

# Smart moves: How to lure young men back in the game

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**As a target group, men under the age of 30 are very difficult to reach. Recruiting and activating them is usually quite the challenge. However, Natali Pohlschneider of Produkt + Markt knows that smart strategies such as gamification and mobile optimisation of surveys may make young men readily accessible for market research.**

Men under 30 years of age make up about eleven per cent of the German population. At first glance, this group of people does not seem to be an inaccessible target group. Nevertheless, young men in particular are actually rather difficult to recruit for market research studies. This becomes particularly noticeable in regular online omnibus surveys: The goal is to draw a representative sample of the population. Toward the end of the survey period, more often than not it is necessary to specifically invite and remind the young men to participate in the survey in order to meet the set quotas. The task becomes even more difficult when additional requirements are to be met – for example, if one is to interview men under the age of 30 who use shaving cream.

**In order to sensibly activate this target group**, the survey design needs to be as appealing as possible. The goal is to give the participants an extremely positive experience with a survey, because this will motivate them to take part in further studies in return. But which approaches are most likely to succeed? The survey should use clear, precise and easily understandable language. Also, one needs to pay close attention to the length of the survey: For example, is it really necessary to have an item set for every single known product, or would individual products suffice? A split in the survey would be another solution to keep the survey time as short as possible and to minimise the dropout rate. For this purpose it is necessary to use a larger gross sample and a branched skip pattern.

**Gamification has also proven to play an important role** for the target group of young men. Therefore it is advisable to already think ahead while designing the survey and to look for other options than those common checkboxes. For example, rankings could be illustrated by asking participants to award gold, silver, and bronze medals. In scales, participants can give star ratings, just like they are used to from product evaluations at online retailers. Furthermore, it is also time to rethink recruiting. In addition to getting in touch through access panels, it is also possible to address young men online just where they can be met most frequently – for example

on social networks, online gaming channels and video platforms such as YouTube. If the study requires a special usage context, recruitment for online studies can also take place offline: possible options would be booths at concerts or career fairs or the distribution of leaflets at those events.

**Always think of mobile devices first.** In addition to best practices, the visual design of the online surveys and the point of contact, there is another point affecting the study's success: mobile optimisation. Internet users, owning both a desktop computer and a mobile device, use their smartphones for 67 per cent of their average online time. Among the group of 14 to 29-year-olds the figure reaches even 74 per cent. These general usage habits also allow us to draw conclusions about the use of smartphones in online surveys. Every third person has already logged on to a panel with a mobile device and also uses a mobile phone or tablet to participate in online surveys. And almost 50 per cent of all young men no longer complete online studies on their desktop PCs, but rather on their smartphones.

Since this target group in particular often delays the completion of the survey period, it is especially important to optimise surveys for mobile devices. For a better view of large item sets, it may already be helpful to advise participants to hold their phones horizontally. At the same time, every online survey should – without exceptions – be designed to meet the display requirements of smaller screens right from the outset; completing the survey on a desktop computer should be a second option. Obstacles caused by display issues are thus eliminated. But not only young men use their smartphones for online surveys. People from B2B target groups are also increasingly taking part in online surveys while they are on the go, and thus making good use wait times, for example.

**In the current discussion on data quality,** one must continue to pay particular attention to recruitment and implementation. Furthermore, we need to ask ourselves the following questions: How do I reach the desired target group? How do I avoid an above-average number of terminations and subsequently biased results? How do I ensure a reliable quality of results? How do I keep up the participants' motivation from start to finish? A combination of the measures described above and demanding a "mobile first" strategy already offer ideal approaches.

### About the author



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