The ESOMAR has published 28 questions designed to help research buyers of online samples (first published 2005 and revised 2008 and 2012).

The primary aim of these 28 Questions is to increase transparency and raise awareness of the key issues for researchers to consider when deciding whether an online sampling approach is fit for their purpose. Put another way, the aim is to help researchers to ensure that what they receive meets their expectations. The questions are also designed to introduce consistent terminology for providers to state how they maintain quality, to enable buyers to compare the services of different sample suppliers.

We warmly welcome these questions and answer them to provide you with information on what we do and how we do it.

28 ESOMAR QUESTIONS

COMPANY PROFILE

1. What experience does your company have with providing online samples for market research?
The company was founded in 2006 and since we conducted mainly online sampling. Both Managing Directors had experience of more than 10 years in the field of offline and online recruitment and panel research (e.g. at IPSOS Deutschland or MediaTransfer AG Netresearch & Consulting, now a subsidiary of Harris Interactive). Since 2009 we are a GmbH ("Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung"), the German equivalent of a Limited Liability Company (=LLC).

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SAMPLE SOURCES AND RECRUITMENT

2. 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?

All our samples are from our Online-Access-Panel Consumer-Opinion.com. This is an actively managed research panel where members have actively agreed to become panel members and take part in market research projects. Membership requires a double opt in (filling in of a recruitment questionnaire and confirmation of membership by sending an activation email). No direct marketing. No social networking. No web intercept/river.

3. 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?

We use our own panel only. We do not broker sample from other sources.

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

Yes, market research only.

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

We use our profiles for inclusion of hard-to-reach groups (like rich or poor people, young people, seniors etc.).

6. 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?

We do not broker sample. Instead, we just use our own panel Consumer-Opinion.com. If we cannot supply the complete sample we tell our client to use other vendors in addition to us.

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SAMPLING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

7. What steps do you take to achieve a representative sample of the target population?
We have methodical doubts that any online panel could be ever able to provide a fully representative sample against a target population – and we do not pretend that we can. In practice, we use quota plans in line with government census data or our customers' quota sheets in order to stratify our sample in accordance with the target.

8. Do you employ a survey router?
No.

9. 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?
We don't have a router.

10. 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?

We don't have a router.

11. If you use a router: Who in your company sets the parameters of the router? Is it a dedicated team or individual project managers?
We don't have a router.

12. What profile data is kept on panel members? For how many members is this data collected and how often is this data updated?
A basic profile, which is mandatory in order to become an active member, includes only information on name, address, country, base language, age, gender and technical information (like IP or referrer). More specific topics, such as education, income, children in household or others, are kept in special profile datasets on demand. We integrate these special profile questions in our surveys whenever suitable or necessary. Thus, this information is always up to date.

13. 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.
All of our invitations have the form of emails, and we do not use a router or any other means of invitation. We inform the respondents about the length and the exact incentives in EURO. The topic is either not stated at all or in a very broad manner (e.g. "about consumer products", "about mobility").

14. 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?
Our panel members receive a monetary incentive. We consider roughly € 0.20 per minute spent on the survey as appropriate. Incentives are wire paid into the personal bank account after €10 have been accumulated.

15. What information about a project do you need in order to give an accurate estimate of feasibility using your own resources?
We need the target group definition, the IR among target and – if applicable - the exact quotas required.

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

We measure respondent satisfaction for internal evaluation. By default the data is not available to customers, but occasionally it is shared with the customer (upon request only).

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

Once a project is finished, on request we provide our clients with a field report containing detailed information on the project's performance data, such as number of invitations, starters, screenouts/quotafulls, dropouts and completes. Further breakouts (number initial invitations, first/second/third/fourth reminders, IR, LOI, etc.) are available to the customer upon request, too.

DATA QUALITY AND VALIDATION

18. 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.

Since most of projects run on the servers of our customers, which we usually have no access to, our customers should detect for undesired survey behavior (such as random responding or speeding) and screen those respondents out.
In addition, we also have our own controls in place such as:

• Quality score for all respondents.
• Silent blocking of respondents with a history of problematic responding from any new invitations
• Securing member identities and exclusion of duplicates and persons with false identities through submitted bank account information.

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19. 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?
Per survey we send one initial invitation and at maximum 4 reminders with at least 3 days between each email. So over solicitation is prevented. We have just one source, our own panel.

20. 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?
We are not multinational company with millions of respondents, instead have a decent size. Given these circumstances, over-surveying is not at all a problem with our respondents. To the opposite, we struggle to provide our respondents with enough survey invitations to keep them motivated. Thus, most respondents receive just 1-2 invitations per month, and the risk of undesirable conditioning effects or other potential biases is much lower with us compared to larger panel providers.

21. 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?
Yes, all data mentioned are available on individual base and can be provided to our customers upon request.

22. 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?
Our panel is identity secured. Payment of incentives can only be done by wire transfer, and during the wire process the banks provide us with the bank account holders' names. We check against registered names, and exclude all duplicates and all panelists with false identities.

POLICIES AND COMPLIANCE

23. Please describe the 'opt-in for market research' processes for all your online sample sources.
At "Consumer-Opinion.com" participants register for panel membership and confirm this in double opt-in process with email verification.

24. Please provide a link to your Privacy Policy. How is your Privacy Policy provided to your respondents?
Link:
http://www.consumer-opinion.com/conditions.aspx?c=en-US
(see chapter "Data protection")
Our policy is openly communicated in the "Conditions" of our panelist website.

25. Please describe the measures you take to ensure data protection and data security.
Our servers and firewalls are completely in house and secured by the latest standards.

26. What practices do you follow to decide whether online research should be used to present commercially sensitive client data or materials to survey respondents?
There are no foolproof methods for protecting audio, video, still images or concept descriptions in online surveys. However, in our conditions we have a "Confidentiality" chapter stating that the respondents may not store or pass on (especially not to the researching organisation's competitors) information received (especially diagrams, templates and question forms) or publish such information on the internet or elsewhere (including after completion of the project).

27. Are you certified to any specific quality system? If so, which one(s)?
Not yet, since there is no agreement among our customers which certification is relevant.

28. 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?
Just with people 14 years or older having registered themselves in our panel. No parent recruitment of their children.

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