

## Tips for Avoiding Online Survey Pitfalls

By Ted Stasney

Whether your research needs are for branding initiatives, new product or service development, tracking or spotlighting new consumer trends, sooner or later you will need to consider a survey to capture real-time insights.



So where do you go to get the research you need? If you don't currently have research, you may need to have someone conduct it for you and provide various options to obtain the research you need.

To help you, here are some tips and questions to ask when considering online surveys.

**What is your survey research objective?** You want to avoid this common phrase - *They don't get it - That's not the research I wanted.* Instead, start by knowing your survey objectives and have a clear understanding of what you need to learn and discover from your research.

**Who are you going to survey?** Is it the general population, target demographics, or users of your product/service that you need to survey?

**Where are you obtaining the sample or panel for your survey?** An important part of any survey is the sample used in your survey. Is the sample representative of your target, does it need to be weighted or projected to be representative. Fortunately, we have worked and partnered with excellent panel survey providers who take the time to understand the client needs and objectives.

**How is the survey going to be conducted?** Most surveys today are online using opt-in samples. Will the survey be emailed, use social media, or other ways of capturing responses. Also, will the responses be based on a single sample or blended sampling?

**Custom real-time vs syndicated and dated research.** Using research based on surveys that have been conducted a year or several years ago as well as research not specific to your needs is not always relevant. A lot can change in a year. Your needs might demand knowing more current and specific consumer trends and moving from dated or syndicated studies to custom real-time surveys.

**Is your survey questionnaire too long and are questions hard to understand?** Long surveys can have a negative impact on response rates and abandonment rates which impact representative samples and data quality. Some of the main reasons to avoid long surveys include:

Survey respondent fatigue affects data quality. Lack of survey participation and engagement in the survey are main concerns when surveys become too long. Most

respondents have it in them to complete something they start. But if it goes on too long, respondents focus on 'finishing' the task rather than providing thoughtful answers to your questions.

Shorter surveys have higher completion rates and are more reliable, which means they have overall better data quality. Keeping your survey short helps you do exactly that.

Also, having questions that are clear, not confusing, are critical in a survey. Respondents do not know how to answer questions they cannot understand - keeping it simple, and to the point will get the responses you need.

**What did we learn?** Offering insight and solutions and not just survey results.

Don't forget to Tell Your Story with Research

Once you have your research compiled, you will need to start preparing your findings. Here's some tips on telling your story:

- ✓ Use a compelling and eye-catching title to engage your reader or client
- ✓ Use research that is relevant to your client
- ✓ Use infographics and charts to emphasize your research findings
- ✓ Use sources for your surveys
- ✓ Never use too much data
- ✓ Focus on the relevant findings
- ✓ Make sure your results make sense and *tells a story*

After the survey has been completed:

- ✓ Does the story present the findings?
- ✓ What have we learned?
- ✓ Do your research results offer solutions and answer the objectives of the survey?

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