

Evaluating the public's perception of NSO websites using a non-standard mixed methodological approach

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In the last twenty years most National Statistics Offices have committed considerable resources to the development of their web presence and for many, a NSO's website is their first contact with the organisation. It is therefore important that NSO websites are fit for purpose. For example, the website should allow for the simple and effective retrieval of data and its related meta data. As there is no standard design for NSO websites it is important that the interfaces they provide are intuitive and adequate for what their public requires. This paper discusses methodological issues surrounding the evaluation of the public's perceptions of NSO websites. It is based on experiences gained in a multinational study. The basic argument put forward by the paper is that for effective evaluation, an extended mixed methods approach is needed that recognises the limitations that standard evaluation methods based on the concept of bounded rationality pose.

After a quick review of NSO websites the paper attempt to develop a simple topology of their possible structures. The paper then concentrates on the issue of how to evaluate their effectiveness. Firstly, the shortcomings of standard mixed methods are discussed. The paper then concentrates on the possible use of projective techniques that attempt to go beyond the mixed methodological fence of bounded rationality.