Reviewer's report

Title: Conducting Online Expert Panels: A Feasibility Study

Version: 1 Date: 4 October 2011

Reviewer: Petter Andreas Steen

Reviewer's report:

According to the authors this is a feasibility study before conducting a comparative study of on-line vs. a more traditional modified Delphi approach incl. face-to-face meeting(s). The latter would normally include an instruction to come to some specified level of consensus, yet the present study specifically avoided instructing the participants to come to consensus. This reviewer has difficulty seeing that the present study gives a good evaluation of the feasibility before such a comparative study. The pressure to come to consensus is an important factor and can cause frustration, but was not included.

With the large number of participants, it would have been valuable to divide them into panels with more spread in participants/group instead of 12,15,31, and 33.

Were the participants evaluations of the process really normally distributed for all factors since all are reported as mean with standard deviation? There is no mention in the methods section on evaluation of distribution of the 7 point satisfaction scale. If other distribution this reviewer believes non-parametric presentation (with medians) and non-parametric statistical tests should be used.

The presentation of the results tend to be too positive. "agree slightly" for mean 4.61 SD 1.51 while only close to "neutral" for mean=4.21; sd=1.55. The latter is as neutral as the first is "agree slightly". The authors should also discuss the large SDs for most of the factors evaluated.

competing interests. It is mentioned that two of the authors are developers of the Expert Lens system. Economic and intellectual property interests should be specified. Is there a patent or other factors involved?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests