CASE STUDY: DIGITAL FRAUD

THE DARK SIDE OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

A click farm is a physical location where a large number of low-paid workers—or automated bots—are used to generate fake clicks, survey responses, likes, or traffic at scale.

Click farms make fraudulent data look real, polluting survey panels and market research integrity.

Operate mainly in developing countries using hundreds of devices. Sell fake engagement by the thousand at very low cost.

INDUSTRIALIZED FRAUD AT WORK

Click farms operate like factories, prioritizing volume over authenticity.

> **100-500 smartphones** per operation—each running multiple apps simultaneously.

> Employees switch **SIM cards and use VPNs** to appear as unique individuals in many locations.

> **Automation scripts** help them evade bot detection and qualify for high-value surveys.

> Some responses are copied-pasted; others are "straight-lined" (all same answer).

$1 per 1,000
Average cost for fake clicks or responses

WHEN FAKE DATA BECOMES REALITY

THE COST OF BAD DATA

Key decisions are made on fake data: product launches, marketing spend, and strategy. When the input is flawed, the output is dangerous.

80% of responses in some panels are fraudulent.

Legacy fraud checks catch **<30%** of this activity.

Result: Wasted investment, inaccurate insights, lost trust.

DEFENDING DATA INTEGRITY

STRATEGIES FOR DETECTION

> **Look for unusual patterns:** Engagement that is too fast, too consistent, or originates from strange geographies.

> **Advanced Technology:** Combine behavioral analytics and real-time machine learning for fraud detection.

> **Vet panel sources carefully:** Demand transparency on recruitment and validation processes.

The future: only platforms with robust fraud prevention (like Blanc Research) can guarantee real, actionable insights.

THEY GOT CAUGHT. HOW MANY HAVEN'T?

$10M FRAUD EXPOSED

In April 2024, eight defendants were indicted for a decade-long conspiracy to defraud market research companies of $10 million.

What They Did:

> Recruited workers called "ants" to pose as legitimate respondents.

> Paid workers to fraudulently complete surveys across multiple panels.

> Evaded detection systems for nearly 10 years.

| INDUSTRY-WIDE CRISIS

Recent analysis reveals the shocking scope of the issue.

100% Fraud Rates

Found in some panels based on analysis of 35.4M respondents.

$41.4 Billion

Cost of click fraud to advertisers & buyers globally in 2025.

80% Compromised

Estimated percentage of market research using compromised sources.

14% Fake Ad Engagement

For SMEs, a significant portion of budget is wasted.

⚠ The business model rewards speed and low cost over truth. Vendors often don't ask hard questions.