

ANALYSIS OF ONLINE SURVEY SERVICES FOR MARKETING RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The online population has led to an increase in the use of online surveys, which have been a good alternative to capture data from the Internet with regard to collecting and filtering information.

The contribution of this paper is an analysis of current free online survey solutions, showing their advantages, disadvantages and, mainly, the restrictions of free and even paid plans in integration with social networks. The information, already available on social networks, was not used in parallel with surveys; however, it could be implemented in some contexts to increase the analysis process of quantitative and qualitative marketing research as well as increase consumer sampling numbers. The social networks are present today, so they could be more explored in current surveys.

Keyword: Online Survey, Questionnaire, Marketing Research, Social Networks

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet use is increasing due to the decline in prices of software, hardware, and Internet access. More recently, the Internet has seen the formation of virtual communities, groups formed with a particular interest that exchange information with the sole purpose of increasing knowledge or deliberately disseminate ideas. The Internet is synonymous with interconnectivity, rapid access to information, and absorbing ideas.

Access to information from people who were, previously, located in more distant regions has been made easier via the Internet because these individual now have access to the Internet; this access can be at home or in a place with public access to the Internet.

There are also cases where people do not want to have their opinions exposed by face-to-face research, even when preserving anonymity, because they might feel uncomfortable for political or social reasons.

As such, opinion research on the Web has been used in various areas including health^{1, 2}, education³, and e-business⁴. Further, the use of online survey research has resulted in positive and negative factors. Some positive factors, in addition to those cited above included the following: reducing expense such as paper^{5, 6} and travel costs for interviewers to reach distant regions. However, negative factors should not be ignored and include insufficient sampling⁷ and a lack of reliability and validity of responses that are collected online.

Works such as^{8, 9} have conducted analyses of Application Based Online Surveys; however, have not included experimental tests with actual free online surveys and have not discussed their integration with social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).

As such, the following study analyzed the most used sites for Online Surveys (QuestionPro^a, Zoomerang^b, PollDaddy^c, FreeOnlineSurveys^d, QuestionForm^e, SurveyMonkey^f and Kwik^g). This paper is organized as follows: Section II presents basic concepts, Section III describes the experimental results, and Section IV concludes the paper and proposes future work.

^a www.questionpro.com

^b www.zoomerang.com

^c polldaddy.com

^d freeonlinesurveys.com

^e questionform.com

^f www.surveymonkey.com

^g www.kwiksurveys.com

2. BASIC CONCEPTS

2.1 Online Survey

A survey is not just a questionnaire, rather covers the collection, comparison, and analysis of results from a particular questionnaire. Additionally a survey can be either supervised or unsupervised. With a supervised survey, the interviewer asks the questions directly to respondents and ensures that all the questions are answered. Conversely, with an unsupervised survey, there is no interviewer; for example, electronic questionnaires on the Internet.

Further, the questionnaire used in a survey can be defined as "a set of questions on a topic that does not test the ability of the respondent, but measures their views, their interests, personality traits and biographical information"¹⁰. Questionnaire can be administered in the presence of the respondent, by phone, email, or in the form of an electronic form that is made available at a particular site or virtual community in which the interviewee belongs. To develop an effective questionnaire, the researcher must (1) select the medium in which the questionnaire will get to the interviewee and (2) conduct an analysis of the arrangement and presentation of questions to which the interviewee must focus in order to address the issues presented.

Additionally, the object of study must be also examined; for example, the launch of a new product, the introduction of a new-and-improved version of a current product, sports products, cosmetics or clothing in general. Finally, the profile of respondents must be defined (e.g., gender, age, location).

If the questionnaire is an online electronic form, it should be available on the Internet for the respondent to complete and the form should meet the minimum requirements for validation. An online questionnaire should also enable the possibility to include multiple or simple choice questions, fields for comments, the inclusion of multimedia (image and video), and provide integration with social networks^h.

Finally, the population sample size should also be considered because it is impossible to develop and administer a survey to an entire population for financial and time reasons. Thus, via statistical methods, the researcher must calculate the minimum number of respondents that are necessary for the survey in order to determine the required sample size. Additionally, the researcher should also calculate the response rate, which is the ratio between

^h Twitter and Facebook

the number of people who answered the survey and the number of people who received the survey.

2.2 Marketing Research

Marketing research helps learn about consumers' knowledge of a particular product or service and evaluates the points of appreciation and depreciation exposed by the consumer. In this type of analysis, researchers can decide which guidelines are appropriate to follow concerning a specific product or service.

The analysis of consumer behavior and habits reflect the existing market and vice versa. Of note, cultural and social influences are decisive factors in consumer behaviors¹¹.

Some questions that are often addressed in marketing research (e.g., Churchill¹³) include:

- Planning: What type people buy our products, where do they live?
- Problem resolution:
 - Product: Which designs or packaging will have more success?
 - Pricing: What price should be charged in relation to other products?
 - Local: Where and to whom should the products be sold?
- Promotion: How much should be spent on promotions? What type of media should be used (newspaper, radio, television, magazines)?
- Control: Are customers satisfied with the company's products? How many people know the company's name? What is reputation of the company's brand?

Two methods of marketing research are implemented in conducting online surveys: Qualitative and Quantitative.

Qualitative research investigates the characteristics of the market via exploratory contexts of decision making. This type of research is exploratory and more subjective, which encourages respondents to think more freely about a subject. Through qualitative research, subjective aspects of individuals' thoughts and behaviors are collected. Specifically, the interviewee can insert his or her opinion, usually within the questionnaire if an open editing field is provided.

Quantitative research measures and quantifies the market data objectively and might refer to size, quota, or the rate of market growth. However, this type of research can also be used to measure attitudes, commitment, and customer satisfaction. The questions used in type of study are straightforward and easily quantified. When using a questionnaire,

questions are formulated as single or multiple choice, without an editing field; all answers are standardized.

The current study implemented qualitative and quantitative research as both single/multiple choice and editing fields were provided.

3. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

In this paper seven free surveys were chosen and analyzed; the commercial version of these surveys will not be covered. Additionally, this study is useful to small business employees who can use these surveys free of charge. Finally the survey contained questions about shampoo and consisted of nine questions including multiple choice and text editing.

The characteristics analyzed in the survey included the following:

- User friendly interface: Is the questionnaire interface easy to use or learn to use?
- Integration with social networks: Can the questionnaire connect to social networks?
- Subdomain: Some surveys allow subdomain creation, as in case of Questionpro domain: survey-2011.questionpro.com.
- Chart analysis: Does the questionnaire interface allows for the creation of graphics for better viewing?
- Data exporting: Does the questionnaire interface allows users to save data in the most popular formats (xls, csv or pdf) for future viewing and modification?
- Number of question: Is there a maximum number of question permitted per questionnaire?
- Number of responses: Is there a maximum number of responses permitted per questionnaire?
- Survey per account: Is there a maximum number of survey permitted per person?
- Storage time per survey: Is there a maximum number of days that the survey is enabled and can be seen by the interviewer or another person
- Schedule: Is there a time interval that the questionnaire is visible by the respondents?
- Templates: Are there design themes templates of different types?
- Customization: Is there the possibility to change color, style, and fonts within the questionnaire?
- Language Customization: Is there language customization options that allow the user to change parts of the survey text that are outside of the questions (e.g., buttons or warnings)?
- Upload Files (multimedia): Is it possible to insert images, sound, and video in the questionnaire?

- Support: Can the survey company provide help by email, tutorials, or phone.

Of the seven free surveys analyzed, the QuestionPro, which can be accessed online,ⁱ was the only that allowed the user to create a subdomain. Additionally, SurveyMonkey captured the Internet Protocol (IP) address of the interviewee to gather geographic information of respondents. TPollydaddy graphical user interface (GUI) was clean and minimalist, a template could be created but required the use of HTML or cascading style sheets (CSS) code. Further, the site sent notifications for questionnaire replies to the administrator email and shows the geographic location of respondents. Zoomerang cannot connect with social networks and there were some delays when updating questionnaires results. Additionally, there was difficulty in modifying the questionnaire after it had been created and there were resource limitation issues within the text fields.

The graphical interface of FreeOnlineSurveys was friendly and didactic and the presentation of the results was easy to find. The site also offered reasonable resources for developing the questionnaire and had free language support, and there was the possibility to use various types of graphs (chart wizard). Unfortunately, this interface only allowed 10 days for each survey.

QuestionForm presented extreme limitations in resources for creating questions.

Finally, Kwik Surveys offered the possibility to schedule the questionnaire, apply a password protection for access to the survey, provided good resources for developing the questionnaire, and allowed users to export files into xls, csv and xml; this questionnaire can be accessed online^j.

The characteristics of the seven survey analyzed are described in Table 1.

ⁱ survey-2011.questionpro.com

^j www.kwiksurveys.com?s=IMKONK_81d189ad

Table 1. Characteristics of free Surveys

Survey Overview	QuestionPro	Zoomerang	PollDaddy	Free Online Surveys	QuestionForm	Survey Monkey	Kwik
User friendly interface	yes	moderately friendly	yes	moderately friendly	moderately friendly	yes	yes
Integration with social networks	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	no
Subdomain	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
Chart analysis	basic	no	yes	yes	basic	no, requires license	no
Data exporting	no, requires license	no, requires license	no, requires license	no, requires license	yes	no, requires license	yes
Number of question	10	12	10	20	05	10	unlimited
Number of responses	unlimited	100	100	50	unlimited	100	unlimited
Survey per account	maximum 2	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	maximum 2	unlimited	unlimited
Storage time per survey	unlimited	10 days	unlimited	10 days	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited
Schedule	no, requires license	no, requires license	no	no	no	no	yes
Templates	yes	yes	yes	yes	basic	yes	no
Customization	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Language Customization	no, requires license	no	no	yes	Portuguese and English	yes	no
Upload Files (multimedia)	no, requires license	no	images, mp3	no	no, requires license	only images	yes
Support	chat, video tutorial	forum, email, phone	email	email	forum, email	video tutorial, email	email

4. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

The online survey that offered the most resources was Kwik Surveys, although the layout did not have many resources. QuestionPro Survey and FreeOnlineSurveys had very friendly interfaces and additional layout and graphic analysis tools, in the case of the FreeOnlineSurveys. QuestionPro Survey had problems connecting via social networks. Finally, none of the Online Surveys included word searches in sources other than the questionnaire itself.

Pollydaddy and FreeOnlineSurveys created and provided the HTML code for the questionnaire; however, but this option might not be useful for newbie users.

In this paper, to test people's interest in online surveys, QuestionPro was chosen and a questionnaire was published on social network sites.

This paper concludes that it is possible to use free online surveys; however, they do have limitations in terms of tools and may require more elaborate word filters, and search capabilities for words so other repositories of information can parallel the questionnaire. Further, the tools did not enable the collection of information from existing social network sites or virtual communities.

As future work, it is intended to implement a study mechanism to capture information from social networks to elicit more respondents to complete general surveys of online sources. Such a study could reveal the contexts and situations that online surveys are useful, as well as study and evaluate a better way to encourage people to complete online questionnaires.

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