



Professional Panelists

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For more information please contact:
Tom Skilbeck
tom.skilbeck@icmresearch.co.uk

Marcus Boyland
marcus.boyland@icmresearch.co.uk

Background

Continuous improvement: *Research on our research*

- Many underlying stereotypes exist about why consumers complete online surveys and how they complete them
- ICM Research wanted to see the 'Professional Panelists' in action, understand them and realise if these stereotypes are justified
- We conducted five ethnographic immersion sessions in home with consumers who are on and currently use more than 10 online panels

Highlights

Flexible working hours and unusual personal circumstances compliments online surveys

Financial incentive is central to original motivation to compete online surveys

- Engagement and the overall experience still remain secondary incentives though

Engagement is the key

- With most completing many surveys a week, keeping respondents engaged remains a key challenge
- Variety in terms of questions type, layout and type of question need to be central to design
- Honest time estimation with a % bar is essential

Familiarity tends to breed dishonesty

- The more savvy and familiar PPs become the more likely they are at 'blindly clicking' or even lying

Importance of the internet

- PC is a fundamental part of their life, with most having multiple email addresses, EBay accounts and social networking sites
- All heavy internet users for a variety of reasons
- Curiosity fuels their knowledge and Wikipedia searching

Online surveys: *How did it all begin?*

- Originally most became aware of online surveys from word-of-mouth, friends recommendation or, for the more tech savvy, from just 'Google searching'
- Financial incentives are central to the reason for starting and continually completing surveys
- However, it is not the whole picture, PP's need to feel a greater sense of satisfaction and engagement

Who the professionals really are?



Amanda

- Personal carer for her son Adam
- Passion is music



Kylie

- Self-employed music teacher
- Looks after children



Jim

- Cleaner/caretaker
- Works flexible hours



Sylvia

- Retired
- Has spare time but likes to be occupied



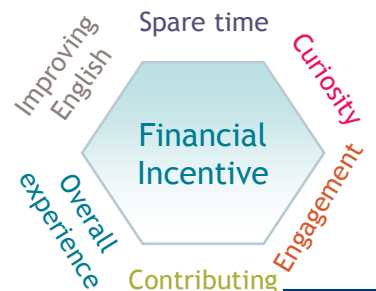
Mohammed

- Tech savvy IT Consultant
- Self-confessed internet junkie

Similarities between the Panelists

- Spare time and flexible working hours
- Usually juggling unconventional personal circumstances
- To varying degrees tech savvy and heavy internet users
- Interested in 'taking part' in various activities and comfortable with a routine

Reasons for completing online surveys



General experiences

- Online surveys, for the PP's are not a recent endeavor with most having been involved in panels for considerable time
- The snowballing invites from various panels have been forthcoming, they started soon after their first purchase of a PC and escalated since broadband
- The original reason for being interested in online surveys has faltered, increasingly PPs feel locked into a routine of survey completion

Frustrations and irritations

Engagement

- Not surprisingly a variety of engaging questions are preferred, in terms of content, way that they are asked and visual layout
- Staying attentive is difficult especially if this variety is not experienced, often leads to answers not being considered and just 'clicking blindly'

Length of questionnaire

- 15 – 20 mins is the maximum time prepared to spend on a questionnaire
- Appreciation is felt for a timing estimation of the survey in the email invite. PPs have become increasingly aware of particular panels that are accurate and honest in this estimation – these they tend to favour

Screening questions

- One of the biggest bug bears is being rejected by the screening questions. Although this is inevitable, some panels are well known for rejecting respondents at a much later stage, this can lead to respondents lying during the screening questions

"My husband is in one of those industries, but I might just lie so that I don't get kicked out!"

Managing their Panels

- For the more extreme PPs, the task of remembering their specific details becomes increasingly challenging
- Many have adopted systems to manage their panels – including a spreadsheet of their panels that is continually monitored and updated

Company	Date checked	Balance	Amount needed to claim
	07/02/2008		4
	10/02/2008	£14.18	
	10/02/2008	£11.88	
	18/01/2008	3,920	
	10/02/2008	990	
	15/02/2008	2530	
	01/02/2008		
	10/02/2008		
	13/02/2008	4330	
	28/01/2008	316	
Mutualpoints.com	01/02/2008	538	

"I need this otherwise I wouldn't know where I was with them all!"

Are PPs who you think they are?

- A variety of factors influence the likelihood to answer questions honestly (e.g. engagement, interest, variety, subject area etc), but they generally prefer to answer honestly
- Disillusionment is experienced if honesty is not a two way process, especially in relation to the time taken to complete the survey
- Familiarity tends to breed dishonesty, if the PP knows what to expect they are able to become more savvy with the procedure
- PPs even admitted to lying on the screening questions to complete the whole survey

"If I get a similar survey I know what is coming so I just go click, click - it's easy peasy!!"

A panelists dream: the ideal panel

- Accurate time indication with email invitation and a time % bar
- Rigorous recruitment phase so that invitations to surveys are likely to be of interest and suitable
- Original and engaging subject area e.g. Film research and ad testing
- Questions that make you think and can be painlessly navigated
- Different and creative ways to be incentivised e.g. prize draws, vouchers, charity donations

The Future: playing them at their own game!

- To counteract the increasingly savvy nature of PPs, online panels need to provide the variety needed and accurate time estimation to ensure maximum engagement
- A time delay between the web page loading and being able to answer the questions forces panelist to think about their answer and read the question more rigorously
- Internal logic checks are essential to validate answers e.g. asking questions in different ways