



A Newsletter on the State of the Art in Marketing Research

## A Note from our President

In addition to reviewing the most recent studies on marketing research methodology, we are also applying the newest techniques in our research studies. We are particularly excited about the e-mail surveys and more advanced multimedia Internet studies that we have been conducting for the past two to three years. These interactive, multimedia surveys utilize embedded visual stimuli and audio voice-overs that simulate consumer purchase and product experiences. They offer several advantages over traditional techniques including improved data quality, lower cost, faster turnaround, elimination of interviewer bias, and automated questioning to support complex analytical methodologies.

Also, we can evaluate your web site features such as content, graphics, and layout along with functional attributes such as ease of finding content, speed, and navigation. Visitors can rate their experience at your site, examining attitudinal issues such as excitement, confusion, frustration, expectations, satisfaction, and their likelihood of returning to the site.

Sometimes on-line focus groups are a cost effective alternative to conventional on-site focus groups. Generally, 8 to 10 participants are recruited to join the discussion for a specified period of time in a specialized chat room. They discuss the topic while text, graphics, sounds/jingles, video or multimedia are introduced for evaluation.

If you would like to discuss an on-line project, contact us by telephone or e-mail Paul at [pvar@syndics.com](mailto:pvar@syndics.com) or David at [coop@syndics.com](mailto:coop@syndics.com).

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A study of the errors in self-reported usage.
- ***The Effect of Question Tone and Form on Responses to Open-Ended Questions*<sup>5</sup>**  
Two experimental studies are presented to evaluate the effects of question tone and form in face-to-face interviews.

- ***Distinctions between New and Loyal Customers*<sup>1</sup>**

While an important objective in analyzing customer satisfaction studies is to estimate attribute importance and the impact of attributes on overall satisfaction, the authors argue that the importance of attributes varies by customer type. Specifically, the authors document differences in attribute importance between newly acquired and loyal customers for the automotive, credit card, and financial services industries.



The authors used the Dynamic Attribute Importance Model (DAIM) as a tool for determining changes in attribute importance as the customers' relationship with a company matures. The four steps involved in DAIM are as follows:

- Determine and compare attribute importance for customers having relationships for different lengths of time. Comparisons can be made using a cross sectional or a longitudinal approach. While the cross section approach involves segmenting customers into groups based on the length of their relationship with the company, the longitudinal approach consists of tracking the same customers over time.

- Graph attribute importance and initiate internal company discussions to identify potential reasons for the differences in attribute importance.
- Conduct qualitative research to discover reasons for changes in attribute importance.
- Initiate action based on insights learned. Specific use of the information include training employees on how to interact with customers based on their tenure, customizing retention/customer management programs, and customizing communication strategies.

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- ***Call Screening - Is it Really a Problem for Survey Research***<sup>2</sup>

The authors examine the relationship between call screening and issues related to nonresponse by evaluating the use of telephone answering machines and Caller-ID services, as call-screening devices. Key findings of the article include the following:

- Self-reported screening behavior did not significantly increase the number of attempts or number of days it took to complete interviews.
- Self-reported screening was not significantly related to the likelihood of encountering a refusal before obtaining a completed interview.
- Younger respondents, those with higher levels of education, and those with one or more children in the household were much more likely to indicate that they screen their calls.

The authors conclude that the increasing nonresponse problem (as measured by the number of calls and first-time refusals) does not appear to be driven by an increase in screening behavior, but rather by more social factors. Nonresponse may be more of a product of the lifestyle of younger and upper-income-status respondents than a specific desire to screen-out survey researchers.

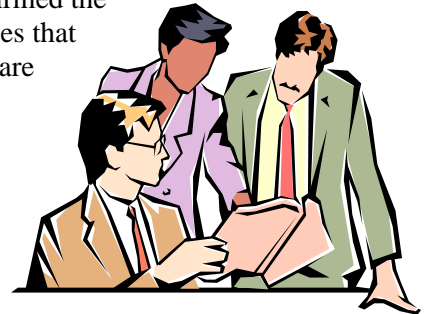


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- ***Employee Attitude Surveys: Examining the Attitudes of Noncompliant Employees***<sup>3</sup>

The authors conducted a study to evaluate the work-related attitudinal characteristics of individuals who purposely refuse to respond to an employee attitude survey (i.e., noncompliant individuals).

The study confirmed the initial hypotheses that noncompliant are generally less satisfied employees. Specifically, noncompliant individuals in comparison



with anticipated respondents, possessed greater intentions to quit and had less organizational commitment, were less satisfied with supervisors, their work, their jobs in general, and possessed more negative opinions regarding how their organization handles survey data.

The authors suggest that survey data will generally appear more positive toward jobs, management, and the organization than would be the case if all employees in the initial sample returned their surveys. Strategies recommended for dealing with this bias include the following:

- Use weighting procedures in a post hoc manner to manage the bias. Specifically, it is suggested that observed statistics be adjusted depending on the estimated extent and magnitude of noncompliance.
- Minimize noncompliance by emphasizing the organization's intent to act on the survey data. The strongest correlate of noncompliance was the participants' beliefs regarding their organizations handling of survey data. Thus, it is suggested that organizations communicate a strong commitment to acting on survey data, provide feedback regarding survey findings and potential action plans, and implement changes based on the data.

- Limiting the number of survey requests made on employees. The authors reference research which indicates that attitudes toward surveys are negatively related to the number of survey requests received.

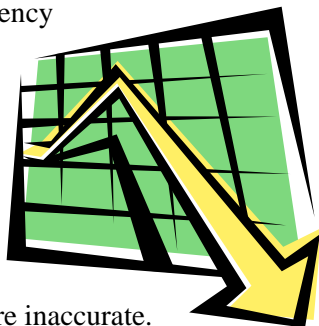
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- ***Are Consumer Survey Results Distorted? Systematic Impact of Behavioral Frequency and Duration on Survey Response Errors***<sup>4</sup>

The authors used a large-scale consumer database created by AT&T to evaluate how actual behavioral frequency and duration systematically affect the direction of errors in consumer survey responses. Specifically, the authors analyzed errors in consumers' reports on their frequency of using long-distance telephone calls, letters, cards, and visits for personal communication.

Key findings observed in the article are as follows:

- Consumer survey reports are, on average, exaggerated relative to actual duration and frequency.
- High and low-frequency consumers are subject to errors. Heavy users tend to underestimate and light users tend to overestimate and reports from light users tend to be more inaccurate.
- For low frequency cases, it might be better to ask respondents to count specific occurrences in a reference period.



The overall exaggeration in surveys occurs because the degree of overestimation exceeds that of underestimation.

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- ***The Effect of Question Tone and Form on Responses to Open-Ended Questions***<sup>5</sup>

The article presents the results of two studies that evaluated the effects of question tone and form on responses to open-ended questions in face-to-face surveys. The analysis is based on two experimental studies which compared the responses generated by different versions of an open-ended question that varied in terms of question tone (i.e., positive, negative, or neutral) and form (long or short, separate single questions or combined double questions).

The analysis indicated that the form and cue tone of an open-ended question can have a significant effect on both the length and tone of the responses generated. Thus, the author recommends using two separate questions (positive then negative or vice versa) rather than a combined (positive and negative) or single (neutral) question to elicit longer responses per respondent, or a greater number of different ideas.



When using two separate questions, the order in which the different cue tones are presented might not affect the number of ideas generated, but it is likely to impact the tone of the different ideas generated. Therefore, one should use a positive cue tone first to obtain a higher proportion of positive ideas overall and use a negative cue tone first to obtain a higher proportion of negative ideas overall.

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For more information, contact us at Syndics Research Corporation, 13612 Midway Road, Suite 605, Dallas, Texas, 75244. 972.385.0066. Visit our website for future archives of this newsletter: [www.syndics.com](http://www.syndics.com).

## OUR RESEARCH TEAM

**Joe Welch Ph.D.** - President: Over twenty years experience in the research industry. Joe has moderated over 1500 focus groups and has extensive experience in survey research, experimentation, and publishing. Graduate faculty at the University of North Texas.

**Lydia Welch** - CEO: Over fifteen years of marketing research experience in focus group moderating, data processing, analysis, and strategic planning. MBA Marketing Methods from the University of North Texas.

**Gwen Fontenot Ph.D.**- Senior Account Executive: Over fifteen years of experience in marketing research and consulting experience with expertise in customer satisfaction measurement, service quality, and Quality Function Deployment. Ph.D. in Marketing from the University of North Texas.

**David Cooper** - Senior Account Executive: Over ten years of marketing research experience in focus group moderating and survey research in healthcare, new product development, customer satisfaction, and high-tech industries. BBA Marketing & Statistics, AAS Design Technology, Graduate studies at UT Arlington.

**Paul Varner** - Senior Account Executive: Eight years of experience with marketing research suppliers with expertise in advanced research methods, price sensitivity & demand analysis, customer satisfaction, and on-line research. MS Marketing Research from UT Arlington and BBA Marketing & Finance from UT Austin.

**Randy Timm** – Director of Quality Assurance: Five years of experience in account management, analysis, and quality assurance. BBA and MBA in marketing from the University of North Texas.

### References in this volume:

- 1) Mittal, Vikas, and Katrichis, Jerome M., “Distinctions Between New and Loyal Customers,” Marketing Research: A Magazine of Management & Applications (Spring 2000), 27-32.
- 2) Link, Michael W., and Oldendick, Robert W., “Call Screening, Is it Really a Problem for Survey Research?” Public Opinion Quarterly, Volume 63 (1999), 577-589.
- 3) Rogelberg, Steven G., Luong, Alexandra, Sederburg, Matthew E., and Cristol, Dean S., , “Employee Attitude Surveys: Examining the Attitudes of Noncompliant Employees,” Journal of Applied Psychology, Volume 85 (2000), 284-293.
- 4) Lee, Eunkyung, Hu, Michael Y., and Toh, Rex S., “Are Consumer Survey Results Distorted? Systematic Impact of Behavioral Frequency and Duration on Survey Response Errors,” Journal of Marketing Research, (February 2000), 125-133.
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## Syndics Synopsis

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