

# The Online Video Research Interview (OVRI)

## Journalistica: The Methods Section

In this section, Journalistica puts a spotlight on research methods used in journalism studies and/or journalism practice.

**LENE HEISELBERG**

University of Southern Denmark

### KEYWORDS

qualitative, online interviewing, participant validation, building rapport, participant activation, turn-taking

## 1. Description of the method

Online Video Research Interviewing (OVRI) (Heiselberg & Stepinska, 2022) is a method that can be applied in scientific projects, e.g. within the field of journalism studies. Using established video conferencing platforms, such as Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet for data collection is highly relevant for journalism scholars and journalism practitioners since many people have grown accustomed to handling these. Yet, when conducting OVRI, it is obvious that traditional ways of conducting a qualitative interview must be reconsidered to fit video conferencing platforms.

By employing online video conferencing platforms, it is possible to design a qualitative study that allows for a collection of rich and thick data, access to all shared data, ease of sharing stimulus material, and access to hard-to-reach demographics. According to the literature and experiences from conducting qualitative interviews on a video conferencing platform, the most prominent challenge regarding the quality of the interview is building rapport and restricted visual cues. Apart from that, my colleague and I found that turn-taking, participant activation through exercises, and participant validation are important to transform to conduct a high-quality interview on a video conferencing platform (Heiselberg & Stepinska, 2022).

## 2. Example of use

Lobe, Morgan & Hoffmann (2022) give a nice overview of how and in which areas online qualitative interviewing has been applied. They provide a systematically organized evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of online qualitative interviewing methods in comparison to traditional in-person interviews. This produces five different areas for comparison: logistics and budget, ethics, recruitment, research design, and interviewing and moderating.

Furthermore, Keen, Lomeli-Rodriquez & Joffe (2022) confer unique advantages of online qualitative interviewing, such as: supporting researcher and participant populations with mobility challenges; enhancing international research where researcher presence or travel may be problematic.

I used the OVRI method in three empirical studies, both individual and group interviews. I had to conduct these studies during the corona lock-down, and therefore, I had to change my interview strategy to online. One of the studies was conducted for The Danish Broadcasting Corporation, and thus it was beneficial that stakeholders from the media company did not have to show up physically.

## 3. Main advantages and challenges of using the method

The main advantage of the OVRI approach is the convenience of the data collection process for both researcher and participants. Advantages for researchers include a time-saving and easy audio and visual data collection process.

Challenges for researchers include a lower number of participants in focus group discussions, potential participants' reluctance to share their personal space, and shorter time for data collection compared to in-person interviewing since online interviews tend to be shorter than in-person interviews (Epinion, 2021).

While conducting OVRIs, I learned that there are aspects of interviewing which must be altered to fit the platform, for instance turn-taking, participant activation through exercises and participant validation are important to transform to conduct a high-quality interview on a video conferencing platform (Heiselberg & Stepinska, 2022). Here, I want to elaborate on nonverbal communication cues and participant validation techniques:

Considering nonverbal communication: In most cases, a camera running while on Teams or Zoom will only be able to capture the head and some of the upper body of the persons interacting. This means that visual cues in the form of body language can be missed.

Generally, when talking on online video conferencing platforms, it is recommended to look into the camera because then participants on the other side of the screen will experience direct eye contact. Unfortunately, the downside is that when looking into the camera, you cannot see the participants, and consequently you can miss participant feedback: Is the participant listening? Does she understand the question? Is she agreeing/disagreeing? etc. I recommend from time to time to look into the camera to create the illusion of eye contact, i.e. when asking questions or rounding up, but the most important thing is to sense participants on the other side of the screen, and it can only be done by looking at the participants. An important piece of advice is to always avoid looking at yourself on the screen while talking, it will seem like your attention is elsewhere.

Participant validation techniques: In OVRI participant validation (Creswell, 2013; Kvale, 1989), also known as member checking, is of increased importance to secure trust between interviewer and participant during the interview. In OVRI, it is vital to check whether the interviewer has correctly understood the responses of the participants, especially when it comes to picking up subtleties such as irony, emotions, silences, or gestures (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019). During OVRI, it can be helpful to ask frank questions. For instance, I had to ask: ‘Why are you smiling?’ because I could not determine if a participant smiled at something being said in the interview, or at something happening in her home that I was not aware of caused her to smile.

As a final point, it is important to stress the need to develop knowledge about which situations are uniquely well-suited to online interviewing (Keen, Lomeli-Rodriguez & Joffe, 2022). At present, we do not know in which situations to apply in-person interviewing and the OVRI method.

#### **4. Ethical considerations**

Established video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Teams are part of privately-owned companies, generating questions about data security.

## REFERENCES

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. (Vol. 3). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Epinion. (2021, April 13). *5 gode råd, hvis du vil afholde dine fokusgrupper online*. <https://epinionglobal.com/pov/fokusgrupper-online/>
- Heiselberg, L. & Stepińska, A. (2022) Transforming Qualitative Interviewing Techniques for Video Conferencing Platforms, *Digital Journalism*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2047083>
- Keen, S., Lomeli-Rodriguez, M., & Joffe, H. (2022). From Challenge to Opportunity: Virtual Qualitative Research During COVID-19 and Beyond. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221105075>
- Khan, T. H., & MacEachen, E. (2022). An Alternative Method of Interviewing: Critical Reflections on Videoconference Interviews for Qualitative Data Collection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221090063>
- Kvale, S. 1989. *Issues of Validity in Qualitative Research*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Lobe, B., Morgan, D. L., & Hoffman, K. (2022). A Systematic Comparison of In-Person and Video-Based Online Interviewing. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221127068>
- McGrath, C., P. J. Palmgren, & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve Tips for Conducting Qualitative Research Interviews. *Medical Teacher* 41 (9): 1002–1006. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149>

## LENE HEISELBERG

Assistant professor  
Centre for Journalism  
University of Southern Denmark  
lhei@journalism.sdu.dk