

A Newsletter on the State of the Art in Marketing Research

A Note from our President

We are excited to send you the newest edition of our newsletter on the state-of-the-art in marketing research. It is our goal to maintain knowledge of the most recent published studies addressing research methodology issues. As we review the 15 to 20 publications that periodically publish articles on new methodologies or useful findings for developing research strategies or interpreting research findings, we will share the key findings with you.

Also, in order to continue providing timely turnaround and high quality research support, we have brought additional statistical analyses such as conjoint analysis and MaxDiff Analysis in house. Adding these analytical techniques to our broad range of research services enables us to control the full range of services required for most types of research.

Additionally, I am delighted to announce that Mark Teich recently joined our staff to coordinate data collection, data processing and quality control. Mark has an MBA from the University of North Texas and has 15 years of experience in marketing research.

Please contact us for your quantitative or qualitative research needs. If you have business associates who you think would like to receive the newsletter, please e-mail their address to mark.teich@syndics.com.

Joe Welch, Ph. D.
President, Syndics Research Corporation

If you would like to discuss these issues or any project, contact us by telephone or e-mail David Cooper at david.cooper@syndics.com or Paul Varner at pvar@syndics.com.

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A review of studies examining the impact of various strategies on response rates in health surveys

The Cost-Effectiveness of Alternative Advance Mailings in a Telephone Survey¹

Mailing a letter prior to calling a sample increases response rate and reduces study cost.

The authors conducted an experiment to compare the affect of two forms of advanced notification (postcards and letters) when conducting



a telephone survey. They completed 3,042 telephone interviews from a sample that was divided between (1) those who received no advanced mailing, (2) those who received a postcard and (3) those who received a letter.

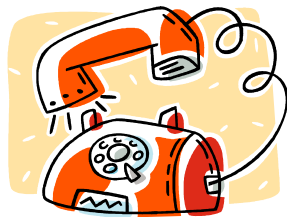
Key findings of the research included:

- The completion rates for the “letter” group, “postcard” group, and “no advanced mailing” group were 17.3%, 15.9% and 14.9%, respectively.

- The average number of calls to complete an interview was reduced from 6.5 for the “no advanced mailing” group to 6.0 for the “postcard” group and 5.9 for the “letter” group.
- While postcards lowered the overall costs of completing the survey’s quotas compared to no advanced notification, the use of letters yielded the lowest overall costs.

An Experimental Comparison of Web and Telephone Surveys²

People who are contacted by telephone are twice as likely to complete the survey at that time by telephone versus completing it online.



The authors conducted an experiment to measure the differences in completion rates and response patterns between respondents who completed a study by two methods: telephone survey conducted by a live interviewer and a self-administered survey conducted via the internet.

2,352 households were screened for internet access, and those with access were randomly assigned to one of two groups. The first group (1,027 respondents) was immediately asked to complete a survey on the telephone and the second group (1,058 respondents) was asked to complete the same survey on-line and was given a website address and login code. While both groups were offered an incentive to complete the survey, the web-based respondents were offered a much larger incentive to offset the typically lower response rates among web-based surveys.

Key findings of the research include:

- Even with the larger incentives offered for the web-based survey, the response rate for completion of the survey was significantly higher for the telephone administered survey (97.5%) than for the web-based survey (51.6%).
- Web-based respondents typically took longer to complete the survey, but the

authors attribute this difference to the amount of time it took for those respondents to type in their open-ended responses to “knowledge” questions.

- Item non-response was lower for web respondents.
- Web-based respondents were more likely to give the correct answer to factual questions.

Comparing Check-All and Forced-Choice Questions Formats in Web Surveys³

When asking multiple response questions in a web survey, a forced-choice format (must check “yes” or “no” for each item on the list) is superior to a check-all format (check all items that apply).



The authors used self-administered surveys to determine the affects of using a forced-choice or a check-all answer option. The authors called into question the standard industry approach of using forced-choice answers in telephone surveys and comparing that data to check-all answers obtained from paper or web-based surveys.

The authors conducted three surveys, one paper and two web-based, which included 4,338 self-completed surveys.

Key findings of the research include:

- The forced-choice format yields significantly more affirmative answers than the check-all format.
- The forced-choice format increases the amount of time that respondents take to answer a particular series of questions, which suggests that they spend more time thinking about their answers.
- Using the check-all format, respondents are more likely to select items at the beginning of the list (first 3 positions), thus primacy seems to exist with the check-all format.

- Adding a “neutral” or “don’t know” response option to the forced-choice format did not reduce the number of “yes” answers.
- Data obtained from the check-all structure should not be used comparatively with data obtained from the forced-choice structure, due to the problems with lower affirmative response rates.
- The forced-choice structure should be the preferred method for multiple answer questions, regardless of the administration method; furthermore, the common practice of using check-all structures for web-based completes and forced-choice structures for telephone completes on the same survey should not be used.
- Respondents who were offered an incentive were happier than those not offered an incentive.
- When incentives are linked to performance, the elevated mood in anticipation of being rewarded leads to distorted informational processing, which negatively affects task performance.
- It does not matter whether participants’ were aware in advance or surprised by the incentive at the time of the experiment or whether the incentives were framed in a positive (get x dollars for every correct answer) or negative manner (x dollars subtracted from total for each wrong answer). In all cases, promises of incentives led to degraded performance.

Monetary Incentives and Mood⁴

Incentives can elevate mood which can negatively affect task performance.



The authors conducted three experiments to determine the affects of performance-based incentives on participants’ ability to perform “choice” tasks. The authors hypothesized that monetary incentives linked to performance may elevate participants’ moods and thereby introduce a bias distortion that can interfere in their ability to make accurate judgments.

The three experiments included 401 college students who were asked to make a series of value judgments. The first experiment measured the amount of distortion that arose from offering performance-based incentives. The second experiment measured what affect the amount or type of incentive had on the amount of distortion found in the first experiment. The last experiment examined the link between incentives and overconfidence.

The key findings of the research were:

- Offering an incentive for performing the choice tasks correctly increased the amount of time spent evaluating the choices by 43%.

Maximizing Response to Postal Questionnaires – A systematic Review of Randomized Trials in Health⁵

Follow-up strategies and shorter questionnaires help to improve response rate in healthcare studies.



The authors conducted a review of 13 studies performed among patients to determine what can be done to increase the response rate to mailed surveys. The 13 studies covered 25,607 respondents participating in health care surveys concerning their current or recent treatments.

Key findings of the research include:

- Follow-up strategies such as telephone reminders or repeated mailings had the largest impact on increasing response rates.
- Shorter questionnaires (7-47 questions) had larger response rates than longer questionnaires (36-123 questions).
- Question order did not affect response rate.

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.



OUR RESEARCH TEAM

Joe Welch Ph.D. - President: Over twenty-five years experience in the research industry. Joe has moderated over 2000 focus groups and has extensive experience in survey research, experimentation, and publishing. Graduate faculty at the University of North Texas.

David Cooper - Senior Account Executive: Over fifteen 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: Over fifteen 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.

Mark Teich – Director of Quality Assurance: Fifteen years of experience in data collection and quality assurance. MBA in marketing from the University of North Texas.

Peggy Tinsley – Director of Research Support Services: Twenty years of experience in supporting the mailing, coding and tabulating functions.

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2. Fricker, Scott, Galesic, Mirta, Tourangeau, and Yan, Ting, "An Experimental Comparison of Web and Telephone Surveys," Public Opinion Quarterly, Volume 69 (2005), 370-392.
3. Smyth, Jolene D., Dillman, Don A., Christian, Leah Melani, and Stern, Michael J., "Comparing Check-All and Forced Choice Question Formats in Web Surveys," Public Opinion Quarterly, Volume 70 (2006), 66-77.
4. Meloy, Margaret G., Russo, J. Edward, Miller, Elizabeth Gelfand "Monetary Incentives and Mood," Journal of Marketing Research, Volume 43 (2006) 267-275.
5. Nakash, Rachel A., Hutton, Jane L., Jorstad-Stein, Ellen, Gates, Simon, Lamb, Sarah E., "Maximizing Response to Postal Questionnaires – A Systematic Review of Randomized Trials in Health Research," BMC Medical Research Methodology, Volume 6 (2006).

Syndics Synopsis

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