ESOMAR 28

28 Questions to Help Research Buyers of Online Sample

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INSIGHTS ENABLED

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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. Notes on the context of the questions explain why the questions should be asked and which issues researchers should expect to be covered in the answer.

These new questions replace ESOMAR's "26 Questions to Help Research Buyers of Online Samples.' ESOMAR has updated the text to recognize the ongoing development of techniques. While some of the questions remain constant, new questions have been added to incorporate new techniques and new technology in this area. In particular, this revision recognizes the broad trend within the industry to build online samples from multiple sources rather than relying on a single panel.

It should be noted that these 28 Questions focus on the questions that need to be asked by those buying online samples. If the sample provider is also hosting the data collection, you will need to ask additional questions to ensure that your project is carried out in a way that satisfies your quality requirements.

The 28 Questions complement ESOMAR's Guideline to Online Research, which was revised in 2011 to add updated legal and ethical guidance and new sections on privacy notices, cookies, downloadable technology and interactive mobile.

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?

Mindforce Research started its online sample operations in 2011 and is currently engaging over 8.2 million consumers and more than 1.9 million B2B respondents in over 48 countries in the Americas, Europe, Middle East and Asia Pacific. Headquartered in India with offices in US and UK with a diversified team of market research professionals from all facets of research, including end clients, market research consultancies and primary research companies, the executive team brings together over 100 years of experience in market research, data collection, panel development and research technology.

SAMPLE SOURCES & 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.

Mindforce Research panels are actively managed panels used solely for the purpose of consumer and business research. Mindforce Research panel is built through running targeted social media campaigns, email campaigns and telephone campaigns. Our B2B panel is by invitation only. Apart from these internal, ongoing processes, Mindforce Research has strategic partnerships with various social media websites, publishers, loyalty programs and professional association from whom it purchases databases to source respondents. Mindforce Research also leverages its 100+ CATI resources to build its world class B2B panel through ongoing telephonic recruitment. Mindforce Research also has a network of panel partners which it uses to reach out to a subpopulation or a specific geography and demography.

Q3

If you provide more than one type of sample 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

In order to integrate multiple samples from the above sources, Mindforce Research uses the combination of network id and device id to ensure that a respondent can register only once.

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.

Our panel is used solely for market research. We do not allow our panel members to be contacted for any advertising or direct marketing purposes.

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.

Mindforce Research recognizes the need to have demographic and geographic diversity in the panel to cater to the needs of its clients. Hence it has always been an endeavor to form partnerships with local organizations and communities who have reach to specific target groups of ethnicity, age, incomes and professions. Mindforce Research has a 100 seat CATI center and access to foreign language interviewers in 15 languages which it uses to recruit hard-to-reach respondents as per the need of its clients. Over the years, Mindforce Research has formed strategic, mutually beneficial partnerships with local sample providers who are focused on a region, sub population or profession. This helps Mindforce Research to reach out to the hard-to-reach target groups its clients ask for.

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.

Selecting a partner is based on two factors – our past experience and the partners quality control policies and procedures. We have been working with our partners for over 5 years and we know their strength and their capability. If required to supplement our sample with a partner, for which we always notify our client, we ensure that we use only our trusted partner network for the target groups they specialize in. The overlap is kept at a minimum by carefully planning out the sample quotas and sub quotas to ensure a panel partner is exclusively working on a section of the sample.

SAMPLING & 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

Based on the target profile requirement of the client, the sample pool of all active and available panelist is mined which meets the screening and participation criteria. This subset of the database is randomized. Based on the predicted response rate of the target group, batches of invites are uploaded on our mailing platform and sent out. We ensure that every batch of invites sent is in proportion to the net sample requirement along with its quotas and sub quotas at that stage of the fieldwork.

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.

Mindforce Research employs survey routers occasionally and for studies which are generic and with minimum qualification criteria. We do not host studies on routers which requires specific targeting. The objective of router is to improve the experience of the respondents participating in a study, specially related to screen outs. Too many screen outs can be a major cause of dissatisfaction amongst respondents and we use survey routers in an effort to keep the respondents engaged and happy.

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 prioritization in choices of surveys to present to respondents and the method of allocation.

The priority is to ensure that there is a precise match based on the targeting criteria of the client. If such a match cannot be established, Mindforce Research takes into consideration the past IR of the study and the field time.

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.

As mentioned above, only those respondents who match the targeting criteria are invited. Hence, we feel any potential bias is the same as you would find with online surveys. Our data quality team is actively monitoring survey routers and if they find bias arising from exclusion, the use of the router is eliminated. Mindforce Research understands the potential for biases from survey routers, which is why they are used only occasionally.

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?

The parameters are mostly determined by the client's targeting needs and are set by the project managers and monitored by the data quality team to ensure replication if needed.

Q12 What profile 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? If real time profiling is used, what control do you have over what question is actually asked?

At the time of recruitment, we gather the following information.

- Demographics – Name, Gender, Birth Date, Country, State/Region, Postal Code
- Contact Information – Email, Phone, Address
- Occupation and Education Information – Education Level, Employment Status, Occupation, Household Income

Additionally, for our B2B respondents we gather information related to their work profile –

- Employee size
- Revenue
- Industry Vertical
- Title and Designation
- Department
- Roles and Responsibilities.

Post recruitment, based on the interest of the respondent, we run several profiling surveys to gather additional information which relates to internet usage, automotive preference and ownership, electronic device usage and ownership, healthcare, travel, pet ownership, beverage and food preferences etc.

All active panelists are sent reminders to update their profile information. We also monitor pre-screener questionnaires and client screening criteria to ensure consistency in personas. Variations are researched for authenticity. All panelists are re-engaged in the recruiting process once year after joining the panel.

In case the respondent does not participate in these profiling surveys, a mandatory pre-screener profiling is done to ensure the respondents are participating in a relevant survey.

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.

For direct invitation, an invite mail is sent which includes the below information.

- General Description of the Study. It is important to avoid giving too many specifics which can cause bias.
- Number of Questions or LOI – whichever best describes the effort that the respondents need to spend on the survey.
- End Date of the Survey
- Device Limitations (If any)
- Incentive Options (including charitable giving) and all terms and conditions for incentivization
- Statement of Confidentiality and Anonymity of each respondent and their responses through Aggregation.
- Privacy Policy
- Decline Survey, Unsubscribe or Opt-Out Options (Temporary and Permanent)
- URL of the Survey Link

For indirect invites, the invite page includes all of the above information.

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.

We offer incentives based on interview length, complexity of the survey, timeline and budget. The incentives options are described below, and respondents are free to choose any on a case-by-case basis:

- Loyalty points that is associated with the sample source.
- Gift Cards from our online partners specific to that region.
- Charity Gift Cards from our partners through which the respondent can donate to a cause of their choice in the country of their preference. Our partners are able to support 3000+ causes in over 90 countries.

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.

Mindforce Research needs the following information in order to provide an accurate estimate of feasibility

- Research Topic and Objective
- Target Respondent – Demographics and Non-Demographics or Behavioral Criteria
- Incidence Level
- Geographic regions involved
- All screening criteria
- Length of the Survey or Number of Questions
- Sample Size
- All Quotas and sub quotas or nested quotas if any
- Time in Field
- Image, Audio or Video Stimuli (if any)

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

Respondents are at the core of our business model. Keeping our respondents happy and giving them a positive experience in participating in our surveys is very important. We give our respondents an opportunity to participate in a short feedback survey through the thank you mail we send after successful completion of a survey. We also run biannual surveys to understand the panelist experience to understand the motivations and barriers of our community. This information is available to our clients upon request.

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

Context: One should expect a full sample participation rate, drop-out rate, the invitation/contact text, a description of the field work process, and so on. Sample providers should be able to list the standard reports and metrics that they make available.

We share the fieldwork status after completion of every project – which includes number of completes, screen outs, quota full, drop outs, average length of the interview and incidence rate.

DATA QUALITY & 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 behaviors, 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.

Mindforce Research has a dedicated Quality Assurance and Quality Check team which monitors and audits all the surveys at a macro and micro level. The QA/QC procedures that we have in place, are employed at different stages

Recruitment Stage - Websites and communities which recruit people giving poor responses consistently are blocked.

Pre-Survey Stage - Monitoring and blocking all respondents who attempt to mask their digital identities. Deploying pre-survey questionnaires to identify behaviors like overstating and understating responses from last survey.

Post-Survey Stage - Monitoring respondents who exhibit unusual number of inattentive behaviors like straight lining, selecting mutually exclusive responses, failing QC questions, trick questions, not following instructions, selecting too many don't knows. Completing surveys in less than 70% of average LOIs and speeding through individual categorial or rating/ranking questions which require a longer time to answer. Monitoring frequent and illogical changes in demographics of respondents. Monitoring IPs to ensure that people are from country/location which has been captured during profiling and as answered in the survey.

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 sources?

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

We do not limit the number of invites a respondent can receive in a month. The number of invites varies from 4 to 10 invites in a month and depends on the survey inventory, client's specifications, respondent's profile and past participation rates. However, the respondent can set a hard limit to the number of invites he or she wishes to receive in a month. Once invited, a maximum of 3 reminders can be sent to the respondent and at the same time the respondent can choose to decline the survey and not receive reminders.

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

For B2B surveys there is a minimum waiting period of 5 days between a survey completion and the next survey invite and a maximum of 3 surveys can be completed in a 30-day period.

For our consumer panel, we do not limit the number of surveys a respondent can participate in a month. However, when sending batches of invites for a survey, the respondents who have completed a survey most recently are kept in the last batch to be sent. This way we ensure that every respondent has a balanced utilization over a period of time. We can also limit this based on our client's request. Our data quality team monitors responses of a respondent if he or she has completed more than 4 surveys in a month. If the quality of responses is poor, then the respondent is quarantined for a specific period of time.

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.

Mindforce Research saves all the details related to a respondent's participation history for the entire lifetime they are on our panel. Mindforce Research complies with all applicable data protection laws and regulations, hence this personal (PII) data of the respondent base is never made available. In case a client wants to access individual level information, we need to establish a sound reason to make that data available and then seek the respondents consent to do so.

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 panelists etc.

Please refer to Q18 which describes our data quality checks. Our B2B panel is by invitation only and a double verification procedure of the respondent's persona is used. Additionally, we monitor the respondent's reported persona on the first 4 – 5 surveys they complete for us to ensure consistency. Any variation is verified, or the participant is eliminated. A similar process is used for our consumer panel. Further, B2B panelist only get business surveys and our consumer panel only gets consumer surveys. Strict adherence to this substantially reduces bad behavior and gaming of our processes.

Our dedicated and independent QA and QC function audits each survey responses and flags them as per our quality ratings. After conducting all the quality checks described in Q18 and combining it with all the rejections of the sample from the client's end, the QA and QC team flags each survey as satisfactory, inattentive behavior or fraudulent response. Fraudulent respondents are immediately removed from the panel and the source is flagged. If a source is flagged multiple times, then the source is blocked from all future participation. The frequency of invites for a respondent exhibiting inattentive behavior is gradually reduced and the responses are monitored. If the respondent continues to show inattentive behavior, the respondent is informed of the possibility of them being removed from the panel. The same set of guidelines and procedures are required to be followed for B2B surveys as well.

POLICIES & 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).

All panelists are required to complete the panel registration form which includes their contact details and the consent to provide the profiling information to participate in market research surveys. After this, a confirmation email is sent to the panelist and they are required to click on the link to verify their contact details. The respondents are then sent a series of profiling surveys over a period of time. Once the profiling is complete the panelist is fully registered in the panel and ready to receive survey invites.

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.

The Privacy Policy is published on our website. The link to the policy is - https://mindforceresearch.com/privacy-policy.

The link to the privacy policy is included in all survey invites and all email communications with the respondent.

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 panelists 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.

Mindforce Research is committed to safeguarding the personal data of customers, clients, suppliers, business partners, employees and other individuals. All panelist information and their participation history are secured by industry standard firewalls which can be accessed only though SSL secured keys and by application services. All our servers and networks are monitored 24/7 by our infrastructure team and our hosting partners. Stringent IT Security Policies are in place to ensure that only select job functions responsible for maintaining the panel have access to the database and this is done under the supervision of our executives.

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.

There are several techniques which can at best, discourage the respondents to not misuse any commercially sensitive client data or materials. These techniques include disabling screen grabs, right mouse click, "save as" and requiring the respondents to agree to a non-disclosure agreement before starting the survey with an easy option to decline the survey. As these measures are not fool proof, Mindforce Research strongly recommends that such surveys should be done in a controlled environment, e.g. – face to face, CLT, intercepts etc.

Q27 Are you certified to any specific quality system? If so, which one?

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

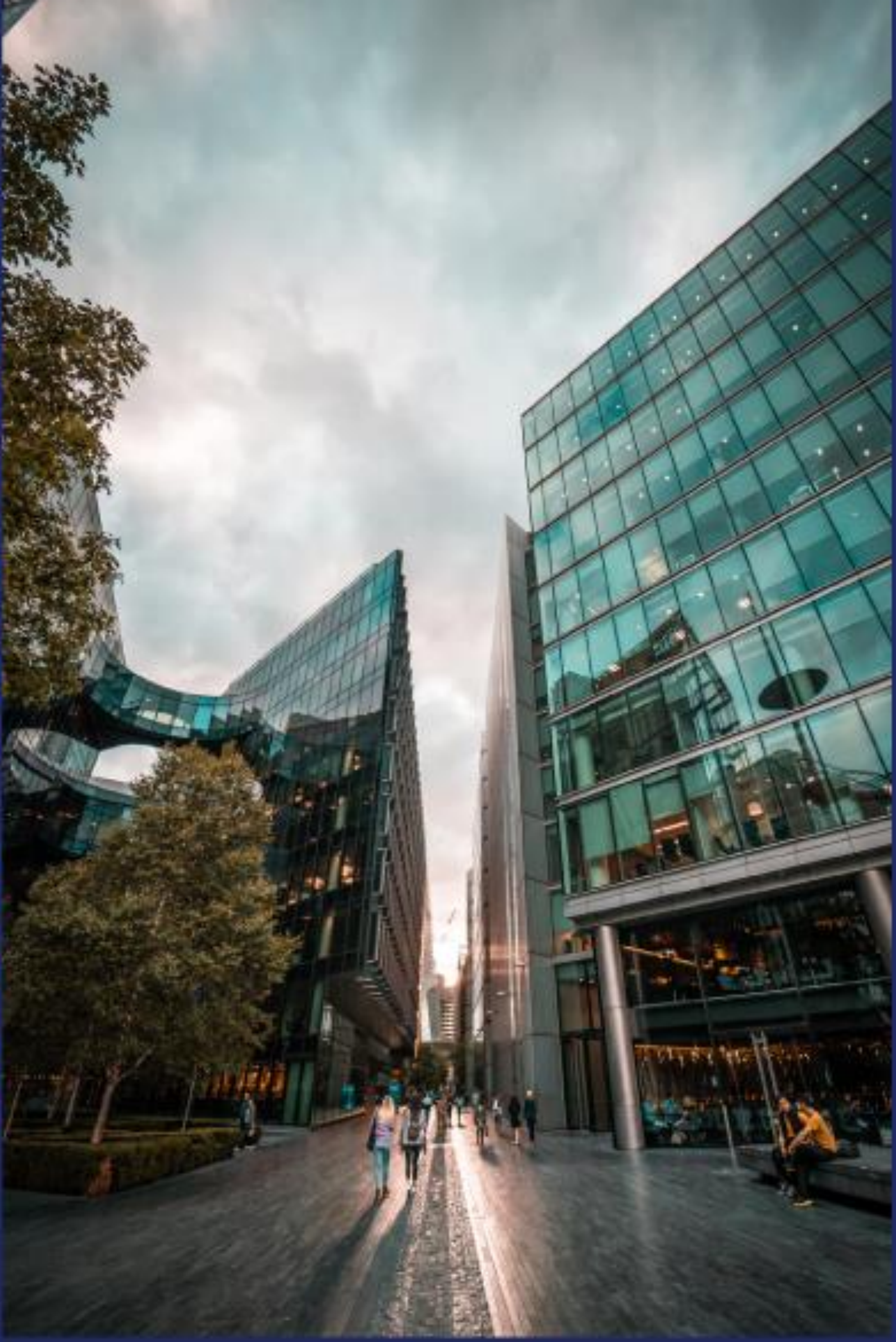
Mindforce Research's delivery center in India is ISO 9001:2015, ISO 27001:2013 and ISO 20252:2012 certified.

Q28 Do you conduct online surveys with children and young people? If so, do you adhere to the standards that ESOMAR provides? What other 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 2 of ESOMAR's Guideline for Online Research and in the ESOMAR Guideline on Interviewing Children and Young People

Mindforce Research has the provision of inviting children and young people through their parents who are on our panel and seeking their explicit consent for their children to participate in any market research activity. The survey is required to be done under the parent's supervision.

OUR OFFICES



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