Statewide SURVEY Colloquium

Customer Satisfaction and Attitudinal Surveys

DESCRIPTION

Customer satisfaction surveys are used to collect quantitative feedback from customers and stakeholders on policies, actions, or conditions. These surveys can help decision-makers understand what they are doing right and where to focus extra attention.

Attitudinal surveys measure opinions and perceptions about a topic, policy, or planning measure. They also reveal likely adoption rates of new services or products. These surveys can elicit public opinion and perceptions about important or emerging topics.

Florida's planning community often conducts customer satisfaction and attitudinal surveys. While these surveys fulfill different objectives, they share methodologies and best practices.

Customer satisfaction and attitudinal surveys use rating scales to collect data. Rating scales rely on simple, well-designed statements and questions that reveal sentiments.

Common research questions for these surveys might include the following:
- How well received or effective is the public participation plan?
- How satisfied are residents with the transportation options in their communities?
- How do Florida's residents feel about new and emerging technologies like automated or electric vehicles?
- How well understood is the traffic safety campaign?

Depending on the target population, these surveys can be conducted via paper questionnaires and phone interviews (to capture harder-to-reach groups). However, these surveys are best scaled using online administration techniques for efficient and widespread data collection.

COST
Low-Medium $$$ $ $

TIME
Short-Medium

METHODS
Online   Paper   Phone

CHALLENGES
Representative Sample   Survey Design

EXPERTISE
Sampling Design   Data Wrangling

EXAMPLE: Survey Scale

How satisfied are you with transit service in your area?

1	Very Satisfied
2	Somewhat Satisfied
3	Neutral
4	Somewhat Unsatisfied
5	Very Unsatisfied

HOW WILL THIS SURVEY HELP ME?

> **Spot trends:** If repeated, these surveys can help spot trends and gauge public opinion.

> **Identify problem areas:** Asking constituents or stakeholders what they think is often the best way to receive feedback.

> **Poll stakeholders:** When conducted with rigor, these surveys can be a defensible and valid tool to support a position or policy.

> **Engage the public:** These surveys allow the public to feel heard and can be effective tools for fostering a dialogue with a community.

Sample size requirements and difficult-to-reach populations are important drivers of cost for this type of research. For example, surveys of the general population are usually more cost effective and quicker than surveys of storm victims, the elderly, or non-English speakers. In these cases, special administration methods are sometimes necessary, which can increase costs.

SUCCESS STORIES

2018 Florida Resident Satisfaction Survey

Administration Method: Online questionnaire
Recruitment: Emails to a purchased online panel
Sampling: FDOT District +/-%
Summary available at: https://bit.ly/FDOTSurvey

This survey measured satisfaction levels with transportation infrastructure from 3,000+ Florida residents from all seven Districts. The survey also asked respondents their opinions and attitudes toward emerging technologies like electric and automated vehicles. The survey will help benchmark and track attitudes toward new technologies.

Important Considerations!

Customer satisfaction and attitudinal surveys make the most use of rating scales. A little knowledge of what type of scale to use and how to label it will go a long way. *See the guide on answer scales.*

Consider how you want to weight and analyze your data during the questionnaire process. For example, if you want to weight to Census data, make sure your demographic answer option categories align with Census categories.

1 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN/ADMINISTRATION

Actionable findings require simple, logically sequenced questions. *Always* check to see if other Districts or MPOs have designed a similar question first to maximize comparability with existing research.

Administration Methods:

Online instruments: Internet penetration is high enough that many researchers feel most surveys (with exceptions for some harder to reach groups like the elderly or businesses) can occur entirely online, which is the most efficient method to collect data.

Phone/paper: The shift to cell phones makes phone surveys less reliable, but this method can still be useful for niche populations. Paper surveys are best used to target harder-to-reach populations. Use paper or phone surveys, the former of which you can distribute on site, to supplement online surveys where full representation is important and not otherwise achievable.

> Sample Size

Assuming a random sample of the population, statistical validity is a function of the number of surveys collected. Thousands of responses are not necessary to derive meaningful insights; often, just a few hundred will suffice.

"I want to be 95% sure the data represents my residents within a specific margin of error…"

Required sample sizes for different margins of error

Margin of error	+/-10%	+/-5%	+/-2%
Sample size needed	96	384	2,395

2 SAMPLING/RECRUITMENT

The best sample and recruiting strategy will depend on the research question, target population, and budget.

Random address-based: Acquiring addresses by ZIP Code, county, or Census block provides the highest level of representation. Using this method requires a mail-based invitation; this can increase costs but can potentially reach everyone.

Online panels: These can be fast, efficient, and cost effective. (Note: Panel members tend to overrepresent wealthier, more educated people. Make sure to specify demographic targets to ensure adequate representation from underrepresented groups.)

Convenience: Email lists, public meetings, or social media can can be good ways of collecting data, but these options often do not represent diverse views. Email or customer lists can be the best option when the target population is constrained to only those individuals or when anecdotal information is sufficient. To that end, this option can supplement other, more rigorous approaches.

3 ANALYSIS AND PROCESSING

Survey Weighting:

Responses can be weighted to accurately reflect the population being studied (i.e. general public, transit riders, a specific segment of customers.). Information about the group must first be gathered to have accurate representation across important socio-demographics including age, income, geography, and gender. This information could be from the Census, transit counts, or customer profiles.

Once the survey has been completed, group respondents into behaviorally similar segments (e.g. less than 18 years old, 18 to 35 years old). Be sure that the groupings provide enough responses for reliable weighting. Assign weights to the survey responses to more accurately reflect the population being studied. Once weights have been developed, be sure to recheck your data to ensure other results have not been distorted!

Analysis:

Combining response categories (e.g., % satisfied/very satisfied) can help simplify results. To make analysis more actionable, avoid segments that are too small. Look for differences across key segments, such as income, rural/urban, household vehicles, age, and other important variables that affect behavior.

TYPICAL CHALLENGES

Sampling and recruitment: Before collecting data, familiarize yourself with the control population and design your administration plan to increase your ability to collect responses from all segments of interest. Where possible, use mixed recruitment approaches (e.g., random address and panels) to balance the strengths and weaknesses of each and to control costs.

Weighting: Weighting processes can be highly technical. In some cases, you may need to use a more complex statistical process such as iterative proportional fitting. Many software packages can help, such as SPSS, R, or Q, but expertise and experience in this area is important.

Low participation: While incentives can add to a budget, they encourage participation and can be key to achieving success. Modest prize drawings (e.g., several $100 gift certificates) are cost effective and deliver increased participation rates. Often, providing incentives is less expensive than sending out more surveys to reach your sample targets.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Fowler, Floyd. 2013. Survey Research Methods. Sage Publications, www. aapor.org/Education-Resources/For-Researchers.aspx

For more infomration visit the Statewide Survey Colloquium: https://bit.ly/SurveyColloq