

Market Research

Every so often a survey form crosses my desk from some market research agency along with an invitation to supply specific data from my office files.

These surveys request a comprehensive practice profile including my services and merchandise, as well as those optical supply companies, be they contact lens people, instrument makers and frame manufacturers that I choose to deal with.

At no time have such marketing agencies ever informed me as a practitioner and consumer as to whose interests are actually represented or promoted by the circulation of these surveys. Nor have any of the optical companies ever chosen to notify me or my colleagues that they have retained the services of XYZ Market Research Agency.

To my mind, if I were to receive a single letter from one firm only, this would not be sufficient to motivate me to reply in any case.

Let me explain. For example, the most recent of these surveys to land on my desk listed only five large firms. What happened to all of the other medium size and small firms in operation? If such surveys are to be useful and unbiased they should not be restrictive. Indeed, they should list all legitimate optical supply firms. It is for this reason that I challenge the wisdom of cooperating with these anonymous surveys. The participant has no way of determining whether the survey jointly serves the interests of one or more of the firms listed or if some unlisted competitor seeks to enhance his own data base at the expense of others.

Furthermore, this practitioner, for one, finds the offer of an insignificant premium labelled "honorarium" upon completion of a questionnaire, to be somewhat insulting. Seriously, who is going to respond when retrieval of such data means accessing oneself to 5 - 10 years of pertinent data.

If Market Research people sincerely desire the cooperation of their 'target population' they might at least be open about the sponsors and the purpose for which the research is intended.

Such is the attitude of this writer and, if I am not mistaken, one which is shared by many colleagues.

G.M.B.

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