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Interviewed by a Sofa?

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Software and panels provider GMI has partnered with Amsterdam-based MR firm DervalResearch to launch SLIC (Second Life Interview Corner), claiming to provide a new perspective on conducting one-to-one research interviews in a virtual environment.

Through SLIC, 'residents' of the virtual world can be polled on hot topics such as collaborative development, customisation or waiting behaviour. The interview starts as soon as a respondent selects a topic and sits on the related 'sofa', which then asks open or multiple-choice questions via the SLIC chat function.

'I've never been interviewed by a sofa before,' admits Professor Tom Novak, Co-director of the Sloan Center for Internet Retailing. 'But I found the SLIC interviewing process much more natural than I'd expected. For one thing, in Second Life, you become accustomed to having text chats with people, so a text chat with a sofa seems like a perfectly reasonable thing to do.'

The system is available 24x7 and respondents are recruited in 'real life' as well as in Second Life through 'word of virtual mouth' and groups. Participants are also invited to join the SLIC group/panel in order to be contacted for further surveys and interviews.

'Survey experience is key – the more engaging and rewarding the experience is, the more likely it will be seen as an integral and useful part of the virtual world, rather than a disjointed bolt-on from the outside,' comments Mario Menti, Solutions Architect for GMI in London. Professor Diana Derval, CEO of DervalResearch explains that SLIC obtains feedback from residents when they are available and roaming in their virtual world.

Founded in Seattle in 1999, GMI (Global Market Insite) now has 29 offices around the world and is online at www.gmi-mr.com . DervalResearch was launched last year and is online at www.derval-research.com .

<http://www.mrweb.com/drno/news7273.htm>