

Crowd-Funding Project Satisfies Foreigners' Curiosity about Russia

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If you wonder why Russians don't smile in the metro, what they really think about corruption, how many of them fought bears and how many of these brave souls were drinking vodka at the time, now you can satisfy your curiosity.

A Moscow-based team of market researchers has recently launched a project on the crowd-funding resource Kickstarter that aims to provide just these kinds of answers and maybe a few more.

The "People's Omnibus" offers backers the chance to ask any question to 600 Russians through an online multiple-choice survey. A tally of the final answers will be presented in a picture book, available in a PDF or paperback version.

These plans will be carried out, as with all Kickstarter projects, only if the organizers reach their minimum pledge limit. For this project it is \$7,000 with each backer paying \$100 to ask

a question or, alternatively, \$30 to add an option to an existing question.

So far the project has 15 backers with \$253 pledged in total. However, all of them have been picking the basic option of getting the book or PDF file for \$8, rather than the more expensive option of buying the right to ask one of the minimum 50 questions that will be featured in it.

One of the project's leaders, Igor Sokolov, said that the main backers of this project would be people with a personal curiosity in Russians, rather than large companies that have the resources to carry out similar research as a private order. He has worked in large market research agencies and said that they usually charge \$300 to \$700 per question.

The "People's Omnibus" project would also be a chance for those businessmen who never got their questions incorporated into company-funded surveys to quench their curiosity.

Some of the questions under consideration now range from harmless inquiries into what Russians like to do in their free time to the more controversial investigations into which laws they have violated, how many spies they have among their acquaintances, what they think about Americans, and how likely they are to support the politics of Kim Jong-un.

Sokolov said this project would help to break some stereotypes about Russians, including the myth of their love of the balalaika and their vodka-chugging ways.

"There is the image that stuck to us, that Russians drink vodka a lot, but really if you look at the statistics, people drink much more beer now," Sokolov said.

On the other hand, our stereotypes will be reinforced, he added. One of them has to do with the number of video cameras installed in the Russians' cars, and it originated after many such cameras captured the fall of the meteorite in Chelyabinsk in February.

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