

# Rakuten Insight's Answer to ESOMAR28

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## Company Profile

### 01 *What experience does your company have in providing online samples for market research?*

Rakuten Insight has been a pioneer in online marketing research for the Asian region since 1999. We are one of the first companies to offer panels across Asia to international clients. Our client portfolio includes some of the top ten global market research agencies.

With over a decade of experience conducting online research in Asia, you will be able to utilize our knowledge and insight of local cultures and behaviors, to bring you prompt and reliable answers.

## SAMPLE SOURCE AND RECRUITMENT

### 02 *Please describe and explain the type(s) of online sample sources from which you get respondents. Are these databases? Actively managed research panels? direct marketing lists? Social networks? Web intercept (also known as river) samples?*

Rakuten Insight's core products, its panels, are actively managed to provide industries with credible and quality responses that are representative of all demographics. To this end, river sampling and web intercept sampling are not employed. Rakuten Insight's dedicated panel management team is solely focused on developing and maintaining active respondents and implementing our unique qualitycontrol standards.

In addition to our own panels, we partner with high-quality online sampling service providers in several Asian countries. Rakuten Insight will inform its clients in the event we work with a sampling partner.

### 03 *If you provide samples from more than one source: How are the different sample sources blended together to ensure validity? How can this be replicated over time to provide reliability? How do you deal with the possibility of duplication of respondents across sources?*

Rakuten Insight has proprietary managed panels in all key Asian markets. We prioritize the use of these panels in carrying out surveys in these markets. Because of this, we prevent duplicate participation of members in the same surveys. Rakuten Insight also employs DFP technology at the point of registration cleaning and on all internal surveys to ensure that there are no duplicate respondents.

As mentioned in Item 1, we have had the privilege of being the pioneer in online research in Asia. This gives us the advantage of having formed exclusive or close partnerships with local sample providers who are also pioneers of online sampling in their respective markets.

In markets where we don't have our own panels, it is Rakuten Insight policy not to use multiple partners, with the exception of when a survey is very difficult to finish (e.g. due to low incidence). This lessens duplicated participation in a survey for which we provide samples. In addition to ensuring de-duplication, we also encourage our clients to employ a cookies meter and digital fingerprinting technology.

# 04

*Are your sample source(s) used solely for market research? If not, what other purposes are they used for?*

Yes, Rakuten Insight panels are used solely for market research purposes. Members will not be approached for any telemarketing or direct marketing activities under any circumstance. Furthermore, they are assured of this upon registration.

# 05

*How do you source groups that may be hard to reach on the internet?*

Rakuten Insight operates proprietary online panels in several countries, employing various recruiting methodologies to attract hard-to-reach demographic groups. In addition to consumer panels, Rakuten Insight offers specialty panels in Asia focusing on “indemand” and difficult-to-reach respondents. Premium panels include IT decision-makers (ITDM), B2B, travelers, kids, finance, automotive, and other difficult to reach audiences.

In addition, Rakuten Insight maintains partnerships with high-quality panel providers in countries that are often difficult to sample.

We source our panels from portals that are not biased towards any particular demographic and thus reflective of general market opinion. We regularly review our partnerships with these sources in order to maintain the high level of quality we demand.

# 06

*If, on a particular project, you need to supplement your sample(s) with sample(s) from other providers, how do you select those partners? Is it your policy to notify a client in advance when using a third party provider?*

Delivering the samples that we promise to our client is our top priority at Rakuten Insight. For difficult surveys (e.g. those with low IRs), we keep the option of using partner panels in tandem with ours. In these cases, we inform and require the permission of our clients.

When working with partners, various factors are taken into consideration in deciding who we work with in markets where we don't have our own panels. Some of these considerations include a partner's membership in local or regional market research organizations and their adherence to these organizations' sampling standards. We also confer to these partners Rakuten Insight's very high standards in sampling.

## SAMPLING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**07** *What steps do you take to achieve a representative sample of the target population?*

Rakuten Insight's panel and invitation system enables us to pre-select target groups according to the specified demographic profiles and apply randomized deployment within the target population to assure the representativeness of sampling operation, unless the projects are re-contact types. For re-contact surveys, we are able to invite respondents who have taken part in previous versions of a survey.

**08** *Do you employ a survey router?*

We do not employ survey routing systems.

**09** *If you use a router: Please describe the allocation process within your router. How do you decide which surveys might be considered for a respondent? On what priority basis are respondents allocated to surveys?*

We do not employ survey routing systems.

**10** *If you use a router: What measures do you take to guard against, or mitigate, any bias arising from employing a router? How do you measure and report any bias?*

We do not employ survey routing systems.

**11** *If you use a router: Who in your company sets the parameters of the router? Is it a dedicated team or individual project managers?*

We do not employ survey routing systems.

**12** *What profiling data is held on respondents? How is it done? How does this differ across sample sources? How is it kept up-to-date? If no relevant profiling data is held, how are low incidence projects dealt with?*

Rakuten Insight maintains basic demographic and profile information for all members of our panels. Further personal information can be submitted by members optionally, including members' lifestyle and general consumption behaviors such as, home internet connection, use of game consoles, and car ownership...etc. In addition to general shared basic demographic profiles, all profiling questions, and the selection items are all localized to each country to assure the quality of the panel profiling.

Compulsory data is collected on all registered members, and they are required to renew their information at least once a year as well as other Rakuten Insight's profile update campaigns conducted couple times a year.

For low incidence projects without relevant profiling data, Rakuten Insight usually could approach with the closest targeting profiling data at hand, or have pre-screen in advance to have better estimation for feasibility.

**13** *Please describe your survey invitation process. What is the proposition that people are offered to take part in individual surveys? What information about the project itself is given in the process? Apart from direct invitations to specific surveys (or to a router), what other means of invitation to surveys are respondents exposed to? You should note that not all invitations to participate take the form of emails.*

Rakuten Insight panelists are asked to provide their honest opinions for business and marketing purposes, and the community is based on the fundamental belief of the integrity of panelists. Panelists are informed that participation will be rewarded. These rewards include payments in the local currency and coupons redeemable for gifts. In exchange for these rewards, respondents are required to abide by the terms of the member agreement, which can be found online at our website.

(An example of our Singapore panel site: <https://sg.m.aipsurveys.com/>).

Rakuten Insight's panelists are typically invited to take part in a survey via an email invitation. The invitation includes the expected length of time required to answer the questionnaire, number of points that will be rewarded, and links to the privacy policy, member agreement form, and Q&A portal. Special invitations are also sent out for internet Home-Use Test (iHUT) and surveys requiring parental referral/approval. Rakuten Insight also can reach our panelists via SMS or phone call for some general announcement or verification as well as some projects to boost participation rates. However this is only limited to panelists who have agreed to receive this form of contact.

**14** *Please describe the incentives that respondents are offered for taking part in your surveys. How does this differ by sample source, by interview length, by respondent characteristics?*

Rakuten Insight panel members receive incentives for their participation in Rakuten Insight-run surveys in the form of EPoints or Rakuten Super Points (Where available). These Points can be converted to cash, gift vouchers, online vouchers, used on Rakuten group services or donations. Members can convert their Points after having accumulated a predetermined basic Point value (this differs across each managed panels). Incentive value is determined by the length of the online survey.

**15** *What information about a project do you need in order to give an accurate estimate of feasibility using your own resources?*

Survey methodology, Target respondent criteria, length of interview and expected fieldwork timing for project conduction are the minimum required information for Rakuten Insight to have better estimation of feasibility.

**16** *Do you measure respondent satisfaction? Is this information made available to clients?*

Yes, Rakuten Insight regularly measures the satisfaction of our respondents. Specifically, we believe that respondent satisfaction is in correlation with quality data. Hence, we are always exploring ways to deliver an increasingly pleasing respondent experience.

Furthermore, satisfaction surveys are periodically implemented to identify potential areas of improvement. This is for Rakuten Insight's internal operation improvement and currently is not available to external parties.

**17** *What information do you provide to debrief your client after the project has finished?*

Rakuten Insight provides, upon request, metrics and variables that might be pertinent to the survey, including gross sample, start/access rate, participation/response rate, dropout rate, and incidence rate at the conclusion of a survey. When necessary, we also provide demographic information to clients after a survey if the client opted not to ask these as part of the screener questions. This is conditioned on not violating our privacy policy.

## DATA QUALITY AND VALIDATION

**18** *Who is responsible for data quality checks? If it is you, do you have in place procedures to reduce or eliminate undesired within survey behaviours, such as (a) random responding, (b) Illogical or inconsistent responding, (c) overuse of item non-response (e.g. "Don't Know") or (d) speeding (too rapid survey completion)? Please describe these procedures.*

Rakuten Insight's operation team is responsible for data quality checks for all of our projects. We also run yearly trap surveys to assess panel quality. Data quality is assured on every survey we run with Rakuten Insight's panels. For sampling-only projects, we encourage clients to inform us of respondents who provide substandard answers. This data is used for future reference, in order to screen offending respondents.

For data collection projects, which Rakuten Insight handles the scripting, hosting, data processing jobs, we offer detailed, project-based quality control for the below:

Rakuten Insight operations team makes implement live flagging of suspect respondents in the survey as well as utilizing our own standard data cleaning methodologies during the data processing phase.

Use of Interactive Questions to improve the look & feel of our online surveys, and also allows respondents to interact with innovative interfaces. Quality of data can be improved using these interfaces. E.g, Using Advanced Matrix/Grid Type Questions – To allow respondents to pay more attention, we use interactive Grid type questions, for e.g. Drag and Drop, Sliders and Grid Bars, rather than using generic grid questions with radio buttons.

Block Speedsters – To block speedsters at programming stage, Rakuten Insight operation team would determine a minimum Timestamp according to the questionnaire and screenout those respondents who completes the survey in less than timestamp value set for the project.

Trap Questions – Trap questions are required in those grid questions which have lots of textual statements to rate or answer. This will assure that respondent is paying attention to statement while answering the grid questions or allow Rakuten Insight to screen inappropriate data efficiently.

**19** *How often can the same individual be contacted to take part in a survey within a specified period whether they respond to the contact or not? How does this vary across your sample sources?*

The Rakuten Insight mailing system randomly selects members to send invitations for participation. As such, we do not apply limits to the frequency of contacting members. We try and balance our panel size with demand to ensure that members are neither contacted too often or too rarely.

**20** *How often can the same individual take part in a survey within a specified period? How does this vary across your sample sources? How do you manage this within categories and/or time periods?*

The Rakuten Insight project management system randomly sends invitations to members. As such, we do not apply limits to the frequency of a member's participation. If a survey requires the exclusion of previous participants of past surveys on the same topic/category, we advise our clients to add a screenout question that will have the same function. By client request, we are also able to de-duplicate or exclude members who have already participated in previous versions of the same survey.

**21** *Do you maintain individual level data such as recent participation history, date of entry, source, etc., on your survey respondents? Are you able to supply your client with a project analysis of such individual level data?*

Rakuten Insight records all data involving an individual member's participation in each survey. This is available upon request, conditioned upon its relevance to a particular survey or client.

**22** *Do you have a confirmation of respondent identity procedure? Do you have procedures to detect fraudulent respondents? Please describe these procedures as they are implemented at sample source registration and/or at the point of entry to a survey or router. If you offer B2B samples what are the procedures there, if any?*

Rakuten Insight employs strict, on-going quality control practices to identify and remove questionable bad data, both upon registration and during periodic cleaning.

These include but are not limited to:

- Screening for registered information that is likely authored by the same individual (e.g. johndoe01@yahoo.com, johndoe02@yahoo.com);
- Comparing multiple sources of information to identify duplicate registrations (e.g. same name, address, phone number);
- Noting suspicious data for future reference;
- Conducting 'trap' surveys to spot dishonest/click happy respondents;
- Conducting sign-up surveys upon registration to add as an extra layer of screening;
- Removing invalid e-mails and inactive members;
- Cleaning data (data collection projects only)

For example, in South Korea, it is a prerequisite to provide their Korean social security ID number upon registration, which can then be checked against official Korean government records. Rakuten Insight is also implementing a verification method collecting I-PIN (Internet Personal Identification Number) of each registered member, which is a commercial alternative to the Resident Registration Number used in South Korea for online identification.

In China, members are required to provide their ID number. Furthermore, methods to verify identity via SMS are also implemented to increase the verification authenticity for China.

## POLICIES AND COMPLIANCE

23

*Please describe the 'opt-in for market research' processes for all your online sample sources.*

To join Rakuten Insight panel, registrants must undergo a double opt-in process. Any registrant who wishes to join will be asked to fill in a preliminary registration form. A link is then sent to his or her registered e-mail address. A registrant will access the link, proceeding to the main registration page. Once this process has been completed, the registrant becomes a member.

24

*Please provide a link to your Privacy Policy. How is your Privacy Policy provided to your respondents?*

Our privacy policy is displayed prominently at the below URL. Members also have access to the policy from their account. <https://insight.rakuten.com/privacypolicy/>

Rakuten Insight complies with all regional, national and local laws with respect to privacy, confidentiality, and children. Personal information is stored in Japan, where stringent privacy laws are implemented. Specifically, Rakuten Insight panels ascribe to the Japan Marketing Research Association's stipulation on private information protection ("Guidelines for Personal Information Protection in the Marketing Research Industry" and the "Code of Conduct of Marketing Research").

In addition, we are members of and adhere to the privacy information protection regulations of several regional and international market research organizations, including ESOMAR and its "ICC/ESOMAR Code".

25

*Please describe the measures you take to ensure data protection and data security.*

Rakuten Insight employs strict data protection/security measures to safeguard respondent information. Different security measures are employed depending on when private information was acquired:

Registration: Rakuten Insight ensures that information being supplied by new members is protected by [Encryption Communication Technologies (SSL)];

Storage of private information: Rakuten Insight uses a [Site Authentication System] which prevents unauthorized access;

Private information management: Rakuten Insight appoints a privacy information officer who, together with our panel managers, is tasked to managing the acquired private information of members. They are also in charge of dispensing private information to third parties such as clients. In rare circumstances, when clients require access to this information to ensure the validity of a survey, we will require our client to sign a non-disclosure agreement with Rakuten Insight.

In addition, all Rakuten Insight employees who have access to panel members' private information undertake a privacy policy seminar and sign a non-disclosure agreement with Rakuten Insight as well.



**26** *What practices do you follow to decide whether online research should be used to present commercially sensitive client data or materials to survey respondents?*

Rakuten Insight's quality management system makes use of area-specific laws and local norms with our Asia-focus, multi-lingual experts. Rakuten Insight's specialist will always proactively give appropriate feedback on the project spec based on the local online population's characteristic and other necessary local insight, to make the survey more realistic and reasonable, as well as good representativeness of the target respondents.

Our multi-lingual experts could also help make sure the translation quality and feedback whether the questionnaire localization is appropriate before project started to enhance the accuracy of the study.

**27** *Are you certified to any specific quality system? If so, which one(s)?*

Currently no, but Rakuten Insight is considering to phase-in ISO system and is currently investigating it.

**28** *Do you conduct online surveys with children and young people? If so, do you adhere to the standards that ESOMAR provides? What other rules or standards, for example COPPA in the United States, do you comply with?*

Rakuten Insight does conduct surveys of children. However, registration is only for those aged 16 or above. Children's participation is typically obtained via referral invitations wherein a parent is invited to have their children participate in our surveys under their supervision.

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**Insight**

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