

Online Community Panels – An Effective Way of Identifying Consumer Trends



Businesses are constantly looking for the latest trends. Whether it's to measure the pulse of the local economy or identify consumers' reactions to their ideas for new products or services.

An increasing number of companies are turning to online community panel survey research to stay current with their customers and identify evolving consumer trends. This is especially the case in these uncertain times.

Panels are opted-in consumers ready to answer questions and provide timely feedback over an extended time period. Panelists are engaged consumers in the survey topics and provide their opinions and valuable insight.

Specific benefits of online panel research include:

- **Timeliness:** the opportunity to research specific topics while they are still “hot”
- **Turn-around time:** results are available in days (sometimes hours) not weeks
- **Cost:** panels are very cost effective
- **Flexibility:** the ability to focus on specific groups based on demographic, lifestyle or customer experience. Your own email database can be a valuable resource in building your panel and learning what they think

Online panels can also be used for qualitative as well as quantitative research through online community forums and online discussion groups. These panels provide live and timely feedback on time sensitive topics.

Online panels are rapidly becoming the survey methodology of choice for many companies. Some of the main reasons include:

Consumer lifestyle patterns are changing dramatically making traditional methods of data collection more difficult and less reliable.

The Internet has become the medium of choice for most consumers.

Most importantly, panels can be used in many ways. For example, online community panels can be used for:

- Media studies to identify content preferences and reaction to new ideas
- Measuring consumer confidence in the local economy
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Branding and top-of-mind awareness of your products and services
- Image ratings and perception/reputation compared to the competition
- Identifying unmet consumer needs
- Determining the effectiveness of various advertising campaigns and marketing programs
- Testing concepts for new products or services

These are just a few ways you can use online community panels.

Online panels are a great way to identify community trends.

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