Online Panel Software
(Online Panel Research)

- Methodological Report -
Online Panel Software Survey

Tim Macer
meaning ltd,
Hon. Research Fellow, University of Winchester

Methodology Statement

Research involved a survey among panel software providers into some of the capabilities they support. Eligible products were identified from online software directories such as Quirk’s Market Research Portal¹, Web Survey Methods², together with the directory that I maintain³. Companies that operated access panels but did not allow others to use their software were excluded from the survey. A questionnaire comprising 37 questions set out as a form in Microsoft Excel, was distributed to 17 identified providers, 14 of whom responded. Responses included 11 from commercial survey software providers and three from open source, not-for-profit developers.

All identified providers were contacted by email during August 2012, and if no response was received, a follow up telephone call was made. If a provider agreed to participate, the Excel questionnaire was forwarded to the individual contacted for him or her to complete, with a deadline set three weeks after dispatch. The date within the first two weeks of September 2012, and varied according to when the questionnaire was issued. A reminder was sent immediately before the deadline to those who had not forwarded their completed form prior to the deadline. A further reminder was issued after the deadline. Those who did not respond at this time were excluded from further research.

Participants were then given an opportunity to update their responses in January 2013. Their original survey forms were returned to them, showing an amended deadline of the 30th January 2013. This second issue of the survey also included a new question (Q26a). This was indicated in the introductory letter.

² Web Survey Methods, www.websm.org
³ Research Software Central, www.meaning.uk.com/your-resources/software-database/
Participants were asked to amend the form sent to them to reflect any changes to their software products in the intervening period.

Several participating companies provided updated forms incorporating new or updated data and these were used to replace the existing record in the dataset. Others indicated there had been no change. Of the latter group, some provided a response to Q26a by email, which was entered manually into the dataset. Others required specific reminders to obtain this information, which again was incorporated into the dataset on receipt.

The final dataset therefore reflects the original data from September 2012, with all updates provided in January and February after the second round of contact with providers.

All contributors except one company agreed for their data to be published in detail, with their names and responses identifiable. Therefore, the summary of data includes all 14 responses; however the detailed data are disclosed only for the 13 companies that gave their consent to full disclosure.

The majority of the questions asked whether specific functionality was supported, was planned to be offered in the near future, or was not supported. A codebook describes all of the fields and the range of responses permitted.