



ISO 19731: A new standard for web analyses and digital analytics

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For market, social, and opinion researchers, standards for both ethics and quality are essential for ensuring our industry prospers in the long-term. Ethical standards ensure that research suppliers, buyers, and participants are treated fairly, honestly, and respectfully. In Canada, the MRIA guides researchers on their ethical responsibilities. Standards of quality form the second major component and while the MRIA also provides guidance on these issues in Canada, the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an independent, international organization that provides a comprehensive set of quality guidelines for researchers around the world.

For several years now, two ISO standards have been available for research suppliers to benchmark the quality of their services. ISO 20252 covers quality standards for market, social, and opinion research and was first published in 2006 and later updated in 2012. ISO 26362 covers quality standards for access panels and was published in 2009.

A third standard, ISO 19731, will be published in a few weeks and it covers web analyses and digital analytics. This standard focuses on methodologies such as social media listening, measurement of website navigation, measurement of cookies or page impressions, online metered panels, passive digital methods, and other forms of research that rely mainly on people's natural use of digital or online technologies rather than more traditional methods such as questionnaires, focus groups, or communities. Although the use of these digital methodologies has been in development for more than ten years, the processes and capabilities have evolved immensely in the last few years. Many suppliers have now built standardized processes that can be easily implemented and used for market, social, and opinion research purposes.

This standard will prove particularly helpful to several groups of people. First, people who are new to commissioning these types of research will appreciate that the standard assumes no prior knowledge of the methodologies. It outlines the full range of topics that suppliers and buyers should discuss so that all parties are fully aware of the important issues that may affect the validity and reliability of the research. Second, since many providers of these services do not yet see themselves as being a part of the market, social, and opinion research industry, the standard gives both parties an unbiased and common framework for understanding the important issues. Third, it offers suppliers a framework for ensuring they have built processes for all important aspects of their business and that those processes are clear and transparent.

Topics described in detail by ISO 19731 include the entire research process. For instance, some of the broad topics include the types of data cleaned out of a dataset, types and validity of sentiment and/or text analysis used, types of digital data or browser data collected and how it is done, sampling strategies including the universe and units of measurement, protections and safeguards of people associated with the data, key features of reporting the data, data retention and security, and ownership of results.



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The new standard will be available for purchase on the [ISO website](#) in a few weeks and further details will follow at that time. We encourage research users and buyers to purchase a copy of the standard so that they may be fully informed about the complexities of these innovative methodologies.