

Questionnaire design

The generic structure in developing questionnaire is described as follows:

- a) Specification of the information needed in researchable format
- b) Selection of interview method
- c) Determination of question composition
- d) Determination of individual question content
- e) Developing question order, form and layout
- f) Pilot testing the questionnaire

Specification of the information needed in researchable format

- The first step in developing a questionnaire is to specify the information needed in researchable format. The researcher should also look at the research objectives and hypotheses and match this information. At this stage, it is very important to have a clear idea of target population and sample. The characteristics of the respondents have a great influence on questionnaire design. For example, questions which are appropriate for elderly consumers might not be appropriate for young consumers.

Selection of interview method

- The type of interviewing method also plays an important role in questionnaire design. For example, in personal interview situations, respondents are able to see the questionnaire and interact in person with the interviewer. This provides an opportunity to ask varied questions involving complexities because instant feedback mechanism is available.

Determination of question composition

There are two major types of question structures:

unstructured (also called open ended questions)

and structured (also called close ended questions)

Determination of individual question content

Each individual question is unique from its content perspective and therefore must be treated with caution in the development process. Using components such as words, order, tenses and so on, each question attempts to fulfil the overarching research objectives.

Wording of a question could create problems such as ambiguity, abstraction, and connotation.

To avoid these problems researchers can take several steps such as:

1. Use ordinary words which can easily be understood by the respondents
 - For example, instead of using the word ‘ambidextrous’ one can use ‘skilful’
2. Avoid ambiguous words
 - For example, word ‘hot’ or ‘cool’ change their meaning according to the context they are used in
3. Avoid leading questions
 - For example, do you think immigration is hurting local economy and making locals lose their jobs?
4. Avoid implicit questions
 - For example, do you think a government backed website will have more trust and credibility?
5. Avoid generalizations
 - For example, what is the per capita annual milk consumption in your family?
6. Avoid double barrelled questions
 - For example, do you think you will purchase this product for low price and high quality?

Developing question order, form and layout

- The question order, format and layout can have a significant impact on respondent engagement. Questionnaire with unclear order, format and layout generally get very low response rate and in turn become costly exercise. The questionnaire can be divided in three main parts generally: forward and opening questions; generic information questions; specific information questions.

Pilot testing the questionnaire

- Once the preliminary questionnaire has been developed using the above stated process a researcher should assign coding (discussed in the next chapter) to every question and test the questionnaire on a small sample of respondents to identify and eliminate potential problems. This sampling process is called pilot testing. It is advised that, a questionnaire should not be used in the field survey without being adequately pilot tested. A pilot test provides testing of all aspects of a questionnaire including, content, wording, order, form and layout.

References:

- **Essentials of Marketing Research – Paurav Shukla, BookBoon.com, 2012**