ST3004: Research Methods

Questionnaires
Questionnaires

- Efficient
- Useful for Descriptive/explanatory research
- Easily repeated on new group/sample

With thanks to Dr Myra O’Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Types

Self-administered
- Internet
- Postal
- Deliver and collection

Interviewer administered
- Telephone
- Structured interview

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Purpose of a Questionnaire

- To obtain accurate information from a sample
- To convert the information needed into a set of specific questions that respondents can and will answer.
- Must encourage the respondent to give the information
- Must minimise boredom and fatigue
- Must leave respondent feeling good
- Provides a standard format on which all information can be recorded
Where do we start?

- Be very clear about research questions
- Who are the respondents
- Method of administration
- Talk to client
- Look at literature
- Talk to experts in your topic area
- Carry out a few in-depth unstructured interviews to get a feel for the area
- Carry out some focus groups

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Tasks in constructing a questionnaire

- Outline major sections
- For each section list variables
- Draw up dummy tables to ensure you have thought of all variables
- Do you need to make comparisons with previous research?
  - If yes, look at their questions
- Search for existing questions or scales in topics of interest
- Draft new questions

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Tasks in constructing a questionnaire

- For each question
  - Decide on type of question
  - Decide on question wording
  - Decide on form of response

- Finally
  - Decide on question sequence
  - Decide on layout
  - Write cover letter
  - Test the questionnaire
The challenge is to obtain all the necessary information without obtaining unnecessary data.
Types of variables collected

- **Attribute**
  - What age are you []

- **Opinion**
  - How do you feel about ..... 

- **Behaviour**
  - How do you spend you free time ...
**Research Question/Objective:** To establish customers’ attitudes to the outside smoking area at restaurants

**Type:** prominently descriptive, wish to examine differences between restaurants and bars and groups of customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigative Questions</th>
<th>Variable(s) Required</th>
<th>Detail in which data is measured</th>
<th>Check included in questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do customers feel that they should have an outside smoking area at restaurants and bars as a right? (opinion)</td>
<td>Opinion of customer on restaurants and bars providing an outside smoking area as a right</td>
<td>Feel ... Should be a right, should not be a right, no strong feelings (need separate questions for bars and restaurants)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do customers feel that restaurants and bars should provide an outside smoking area for smokers? (opinion)</td>
<td>Opinion of customer to the provision of an outside smoking area for smokers</td>
<td>Feel ...very strongly that it should, quite strongly that it should, no strong opinions, quite strongly that it should not, very strongly that it should not.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age? (attribute)</td>
<td>Age of customer</td>
<td>Nearest 5 year band</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether or not a smoker (behaviour)</td>
<td>Smoker</td>
<td>Non-smoker, smokes but not in own home, smokes in own home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How representative are the responses of customers? (attribute)</td>
<td>Sample must be representative – comparable to national statistics socio-economic classification</td>
<td>Profession, age, gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Type of Question

- **Open Ended Questions**: No choices provided
  - What age are you? _____ years

- **Closed Questions**: Choices are provided
  - What age are you?
    - 10-20 years
    - 21-40 years
    - 41-60 years
    - 60+ years
**General Open Ended question**

- **Description:** Question that respondent can answer in an unlimited number of ways

- **Example:**
  
  Suggest improvements to the current service

  ___________________________________

  ___________________________________

  ___________________________________

  ___________________________________
Thoughts on Open ended questions…

- Allows respondent to answer in her own words, no influence
- Answers depend on how much respondents are willing to think
- Unanticipated responses
- Does not restrict to specific options.
- Useful to give the flavour of people's answers to cite as examples in a report.
- Complements and brightens up the quantitative data
More thoughts on Open ended questions…

- Not possible to design a closed question.
- Useful in a pilot to develop a list of possible options for a closed question.
- More detailed information but takes more time.
- Does depend on the articulateness of the respondent.
- Depends on interviewer's ability to record responses verbatim.
- Difficult to code.
- They can capture issues or feelings of respondents that may not have been covered by the closed questions.
Thoughts on Closed questions

- Harder to develop closed questions - have to ensure that all potentially important response alternatives are included.
- Responses may be influenced by the list of options provided.
- Easier to code afterwards
- Easier for interviewer to record answers
- Easier for respondent
- Less margin of error in recording
Lists
Lists

- Bias & Error Risks

- Controversy - question assumes everyone has a religion

- No category for Judaism (categories used for state funding of schools)
Category Questions

How often do you eat desert

- Once a week
- Less than fortnightly to once a month
- 2 or more times a week
- Less often

Problems with example:

- Needs a filter question
- Confusing/incomplete timescales

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Ranking

Rank order the importance of the following to you:

1. Power & Prestige
2. Location ... Living Where You Want
3. Independence ... Freedom to Act
4. Money .... Financial Success
5. Balance Between Work & Family
6. Professional Respect & Recognition
7. Job Security ..... Stability
8. Working with Great Technical People
9. Training and Personal Advancement
10. Working with People You Like
11. Having Fun ..... Enjoying Work
12. Working For A World Class Organization
13. Continual Challenge & Growth
14. Excitement .... A Sense of Adventure
15. Managing/Leading Others
16. Making an Impact; Achievement
17. Working on a Global Team

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Rating

Your feedback is an important component of the College's commitment towards the creation of an inclusive College environment. The results of this anonymous survey will be used in reviewing your programme to enhance inclusion.

Your constructive comments are always welcome.

Module: __________ Faculty: __________

What programme are you studying on? __________

Are you enrolled as a:
- Full time student
- Visiting Student
- Other

Please Answer The Following Questions:

Module General

The learning outcomes of this module have been communicated to me:
- Very clearly
- Clearly
- Neutral
- Unclearly
- Very Unclearly

Organisation on this module is:
- Excellent
- Good
- Neutral
- Poor
- Very Poor

Lectures were engaging and informative
- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly

I find the workload:
- Too heavy
- Heavy
- Just right
- Light
- Too light

I find the module handouts:
- Very Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- Unhelpful
- Did not receive any
14. How would you prefer to receive information from publishers on new products and services? Please rank up to 5 options in order of preference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>1 = most preferred</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 = least preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject specific catalogues - hard copy</td>
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<td>Subject specific catalogues - electronic copy</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy

Wiley Higher Education Communications Survey 2012 (UK)

Introduction

Thank you very much for your time in completing this questionnaire. The aim of the survey is to ensure our communications with you are most effective in helping you find the information you need about course textbooks. All of your responses are confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of developing our communication and services.

1. What is the name of the main educational establishment you are employed in?

2. Do you teach students at this establishment?
   - Yes - currently
   - Not currently - but have in the past/plan to in the future
   - No not at all

Next
Too long
Do you strongly favour, somewhat favour, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose or have no opinion on whether advertisers should be required to have advertising aimed at children approved by a national board?

Just Right?
Do you favour or oppose requiring advertisers to have advertising aimed at children approved by a national review board?

- Strongly favour [ ]
- Somewhat favour [ ]
- Somewhat opposed [ ]
- Strongly oppose [ ]
- No opinion [ ]
Use simple words/ phrases

Candid……Honest
Leisure …… Free time
Employment …… Work
Rectify …… Correct

Occupants of this household ………..
People who live here

Your responses to this questionnaire ………..
Your answers

Post-school extracurricular activities…………
What you do after school
Use complete sentences

1. Number of years lived in Ireland
   ____________ years

1. How many years have you lived in Ireland?
   ____________ years

2. Your city or town
   ____________ city or town

2. In what city or town do you live?
   ____________ city or town

3. Your county
   ____________ county

3. In what Irish county do you live?
   ____________ Irish county

With thanks to Dr Myra O’Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Avoid Vague Quantifiers

How often do you attend religious services during the past year?

☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☐ Occasionally
☐ Regularly

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Avoid Vague Quantifiers

How often did you attend religious services during the past year?

- Not at all
- A few times
- About once a month
- Two to three times a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week
Avoid excessive specificity

1. About how many books have you read for leisure during the past year?
   __________ number of books

2. About how many books have you read for leisure during the past year?
   None []
   1-2 []
   3-5 []
   6-10 []
   11 or more []

3. About how many books have you read for leisure during the past year?
   Less than 10 []
   22-25 []
   26-50 []
   51-75 []
   75 or more []

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
### Distinguish undecided from neutral

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “Living in a rural area is better for a person’s health”

- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Undecided
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree

- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] No opinion

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With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Avoid Bias

Which of the following do you feel is more responsible for violence among children in school?

- Irresponsible parents
- School policies
- Television programs
- Parent
- Schools
- Television

The way children are raised by parents
- School policies
- Television programs

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
State both sides of scale

To what extent do you agree with this statement: “It’s easier for graduates to find work than it was about one year ago”

- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “It’s easier for graduates to find work than it was about one year ago”

- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree
Eliminate Check-All formats

Which of the following characteristics would you like to see developed in your child?

- An interest in music
- An interest in sports
- An appreciation of art
- An interest in science
- An interest in business

With thanks to Dr Myra O’Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Use mutually exclusive response categories

From which of these sources did you first learn about the referendum?

- Radio
- Television
- While at home
- On the way home from college
Use Cognitive Design Techniques

We would like to ask you about the most recent time you drove or rode anywhere in an automobile or other vehicle. During this most recent ride, would you say that your seatbelt was fastened ...

- All of the time
- Almost all the time
- Almost of the time
- Half the time
- Less than half the time
- Not at all
Use Cognitive Design Techniques

- We would like to ask you to please think about the last three times you drove or rode in a motor vehicle.

- First, when was the last time you drove or rode in a motor vehicle?
  - Today
  - Yesterday
  - Sometime before that

- Could you tell us generally where this most recent trip began and where it ended?
  ______________________________

- About how long was this trip?
  - Less than a mile
  - One to five miles
  - Longer

- During this trip would you say your seatbelt was fastened......
Use Cognitive Design Techniques

- Understand the thought process used to answer survey items

- Use this knowledge to find better ways of constructing, formulating and asking survey questions
Use appropriate time referents

How many times in the last six months have you eaten away from home? ______________

On average, how many times per week do you eat a meal away from home? ___________
Choose wording that allows essential comparisons with previous research

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Avoid asking respondents to say yes to mean no

Do you favour or oppose not allowing the government to agree to the EU fiscal treaty without approval of the majority or voters?

- Favour
- Oppose
Avoid asking unnecessary calculations

What percentage of nights spent away from home on trips last year were for business reasons? _________

How many nights did you spend away from home last year? ________________

How many of these were for business reasons? _________
Softening the impact of objectionable questions:

Have you ever shoplifted something from a store?
- Yes
- No

Have you ever, accidentally or purposely, taken anything from a store without paying for it?
- Yes
- No
Ordering

- Structure like conversation
- Group by topic
- Most important first
- Follows on from letter
- Demographic questions at end
- Objectionable questions near the end
- Order questions logically
- Group questions that have similar structures or scales

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
First Question

- Most crucial
- Easy to answer
- Very relevant to questionnaire
- Follows on from letter
- Not an open question
- Apply to everyone
- Should be interesting
Front Cover

- First impressions important
- Use it to motivate
- Use simple graphics?
- Ensure title is meaningful
- Distinguish from others
- Full details of researchers

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Back cover

- Addition to make additional comments
- No questions
- Thank people
- Remind them how to return questionnaire
Pilot

Things to evaluate in Pilot study:

- Interpretation
- Difficulty
- Boredom
- Question flow/Skips
- Timing

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Testing - content

- Are the questions asking about right things?
- Are all necessary questions included?
- Can we delete questions?
- Questions versus aim of survey
Testing - cognitive

- Do respondents understand questions consistently?
- Do they have required information?
- Are they willing to answer?
- Are they able to answer?

With thanks to Dr Myra O'Regan and Dr Susan Leavy
Testing - usability

- Can respondents complete questionnaire easily
- Is everything working OK?
Testing survey - interview

- **Concurrent think-alouds** R's verbalize their thoughts while they answer questions
- **Retrospective think-alouds** R's describe how they arrived at their answers after they each question or at the end
- **Confidence ratings** R's assess their confidence in their answers
- **Paraphrasing** R's restate the question in their own words

Geiger (2007)