

CONSULTANCY OPPORTUNITY – Digital Methods Consultant

Role	Digital Methods Consultant	Reports to	Project Lead
Contract type	Consultancy / freelance contract	Duration	ASAP until 30 June 2027
Volume	Average of 50-65 days over project timeframe (depending on day rate)	Location	UK or Germany
Daily rate	To be agreed based on experience	Languages	English

ABOUT ISD

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) is an independent, non-profit think-and-do tank dedicated to safeguarding human rights, democracy, and security in the face of rising extremism, hate, polarisation, and information manipulation. For more than 20 years, ISD has been at the forefront of analysing, exposing, and countering these threats, helping governments, institutions, communities, and the private sector build the tools, strategies, and capabilities they need.

ISD's work combines cutting-edge digital analysis, policy expertise, and operational programmes. Our teams in Berlin, London, Washington DC, Amman, and Toronto span more than 150 researchers, analysts, policy specialists, and practitioners.

ABOUT THE DIGITAL ANALYSIS UNIT

ISD's Digital Analysis Unit (DAU) is a central hub for digital methodologies and technology within ISD. Working closely with analysts and managers in the research team, the DAU is responsible for overseeing research methodologies across ISD projects, selecting appropriate tools and technical partnerships, providing internal training and upskilling, and ensuring standardised research practices across various projects and entities.

In collaboration with strategic technology partners, the DAU leverages data analytics, natural language processing, open-source intelligence (OSINT) techniques, and rigorous ethnographic research to enable ISD researchers to gain real-time insights into extremist, hate and terrorist networks, movements, and online narratives. It also supports ISD's efforts to identify instances of covert content manipulation, identity deception and misleading behaviours with the goal of countering the spread of false information. As well as monitoring online risks, the DAU provides empirical evidence to guide ISD's digital policy work on assessing the effectiveness of social media platforms' efforts to mitigate online harms in line with digital regulation, including policy enforcement and content moderation.

Increasingly, the DAU also integrates representative survey research as a complementary methodology, enabling ISD to measure not only the supply of online narratives but also their reach, credibility, and behavioural effects among target populations.

THE ROLE

We are seeking a Digital Methods Consultant to design and oversee the digital research and survey components of the project, working alongside the qualitative analysts to:

- a) Operationalise the narrative salience and relative traction frameworks across Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube in the three target countries (Brazil, India, and South Africa)
- b) Translate ethnographic findings into structured survey instruments
- c) Oversee survey design, fielding, and analysis with local partners.

The consultant is expected to work for an average of 50-65 days over the project timeframe (depending on the day rate). The consultancy starts as soon as possible and runs until 30 June 2027.

A key project the consultant will work on is ISD Germany's 14-month research project funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, running until 30 June 2027, which investigates information manipulation circulating in Brazil, India, and South Africa that targets Germany's economic interests. Distorted narratives about Germany - as an economy, employer, trading partner, and destination for skilled migration - can damage skilled-labour recruitment, trust in German companies, and broader economic cooperation, even when formal economic indicators have not yet registered any impact. This project closes that gap by establishing the first systematic mechanism examining how such narratives circulate abroad and affect German economic interests.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Digital research methods & data collection oversight (35%)

- Support the qualitative analysts in collecting public social media data, including via platform research APIs and other appropriate tools, and troubleshoot platform-specific access constraints as they emerge.
- Operationalise the narrative salience and relative traction frameworks set out in the project design, ensuring measurement is consistent and defensible across the three country contexts.
- Contribute to the actor and narrative mapping during the initial ethnographic phase, and oversee the methodological consistency of the three-month longitudinal monitoring phase.
- Maintain project-specific keyword lists, actor lists, and codebooks, and ensure these are documented for reproducibility and audit.

Survey design, fielding & analysis (45%)

- Translate qualitative findings from the ethnographic phases into structured survey instruments, in coordination with the project research team.
- Specify sampling, weighting, translation, and cognitive pre-testing requirements and develop quality-assurance protocols for fielding.

- Manage relationships with local survey partners in India, Brazil, and South Africa, including tendering, contracting support, and ongoing oversight
- Lead the analysis of weighted survey data, including subgroup analysis and basic inferential statistics, to assess correlations between exposure to manipulated narratives and economic perceptions, trust, and migration intentions.
- Ensure survey data handling complies with applicable data protection requirements and ethical standards.

Triangulation, reporting & stakeholder support (20%)

- Triangulate quantitative survey findings with qualitative ethnographic evidence to produce robust, policy-relevant insights.
- Contribute methodological sections and analytical content to the project's two core deliverables: the Monitoring Report and the Impact Assessment.
- Support the preparation and delivery of the validation roundtable with German ministries, economic stakeholders, and business associations, including by presenting methodological choices and findings in accessible terms.
- Escalate project challenges and methodological risks to the project lead in a timely manner, and contribute to adaptive course-correction where needed.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

We are looking for a consultant who combines methodological rigour in digital research methods with hands-on experience in survey design, fielding, and analysis. The criteria below describe the profile we are seeking.

	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge, training and qualifications	Educated to degree level in a related field (political or social science, area studies, computational social science, statistics, international relations, or security studies).	Master's degree or PhD in a relevant discipline, particularly in survey methodology, computational social science, or area studies covering at least one of India, Brazil, or South Africa.
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3+ years of project delivery experience, with a proven ability to lead the methodological design and execution of mixed-methods research projects. • Experience designing research methodologies on online information manipulation, disinformation, and/or related digital harms. • Demonstrated experience working with or commissioning quantitative survey research, including questionnaire design, sampling, weighting, translation, cognitive pre-testing, and analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with the information environments of at least one of India, Brazil, or South Africa. • Experience conducting or supervising digital ethnographic research on non-Western platforms and publics. • Prior experience working on projects examining economic, migration-related, or reputation-focused narratives.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience commissioning and overseeing local survey partners, ideally across multiple country contexts. • Experience integrating qualitative and quantitative findings in mixed-methods designs. 	
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong working knowledge of digital research methods, including content analysis, network analysis, and approaches to assessing narrative prominence and engagement in data-constrained environments. • Practical experience collecting public social media data via platform research APIs (e.g. TikTok Research API, Meta research tools, YouTube Data API) or comparable tools. • Ability to analyse weighted survey data, including subgroup analysis and basic inferential statistics, in R, Stata, SPSS, or equivalent. • Strong working proficiency in English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working proficiency in Portuguese, Hindi, or other languages relevant to the target information environments. • Familiarity with weighting procedures such as iterative proportional fitting. • Experience with data wrangling in Python or R, including common libraries (e.g. pandas, tidyverse). • Proficient use of data visualisation tools (e.g. Tableau, Flourish, ggplot). • Familiarity with applicable data protection requirements and platform Terms of Service in research contexts.
Additional requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding attention to detail. • Highly organised, with the ability to be flexible, multi-task, and respond proactively in a fast-paced research environment. • Ability to work well both independently and as part of a distributed project team. 	

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

ISD is committed to building a diverse and inclusive team. We particularly welcome expressions of interest from individuals who are currently underrepresented in our networks, including consultants from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. If you have specific access needs or adjustments you would like us to consider during the selection process, please let us know.

HOW TO EXPRESS INTEREST

Interested consultants are invited to share the following with the ISD Germany project team at germany@isdglobal.org:

- A current CV or short profile (max 3 pages)
- A short cover note (max 1 page) outlining relevant experience, country expertise, and availability
- One or two examples of relevant prior work (links or attachments)

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a 40-minute conversation with members of the ISD Germany project team.