TNS Introduces 'Six Degrees of Online Quality' System at ESOMAR Panel Research 2007 Conference

Contributed by TNS
Tuesday, 30 October 2007

TNS to adopt Six Degrees of Online Quality from panel recruitment to validating the quality of the final results

October 30th 2007 â€“ TNS is urging the market research industry to continue seeking ways of delivering maximum quality in online research and has introduced a new global quality program called the â€˜Six Degrees of Online Qualityâ€™. To be implemented by TNS in 2008, the â€˜Six Degrees of Online Qualityâ€™ covers all phases of the research process from panel recruitment methods to validating the quality of the final results.

Speaking at the ESOMAR Panel Research 2007 Conference in Orlando, Florida yesterday, Jon Briggs and Mark Walton â€“ both TNS regional directors for online research in Asia Pacific, Latin America, Middle East and Africa â€“ underlined that effective online research can only be delivered through an integrated and rigorous quality programme, covering every stage of the research process.

Specifically, TNS recommended these â€˜Six Degrees of Online Qualityâ€™ procedures should be embedded into the online research process:
- Building a panel: adopting a variety of techniques to carefully analyse the calibre and motivation of every single person joining a panel.
- Panel management: applying long-established best practice to actively manage panels through initiatives such as capping panel sizes, removing inactive panel members, and ensuring participating members are properly motivated.
- Sampling techniques: delivering balanced, qualified, eligible and relevant samples to best meet the needs of particular projects.
- Questionnaire design: ensuring that the wording, content and overall strategy of a survey contributes to higher data quality, and that protocols are in place to facilitate accurate completion of long surveys.
- Quality of data captured and reported: vetting the locations of survey participants and how long they spend in completing a survey, and checking surveys visually to ensure the questions have been carefully answered.
- Panel reporting: providing clients with a breakdown after a survey is completed of key quality metrics such as the response rate and the number of participants that were rejected either at the panel recruitment stage or at a later phase in the survey.

Jon Briggs, TNS Regional Director, 6thdimensionâ„¢ Interactive Research, said: "As the leader in customized research and the industryâ€™s leading online access panel company, clients expect that we will deliver a panel that is fully representative of the population they are measuring. TNS is leading the industry in implementing the highest level of quality with regard to building and maintaining panels. However, in addition to the quality of our panels, TNS believes it is just as important to have standards around other aspects of the studies we develop for our clients, including questionnaire design and data reporting. In the end, clients expect us to deliver the highest level of quality throughout the entire process â€“ end to end. As the industry develops new approaches to conducting online research such as online communities and using customer and employee databases, it is just as important that this â€˜end-to-endâ€™ approach to quality is fully developed and implemented."

Mark Walton, TNS Regional Director, 6thdimension Interactive Research, said: "Achieving quality throughout the online process is critical for our industry and TNS fully supports the work of ESOMAR and other organizations (such as the recently formed ARF Online Research Quality Council*) in this area. The â€˜Six Degrees of Online Qualityâ€™ procedures we are recommending reflect the experience we have gained in a range of emerging markets â€“ such as China, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and the United Arab Emirates. We have also found that the processes we have developed are equally applicable to more established markets such as Australia, Europe, Japan and the United States."

TNSâ€™s online access panels â€“ known as 6thdimensionâ„¢ access panels â€“ have a strong global footprint. The operation i ordinated out of three â€˜centers of excellenceâ€™: Toledo, Ohio supporting North America; Amsterdam supporting Europe; and Hong Kong supporting Asia, Pacific, Latin America, Middle East & Africa. With panels to be added in 2008 in several new markets, TNS 6thdimension access panels will soon operate in up to 30 countries and will comprise some 3.6 million panelists.

Robert I. Tomei*, EVP and Global Director of TNS 6thdimension Access Panels, said: "Our three â€˜centers of excellenceâ€™ put TNS in a unique position to deploy best proven practices and innovative solutions to the benefit of our clients, from one region or country to another in an effective and efficient manner. Our â€˜Six Degrees of Online Qualityâ€™ system is one example of how we will do this, and underlines that we have strict rules on how we use online respondents. "

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In 2008, TNS will launch a new platform for consistent development and management of its 6thdimension access panels worldwide from one central data-center location. This new platform will provide clients with consistent panelist profiles, improved sampling processes and timing, and uniform data quality reports to demonstrate the integrity of TNS panels.

Mr Tomei added: "Governed by industry-leading quality standards, our online access panels are carefully managed, cost-effective resources that support both the Custom and Syndicated businesses within TNS. As a source of intellectual property providing integrated and innovative insights, our panels are at the core of the value we bring to clients and part of TNSâ€™s platform for growth."