in online settings. Jennifer Dale and Susan Abbott provide such preparation in their book, *Qual-Online the Essential Guide: What Every Researcher Needs to Know about Conducting and Moderating Interviews via the Web*. This guidebook explains the purpose, process, and resources associated with conducting and moderating online interviews, and provides novice to experienced qualitative researchers with practical examples and tips for implementation.

Keywords: qualitative research methods, qualitative interviewing, conducting and moderating online interviews

Technology has become an increasingly valuable tool to the field of research. The importance of technology was clearly illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused an abrupt end to in-person research. The internet makes online research possible; however, researchers need training and guidance to navigate conducting research in online settings. Jennifer Dale and Susan Abbott (2015) provide such guidance in their book, *Qual-Online the Essential Guide: What Every Researcher Needs to Know about Conducting and Moderating Interviews via the Web*.

Dale and Abbott's work provides a guidebook on conducting and moderating interviews via the web. The work explains the purpose, process, and resources associated with conducting and moderating online interviews. The book plunges into the tricky realm of conducting online research through the lens of traveling to a new city. Aligning the work within this context enhances the readability and application the book, as novice online researchers can embed this framework within their own background knowledge.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, discussing topics from methodological and ethical considerations to collecting and coding data. Chapters one through five outline the history of online qualitative research, as well as methods, tools, and ethical considerations for online qualitative research. The following three chapters extend upon previous topics by discussing related costs, recruiting, and managing online studies. Methods and tips for moderating online data collection tools and interviews, along with approaches to transcription and data analysis, are provided in chapters nine through twelve. The authors conclude the work with future directions for online qualitative research.

In introducing chapter three, Dale and Abbott express: "We never want to lose sight of the fact that research is a journey" (p. 14). While the book is centered in the context of travel, presenting the various tools and applications – "modes of travel" – appropriate for online qualitative research, the authors return back to the research, or "journey," at hand by relating these tools and applications to real world examples. This is done through mini case studies, "travel tips," and pro tips scattered throughout the work. Dale and Abbott's mini case studies

provide appropriate examples of tools and methods in action. “Travel” and pro tips are practical suggestions to readers for implementation of the tool, application, or method. These elements, along with visual aids and checklists offered in the work, help readers process and relate the information presented to their own research.

Another important strength of the work includes the distinguishment of ethical considerations for qualitative research conducted in online settings compared to traditional, in-person settings. The authors devote chapter five to discuss the ethical considerations for online qualitative research. Particularly, the authors discuss the intimacy of online interviews, as they often bring us into participants’ homes and lives, the logistics of obtaining consent via the web, connecting with participants via social media, and handling disagreements between participants. Challenges, as well as suggestions for overcoming challenges, are provided for each issue. Ultimately, the authors showcase the importance of conducting ethical online qualitative research.

While there are several strengths of this work, there is one substantial limitation to chapter eight. The authors discuss the use of stimuli in relation to managing online qualitative studies; however, they provide little discussion and support in determining appropriate stimuli for online research compared to in-person research. One might have hoped for more information to determine which stimuli are appropriate for each online research method (i.e., images in chat compared to video in chat). Stimuli are briefly discussed within this context in chapters nine and eleven; however, it would have been helpful for these to be discussed in more detail, as well as in context of appropriate applications for use, when first introduced in chapter eight. In light of the strengths and limitations, the work provides a promising guide to conducting online qualitative research.

Dale and Abbott’s work contributes to the current body of literature on conducting qualitative research via the internet. They provide a relatable, digestible perspective on conducting online qualitative research; however, the authors provide little discussion upon theory. Instead, it is expected that readers have a foundational understating of the theories and fundamental design elements of qualitative research. This book would be appropriate for novice to experienced online qualitative researchers who have a foundational understating of qualitative research. It would also be suitable as a supplemental reading to a foundational text for introductory qualitative research courses, or as a main text for more advanced scholars focusing on online research. Overall, their work contributes to the field of online qualitative research by providing an easily understandable guide to conducting and moderating interviews via the internet.

References

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Author Note

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