

There are some instances where, in order to get a more rounded picture of what is required, it is necessary to combine both methods of study, which can be termed a mixed-method approach. This involves combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, either sequentially or concurrently, to generate a new body of knowledge or follow a new line of inquiry. It is up to the event owner or organisation to determine the most suitable method of research, dependent on timing, budget, the nature of the study, and the depth and complexity of the information required. All three types of research could be considered throughout the event cycle, particularly in the pre-event and post-event stages, and a qualitative methodology can also be very effective on site. The example below demonstrates how all methods may be effectively used in research.

REAL INSIGHT 4.2

Research into Screen Time and Social Media Use for Event Professionals

In November 2023 Northstar Meeting Group (publishers of UK magazine *Meetings & Incentive Travel*), in partnership with IHG Hotels and Resorts launched a survey, which ran from November to December 2023, to explore how much time meeting planners spent in front of screens and what impact social media usage is having on their mental health.

The aim of the survey, which was issued by First Look Research, was to attempt to discover why meeting professionals spend so much time online, how they use social media platforms to enhance their events, and whether they think that time is well spent.

The survey questions delved into the health implications of screen time and social media use, to ascertain whether users felt 'in control' of the amount of time they spend online, and how it impacted their wellbeing and productivity.

103 of the 176 respondents had event or meeting planner in their job title, 28 had a marketing background, 18 were in sales, with the remainder made up of executive directors, managing directors, and CEOs. Responses came from 32 countries, with the UK (60%) and the United States of America (17%) making up the majority.

A Quantitative Approach in Event Research

A series of questions was asked in the survey, where specific response options were offered for the respondents to select. The answers to these questions were presented in

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Research into screen time use

Source: Image courtesy of MINT Social via Flickr.

the primary findings, by means of colour-coded pie charts, showing the statistical data in percentage form. This type of research data is known as quantitative. A sample of the fact-finding questions asked to the respondents were:

1 *On a typical working day, how much time do you spend online?*

- More than seven hours
- 0–3 hours
- 3–5 hours
- 5–7 hours

The findings to this question showed that 72% of respondents say they surf the internet for more than five hours during a 'typical working day', with 46% of those people spending more than seven hours a day 'online'.

Some of the survey questions asked were closed questions, which only required a yes, no, or not applicable (n/a) response, for example:

2 *Have you ever been asked to use a personal social media account for professional purposes?*

The primary findings to this question indicate that in 46% of cases, employees have been asked to use a personal social media account for work purposes and in those cases only 35% say it was in their job description.

Another revealing survey question posed to respondents, which proffered a choice of set statements, also presented as statistical data in the form of a pie chart, was the following question:

3 *Why do you use social media?* The choice of statements was:

- To further my own career
- It's part of my job description
- Because my employer expects me to use it
- Personal brand management
- To enhance my business/company performance
- Other

The quantitative findings presented showed that self-employed people (83%) and owner-managers (88%) were far more likely than employed people (50%) to use social media to improve the performance of their company. Employed people were also less concerned about 'personal brand management'. However, they were more likely than owner-managers to use social media to 'further their own careers'.

A Qualitative Approach in Event Research

In addition to closed and set responses to questions, the survey also invited respondents to provide expanded comments, in their own words to some of the more open-ended questions. These were presented 'verbatim', as qualitative data in the report. A few of the qualitative comments captured from the survey were:

'I am aware of how much time I spend on it and how little positive emotion I get out of it. Yet I'm self-aware enough to realise that but I find I go back to it out of habit. I find LinkedIn to be more rewarding than other platforms but also find I could be doing more things with my time.'

'You're constantly comparing what other similar companies are doing and this can have a negative impact. It always appears someone is doing it better than you are.'

'It caused more fatigue for me personally – physically and emotionally in different ways.'

'It can give both an inflated sense of self, and at the same time invoke serious imposter syndrome.'

The comments should be presented in the findings section under the question posed, or at the end of the report, and should be kept anonymous, with no names or company details published. They are very useful in providing more specific feedback and further expanding the respondents' views and opinions on the subject matter.

A Mixed-method Approach in Event Research

Some of the questions posed in the questionnaire are designed to capture statistical information, such as how much time event planners spent using social media, and how that impacted their mental wellbeing, asking them to use a Likert scale to rate a series of statements.

Other questions in the survey are open-ended and designed to gauge opinions and comments from the respondents. The report uses a mixed-method format, presenting the quantitative data, using tables, graphs, and pie charts. It also used a qualitative approach, featuring some of the verbatim comments recorded from the respondents. The final findings revealed that some respondents felt they were 'out of control' with their social media use.

Report Findings

Findings from *First Look Research* suggest meeting and event professionals have a complicated relationship with social media. It appears that most event planners spend the bulk of their working day online and using social media for a significant proportion of that time, although event professionals did not feel that that time on social media was entirely within their control. In addition, many reported feelings of anxiety and inferiority, resulting from reading competitor posts. However, despite this, only 5% of respondents said they actually made an effort to take time away from the screen in their working day.

AMI editor and Northstar Meeting Group UK editorial director James Lancaster said: 'Sitting in front of a screen is how many people spend their working lives – and this has been the case for decades. But the proliferation of social media channels has added another even unhealthier dimension.... We know from talking to professionals that many of them struggle to manage the amount of time they spend online, so we thought it was important to get a clearer picture through this research of exactly what is going on in our industry.'

<https://mitmagazine.co.uk/People/Survey-explores-sector-s-screen-time-and-social-media-use>