HORIZON RESEARCH

Research methods and standards

Horizon's online research standards in relation to international best practice guidelines

HORIZON RESEARCH – SERVICES AND STANDARDS

1. Introduction

Horizon Research Limited is based in Auckland, New Zealand, and has more than 42 clients, including multi-national and national companies, government agencies, iwi and national business and community organisations.

Horizon undertakes quantitative and qualitative research. It specialises in conducting research online.

Horizon operates the HorizonPoll and Horizon Research Maori Panels, representing the New Zealand adult and Maori adult populations at the 2006 census.

Horizon also operates client customer research panels. It also uses online panels to quickly and cost efficiently conduct qualitative research, using its online panels to recruit focus groups and individuals for in-depth interviews.

It also undertakes research using telephone, focus group mail interviews.
Horizon is a member of the Market Research Society of New Zealand and follows its rules and codes of ethics for online research.

2. Practices in relation to ESOMAR online research guidelines

The European Society for Opinion and Market Research (ESOMAR) is the world association for market, social and opinion researchers. This is how Horizon answers it questions based on guidelines for conducting online research.

Company

2.1 Experience in providing online samples for market research.

Horizon's principals have been involved in market research since 1971, and have specialised in developing national online research panels since 2005.

Their experience also includes marketing, policy and product development. This includes award-winning direct marketing projects for clients.

Horizon conducts research for clients. It is an independently owned limited liability company.

2.2 Sample sources and recruitment

Horizon recruits members of its online panels by e-mailing invitations to people on purchased lists who match the census population profile for the target group (New Zealand population, Maori population) at the last census.

88% of New Zealanders now have internet access, with 55% using the internet daily, making it possible to recruit representative population samples for online research.

About 5% of Horizon's panellists are recruited via Horizon's public web site. Pre and post weighting of respondent samples ensures representative population samples only are used.

Where more specialised samples of respondents are required (e.g. for a particular sector, occupation or location) invitations are sent to specifically-purchased e-mail lists. These surveys are conducted separately from the nationally-representative population panels and demographic data is captured in survey questions, rather than through pre-registration as with the national panels.

2.3 Combining multiple-source samples

Combining sample sources is rarely required. In these cases samples are de-duplicated before respondents are invited to complete surveys. Reports are prepared for surveys of each sample type, with combined results presented.

2.4 Samples sources sole use

Horizon's panels are used soley for market research.

2.5 Sourcing groups that may be hard to reach on the internet:

Sufficient numbers of New Zealanders now have access to the internet to allow representative population panels to be recruited across a range of criteria Horizon uses, including age, ethnicity, gender, personal income, employment status and location/ region.

Post-sample iterative rim weighting is used to match Statistics New Zealand national population averages for up to six criteria at one time, including age, gender, personal income, education level, and ethnicity, region and employment status and Elections New Zealand figures for party vote in the 2011 or 2008 general elections.

2.6 Supplementing samples from other providers:

See 2.3. Samples are selected from e-mail list providers, including some lists from other research companies. External lists are used only with client approval.

Sampling and project management

2.7 Achieving a representative sample of the target population

Panel recruitment methods and pre-weighting of panel members for a survey ensures a representative population is achieved. Further weighting of the respondent group also ensures representative samples.

2.8 Survey routing

Survey routers and routing are not employed.

2.9 Data held on respondents

Horizon holds all data provided by all respondents.
This includes 18 standard demographic field profiles (detailed below), secured as a condition of panel registration.

Responses to questions may also be used as filters, where Horizon owns the data. For example, panellists' sporting and creational interests, main banks used, mobile provider, media consumption. In all more than 200 behavioural profile filters are available to produce results for clients in addition to answers given to their survey questions. Real-time profiling is not used. Logic-based programming within a survey directs respondents of particular types to particular questions.

Horizon panel membership is regularly reviewed by an independent research consultant to ensure it meets requirements to represent targeted population samples. Recruitment is undertaken regularly to adjust membership and overcome any under response trend among particular segments. Panel members are also invited and incentivised to update personal information.

2.10 Survey invitation process

Horizon can select pre-weighted samples of national population groups (e.g. New Zealand aged 18+ as a whole, Maori aged 18+). Invitations to complete surveys are e-mailed to the selected groups. Where mention of the subject to be surveyed might affect the type of respondent and their responses the topic is not mentioned in the invitation. Generally topics are mentioned, along with benefits of being heard and having an influence. Respondents are also entered in quarterly cash and product (e.g. iPad) draws. E-mail invitations only are used for online research.

2.11 Incentives

Horizon offers quarterly prize draws. In some instances, where appropriate, additional product or cash prize draws are offered. Horizon's own market research and offer testing indicates, however, that prizes are not the primary motive for participating and the company draws on seven years' experience in developing techniques to manage invitations to achieve high response rates, and deliver respondent sample and sample sizes sought by clients.

2.12 Information needed to accurately estimate sample feasibility

Horizon requires sample size, demographic information (e.g. age, gender, location) and incidence rates. Where no incidence rate is available, Horizon undertakes preliminary surveying to ensure it has sufficient panelists to satisfy clients' respondent requirements. For example, recent pre-survey sampling was conducted in 12 hours across 2000 adult panelists on intended appliance purchasing. This allowed accurate estimates for response rates to deliver specific sample sizes for research aimed at two-only white ware categories. When dealing with a new international research partner, Horizon requires 24 hours' notice to meet technical requirements when referring panelists to an externally hosted survey. The required number of completed surveys is generally delivered within 24 to 48 hours. Reliably weighted results of national surveys can be achieved in eight hours or less, depending on the number invited and topic.

2.13 Respondent satisfaction

Horizon seeks respondents' comment on all surveys it conducts through its own system own and panels and customer panels hosted for clients.

2.14 Post-survey client briefing

Horizon's clients have direct access to its online results analysis and reporting system. It liaises with clients from the time surveys enter the field, and when final samples are achieved and before detailed analysis and written reports are prepared. All clients have access to the online results system and may download all results in Excel for further analysis or storage.

Data quality and validation

2.15 Data quality checks

A senior data analyst is responsible for checking responses and respondents to each survey. Security procedures are in place provide for checking of responses according to IP number and e-mail address and respondents who have given the same answer to all or some questions within each survey. (An automated process to exclude transmission to any duplicated e-mail address is also employed when each survey is transmitted and the database base is cleaned). Survey data is validated through the weighting system.

2.16 Panelist contact

Horizon's business model (in maintaining sufficient membership levels and setting survey frequency, and the ability to select respondent groups based on previous participation) ensures a panel member is usually not contacted more than twice per month, though twice weekly contact might be standard for some research companies internationally.

2.17 Contact per survey

Horizon generally issues only one reminder to panelists who have not responded to a survey invitation. Response rates are high by reported industry experience. Response rates when a survey invitation is first issued generally run at 8.5 completes per minute for the first two to three hours.

2.18 Frequency of contact

Contact with panel members is limited generally to a maximum of two surveys per month. Other contact may be initiated to provide respondents with links to results where the respondents have indicated they would like to see any results published for a survey they have completed. Response rates are confidential, but many times higher than some rates reported to Horizon by some international panel owners.

2.19 Participation data

Data is held on participation in all surveys by all panels' members. Where participation frequency data is sought by a client it is provided.

2.20 Respondent identification procedures

Security procedures in place provide for checking of responses according to IP number and e-mail address and respondents who have given the same answer to all or some questions within each survey. All respondents have a unique identifying number. All panellists' registration data is checked upon registration. A manual addition exercise must be completed by those wishing to submit a panel registration.

Policies and compliance

2.21 'Opt-in for market research' processes

All panels' members opt in and can manage their accounts and opt out at any time. All e-mails to panel members, including invitations to complete surveys carry account management and opt out links. Horizon fully complies with New Zealand privacy law.

Registration pages explain panel membership, purpose and benefits.

2.22 Privacy policy

Horizon's privacy policy is available at http://www.horizonpoll.co.nz/page/32/privacy-policy

2.23 Data security

Horizon secures data on panelists and survey responses on secure servers with high levels of security. Our servers are located in a managed data centre with a reputable hosting provider in a secure facility managed by TelstraClear. The facility has 24 hour physical security and on-site technicians to respond to hardware/network issues.

Horizon's research system is installed on a dedicated virtual server, with access only available to a small team of web developers contracted by Horizon and server technicians. Daily backups are made of all data, files, and virtual machine snapshots. These are stored onsite at the facility, onsite at the developers (Beweb), and taken offsite to a remote location.

The website uses SSL encryption for all sensitive data including signups, surveys and profile editing. It runs on Microsoft operating systems that are patched with security updates on an ongoing basis.

2.24 Commercially sensitive data

Only data (images and information) approved by clients is presented in online surveys.

2.25 Surveying children

Horizon surveys the New Zealand adult population only. When information might be needed from younger household members this is sought through the adult care-giver.

3. Research services

Horizon serves clients with

- Survey design
- Infield survey management
- Online access to real-time results with
- Instant analysis and graph and tables results reporting
- Detailed analysis and written reports
- Access to segmented respondent samples online
- Qualitative research, including rapid recruitment of panels' members willing to participate in focus groups and in-depth personal interviews, often with a seven working day turn-around from recruitment to final report.

4. Standard demographic profiles

Horizon's online panels service allows clients to select or profile respondents to each survey and question within it up to 18 demographic criteria:

- Gender
- Household Decision Type
- Age Group
- Household Income
- Personal Income
- Employed
- Occupation
- Main Business Activity
- Highest Qualification
- Household Type
- Purchase Goods Level
- Local Government Area
- Sub City
- Suburb
- General Electorate
- Ethnic Group Member
- Party Vote 2008
- Party Vote 2011

The pre-registration of this data means valuable space in the questionnaires is not used seeking this information.
In addition, Horizon has developed more than 200 filters to identify panellists' other interests, based on answers to previous surveys, the data from which Horizon owns.

Horizon's proprietary software is also used to manage customer and membership databases.

5. Contact

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