

E-Survey Research

Find out the facts and fiction of online research before you consider outsourcing these services

By Marketing Partners, Inc.

TRUE OR FALSE?

- 1
Completing an online survey is less secure than a telephone interview.
- 2
Web survey software is a high initial investment.
- 3
Chatroom focus groups are ideal for conducting product research.
- 4
Online survey participants are representative of the universal population.
- 5
Top-level executives are easier to reach with online research.
- 6
In-depth responses are easy to obtain through e-mail surveys.
- 7
Online survey research results are not reliable for decision-making.
- 8
Most associations with web sites outsource the hosting of web surveys.
- 9
Online data collection is faster and cheaper than some traditional methods.
- 10
The Internet can be used for both qualitative and quantitative research.

Your members complain about e-mail overload.

Your staff is overwhelmed by technology.

Understanding the ins and outs of online research can help you take advantage of technology and avoid the pitfalls.

Facts and Fiction of Online Research

Online research is just one of many methodologies that can be used to conduct market research. Just like traditional research tools such as mail surveys, phone interviews, focus groups and panels, online research has both advantages and disadvantages. These should be carefully considered before selecting a research methodology.

The following are a few examples of fictions and facts of Online Research.

Fiction

Everyone is on the Internet.

Fact

Although the number of users is growing by the hour, online survey participants may not provide a representative sample of the population and may introduce a sample bias for non-users.

Fiction

E-mail addresses are as inexpensive to purchase as telephone numbers.

Fact

Purchasing e-mail lists is more expensive due to the lack of a centralized collection agency (i.e., telephone book) and the cost of verifying constantly changing consumer addresses.

Fiction

There is plenty of “off-the-shelf” online survey software available for professional membership societies to use.

Fact

Standardized survey instruments are available for employee, consumer and product research. Most professional membership societies require specialized instruments to effectively meet their research needs.

Fiction

Online focus groups are cost-effective and an excellent method for conducting product research.

Fact

There are cost advantages to using online focus groups including the ability to include hard-to-reach populations and decreased travel costs. However, there are major drawbacks for collecting in-depth qualitative information, as there is no opportunity to touch or see the product.

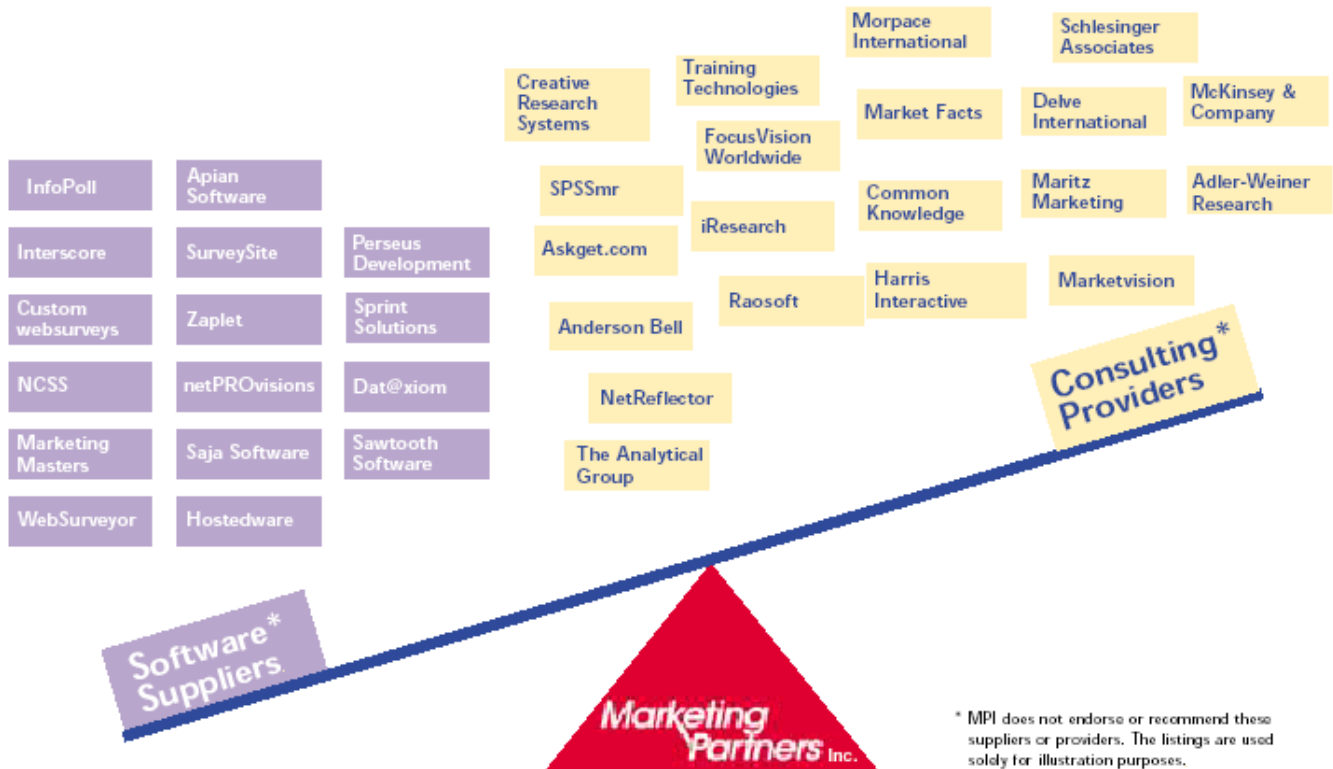
What to Look for When Outsourcing

There are as many services available for outsourcing online market research activities as there are vendors. Look for opportunities to partner with a vendor who understands your members and customers and is sensitive to their information needs.

Key Features	Web Surveys	E-mail Surveys	Online Focus Groups
Hosting	Surveys can be conducted by the vendor or licensed to the association.	Usually conducted by the association to monitor member satisfaction, but can be hosted by vendor.	Usually conducted by the vendor due to equipment requirements.
Survey Management	A variety of arrangements can be made. Vendor can manage all aspects of survey administration, share responsibilities with the association, provide assistance to the association, or, the association can manage all aspects of survey administration.	Usually conducted by the association to monitor member satisfaction.	A variety of arrangements can be made. Vendor can manage all aspects of survey administration, share responsibilities with the association, provide assistance to the association, or, the association can manage all aspects of survey administration.
Length of Survey	Most vendors do not have any limitations. Some vendors specialize in short (1-2 questions) surveys.	No limitations.	Most focus groups average 1.5 to 2.0 hours in length.
Fielding Time	Most vendors do not have any limitations for field time. Polling specialists offer short (1-2 questions) surveys.	No limitations.	Single, 1.5- to 2.0-hour sessions.
Participant Solicitation	URL via e-mail either inside or outside of the Web survey program. Done by vendor or association or both.	Usually conducted by the association to ensure member satisfaction.	Recruiting is usually done by the association, although some vendors also offer this service for an additional fee.
Reporting	Reporting module online; downloading of data for additional fee. Graphic modules available separately.	Reporting module usually sold separately.	Transcripts via streaming media diary on CD-ROM available minutes after completion. Some vendors offer additional analysis services.
Cost	Varies according to number of responses, annual subscriptions and project requirements. Cost can range from free to more than \$5,000.	Basic packages cost \$500-\$1500 with additional add-on products available.	Cost varies depending on volume and location.

Survey Research Solutions

You can buy survey software from any manufacturer. You can also hire a market research consultant to help you select the methodology or design the instrument. But how do you know what you need and put it all together?



Marketing Partners, Inc. is a strategy and business services organization serving individual membership societies and associations, as well as consumer packaged goods, consumer durable and health care clients across the United States.

We understand that for today's trade associations and professional membership societies "business as usual" just doesn't work anymore.

We are fully automated and equipped to handle qualitative and quantitative research, both online and traditional applications such as direct mail, computer-assisted telephone interviewing and focus groups. Using industry standard software and a team of research, technology, marketing and strategy professionals, we can help you navigate through the maze of players and options to develop customized solutions for your association.

A Michigan corporation formed in 1983, the firm and its predecessor companies have been engaged in service to associations and membership societies since 1972. Today we have more than 30 professionals and support personnel.