Surveys via social media:
the new insights revolution

episto

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Editorial

"*Doctor Gallup knows the thoughts of millions of people whom he doesn't know.*" That's how the journalist of a French newspaper described in 1939 the extraordinary power of a new scientific methodology: **the opinion poll.** The latter appeared a few years earlier in the United States and had been made famous thanks to George Gallup during the 1936 US Presidential election[1]. As the mathematicians had demonstrated, **all you needed to do was to survey a "representative" sample of a few hundreds or thousands of people to obtain a precise insight into the thoughts of millions of others**. Nearly a century later, this scientific discovery is still perfectly relevant, and new polls are conducted every day in the fields of politics, health, research and marketing.

Since the first surveys, conducted face to face, different revolutions – first the telephone, then the Internet – have transformed the way we gather opinions. **The last two decades have been marked by the emergence of mobile phones and the extraordinary growth of social networks.** Unsurprisingly, surveys are now conducted via questionnaires in mobile-friendly formats, released automatically on social media. In this way, **4,6 billion social network users around the world are now virtually instantly accessible** and ready to share their opinions on matters of concern to them. For brands, this is a powerful opportunity in their quest to become ever more agile and "consumer-centric" as they adapt to meet customer expectations wherever possible.

This new methodological approach delivers unprecedented advantages for research professionals (quality, targeting, speed), and naturally constitutes the next revolution in this industry.
This white paper is a summary of what we have learned from conducting hundreds of consumer surveys via social media. Read it to find out all about this new insights revolution, in anticipation of the next one… will the 2040 decade see the rise of metaverse?

> **For brands, this methodology is a powerful opportunity in their quest to become ever more agile and *"consumer-centric"*.**

Learning points in this White Paper:

- ✔ How to do surveys via social media

- ✔ Why this is disrupting the market research industry

- ✔ The advantages of this methodology

- ✔ When this methodology should be used

[1]During the US Presidential election of 1936, a "straw poll" (a simulated electoral contest run by the newspapers in the form of ballots to be returned by their readers prior to the big elections), on 10 million people, predicted a loss for Roosevelt, whereas the new Gallup institute, using a representative sample, backed him to win with 56% of the votes. Roosevelt actually took 62% of the vote, establishing the credibility of the Gallup methodology.
(Le Monde, *Sondages : l'histoire débute avec l'institut Gallup et l'élection du président Roosevelt*, 2005)

Part 1

How do surveys via social media work?

"*To understand social networks, think of them as a newly-created public space,*" says Danah Boyd (Partner Researcher at Microsoft Research and founder of Data & Society). Today, social media are firmly established in society, transforming the way we inform ourselves and interact. We explain here why they represent a real revolution for the market research industry, and how this methodology works.

01 Why use social media?

The survey sector was born in the early 20th century. With successive technological revolutions, opinion collection methodologies have diversified, with the most innovative new solution regularly winning against existing methodologies. At the start of the century, the first surveys were carried out directly, face to face on the street.

After that, in the 1970s, the appearance of the telephone and its widespread use in homes made it possible to rationalise survey costs and time while at the same time accessing a wider geographical scope.

But that was before the appearance of the Internet. In the late 1990s, the digital revolution disrupted the sector. Pollsters no longer needed to administer the questionnaire to each individual; they could instead distribute it online to panels of Internet users and collect answers.

Strengths and limitations of the three traditional market research methodologies
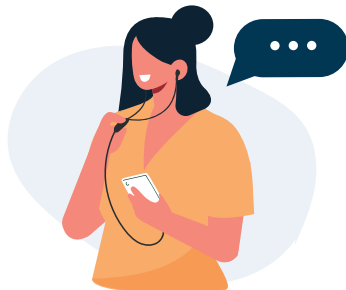
Face to face

CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing)

Strengths

- ✓ Access to participants without a phone or internet access
- ✓ Ability to go beyond the framework of the interview guidelines

Limitations

- ✗ Need for trained staff
- ✗ Time consuming
- ✗ Biases from contact with the interviewer
- ✗ Expensive

Telephone

CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing)

Strengths

- ✓ Access to a wider population
- ✓ Ability to go beyond the framework of the interview guidelines
- ✓ Remote geographical targeting

Limitations

- ✗ Need for staff and training
- ✗ Time consuming
- ✗ Biases from contact with the interviewer
- ✗ Decline in land-line phone use and difficulty in obtaining mobile numbers
- ✗ Growing reluctance to accept calls from unknown sources

Online panels

CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing)

Strengths

- ✓ Easy to arrange and administer for large sample groups
- ✓ Low human resources requirements
- ✓ Quick implementation and fieldwork
- ✓ Inexpensive

Limitations

- ✗ Exclusively for literate population groups with Internet access
- ✗ Some respondents become survey experts
- ✗ Limited qualitative data

Today, **the power of social media** represents a significant opportunity for quantitative research. In France, 80% of the population use social media platforms.

The time spent on them by each individual is around 2 hours on average. **That's nearly 20% of waking time!** Your target groups spend most of their free time on social networks, which makes them the ideal place for asking them about your issues.

Social media in 2023

4.6 bn

active users worldwide

58%

of the world's population (84% in the UK)

2 hrs 27 mins

The average time spent on social networks (2h in the UK)

Facebook
2.9 bn
active users
45 year-old on average

Instagram
2 bn
active users
32 year-old on average

TikTok
1 bn
active users
23 year-old on average

Snapchat
0.5 bn
active users
29 year-old on average

Twitter
0.4 bn
active users
34 yeard-old on average

02 So how does it actually work?

Adverts on social media as a targeting tool

Today, social networks offer the possibility of targeting all their users according to specific criteria: socio-demographic, geographical, and by area of interest (we will come back to this in Part 3). This targeting, initially intended for the delivery of advertising content by advertisers, is becoming **a valuable resource for pre-qualifying and sourcing survey participants** for our quantitative research purposes.
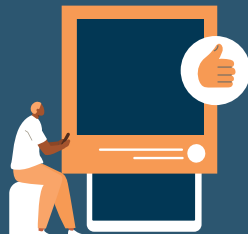
The methodology adopted for social media research is based on advertisements and their in-depth targeting criteria. The idea is simple:

01
Specify the target of the study

according to your objectives.

02
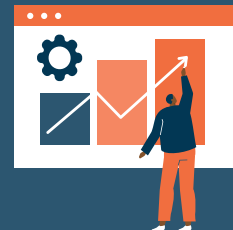**Create publications (posts and stories)**

an image accompanied by a message inviting your target to give answers.

03
Launch an advertising campaign

to sponsor these publications among the target group using social network targeting criteria.
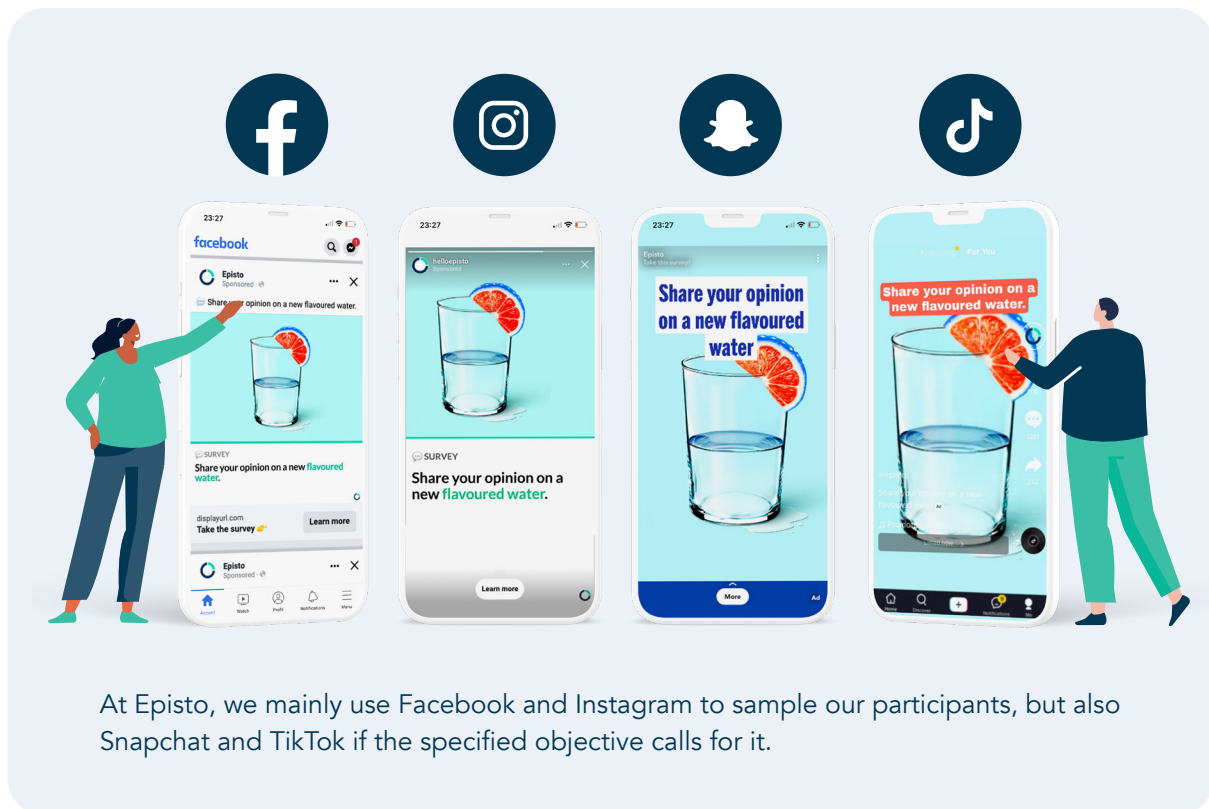
04
Monitor the collection of answers from targeted users

by monitoring aspects such as quota fulfilment.

At Episto, we mainly use Facebook and Instagram to sample our participants, but also Snapchat and TikTok if the specified objective calls for it.
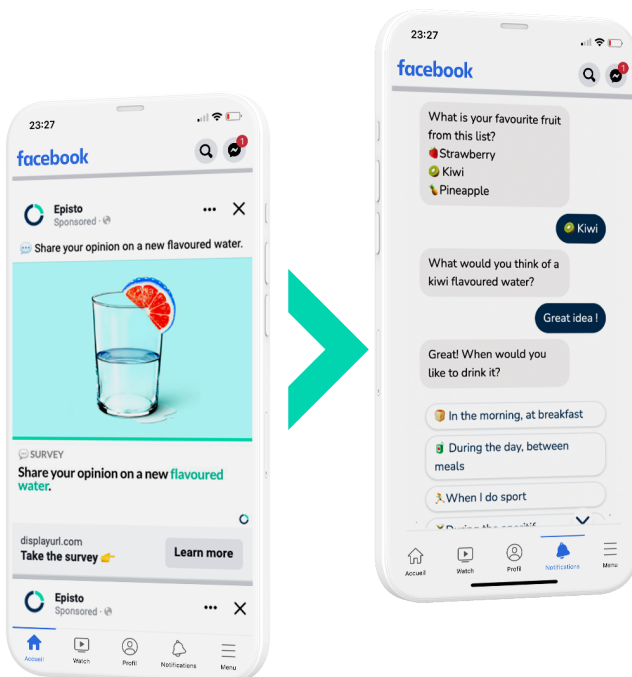
A conversational questionnaire as a collection methodology

It's vitally important to target survey participants correctly. But once you've done that, you need to deliver a questionnaire that will hold their attention and keep them entertained from start to finish!

Targeted users who are interested in the advertisement **are just one click away from becoming survey participants.** They are then redirected to the questionnaire, which they answer directly on their smartphones.

The key challenge for surveys via social media is to offer each individual **a pleasant experience** in the form of a fluid, easily understandable questionnaire.

That's what we do here at Episto, using an engaging conversational format.

What is a conversational and engaging questionnaire?

It's a questionnaire that resembles the sort of natural discussion you might find on an instant messaging service.

- A familiar app-like look & feel
- Various types of questions
- Emojis
- Questions that are presented as the "discussion" progresses
- An engaging tone that's neither too familiar nor too formal, with appropriate language

Warning!

Although participant engagement is crucial for the collection of quality answers, this methodology will not be suited to some cases.

Two scenarios are covered by this category and, depending on the precise nature of your questionnaire, we can discuss possible alternatives and solutions.

> **If your questionnaire involves an overly complex device**

In other words, if it imposes technical requirements such as the activation of a webcam for eye tracking purposes, for example.

> **If your questionnaire is unavoidably long**

In other words, if it contains more than 60 questions and takes more than 15 minutes to complete. In this case, it will not be suited to this methodology, because mobile devices are used 95% of the time and participants are not rewarded.

Part 2

The best way
of collecting
authentic answers

Running a quantitative survey is simple: you just have to collect the data that most accurately represents reality from a given population group. For this reason, authentic answers and participant reliability are critically important. Let's take a closer look at the reasons that give our methodology its power to glean quality insights.

01 Relevant profiles

Our methodology uses social media targeting criteria to enlist only qualified users, thus ensuring that profiles match the target group.

This close profile matching will in turn ensure the best possible quality of collected insights.

These participants are ordinary consumers or professionals who, for the most part, have not signed up with panels and are therefore neither contacted repeatedly nor incentivised.

Case study

Using hairdressers' expertise to verify that participants are qualified

You might think it was impossible to check the identity of participants and detect the presence of unqualified individuals who could skew the results of the surveys on social media.
So we used this test to verify the reliability of our participants: in a questionnaire aimed at hairdressers, we inserted a trick question about the products used by those professionals. Two of the products named in the list were actually products that were sold only to the general public, and not used by professionals.
And we recorded fewer than 1% of answers for these two items – proving that the sampled profiles were indeed genuine hairdressers.

Only 5%

of participants surveyed via social media report having signed up with panels

Fewer than 1%

of participants make a mistake when we insert a trick question into a questionnaire

02 Participant engagement

At Episto, we firmly believe that this is **the sine qua non condition for collecting quality answers and insights that tally with reality.** It enables participants to express their opinions in a focused, authentic way, helping them to (almost) forget that they are completing a survey. Participant engagement is achieved by adopting a playful tone that makes the experience a unique and pleasant one, and an affirming approach that empowers participants not used to being asked for their opinions.

In addition to guaranteeing that the sampled profiles are reliable, the precise targeting enabled via social media ensures access to a target group that is genuinely committed because it is actually affected by the theme of the survey.

> It's about time lorry drivers were asked for their opinions!
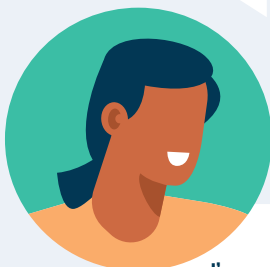
> I'm grateful to see someone's interested in my profession as a hairdresser!

Case study

Learning how waste sorting in kitchens works – via videos

To understand how residents of the Ile-de-France region handled kitchen waste sorting, we surveyed 300 participants and collected videos they had recorded showing waste sorting in their own homes. These valuable, authentic insights offered a useful glimpse into the lives of Ile-de-France residents, providing a better understanding of their usage practices.

92%

of respondents on average say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the Episto conversational questionnaire experience.

13

03 Authentic answers

One of the main advantages of surveys via social media is that this methodology makes it possible to collect authentic answers. Meaning what, exactly?
By "authentic" we mean **sincere, spontaneous answers that genuinely reflect the opinions of surveyed individuals without the intervention of disruptive external factors**.

+50%

The verbatim comments we collect are on average 50% longer than the ones collected via the online panel methodology.

Surveys via social media provide guarantees of authenticity associated with:

The participants

> They are not accustomed to answering polls, and are not survey "professionals"

> Not remunerated, and therefore not motivated by profit

Smartphone use

> A personal tool that they are comfortable using

> And use whenever available

The questionnaire

> Designed from the outset for mobile phone use

> Self-administered, at their own pace, in an environment that suits them

> An engaging conversation

With this methodology, participants don't feel that they are completing a questionnaire; rather, they feel that they are participating in a conversation.

Part 3

The ability
to survey (almost)
all target groups

With 4.6 billion active users worldwide, social media offers brands access to an unparalleled range of profiles… and nearly as many targeting criteria for ranking them. Using these available criteria, surveys via social media make it possible to put questions to almost all target groups, from the broadest to the most niche. Including target groups that are hard to reach using other methodologies.

01 Social media: a goldmine of targeting criteria

What makes social media such a precious lever for advertisers today is the fact that they enable the precise targeting of users in terms of **socio-demographic criteria** (who they are), **geographical criteria** (where they are and live), and **areas of interest** (what they do and enjoy). On social media, this means reported information (statements of nationality, age, etc., made when accounts are created), as well as behavioural information (profiles followed and viewed, participation in different topics, online purchases, etc.). Add into this mix a global reach, plus daily use by most individuals, **and social media becomes an extremely precise tool for reaching a wide variety of profiles!** They can therefore be useful for surveying very broad target groups, by applying the quota methodology, but also very niche target groups, with a very low proportional representation within the general population.

Examples of available targeting criteria

Socio-demographic criteria

- Gender
- Language
- Age
- Parental status
- Relationship status
- Education
- School attended
- Subject studied
- Occupation
- House moves
- Birthday
- Employers
- Long distance relationship
- Recently engaged/married

Geographical criteria

- Place of residence
- Places visited

Criteria for areas of interest

- Entertainment
- Hobbies/Activities
- Travel
- Technology
- Shopping
- Media
- Brands
- Frequent traveller
- Telephone

02 Rare and hard-to-reach target groups

Unfortunately, because of the tiny percentage of the population they represent, or as a result of their specific characteristics, **some target groups cannot be surveyed using traditional research methodologies.** The use of social media makes such groups accessible. And in the following cases, this methodology is the best option available to you.

Young people

The question everyone's asking is: how do you collect answers from young people on a widespread scale? Although social media is more than just young people, this methodology remains the best way of surveying the consumers of tomorrow.

Hyper-localised target groups

Are you seeking to survey users of a specific train route or the inhabitants of a geographically defined area? Unlike other collection methodologies, surveys via social media make it possible to target hyper-local groups. This can be accurate down to the nearest mile!

Specific interest communities

Following the same principle, surveys via social media are an excellent way of polling a target group with a shared area of interest; for example, martial arts enthusiasts, travel lovers, people who play a niche sport, or cinema buffs.

B2B target groups

By BtoB target groups, we mean groups of professionals working in the same profession. Using the available targeting criteria – and criteria covering areas of interest in particular – it becomes easy to address certain specific professions.

Users of specific products/services

Assess your customers' satisfaction levels, or your prospects' needs, by targeting a population group whose consumption patterns are of interest to you.

Pregnant women or young parents

Using socio-demographic criteria and also recent areas of interest gives you access to young parents and parents-to-be, delivering authentic answers on this new chapter of their lives.

Part 4

International surveys, centrally managed
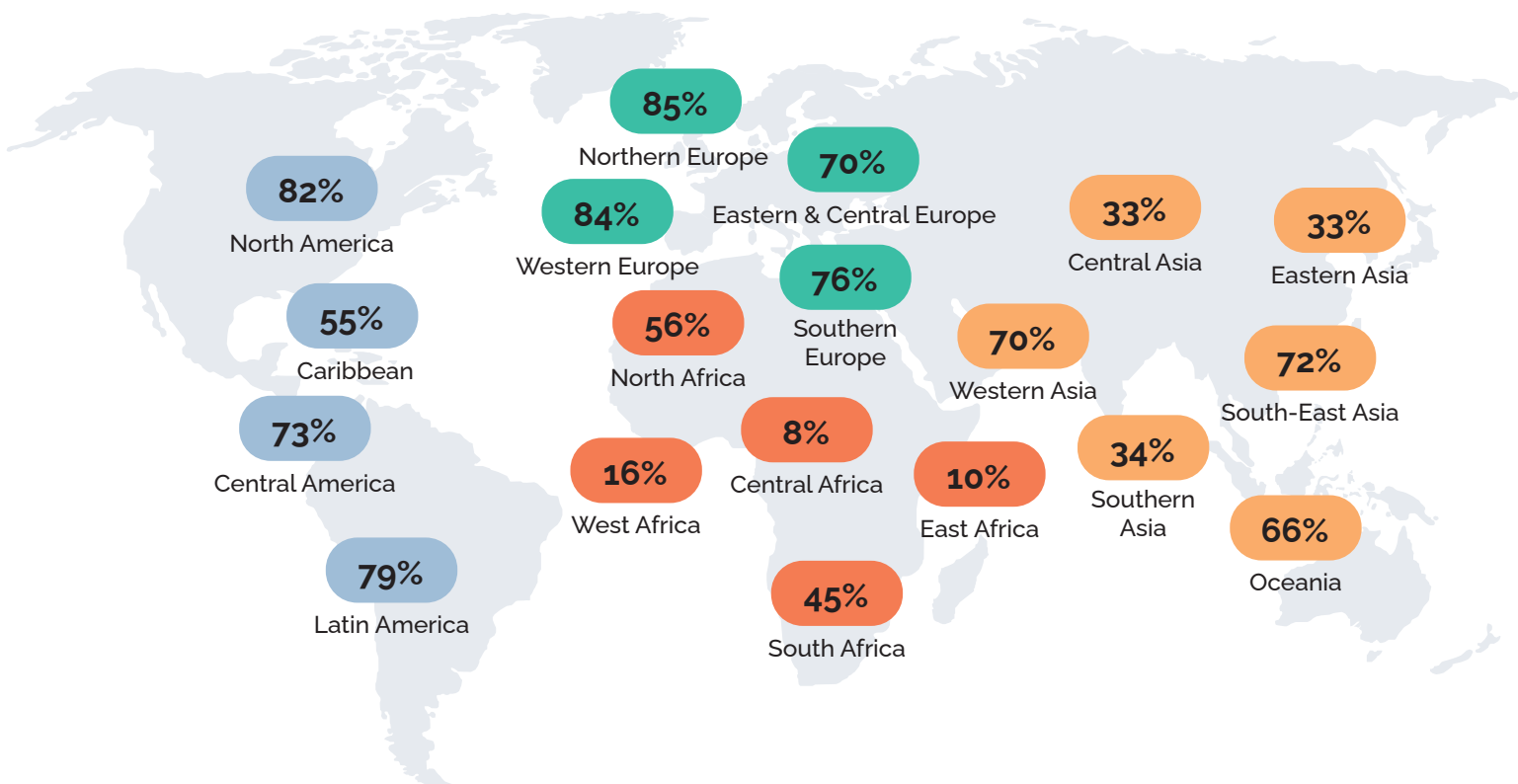
For most brands today, business issues apply not just at a local level, but rather in an international, multi-country context. The magic advantage of social networks is that they have global reach. And if your consumers come from different backgrounds, surveys via social media give you the power to better understand both their regional differences and the things they have in common.

O1 All population groups at your fingertips

Social media targeting makes it possible to get in touch with people anywhere in the world: its reach is such that nowadays, almost any market can be surveyed using this methodology.

Proof of this fact: **high penetration rates across most world regions.**

Social media penetration rate by world region in 2022

85% Northern Europe

84% Western Europe

70% Eastern & Central Europe

82% North America

33% Central Asia

33% Eastern Asia

55% Caribbean

56% North Africa

76% Southern Europe

70% Western Asia

72% South-East Asia

73% Central America

16% West Africa

8% Central Africa

10% East Africa

34% Southern Asia

66% Oceania

79% Latin America

45% South Africa

What does this actually mean?

Simply this: **from your own desk, you can initiate and track a multi-country survey, centrally and simultaneously.**
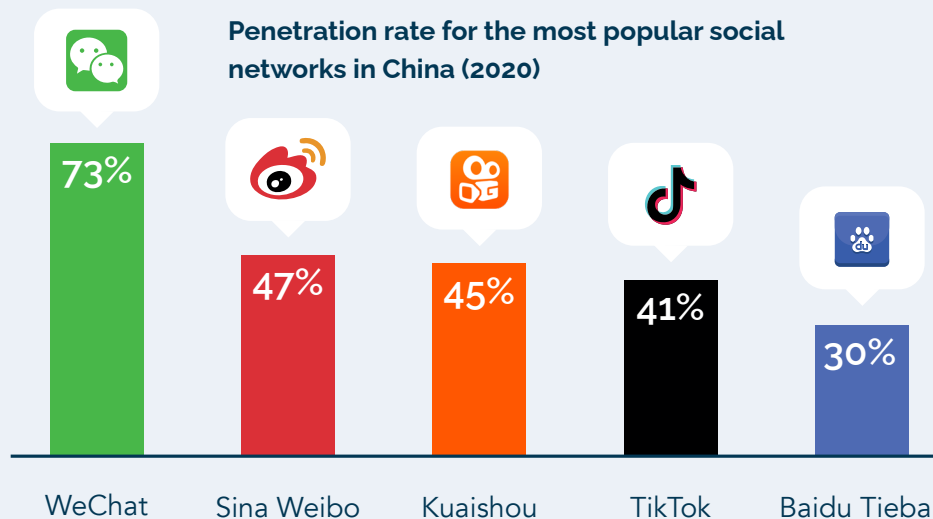
All this using one single technology and viewing just one output platform!

Zoom

China: the exception

China is the most populous country in the world, with more than 931 million social media users. However, the social networks we are familiar with (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.) are blocked there, and Chinese users flock instead to other platforms.

Penetration rate for the most popular social networks in China (2020)

WeChat	Sina Weibo	Kuaishou	TikTok	Baidu Tieba
73%	47%	45%	41%	30%

Africa and its growing penetration rates

The low penetration rates of social networks on this continent should be viewed through the prism of very high poverty levels, greatly limiting access to mobile phones, and significant disparities in development between and within different countries. Be that as it may, numbers are constantly rising, and it is becoming possible to survey the opinions of consumers of interest to you.

02 The centralised coordination of multi-country surveys

The reach of social media makes it easy for marketing surveys to expand their worldwide goals.

By finding **common features between consumers from different countries while retaining a close focus on specific local characteristics,** you can define appropriate areas for development.

It becomes a simple matter to collect answers from target groups in the same type of country (e.g. emerging countries), or markets in which your business operates, with the aim of comparing data between the relevant countries or consolidating the results. The fact that **data collection is centralised on one single platform** makes the process still more simple.

We have already conducted surveys in

54 countries!

Case study

Beauty, digital tech and emerging countries

In an effort to understand new practices in the spheres of digital technology, influence and cosmetics in emerging countries, we were able to conduct a multi-country survey on 1,000 women: 200 each in Saudi Arabia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Brazil. In just 4 days, answers from these 1,000 consumers provided a detailed analysis of the similarities and differences in usage between these culturally – and geographically – very distinct countries!

Walking sports in cold European regions

To collect information on snow walkers' habits and equipment, we surveyed 3,000 inhabitants of cold regions in five different countries: France, Russia, Romania, Italy and Germany. The study provided a means of comparing habits for a geographically targeted activity and local needs in different countries at the same time.

Part 5

A simple, fast
and reliable
methodology

As we've already seen, social media offers many strategic
advantages for boosting your knowledge of your target
group. It also offers improved efficiency and helps you to
use your resources optimally. At Episto, our methodology
combines simplicity and speed while delivering
guaranteed reliability that has been confirmed by major
market research companies.

01

Simple, quick steps

for getting your whole survey done in one week!

The Episto team is committed to supporting its customers all the way from project launch to output delivery.

Our watchwords are responsiveness and support to deliver an agile, streamlined process.

100% transparency

Quantitative research is a scientific discipline with complex technical aspects. Our teams are experts in this field, yet we make it a point of honour to establish trusted and 100% transparent relationships with our customers.

Adjusting your objectives, redefining the target group, handling schedule slippages, considering potential reasons for non-transferability of the chosen methodology… if there is any doubt regarding feasibility, or if something unexpected happens, we will take the time to explain to you and seek out solutions, with one goal in mind… the success of the survey.

Quote request

To save you time, we undertake to send you a quote within 24 hours of receipt of your request.

Day 0
Project launched

Upon validation, our Customer Success Managers set their expertise to work on your objectives. Briefs, schedules and draft questionnaires help to clarify the framework of the survey.

Day 1
Questionnaire approved

Starting with a questionnaire that may or may not be complete, and following a collaborative optimisation process with your assigned CSM, the questionnaire is adjusted to fulfil all the objectives, and is approved. Your CSM's mission is to ensure that your questionnaire is adapted into a conversational format, overseeing translation where necessary.

Day 2-3
Questionnaire planned and tested

It is now time to script the questionnaire on the platform and test it. The advertising images are created at the same time; the purpose of these will be to recruit qualified participants on the social networks.

Day 4
Campaign launch

The advantage of surveys via social media is their collection speed, as they are aimed at a very wide panel of individuals. At Episto, the fieldwork stage takes an average of 3 days!
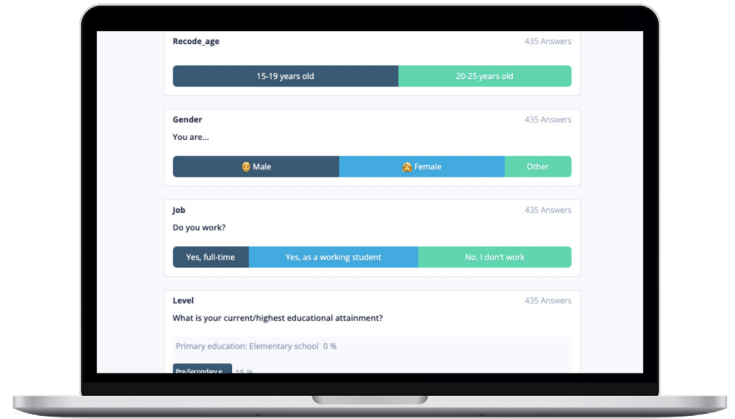
Day 5-9
End of collection

An email notifies you that collection is complete. You can view results live from the start of the fieldwork on the platform, allowing you to track progress.
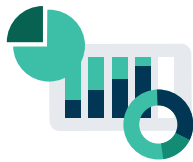
O2 An intuitive, accessible platform

for tracking results in real time!

Throughout the fieldwork stage of the survey, results are accessible on the Episto platform.

With your own personalised access, you'll be able to track **participant sampling and changes in quantitative data, and even view verbatim comments… in real time!**

What you'll find on this platform:

Data visualisation of results

Quantitative data is aggregated into simple, intuitive images.

Verbatim comments

Can be accessed and filtered in a dedicated tab and translated automatically into the desired language.

Filters

Simply tick the filters to isolate a population group by collected data criteria, and even compare groups with one another.

Collaborative features

Share and annotate the results platform for smooth, efficient teamwork.

Statistical processing

Cross-referenced sorting, significance tests, correction.

Exporting results

Raw data can be exported in Excel, CSV, Triple S and SPSS formats.

03 Reliable, tried and tested methodology

by the leading market research companies

Episto is the leading technology for collecting answers on social media. Our methodology has been developed in strict compliance with all rules governing survey discipline. A reliable surveying methodology that complies with industry best practice.

The quota methodology

A sampling methodology consisting of ensuring that a sample is representative by assigning it a structure that matches the target group. Questions enabling us to collect the data required to produce these quotas are always included in our questionnaires. They are then also used to perform post-fieldwork correction where necessary.

GDPR compliance

At the start of each of our questionnaires, in line with the applicable laws, we notify participants that their answers will be anonymised, and inform them of our privacy policy. They then have the option of starting or leaving the survey.

At Episto, we work alongside leading market research companies, all of whom have approved our methodology.

Experimental research work, conducted by leading market research companies at the very beginning of our collaboration, has enabled them to validate the rigour of our methodology and the accuracy of the output.

Conclusion
Why use surveys via social media?

Now you know the full story, here's what you need to remember:

Surveys via social media for collecting better answers

Surveys via social media are an ideal collection methodology for obtaining authentic answers, long verbatim comments and multimedia content from your target groups. However, this methodology should be avoided if your questionnaire is too long (over 60 questions), or involves an overly complex device (e.g. a webcam for eye tracking).

Surveys via social media for more accurate targeting

This collection methodology is suitable for all types of audiences, from the broadest to the most niche. We use targeting criteria available on social networks (socio-demographic, geographical, or by area of interest) to survey participants across a range of different profiles who do not regularly complete surveys.

Surveys via social media for centralised multi-country surveys

These provide access to greater geographical scope and allow you to monitor multi-country studies from your own desk, via one single platform. Easily survey your consumers in all locations where your business operates, and learn about the factors that unite and separate them.

Surveys via social media for greater simplicity and efficiency

No more lengthy fieldwork and endless waits for results! With the support of our CSMs, conduct your study quickly using a reliable methodology that's been validated by industry professionals and quickly access the platform containing all your results in real time.

**Surveys via social media: the revolutionary new methodology for collecting insights, with support from Episto**

episto
in a few words

Founded in 2018 by Jérémy Lefebvre and Alexis Watine, **Episto is now the leading answers collection technology on social media** (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok). We target the most relevant participants via social media advertisements, and collect their answers via an engaging, conversational questionnaire.

We are members of the Future 40 (Station F's forty most promising start-ups), with a current team of 28 employees, and a customer portfolio including market research companies (BVA, Ipsos, Kantar, OpinionWay), brands (Decathlon, Bonduelle, Auchan), advertising agencies and consulting firms (Dentsu, Roland Berger, EY).

Collect authentic answers from your target groups, anywhere in the world, nimbly and instantly.
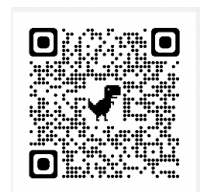
in episto.uk

Contact us!
hello@episto.uk

Try out one of our questionnaires!