

Buyers' Guide to Online Research Quality

Your Checklist for Standardizing Quality



This Online Research Buyers' Guide provides helpful information about how research buyers, like you, can easily and consistently implement and enforce research standards for your online quantitative research. If you are like most research buyers and work with multiple research vendors, sample suppliers and survey platforms, following the suggestions in this Buyers' Guide will provide assurance that every project you commission meets a core set of quality requirements. The result will be more consistently accurate research results and more confident business decisions.

“The industry can’t take another four years to implement improvements; there’s too much at stake. Companies like Microsoft and Procter & Gamble are continuing to lead the efforts to set guidelines for the entire industry, and they’ve recently formulated a number of requirements that they believe the industry needs to commit to, such as transparency, audits, objectivity, and reporting.”

— Reineke Reitsma,
Vice President,
Research Director,
Forrester Research

Online Research Quality: An Industry Challenge

Market research professionals agree that online research data is only as good as the respondents who provide it and the surveys that collect it. With your budget, your brands’ reputations, and your research unit’s credibility on the line, do you feel confident about the data driving your business decisions? Market research associations, vendors, and industry analysts *all* acknowledge challenges with online data quality.

Online sample quality issues are well documented

	41%	Email address duplication across panels.
	48%	Duplicate respondents in surveys.
	29%	Fakes, duplicates, speeders/straight-liners in any one panel.
	30%	Of all online surveys taken by a quarter percent (0.25%) of all respondents.

An Industry Response: RFP-Ready Quality Guidelines

Recognizing that the quality of online survey data is a major concern for the market research industry, and for the business leaders who rely on this data, MarketTools formed the TrueSample Quality Council in 2008. The Council includes a select group of market research industry leaders, from suppliers to Fortune 50 buyers, who share the common goal of markedly improving online sample and research quality. Current Council member companies include General Mills, MarketTools, Microsoft, Opinionology, Procter & Gamble, Research Now, and Unilever.

In an effort to establish an industry standard for quality, the Council has issued a set of standard Online Consumer Research Quality Guidelines for research buyers to use as an aid in the selection of research suppliers for online consumer research, and to ensure that all research from these suppliers meets research quality standards. The Guidelines have been formulated into an easy-to-use list of 11 conditions—all of which should be met—to easily evaluate whether suppliers achieve the quality standard.

The Council encourages research buyers to include the Online Consumer Research Quality Guidelines in all outgoing Requests for Proposals and Statements of Work to ensure consistency and reliability in research. By choosing only suppliers who meet these requirements, research buyers can feel confident in the accuracy and quality of their research projects.



Download your copy of the Online Consumer Research Quality Guidelines by visiting <http://marketing.markettools.com/rs/markettools/images/MarketToolsOnlineConsumerResearchQualityGuidelines.pdf>

“The TrueSample Quality Council has taken a giant leap forward toward the development of an industry-standard for online research quality. The guidelines the TrueSample Quality Council is issuing...will be immediately useful to research buyers to define quality, and to research vendors to deliver it.”

— *Maria Cristina Gomez,*
Director of Corporate Consumer & Market Knowledge
Foundational Scaled Solutions,
The Procter & Gamble Company

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Steps to Standardizing Online Research Quality

Industry giants, such as Microsoft and Procter & Gamble have already developed and implemented online quality standards. By following these three steps, you too will be confident you get reliable research with every project:

1 Hone your list of approved online research suppliers

Use the Online Research Quality Checklist (see Appendix) to determine which suppliers meet every checklist item.

2 Create quality standards for your organization

Review the TrueSample Quality Council's Online Consumer Research Quality Guidelines and, if necessary, adapt them to meet your business needs.

3 Ensure quality on every project

Include your Online Research Quality Guidelines in all outgoing Requests for Proposals and Statements of Work for online quantitative consumer research and award projects only to those suppliers who can meet the requirements.

Benefit from Standardizing Quality Today

Using the Council's Guidelines, research buyers now can easily define quality standards for their organizations, and many research vendors can meet these standards today. Now you too can start reaping the benefits of setting research quality standards:

- Quickly and easily identify qualified suppliers using a consistent set of criteria
- Feel confident that you will get reliable data, regardless of which supplier you use
- Get unprecedented visibility into suppliers' quality criteria and practices through auditing reports
- Reduce field times and sample costs because studies will not need to be re-fielded or re-opened as a result of post-survey data cleaning

The challenges with online research are well-known. By honing your research vendor list, developing your own quality standards and enforcing Online Consumer Research Quality Guidelines for every online research project, you can readily address those challenges. Following these three simple steps will dramatically and consistently increase the quality of your research, enabling you to feel confidence in your results, regardless of which vendor you use.

About MarketTools, Inc.

MarketTools is the leading provider of software and services for enterprise feedback management (EFM) and Market Research. The company is focused on providing leading organizations the actionable customer insights they need to make better business decisions that lead to high-value business impact. As the first company to make online surveys widely available on the Web, MarketTools continues its market-leading position by providing the broadest range of powerful, accurate and integrated customer insight technologies that empower companies to become the most customer-centric organizations in their industries. MarketTools' premier portfolio of technology-based insight brands includes CustomerSat™, MarketTools.com™, TrueSample®, Zoomerang®, ZoomPanel® and ZoomPanel Tech™. For more information, please visit www.markettools.com.

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The handy checklist below is based on the TrueSample Quality Council's Online Consumer Research Quality Guidelines, and will help you to quickly appraise potential suppliers.

APPENDIX: Online Research Quality Checklist

Respondent Quality

To ensure questionable online survey respondents do not compromise results, select online market research suppliers that:

- Identify survey respondents whose identities cannot be verified against publicly available third-party databases.
- Ensure each survey respondent completes a survey only once, regardless of whether the sample is sourced from one panel or multiple panels.
- Identify survey respondents who speed and straightline through any individual survey.
- Identify panelists who chronically speed and straightline through surveys so they don't get invited to take surveys.
- Ensure survey takers meet your eligibility criteria, regardless of whether the sample is sourced from one panel or multiple panels.

Survey Instrument Quality

To reduce the impact that complex or poor survey design has on data quality, select online market research suppliers that:

- Measure and benchmark the quality of each survey's design to determine its overall impact on respondent engagement and data quality.

Quality Solution

To assure replicable results, efficiency, and transparency, select online market research suppliers that:

- Use objective quality criteria that are predetermined, replicable, and standardized.
- Rely on automated processes to meet quality requirements.
- Uniformly apply quality requirements to all projects when requested, regardless of sample source, survey technology, and geography (where technically possible).
- Deliver reports demonstrating the impact of applying the quality requirements.
- Protect and secure all personally identifiable and confidential information collected from respondents, suppliers, or clients.