Marketing Systems Group

Chase H. Harrison (Harvard course instructor):

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"MSG - ABS Case Study"

INDUSTRY: ACADEMICS   **CLIENT:** HARVARD UNIVERSITY   **REGION:** UNITED STATES

TOPIC

Supporting higher education and a valuable student research project

BACKGROUND

GOV 1010 is an annual introductory undergraduate survey research class taught at Harvard University. The course draws an interdisciplinary mix of students, with a heavy concentration of Statistics and Government. In the fall semester of 2014 the class had a project designed to enhance their understanding of survey research: conduct an original survey on a topic of their own choosing. In collaboration with the professor, MSG donated the ABS sample to help the students conduct a rigorous and scientifically representative study.

SURVEY TOPIC

Measuring the social, financial, and community dimensions of well-being, with a focus on differences between cities and suburbs.

GENESYS - SAMPLING SOLUTIONS

CLIENT'S CHALLENGES

- Needed a statistically representative frame of all the households in the greater Boston area.

- Needed a sample design to target equal numbers of urban and suburban households to effectively compare the MCPA's urban core to the adjoining (streetcar) suburbs.

- Needed a multi-mode approach to increase response rate.

- Needed to conduct this well-designed and representative survey on a professor's budget!

THE APPROACH - WITH GENESYS EXPERTISE

- Created two geographically-pointed strata to isolate the urban and suburban target areas at the Census block-group level. This was possible because census geography is one of the many auxiliary variables MSG appends to the raw Computerized Delivery Sequence File (CDSF) in creating their Addressed Based Sampling (ABS) Frame.

- Sampled 1,000 addresses for each stratum from MSG's ABS frame for a total of 2,000 addresses. This frame provides the highest level of coverage available to survey researchers.

- Matched addresses against several licensed commercial databases to append telephone numbers wherever possible, which allowed phone follow-ups for a portion of the non-responders.

ROI / RESULTS

- Received a total of 119 returned mail surveys within ten days of the mailing, despite the short time-frame students had to complete the survey (less than two weeks), plus the fact that the survey was mailed only a day before Thanksgiving.

- Conducted a telephone follow-up with a random sub-sample of 200 households (among those with telephone numbers), yielding an additional 21 responses.

- Overall response rate for the survey (AAPOR RR2) was 14.27%.

COMMENTS

Course instructor Chase H. Harrison commented, "MSG's willingness to donate the sample for this project is just incredible. I always encourage my students to use the best tools available, although I don't always have the resources to help them use those tools, especially for things like general-population samples. Thanks to MSG, this group was able to use a sample that otherwise would have been beyond their reach, and were able to experience what it is like to work on a real-time survey with professional tools."

GENESYS   ARCS   PRO-T-S & U-DIAL