

Questions to help buyers of market and social research

1. COMPANY PROFILE AND POLICIES

Is your company accredited to ISO 20252 (*Australian Standard for market, opinion and social research*) or another Quality System?

ISO 20252 specifies the processes in conducting research projects from proposal, through sampling, fieldwork and data analysis to the final report. ISO 20252 addresses the quality triangle of Design, Process and Fitness. Reporting guidelines in the standard apply to both Quantitative and Qualitative research.

2. YOUR MARKET RESEARCH NEEDS – do you know exactly what they are?

Do you know what market research you need?
Do you know how to define your needs – objectives/outcomes?

ISO 20252 requires the research provider to discuss and scope the project in consultation with you the client, and document agreed arrangements to ensure both parties fully understand the procedure and outcomes.

3. BUYER AND MARKET RESEARCH SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIP

Is there an ongoing communication and consultative process between you and the research provider, in developing the program and throughout the project?

ISO 20252 requires research providers to clearly record relationship management through consultation and approvals throughout the life of the project.

4. SCOPE OF WORKS

Do you understand the project scope of works and how it will impact on the project deliverables?
Are you informed of legal and regulatory requirements by the research provider and how your project complies with these requirements?

You should be informed of regulatory compliance issues; in particular those around privacy law, and how they are managed along with the scope of works – its limitations, risks and reportable outcomes. This is a requirement of the research provider under ISO 20252.

5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Are you informed of the research provider's project team, their roles and capabilities?
Are you provided with a project schedule, and kept updated on progress?

Clarity of competency regarding the project team along with a regularly updated project schedule is also a requirement of the research provider under ISO 20252. This must be provided by the research provider and may also include QPMR [Qualified Practicing Market Researcher] status as a measure of best practice.

6. SOURCING RESPONDENT DATA

Are you involved in data sourcing including sample size, nature, context of data collection, its reliability and risk?

ISO 20252 and ISO 26362 jointly provide due diligence of the research provider's data sourcing processes including online data and other technology interfaces. The decisions related to data sourcing, which may include outsourcing to external research suppliers (i.e. subcontractors), must be informed to you, the client, through consultation including risk and reliability issues.

7. DATA MANAGEMENT

Are you kept informed of the research provider's coding and analysis decisions and subsequent outcomes?

Clarity and transparency of the research provider's data management is a due diligence requirement of ISO 20252 and therefore must be replicable for future needs.

8. REPORTS AND REPORTING

Are the research provider's reports presented in a manner that provides the information in a readily usable and coherent form?
Does the report clearly express appropriate use of report outcomes including risks and any limitations?

As a mandatory requirement of ISO 20252, the research provider's reporting process must be compatible and transparent to the proposal that states expected project outcomes. The research provider report must indicate findings, risks and any known limitations.

Questions to help buyers of online market and social research

1. COMPANY PROFILE AND POLICIES

What experience does your research provider have in providing you with online sampling specifically for Market and Social Research?

Is your company accredited to ISO26362 (Australian Standard for access panels in market, opinion and social research) or another Quality System?

ISO 26362 requires an online sampling provider to have the appropriate level and type of research experience required to deliver your project.

Being ISO 26362 certified helps ensure that the online sampling provider will perform their service in a way that should be followed specifically for Market Research.

2. SAMPLE SOURCES AND RECRUITMENT

What online sample sources does your research provider use and are they used only for Market and Social Research?

If your research provider needs to supplement the sample from other providers, what criteria are used?

Does your research provider notify you if they intend to use an additional provider?

The sources your online sampling provider uses will give you an insight into the quality of the 'sample frame' and how appropriate they may be for your 'sample design'. These sources may be actively managed 'market research panels', or direct marketing databases, web intercepts ('river' sampling) or even a combination.

It is important to avoid any undesirable survey data effects related to using sources that are used for activity other than market research (eg. direct marketing, advertising, promotions, etc).

The success of your project is reliant not just upon the quality of your provider, but also the quality of the providers they use. An online sampling provider with an ISO 26362 accreditation will provide crucial transparency and confidence on these issues.

3. SAMPLING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

What steps does your provider take to achieve a representative sample of the target population?

Is your provider keeping you regularly informed of the management of your project, including sample size and scheduled delivery?

Can your research provider deliver the sample size required to meet your needs?

It is important to understand from your online sampling provider how representative the sample is to your requirements. 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 'sampling' fundamentals specific in ISO 26362 may enhance sample quality.

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.

The quality of a research panel is to an extent contingent on its ability to source sufficient respondents to complete your needs. Frequency of survey participation may increase the risk of potential bias.

4. DATA QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE

What process does the research provider have in place for data quality checks; including safeguarding against unacceptable survey data or fraudulent respondents?

The use of such quality checks may increase the reliability and validity of survey data. Issues that may need to be addressed include: straight lining responses, illogical or inconsistent responding, overuse of item non-response [e.g. "don't know"], speeding [too rapid survey completion].