Best Practices in Survey Research using Qualtrics

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Agenda

• Preparing your survey
  • Guiding questions
  • IRB
  • Survey design
  • Implementation

• Managing your survey
  • Response rates
  • Reminders

• After your survey
  • Taking down your survey
  • Reporting
Preparing your survey: Guiding Questions

- Guiding questions:
  - What do you want to know?
  - Why do you want to know it?
  - What do you plan to do with the information? What actions will you take with these data?

- Need a clear research question and purpose
  - Survey should collect good data
  - Survey should not burden participants

- Don’t collect data “because it’s interesting.”
Preparing your survey: Guiding Questions

- Not all research questions demand surveys
  - Is the data already available?
    - (Contact OIR&E!)
  - What about focus groups or interviews?
Preparing your survey: IRB

• Institutional Review Board
  • Must review research proposals
  • Will guide you to ensure your research is ethical

• To contact:
  617-627-3417
  http://www.tufts.edu/central/research/IRB/
Preparing your survey: Design

• Fixed-choice vs. open-ended questions

• Fixed-choice:
  Which flavor of ice cream is your favorite?
  Chocolate
  Vanilla
  Strawberry

• Open-ended:
  Which flavor of ice cream is your favorite?
Preparing your survey: Design

Fixed Choice Questions

• Pros:
  • Easier data collection
  • Easier data analysis
  • Best approach for large populations
  • A variety of ways to ask questions

• Cons:
  • May not get at participant’s true feelings/thoughts
Preparing your survey: Design

Open-Ended Questions

Pros:

• Offers flexibility and freedom in responding
• Rich, interesting data

Cons:

• Time-consuming
• Coding a challenge
• Vague or irrelevant responses

Size open-ended question boxes appropriately

• They cue the response
Preparing your survey: Design

• Good questions start with proper English!
  • Spelling, grammar, punctuation
    • Rate your favorite ice cream, brands.
Preparing your survey: Design

- Good questions start with proper English!
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    - Rate your favorite ice cream, brands.
  - Clear, short prompts
    - Tell us about the preferred flavor of ice cream you desire.
Preparing your survey: Design

• Good questions start with proper English!
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    • Rate your favorite ice cream, brands.
  • Clear, short prompts
    • Tell us about the preferred flavor of ice cream you desire.

• Avoid “double-barreled” questions
  • How satisfied are you with the ice cream flavors and toppings at JP Licks?
Preparing your survey: Design

• Good questions start with proper English!
  • Spelling, grammar, punctuation
    • Rate your favorite ice cream, brands.
  • Clear, short prompts
    • Tell us about the preferred flavor of ice cream you desire.

• Avoid “double-barreled” questions
  • How satisfied are you with the ice cream flavors and toppings at JP Licks?

• Bad questions lead to bad data (and survey dropout)!
Preparing your survey: Design

- Design recommendations
- Visual ease
  - Don’t put too much on one page – use page breaks
    - Use “Preview Survey” to test your survey on multiple devices
  - List down, not across
  - Don’t overwhelm your matrix questions
    - Use “Repeat Headers” to break things up
  - Use the “Look and Feel” option to customize design
    - Keep it simple!
Preparing your survey: Implementation

• What is your population?

• Is an entire population necessary or can you employ sampling?

• Sampling: using a subset of a population as a proxy for the entire population
  • Different approaches to sampling depending on your needs
Preparing your survey: Implementation

• Sending your survey:
  • Anonymous link
    Pro: Good for sensitive topics
    Con: Potential for duplicated data
  • Survey panel
    Pro: Tracks responses
    Con: Data security
  • Combination approach
    • Use “Survey Flow” to add “End of Survey” element
Managing your survey: Response Rates

- Keep tabs on your response rate!
  - Qualtrics Survey Health Report

- What is your expected response rate?
  - Depends on the survey and the population
  - 20%-35% for a 10-minute survey
Managing your survey: Response Rates

• Incentives increase response rates

• Which incentives work best?
  • It depends on…
    • Your population
    • Your budget
    • Your survey methods

• Guaranteed small incentives > Raffles
• Be creative
• Does not have to be expensive or flashy
Managing your survey: Reminders

- Reminders
  - Participation drops steeply after a few days
  - Reminders are highly recommended
    - Improve representativeness of sample
    - Hear more diverse opinions
  - Reminders are easier with survey panels
After your survey: Taking down data

- Deactivate your survey

- Download data
  - Data cleaning is easier elsewhere
  - -99!
  - Coded values vs. Choice text
After your survey: Reporting

- **Built-in reporting tools in Qualtrics**
  - Not useful if you have cleaned data in another program
  - Cleaning data in Qualtrics is complicated
  - Don’t tinker with original data!!

- **Best if your data…**
  - Is straightforward, simple
  - Is already clean (no transformations, deletions, etc.)
  - Requires only simple reporting
OIR&E

- Office of Institutional Research & Evaluation
- University-wide resource with expertise in survey research
- Provide data, research, and analytic services
- Assists with outcomes assessment and program evaluation
- Offer consulting services

To contact:
617-627-3274
http://go.tufts.edu/OIRE