APPENDIX 3: SSI PROCEDURES
1 Recruitment of panel members
2. Compensation
3. Confidentiality/Anonymity
4. Security/maintenance of data

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1. Recruitment of panel members

SSI's online sample is made up of a number of different proprietary panel brands across the globe. A small % of total sample (less than 7% in the US) comes directly from trusted partner relationships. Almost all panelists are re-contactable. SSI's sample does not use a "river" approach: participants come from sources with which SSI has a relationship and access to detailed information about the source. All SSI survey participants go through SSI's rigorous quality controls within the SSI Dynamix sampling platform before being included in any sample.

Recruitment

Proprietary panels are the basis of SSI's online sample because they deliver higher quality samples.
SSI's multi-sourcing panel recruitment model increases reach and capacity, improves consistency and minimizes bias. To increase diversity, SSI uses a variety of contact methods to recruit: online banners, TV ads, e-mails, apps, social media influencers, websites are among the many channels used. SSI's massive panel size helps studies to fill quickly and easily and improves representivity. With a large number of diverse frames, sample is less vulnerable to the loss of a source, or to changes within individual sources (for example, Facebook started out as a site for students at elite US colleges but now of course has a very different profile.).

Here are the important benefits of this multi-source model and SSI Dynamix™, SSI's sampling platform:

- **Allows us to bring you a more representative universe via recruitment to diverse panels.**
- **Leverages multiple contact modes (not just emails) in directing participants into the stream.**
- **Allows for precise targeting via methodologically-sound refinement questions,**
- **Eliminates many wasted survey opportunities where a participant is told that they do not qualify for a study. This results in more people being available to complete surveys.**
- **Ensures that the panelist experience is optimized. This leads to lower attrition rate, less panelist fatigue and better data quality.**

Participants are assessed as they enter the SSI sample stream to determine whether they are eligible to take a survey, based on information we already know about them, as well as targeting questions.

It is the technology behind SSI Dynamix which allows us to blend multiple sources and deliver a consistent diverse sample, in the same way across all the countries across the globe where SSI provides sample.

Panel Counts

SSI publishes panel books which describe the demographic make-up of panels in a specific country. SSI marketing materials include information about panel composition, but SSI does not produce panel books with very detailed numbers, because without the right context raw numbers are not helpful and can be misleading. For example a panel of 10 million with a response rate of 1% is the same size as a panel of 500,000 with a 20% response rate. And a panel of 10 million which is 90% female is smaller in practical terms than a panel of 3 million with a correct male/female balance. In addition, our panel counts are constantly changing as panels grow and develop. It is best to ask SSI to provide some potential bids to respond to in order to understand the capacity of SSI panels. Specifics on capability to support individual projects is always available.

SSI Sample Blend

Because sources used to recruit to online panels are not only different from each other, but can also change over time, SSI uses a combination of personality and psychographic characteristics to understand and identify the underlying traits which make a difference in the way people answer survey questions. By controlling the characteristics of people within the sample, based on asking them a short set of key questions, SSI has been able to make available to the market a sample blend which is exceptionally consistent, when measured by comparison with external benchmarks, including telephone sample studies and Industry Measures such as the Grand Mean. The SSI Blend is continuously monitored and calibrated by a dedicated team of methodologists and analysts.

Research has shown that different sample sources tend to produce different data. While this is something that we as sample providers need to be aware of, it does not pose a problem to research if handled properly. In fact, proper blending of these different sample sources leads to a more representative data sampling frame and therefore more reliable data.

SSI has developed a proprietary blend based on the principle that the definition of “people” goes beyond traditional social demographics. As such, SSI’s Blend uses a combination of psychographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables to help identify and classify people as they come into the SSI Dynamix™ stream. This method focuses on the individuals coming into the stream rather than the source because sources themselves can and do change over time.

Creation of the SSI Sample Blend

To create a consistent online sample blend, SSI began by testing a number of known personality, sociographic and psychographic questions. Also included were questions designed to understand other characteristics of panel members, such as chronotyping and stimulus response, along with behavioral metrics. We selected questions which had been tested over time, and which were global in scope. Beginning with over 150 questions that proved promising, the set was whittled down to a few which were most powerful in explaining the differences in how people answer common survey questions. The questions are, as a result a disparate group, which only have in common their power in explaining variation.

There is nothing inherently significant in the questions themselves; these are the questions that were most powerful in explaining differences in how people answer survey questions of many different types. This is why the clusters are not definable in the same way as marketing clusters, and why SSI does not publish cluster information for our panelists.

Facts about the SSI Blend

The Blend cannot provide consistency on its own: It works in combination with SSI's sourcing strategy and SSI Quality Controls to control consistency and better reflect populations under study

SSI Blend does not explain all or even most of the variance in how people answer survey questions: It helps to guard against any potential fluctuations in the type of people in the SSI sample stream by monitoring the distribution of the clusters which make up the blend. If fluctuations are noticed, SSI is able to dial up or down individual cluster types.

SSI Blend uses offline benchmarks to match against: The SSI Sample Supply Team constantly monitors the consistency of the SSI blend across the total sample stream of participants entering Dynamix.

We do not share blend cluster information – both because the blend is proprietary and because the blend clusters are not definable like segmentation clusters. The blend clusters are simply distinct groups which, when balanced in a constant proportion explain variance in how people answer survey questions on a wide variety of topics.

Targeting

SSI holds targeted information on all participants. Using targeting is important in providing a good participant experience by avoiding asking people the same question over and over and more quickly connecting them with a survey they are likely to be able to complete.

How SSI captures information for targeting.
SSI uses a combination of systematic and real-time targeting questions and, to reduce participant burden, stores and re-uses relevant and non-time dependent data on each participant collected as they come through SSI Dynamix.

Age (based on birth date) and Gender are collected and held for everyone. Over time a picture is built up of individuals based on other data they choose to share.

The library of panelist information is managed by a dedicated team within our Access, Supply and Engagement team, and each question has its own individual expiration date. For example, a question asking if someone likes to play golf will not be updated as frequently as one asking if someone has a current sports injury. Once again, there is a trade-off between burdening participants with too many questions and maintaining updated data. The collection date range of any question used is configurable and can be discussed at the sample planning stage. (For examples, if the project requires people who have done a certain activity within the past 3 months, we can select people who have responded to the question within the past 3 months.

To avoid acquiescence bias, or the participant making a mistake or even in rare cases over-claiming in order to qualify for the survey, targeting questions are never asked as affirmation questions, nor is the required response obvious when reading the question.

For example, we would not ask “Do you play golf?” or “How often, if at all, do you play golf?” Our question would instead be “Which of the following sports or leisure activities, if any, do you take part in regularly?” Golf would then be included as one possible answer.

In designing the question we ensure that the target population is fully contained within the answer given. If the target audience is “all Golfers” we would not write a question that placed a time limit on participation (e.g. asking if the participant had played in the past 3 months).

We have determined through multiple rounds of research that an error rate is a reality when people answer questions. Additionally, inattention can occur in the moment, which also impacts accuracy of information. A small percentage of people will try to embellish their answers to qualify for surveys. People will also change their answers if the question is asked in a different manner. People’s answers will also naturally change over time, so the information stored in the panel is not 100% accurate. We see a difference of 1-5% between answers given within our screening section and answers given within the survey. However, much of the data is collected in real-time and updated on a frequent basis.

Higher levels of mismatch may occur in a low incidence study, because most people answer the targeting questions accurately and do not qualify. A greater proportion of those qualifying will be invalid (accidentally click, are being inattentive, or possibly not telling the truth).

The problem that we are facing in this case can be expressed as: “What is the probability that someone actually has the thing that we are looking for, given that they say they do, and given that we know there is an error level associated with their answering the question?” This is a classic problem in statistics that is answered by Bayes Theorem and can be calculated. Knowing this probability allows us to adjust the expected incidence based on the reported incidence and to estimate the number of people who will “change their answers” if they are asked the same question twice.

The chance that someone who answers they do not have the “thing” actually does have it and has made an error is negligible at low incidences and small even at high incidences.

For example, imagine we were targeting consumers of a new protein bar and ask 10,000 people whether they are consumers of the bar. The incidence rate is expected to be 2%:

- **98% of the sample of 10,000 people are honest and accurate in their answers, so 196 of them qualify (10,000*.98*.02=196)**
- **2% of the sample are not honest or make an error, saying they qualify when they do not (10,000*.02=200).**

Therefore in the sample we now have 196 accurate participants and 200 inaccurate.

2. Compensation

Rewards

SSI offers great diversity in incentives as another means to increase diversity of sample frames. Some people are motivated by cash, points, prizes or sweepstakes or by being able to donate to charity. Others are motivated by the chance to make a difference, make their voice heard, have fun taking a survey, helping out or having a say in the products and services of the future. Others are motivated by learning opportunities provided by the survey or by the promise of receiving information after taking it. SSI aims to respond to all of these individual motivations, in order to provide a sample which is diverse and as representative as possible of the target population.

Rewards offered also vary by survey length and the characteristics of the population being targeted. SSI uses a reasonable level of reward based on the amount of effort required, the population and appropriate regional customs.

From a methodological point of view it is hard to support the use of rewards. The increases in response rate and subsequent breadth/depth of participants simply comes from too low a base and increases so little absolutely to have any technical merit.

But there are real efficiency gains that may be vital to the long-term health of a panel. We use the word “may” since there is no proven link between rewards and panelist lifetimes.

It is important to recognize that in the online access panel world, the presence of money encourages fraudsters to be active and they can have a negative effect on clients’ data. The absence of such rewards would, by definition, reduce the levels of fraud to the merely malicious.

While we continue to offer rewards we must increase policing of the “front gate” and guard ourselves against the fraudulent survey-taker.

SSI continues to experiment with individually tailored rewards (by type and value) to find the most effective method whilst still keeping a watchful eye on fraudulent behavior.

SSI uses quality control at the reward redemption stage including two-factor authentication, similar to that used by financial institutions to prevent fraud.

Because SSI recruits panelists from many different partners, communities and loyalty programs, many different reward levels and types are offered to panelists. In one single survey individual participants are likely to receive a variety of different reward levels and types.

Reward FAQs

Why are there no rewards on this study?

Many people do not require any kind of monetary or other tangible reward. The enjoyment they get from taking part in a short, well-designed survey is reward enough.

According to the latest thinking in Psychology (Self Determination Theory) adding a reward to a task completed by someone who was intrinsically motivated to do the task will actually result in them being less motivated in the future. The incentive in this instance will have had the opposite effect to that intended.

What is the effect on participants of giving rewards?

Other than the reduced motivation phenomenon we do not believe that there is much effect on participants themselves by receiving rewards. This is because many people simply do not notice that there is a reward on offer.

We have noticed that the wrong reward can have a negative effect on response rates. It could be that they also have a negative effect on the panelist's perceptions of the panel itself, and hence be damaging in the longer run.

Research conducted by SSI showed that when asked during the survey what reward they expect to get, many participants do not know. Many panelists are aware there is some type of compensation for their participation, but do not focus on the specifics for each individual questionnaire they answer.

If I give rewards now where I haven't done before will I get consistency in my data?

Yes, probably. Adding rewards to a study where none were present before does not substantially affect the overall response rate. Many of those who respond when a reward is offered would equally well respond without the reward.

Rewards do have more impact for some demographic groups, especially younger people. If your survey target consists **only** of these groups then you are more likely to introduce a bias into your data by adding a reward that may have substantive effects on your data.

Other providers give cash rewards, does SSI?
A unique benefit of SSI's loyalty panels is that members are rewarded directly in the currency that is meaningful to them, for example airline miles, hotel or other points. This is not the case with some other research panels, which offer generic points which require people to take an extra step to translate those into a meaningful reward. Because SSI has recruitment relationships with loyalty programs, we are able to leverage the controls which are already in place at the loyalty source (for example, in order to join an airline miles program, the person has already provided identification.)

Are your response rates low because you don't give (enough) rewards?

Adding a reward to a survey that did not have one previously will have a relatively large impact on certain segments of the participant base – but the absolute response rate will remain low. For example we might increase the response rate amongst young men from 10% to 15%. This is a 50% increase in response but the response rate is still low.

How do you reward participants – in detail, not just "sweepstakes and points"?
How do you use rewards?

SSI rewards are constantly refined and adjusted to provide the most appropriate reward for the participant and project. Individual participants for the same project will not necessarily receive the same reward. SSI's range of rewards includes sweepstakes, points, points for gift cards, music downloads, loyalty points such as airline miles, hotel points, and more.

For example, panelists can earn point to be redeemed at Amazon, PayPal, and iTunes and for airline miles, as well as being entered into prize drawings for cash. Rewards rules and more details are available here for SurveySpot and here for OpinionOutpost, just two of SSI's dozens of panels worldwide.

What is the correlation between rewards and speeding behavior?

There are some people in the world attracted by easy money, and market research is not immune from this. By over-incenting, we would risk attracting a disproportionate amount of such people to the survey. Since these people have little motivation to actually do the survey properly we would tend to see them in the fastest responders group.

There is no evidence that offering rewards makes otherwise attentive people into inattentive speedsters.

3. Right to withdraw from survey and compensation if done.

As above-Panelists can withdraw at any time.

3. Confidentiality/Anonymity

Legal, Ethical, Privacy, Data Security

Studies with Children

SSI does not directly contact anyone under the age of 18 to take part in research. This is not an industry guideline, but SSI's business practice.

SSI however, does support data collection for projects with children and teens. To enable research with children under 18, SSI contacts the parent or guardian who can bring the child to the computer or phone to take the survey.

Participant Data Protection

Everyone who takes surveys from the SSI Dynamix™ system has agreed to take part in research. SSI's proprietary panels use double opt-in recruitment. Click to view SSI's Privacy Policy.

SSI's General Counsel periodically reviews SSI's privacy policy. The policy is prominently displayed to participants; members of SSI's managed communities and panels are alerted to any changes.

SSI does not allow personally identifiable information to be asked during a questionnaire, unless by prior arrangement for reasons such as sending a product to be tested. Participants must not be required to provide this information in order to complete the survey.

SSI does not conduct direct marketing, i.e. requiring a purchase to take part in the research, or asking for money in connection with the study.

Commitment to Privacy Standards

SSI staff serve on industry committees working to maintain and develop best practices for privacy, and strives to achieve the highest level of privacy and data protection compliance, not only because it is required by laws and regulations, but because it is an essential element in our relationship with participants. Data quality is better when participants are confident that their personally identifiable information will be protected.

Data Protection Within SSI

All panelist and participant information is secured via industry standard firewalls and stringent IT security policies and procedures. All computer equipment (servers, SANs, switches, routers, etc.) is redundant and is located in secure, environmentally controlled data centers with 24/7 monitoring. Access is restricted and requires authorization.

Access to participant data is restricted by password and staff job function. Access is limited to secure company networks or secure VPN. Access to databases and associated backup files is restricted by IT job function and role. Password-protected database roles further restrict data access and force any data modification to be done through

the application layer only. All database connections are logged. Web does not directly access the database and database requests are reversed proxy via an application server to the database.

Adherence to privacy guidelines

SSI staff adheres to strict guidelines to prevent any sharing of any information across projects or clients. For example, if a project moves from one research provider to another, no information will be shared to the second provider without the express written permission of the original research sponsor. All SSI employees must sign a confidentiality agreement when joining the company.

Study Data Protection

SSI is highly experienced in supporting research projects with extremely sensitive material and regularly provides consultation to researchers on best practices in this area.

There are a number of techniques which can discourage leaks, including disabling of copying and screen grabs, removal of images after a timed period, and special wording to the participant along with an "I agree" not to share information. However there is no guarantee that sensitive information can be kept confidential online, (it is very easy to take a photo of the screen with a cell phone) and SSI may recommend an in-person interview as a better option for extremely sensitive material.

Illegal Activities

SSI will not allow participants to be asked questions which could require them to report illegal activity. This includes topics such as drug use, underage drinking, driving and violations, etc.

Sensitive Topics

Survey researchers may have good reason to ask questions about sensitive topics in areas such as finance, health, politics or personal relationships. SSI must review all questionnaires where the topic could be considered sensitive. Adequate warning must be provided in the invitation and survey introduction, and there must always be an option for the participant to easily opt out of the questionnaire.

Local Customs and Sensitivities

Questionnaires which are to be fielded in multiple countries must be edited to conform to local customs. For example, it is usual to ask people what their race is in the US. This is illegal in France, and the question would be considered strange and unwelcome in many other countries. Questions about government and social issues are not acceptable in a number of countries. US participants might be offended by language and images which are acceptable in European mass media. Questionnaires should be reviewed by SSI localization teams who can provide up-to-date local knowledge.

4. Security/maintenance of data

As above

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