Questionnaires

Questionnaire as an instrument for collecting data, which almost always involves asking a given subject to respond to a set of oral or written questions. A **survey** is a process of gathering data that could involve a wide variety of data collection methods, including a questionnaire. Questionnaires can be classified as both, quantitative and qualitative method depending on the nature of questions. Specifically, answers obtained through closed-ended questions with multiple choice answer options are analyzed using quantitative methods and they may involve pie-charts, bar-charts and percentages. Answers obtained to open-ended questionnaire questions are analyzed using qualitative methods and they involve discussions and critical analyses without use of numbers and calculations. In general total 25-40 questions in questionnaires will usually suffice. Questions need be formulated in an unambiguous and straightforward manner and they should be presented in a logical order.

Advantages of questionnaires include increased speed of data collection, low or no cost requirements, and higher levels of objectivity compared to many alternative methods of primary data collection. However, questionnaires have certain disadvantages such as selection of random answer choices by respondents without properly reading the question. Moreover, there is usually no possibility for respondents to express their additional thoughts about the matter due to the absence of a relevant question.

There are following types of questionnaires:

Computer questionnaire. Respondents are asked to answer the questionnaire which is sent by mail. The advantages of the computer questionnaires include their inexpensive price, time-efficiency, and respondents do not feel pressured, therefore can answer when they have time, giving more accurate answers. However, the main shortcoming of the mail questionnaires is that sometimes respondents do not bother answering them and they can just ignore the questionnaire.

Telephone questionnaire. Researcher may choose to call potential respondents with the aim of getting them to answer the questionnaire. The advantage of the telephone questionnaire is that, it can be completed during the short amount of time. The main disadvantage of the phone questionnaire is that it is expensive most of the time. Moreover, most people do not feel comfortable to answer many questions asked through the phone and it is difficult to get sample group to answer questionnaire over the phone.

In-house survey. This type of questionnaire involves the researcher visiting respondents in their houses or workplaces. The advantage of in-house survey is that more focus towards the questions can be gained from respondents. However, in-house surveys also have a range of disadvantages which include being time consuming, more expensive and respondents may not wish to have the researcher in their houses or workplaces for various reasons.

Mail Questionnaire. This sort of questionnaires involve the researcher to send the questionnaire list to respondents through post, often attaching pre-paid envelope. Mail questionnaires have an advantage of providing more accurate answer, because respondents can answer the questionnaire in their spare time. The disadvantages associated with mail questionnaires include them being expensive, time consuming and sometimes they end up in the bin put by respondents.

Questionnaires can include the following types of questions:

Open question questionnaires. Open questions differ from other types of questions used in questionnaires in a way that open questions may produce unexpected results, which can make the research more original and valuable. However, it is difficult to analyze the results of the findings when the data is obtained through the questionnaire with open questions.

Multiple choice questions. Respondents are offered a set of answers they have to choose from. The downsize of questionnaire with multiple choice questions is that, if there are too many answers to choose from, it makes the questionnaire, confusing and boring, and discourages the respondent to answer the questionnaire.

Dichotomous Questions. This type of questions gives two options to respondents – yes or no, to choose from. It is the easiest form of questionnaire for the respondent in terms of responding it.

Scaling Questions. Also referred to as ranking questions, they present an option for respondents to rank the available answers to the questions on the scale of given range of values (for example from 1 to 10).

Survey Monkey represents one of the most popular online platforms for facilitating data collection through questionnaires. Substantial benefits offered by Survey Monkey include its ease to use, presentation of questions in many different formats and advanced data analysis capabilities.

Advantages

1. **<u>Questionnaires are inexpensive:</u>**

   First of all, questionnaires are one of the most affordable ways to gather quantitative data. Especially self-administered questionnaires, where you don't have to hire surveyors to perform face-to-face interviews, are a cost-efficient way to quickly collect massive amounts of information from a large number of people in a relatively short period of time. A questionnaire can be placed on your website or emailed to your customers. These methods have little to no cost, though strong targeting is necessary if you want to have the highest possible response rate receive the most accurate results.

2. **<u>Questionnaires are practical</u>**

Apart from being inexpensive, questionnaires are also a practical way to gather data. They can be targeted to groups of your Choosing and managed in various ways. You can pick and choose the questions asked as well as the format (open-ended or multiple choice). They offer a way to gather vast amounts of data on any subject. They can be used in a wide variety of ways.

3. Questionnaires offer a quick way to get results:

It's quick and easy to collect results with online and mobile tools. This means that you can gain insights in as little as 24 hours (or less!), depending on the scale and reach of your questionnaire. You don't need to wait for another company to deliver the answers you need.

4. Scalability

Questionnaires and surveys allow you to gather information from a large audience. Online, you can literally distribute your questions to anyone, anywhere in the world (provided they have an internet connection). All you have to do is send them a link to your survey page. And you don't even need to do this manually. This could be done through an automated email in your customer on boarding or lead nurturing campaigns.

5. Comparability

When data has been quantified, it can be used to compare and contrast other research and may be used to measure change. This makes monthly or yearly questionnaire more and more valuable over time. Improving comparability implies that errors due to translation have to be minimized. In terms of questionnaire translation for multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-regional surveys the aim is to achieve a level of comparability across all local versions.

6. Easy Analysis and visualization

Most survey and questionnaire providers are quantitative in nature and allow easy analysis of results. With built-in tools, it'seasy to analyze your results without a background in statistics or scientific research. Tools like Survey Anyplace offer easy to interpret reports and visualizations, meaning that you'll quickly be turning your data into results. These results can

be put in a wide variety of charts and tables to present them to your boss, colleagues, clients or customers.

7. Questionnaires offer actionable data

Look at research as a blank canvas. The more data you gather, the clearer the painting becomes. All this information gives marketers the capability to create new strategies and to follow trends in your audience. Analyzing data and building reports can be used to generate predictions and even create benchmarks for follow-up questions or questionnaires.

8. **Respondent anonymity**

Online and email surveys allow respondents to maintain their anonymity. Mail-in questionnaires also allow for complete invisibility, which maximizes comfort for those answering. Even phone interviews are not face-to-face, thereby making it a more private communication. This concealment puts respondents at ease and encourages them to answer truthfully; however, there is still a human touch to these phone interviews.

9. Questionnaires don't have time constraints

When using mail-in, online or email questionnaires, there's no time limit and there is no one on the other end waiting for an answer. Respondents can take their time to complete the questionnaire at their own leisure. As a bonus, they will often answer more truthfully, as research has shown that having a researcher present can lead to less honest and more social desirable answers.

10. **Questionnaires can cover every aspect of a topic**

One of the biggest advantages is being able to ask as many questions as you like. Of course, it benefits the marketer to keep each individual questionnaire short, since respondents may find a long questionnaire frustrating. We suggest a limit of 10 questions for online surveys.

However, since they are efficient, cost-effective in nature and have an easy mode of delivery, there is no harm in creating multiple questionnaires, each covering a subtopic of the main subject, that build upon one another.

Disadvantages

1. Dishonest answers

While there are many positives to questionnaires, dishonesty can be an issue.

Respondents may not be 100% truthful with their answers. This can happen for a variety of reasons, including social desirability bias and attempting to protect privacy. Stop dishonesty in its tracks by assuring respondents that their privacy is valued and that the process prevents personal identification.

2. Unanswered questions

When using questionnaires, there is a chance that **some questions will be ignored or left unanswered**.

If questions are not required, there is always that risk they won't be answered. Online questionnaires offer a simple solution to this issue: make answering the question required.

Otherwise, make your survey short and your questions uncomplicated and you will avoid question skipping and get better completion rates.

3. Differences in understanding and interpretation

The trouble with not presenting questions to users face-to-face is that each may have different interpretations of your questions.

Without someone to explain the questionnaire fully and ensure each individual has the same understanding, results can be subjective.

Respondents may have trouble grasping the meaning of some questions that may seem clear to the creator.

This miscommunication can lead to skewed results. The best way to combat this situation is to create simple questions that are easy to answer.

4. Hard to convey feelings and emotions

A survey or questionnaire cannot fully capture emotional responses or feelings of respondents. Without administering the questionnaire face-to-face, there is no way to observe facial expression, reactions or body language.

Without these subtleties, useful data can go unnoticed.

Don't get stuck trying to interpret emotion in data, instead go for a Likert scale, the response scale that often uses a rating scale from "slightly agree" to "strongly disagree." This allows for strength and assertion in responses rather than multiple choice.

5. Some questions are difficult to analyze

Questionnaires produce a lot of data. Multiple choice questions can be tabulated and graphed, but open-ended questions are different.

Open-ended questions allow for individualized answers which cannot be quantified and must be reviewed by a human.

Too many open-ended questions can produce a flood of data, that can take forever to analyze. Fix this pitfall but choosing your question types carefully. If you have ten questions, you probably don't want more than one to be open-ended since these have no way to be quantified.

That's why it's important to select the right type of question as a questionnaire is only as effective as its questions.

The survey questions need to be evaluated quickly and they need to produce data that can be acted upon.

If you make questions too difficult or confusing to answer, you may end up with meaningless data.

Choosing the wrong type of question can also lead to incomplete results or data that is hard to interpret.

The main question types are open-ended, closed-ended and semi-closed ended questions. Within these types, there is an abundance of ways to present your query from ratings to yes/no question.

6. Respondents may have a hidden agenda

As with any sort of research, **respondent bias can be an issue**.

Participants in your survey may have an interest in your product, idea or service. Others may be influenced to participate based on the subject of your questionnaire. These proclivities can lead to inaccuracies in your data, generated from an imbalance of respondents who see your topic in an overly positive or negative light.

Filter out a hidden agenda with a pre-screening. Come up with a few indirect questions that will remove those results wreckers.

7. Lack of personalization

Customization is the prevailing marketing theme.

Any piece of marketing material is at risk of seeming impersonal unless time and care are taken to personalize it. **If you're unable to add touches of personalization, some potential respondents may be put off** and ignore it.

This can be particularly difficult when the questionnaire or survey is taken voluntarily on a website, regardless of purchase or email.

Fix this by always sending emails containing respondents names. Use dynamic content on websites, and strive to use names, personal data and personalized content in all communication.

8. Unconscientious responses

Every administrator hopes for conscientious responses, but there's no way to know if the respondent has really understood the question or read it thoroughly before answering.

At times, answers will be chosen before fully reading the question or the potential answers. Sometimes respondents will skip through questions, or split-second choices may be made, affecting the validity of your data.

This drawback is tough to defeat, but if you make your survey short and your questions simple you're likely to get the most accurate responses.

9. Accessibility issues

No matter what form of delivery is used, **lack of accessibility is a threat**. Surveys may be unsuitable for users with a visual or hearing impairment, or other impediments such as illiteracy. This should be considered when choosing to do research in this manner.

Always choose a questionnaire platform that has accessibility options built in.

10. Questionnaire or survey fatigue

We've all received survey invitations and the trend of companies using customer feedback surveys is up. This means that some level of **survey fatigue is setting in with respondents**.

In general, we can identify two types of survey fatigue:

Survey Response Fatigue: This occurs before the survey begins. Overwhelmed by the growing number of surveys, respondents will be less inclined to take part in your survey. As a result, you'll suffer from a low response rate.

Survey Taking Fatigue: This type of respondent fatigue happens during the survey. It's the result of surveys that are perceived as too long and include questions irrelevant to the respondent. An indicator of survey taking fatigue can be found in a low completion rate.

How much survey fatigue affects your questionnaire depends on you. If you make it easy for respondents to answer and you actually do something with the information then fatigue will be lower.