ESOMAR 28 QUESTIONS TO HELP BUYERS OF ONLINE SAMPLES

Answered by Tiburon Research

COMPANY PROFILE

Q1. What experience does your company have in providing online samples for market research?

Context:
This answer might help you to form an opinion about the relevant experience of the sample provider. How long has the sample provider been providing this service and do they have for example a market research, direct marketing or more technological background? Are the samples solely provided for third party research, or does the company also conduct proprietary work using their panels?

The project "InternetOpros.ru" (meaning Internet Survey) started in 2006 with the main purpose to secure demand for quality online sample in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Current panel size is 900K+ panelists with 40K new coming every month and about 150K purged every year. Panel response rate varies with target group and averages 20%.

SAMPLE SOURCES AND RECRUITMENT

Q2. Please describe and explain the type(s) of online sample sources from which you get respondents. Are these databases? Actively managed research panels? Direct marketing lists? Social networks? Web intercept (also known as river) samples?

Context:
The description of the types of sources a provider uses for delivering an online sample will provide insight into the quality of the sample.

The panel is mainly recruited via banner and teaser advertisement throughout a vast variety of sites. Non-monetary motivation at the first contact is used. We avoid referral programs so that not to encourage duplication.

Q3. If you provide samples from more than one source: How are the different sample sources blended together to ensure validity? How can this be replicated over time to provide reliability? How do you deal with the possibility of duplication of respondents across sources?

Context:
The variation in data coming from different sources has been well documented. Overlap between different panel providers can be significant in some cases and de-duplication removes this source of error, and frustration for respondents.

We use proprietary deduplication algorithm to find and remove duplicates both within our own panel and any sample we administer including those coming from other panels and river sample sources. The algorithm uses cookies, other technical data and is extremely reliable.

Q4. Are your sample source(s) used solely for market research? If not, what other purposes are they used for?

Context:
Combining respondents from sources set up primarily for different purposes (like direct marketing for example) may cause undesirable survey effects.

YES, we never use panel for any sort of advertising or direct marketing.

Q5. How do you source groups that may be hard to reach on the internet?

Context:
Ensuring the inclusion of hard-to-reach groups on the internet (like ethnic minority groups, young people, seniors etc.) may increase population coverage and improve the quality of the sample provided.

We set monthly socio-demographic quotas on signups from our recruitment partners to make the panel representative to internet users.

Q6. If, on a particular project, you need to supplement your sample(s) with sample(s) from other providers, how do you select those partners? Is it your policy to notify a client in advance when using a third party provider?

Context:
Many providers work with third parties. This means that the quality of the sample is also dependent on the quality of sample providers that the buyer did not select. Transparency is essential in this situation. Overlap between different providers can be significant in some cases and de-duplication removes this source of error, and frustration for respondents. Providers who observe process standards like the ISO standards are required to give you this information.

When we run out of the sample (huge projects, low incidence rates) we mix up our sample with sample from our trusted panel partners. We always notify our Clients when we do so. We conduct “mystery panelists survey” regularly to ensure quality. In case of multi-panel sampling we use real-time de- duplication based on cookies and other technical parameters like IP, user agent, display resolution, etc.

SAMPLING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Q7. What steps do you take to achieve a representative sample of the target population?

Context:
The sampling processes (i.e. how individuals are selected or allocated from the sample sources) used are the main factor in sample provision. A systematic approach based on market research fundamentals may increase sample quality.

To achieve a representative sample and avoid skewing we quote main socio-demographic parameters (sex, age, city/region/strata, income and education). The common procedure is as follows:

- Initial batch of the e-mails is pooled from the database according to the screening/quota criteria;
- The batch is then filtered according to invitation/participation/topic moratorium criteria;
- The remaining e-mails are then randomized; ● Sample of target size in then deployed; ● Reminders are used to increase response rate.

Q8. Do you employ a survey router?

Context:
A survey router is a software system that allocates willing respondents to surveys for which they are likely to qualify. Respondents will have been directed to the router for different reasons, perhaps after not qualifying for another survey in which they had been directly invited to

participate, or maybe as a result of a general invitation from the router itself. There is no consensus at present about whether and how the use of a router affects the responses that individuals give to survey questions.

Yes, we are using survey router software. Respondents might take a survey via router by next ways: by visiting panel site, by receiving general invitations to survey router, by screening at simple survey. We take care of overall amount of successful completes, in this way we also control sample quality.

Q9. If you use a router: Please describe the allocation process within your router. How do you decide which surveys might be considered for a respondent? On what priority basis are respondents allocated to surveys?

Context:
Biases of varying severity may arise from the prioritisation in choices of surveys to present to respondents and the method of allocation.

There is no any prioritization for users, we select surveys randomly which fit respondents most of all.

Q10. If you use a router: What measures do you take to guard against, or mitigate, any bias arising from employing a router? How do you measure and report any bias?

Context:
If Person A is allocated to Survey X on the basis of some characteristic then they may not be allowed to also do Survey Y. The sample for Survey Y is potentially biased by the absence of people like Person A.

We have a rather big panel and it helps us to have enough people A to represent any groups for X survey and Y survey at the same time. We are not allowing people who took part in survey X to take part in survey

Y if this is a part of way to make a good quality sample.

Q11. If you use a router: Who in your company sets the parameters of the router? Is it a dedicated team or individual project managers?

Context:
It may be necessary to try to replicate your project in the future with as many of the parameters as possible set to the same values. How difficult or easy will this be?

There is a special team which focused on router workflow. There is no problem to replicate parameters of any project.

Q12. What profiling data is held on respondents? How is it done? How does this differ across sample sources? How is it kept up-to-date? If no relevant profiling data is held, how are low incidence projects dealt with?

Context:
The usefulness to your project of pre-profiled information will depend on the precise question asked and may also depend on when it was asked. If real time profiling is used, what control do you have over what question is actually asked?

For many panelists in addition to contact details we keep such profiling information as: internet usage habits, family, job, income, etc. (see our Panel Book for more details).

The panelists are asked to review their profiles twice a year. For advanced targeting and panel knowledge we conduct a biyearly voluntary survey covering lifestyle and consumer behavior topics.

Q13. Please describe your survey invitation process. What is the proposition that people are offered to take part in individual surveys?

What information about the project itself is given in the process? Apart from direct invitations to specific surveys (or to a router), what other means of invitation to surveys are respondents exposed to? You should note that not all invitations to participate take the form of emails.

Context:
The type of proposition (and associated rewards) could influence the type of people who agree to take part in specific projects and can therefore influence sample quality. The level of detail given about the project may also influence response.

We use individual links for all survey invitations. We never disclose any project details (target group, etc.) in those invitations, but expected survey length and proposed incentive.

Q14. Please describe the incentives that respondents are offered for taking part in your surveys. How does this differ by sample source, by interview length, by respondent characteristics?

Context:
The reward or incentive system may impact on the reasons why people participate in a specific project and these effects can cause bias to the sample.

Incentives are accrued to panelist’s account on per complete basis and depend on interview length or task complexity. Incentives can be deemed as a top-up of participant’s mobile phone accounts when redemption threshold is achieved or on charity any time. Valuable panelists (ITDMs, BDMs, etc.) receive higher incentives vs. ordinary panelists.

Q15. What information about a project do you need in order to give an accurate estimate of feasibility using your own resources?

Context:
The “size” of any panel or source may not necessarily be an accurate indicator that your specific project can be completed or completed within your desired time frame.

To make accurate estimation we ask our clients:

- Target group definition and expected incidence rate if known;
- Any quotas (geo, age, brand usage etc.)

Q16. Do you measure respondent satisfaction? Is this information made available to clients?

Context:
Respondent satisfaction may be an indicator of willingness to take future surveys. Respondent reactions to your survey from self-reported feedback or from an analysis of suspend points might be very valuable to help understand survey results.

Yes. The satisfaction is tracked at the end of each survey and – in more details – during biannual major panelist satisfaction study. Yes, this information is shared with the clients (in the technical report which is provided after each study) and on request.

Q17. What information do you provide to debrief your client after the project has finished?

Context:
One should expect a full sample provider debrief report, including gross sample, start rate, participation rate, dropout rate, the invitation/contact text, a description of the fieldwork process, and so on. Sample providers should be able to list the standard reports and metrics that they make available.

Debriefing report contains actual fieldwork figures: response rate, incidence rate, dropout rate, average interview length and standard deviation of the latest, panelist satisfaction index, questionnaire feedback summary (on request).

DATA QUALITY AND VALIDATION

Q18. Who is responsible for data quality checks? If it is you, do you have in place procedures to reduce or eliminate undesired within survey behaviours, such as (a) random responding, (b) Illogical or inconsistent responding, (c) overuse of item non-response (e.g. “Don’t Know”) or (d) speeding (too rapid survey completion)? Please describe these procedures.

Context:
The use of such procedures may increase the reliability and validity of the survey data.

We check for the following quality issues:

- Speeding;
- Inconsistencies in registration vs. screener data;
- Straight-lining;
- Duplication;
- Logical and consistency control typically rests with the client. We encourage our clients sharing results of such an analysis with us and keep track for fraudulent activity.

Q19. How often can the same individual be contacted to take part in a survey within a specified period whether they respond to the contact or not? How does this vary across your sample sources?

Context:
Over solicitation may have an impact on respondent engagement or on self-selection and non-response bias.

We have the following invitation/participation restrictions: 1) max. 3 invitations a month, 2) max. three completes per month.

Q20. How often can the same individual take part in a survey within a specified period? How does this vary across your sample sources? How do you manage this within categories and/or time periods?

Context:
Frequency of survey participation may increase the risk of undesirable conditioning effects or other potential biases.

We have the following invitation/participation restrictions: 1) max. 8 invitations a month, 2) max. 4 completes per month.
We also have an opportunity to exclude people who participated in some category (48 in total) within one month.

Q21. Do you maintain individual level data such as recent participation history, date of entry, source, etc., on your survey respondents? Are you able to supply your client with a project analysis of such individual level data?

Context:
This type of data per respondent including how the total population is defined and how the sample was selected and drawn, may increase the possibilities for analysis of data quality.

YES.

Q22. Do you have a confirmation of respondent identity procedure? Do you have procedures to detect fraudulent respondents? Please describe these procedures as they are implemented at sample source registration and/or at the point of entry to a survey or router. If you offer B2B samples what are the procedures there, if any?

Context:
Confirmation of identity can increase quality by decreasing multiple entries, fraudulent panellists etc.

We believe that ID validation skews panel significantly (people are afraid of sharing sensitive information in web). We use e-mail based validation of registration. All respondents have to provide their mobile phone number as they receive incentives on mobile phone account.

POLICIES AND COMPLIANCE

Q23. Please describe the ‘opt-in for market research’ processes for all your online sample sources.

Context:
The opt-in process indicates the respondents’ relationship with the sample source provider. The market generally makes a distinction between single and double opt-in. Double opt-in refers to the process by which a check is made to confirm that the person joining a panel or database wishes to be a member and understands what to expect (in advance of participating in an actual survey for a paying client).

Panelists are registered through a double opt-in process:

1. visits InternetOpros.ru panel portal,
2. clicks ‘Join’ button, completes short registration form (name, region, sex, age, e-mail, password),

3. reads and confirm an agreement with Terms & Conditions and Privacy policy statements,
4. clicks a unique link in the invitation message to validate his/her e-mail,
5. completes an extended registration form (internet usage, family, job, income, etc.)

Q24. Please provide a link to your Privacy Policy. How is your Privacy Policy provided to your respondents?

Context:
Not complying with local and international privacy laws might mean the sample provider is operating illegally. An example privacy policy is given in the ESOMAR Guideline for Online Research.

http://internetopros.ru/Info/Confidential

Our privacy policy statement is in line with local Personal Data Protection law. We also observe ESOMAR codes and guidelines.

Q25. Please describe the measures you take to ensure data protection and data security.

Context:
The sample provider usually stores sensitive and confidential information on panellists and clients in databases. These data need to be properly secured and backed-up, as does any confidential information provided by the client. The sample provider should be able to provide you with the latest date at which their security has been evaluated by a credible third-party.

All data is stored within a reliable datacenter with all appropriate security policies in place.

Q26. What practices do you follow to decide whether online research should be used to present commercially sensitive client data or materials to survey respondents?

Context:
There are no foolproof methods for protecting audio, video, still images or concept descriptions in online surveys. In today's social media world, clients should be aware that the combination of technology solutions and respondent confidentiality agreements are "speed bumps" that mitigate but cannot guarantee that a client's stimuli will not be shared or described in social media.

To protect sensitive client data we use:

- unique invitation links;
- copy/paste is blocked (our scripting).

Q27. Are you certified to any specific quality system? If so, which one(s)?

Context:
Being certified may require the supplier to perform tasks in a pre-determined manner and document procedures that should be followed.

We have Grand Mean Project (http://www.mktginc.com) certificate.

Q28. Do you conduct online surveys with children and young people? If so, do you adhere to the standards that ESOMAR provides? What other rules or standards, for example COPPA in the United States, do you comply with?

Context:
The ICC/ESOMAR International Code requires special permissions for interviewing children. These are described in the ESOMAR Online Research Guideline. In the USA researchers must adhere to the

requirements of the Children's Online Privacy Act (COPPA). Further information on legislation and codes of practice can be found in Section 6 of ESOMAR's Guideline for Online Research.

Following ESOMAR Online Research Guideline for each project with those under 14 y.o. parents are contacted to obtain their permission. Parents are informed about the nature of the project, provided with a unique URL to the survey and appropriate instructions.