

**2021 ITAA Special Topic Session:
Overcoming Online Survey Data Quality Challenges in Using Qualtrics, Amazon
Mechanical Turk, and Prolific**

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To enhance the generalizability of consumer behavior, marketing, and merchandising research, scholars have eschewed the use of student samples and have instead embraced online survey samples that better reflect the general population. Survey sampling options, particularly Qualtrics and Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), have been lauded for their ease in gathering national data, rapidity, and cost-effectiveness (Owen & Hawkins, 2020). An examination of ITAA conference proceedings in the consumer behavior track from 2019 and 2020 shows that about 23% (8/35) and 34% (14/41, as of January 27th, 2021) of the studies, respectively, reported the use of Qualtrics or MTurk for data collection. Despite the widespread utilization, research has called into question the validity of data collected through these online sampling services and warned that researchers need to implement techniques to ensure data quality (Chmielewski & Kucker, 2020; Holt & Loraas, 2019; Kennedy et al., 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this special topic session was to (1) inform ITAA scholars on the shortcomings of these survey sampling methods, (2) present approaches and techniques to overcome the shortcomings, and (3) facilitate a conversation with researchers in order to improve the quality of research related to textiles and apparel.

The session began with a short introduction, followed by the panelists' reflective presentations. The panel members have experience administering surveys on digital sampling services, Qualtrics, MTurk, and Prolific. The presentations addressed data quality issues related to the two commonly used digital sampling services, Qualtrics and MTurk, and one relatively new digital sampling service, Prolific. This session alerted the ITAA faculty and graduate student researchers to caveats regarding collecting data from the three survey sampling options related to (a) accessing qualified participants, (b) screening out fraudulent respondents, and (c) validating collected data. Panelists shared their experiences regarding unexpected challenges associated with the data collection and analysis. In addition, panelists presented the techniques and strategies used to acquire valid, high-quality responses by sharing practical know-how and

technical tips based on firsthand experience. The session concluded with an open discussion with attendees asking questions and sharing their insights about survey sampling experiences with others in attendance.

We expect that this session will benefit the ITAA members who perform research related to issues of consumer behavior, marketing, merchandising using online panel samples, as it exposed the members to different digital sampling options, discussed the adequacy of employing each sampling service for certain research design or context, and proposed techniques to overcome challenges encountered in using online panel samples. The session may provide short-, intermediate-, and long-term favorable outcomes. The short-term outcome would be increased knowledge and understanding of implementing digital sampling services by novice and experienced users. The intermediate outcome would be increased access and use of digital sampling services for research studies and better assessment of published scholarship. The long-term outcome would include enhanced quality of research articles related to textiles and apparel products, services, and experiences, with improved validity and generalizability.

References

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