ALEC 621:  
Online Research Methods  
Week #2: Mixed Mode Surveys

Welcome

• What we need to do this week:
  – Discuss mixed mode surveys.
  – Explore variations in online surveys.
  – Illustrate fundamental online survey structures:
    • Welcome site - *.htm code
    • Survey site - *.asp code
    • Verification site - *.asp code
    • Hidden components - *.mdb structure
    • Follow-up site - *.htm
  – Begin the coding process for online surveys.

Mixed Mode Surveys

• Why would you use a mixed mode technique to collect your data?
• What are the advantages of mixed modes?
• What are the disadvantages of mixed modes?
• You know how to conduct paper-based data collection, but what are the possibilities in an online setting?

Five Situations for M-M Surveys
1. Collection of the same data from different members of a sample.
2. Collection of panel data from the same respondents at a later time.
3. Collection of different data from the same respondents during a single data collection period.
4. Collection of comparison data from different populations.
5. Use one mode to prompt completion by another mode.

Why use M-M Surveys

• According to Dillman:
  – Desire to cut costs (least to most expensive)
  – Reduce non-response error
  – Improve measurement
  – Convenience
  – Improve coverage
• In our case, there are two primary factors:
  – Expediency – rapid response from online responders
  – Totality – eventual response from mail responders

Dillman’s M-M Formats

Unimode Design

• “Unimode construction is the writing and presenting of questions to respondents in a way that assures receipt by respondents of a common mental stimulus, regardless of survey mode” (Dillman, 2000, p. 232)
• In other words, “online survey formats better look exactly like their snail-mail counterparts, or you’re going to have problems…” (Wingenbach, today).

Unimode Visual Principals

• Form foundation of unimode design
– Font size
– Brightness
– Color
– Location
– Shape
– Figure/ground relationships

• Used to obtain equivalent data across modes
• ALEC 621 M-M design will incorporate the same foundation for online vs. mail surveys

9 □ Unimode Visual Principals
1. Make all response options the same across modes and incorporate them into the stem of the survey question.
2. Avoid inadvertently changing the basic question structure across modes in ways that change the stimulus.
3. Reduce the number of response categories to achieve mode similarity.

10 □ Unimode Visual Principals
4. Use the same descriptive labels for response categories instead of depending on people’s vision to convey the nature of a scale concept.
5. If several items must be ranked, precede the ranking question with a rating question.
6. Develop equivalent instructions for skip patterns that are determined by answers to several widely separated items.

11 □ Unimode Visual Principals
7. Avoid question structures that unfold.
8. Reverse the order in which categories are listed in half the questionnaires.
9. Evaluate interviewer instructions carefully for unintended response effects and consider their use for other modes.

12 □ M-M Considerations
• Implementation Issues:
  – Which mode is used first?
  – Switching modes during implementation
  – Choice of response mode
  – Supporting modes
• Response set differences:
  – Social desirability
  – Acquiescence
  – Norm of even-handedness and other question order effects
  – Primacy/Recency Effects

13 □ M-M Variations
• ALEC 621 will explore two primary modes which have shown great potential in educational only settings:
  – Online survey methods
  – Mail survey methods
• Both methods have their merits and pitfalls
• Educational surveys “almost” always have valid population/sample names with e-mail contacts

14 □ M-M Variations
• Online variations that simplify mail modes:
  – Delphi technique in multiple rounds
  – Likert-type scales with multiple response sets
  – Open-ended questions
  – Knowledge questions
    • One correct versus multiple correct responses
• Variations of online survey construction/use aid researchers in combating one primary error:
  – Data entry errors (if all is coded correctly)

15 Fundamental Online Structures
16 Information and Consent Page
17 Information Page (*.htm code)
18 Survey Page
19 Survey Page (*.asp code)
20 Verification Page (file only; *.asp)
21 Database Structure (design view)
22 Database Structure (table view)
23 Confirmation Page
24 Confirmation Page (*.htm code)
25 Weekly Code - *.htm
  • This week, we start writing the code needed for Online Research Survey Methods
  • Weekly code writing sessions include:
    – Welcome site - *.htm
    – Survey site - *.asp
    – Verification site - *.asp code
    – Hidden components - *.mdb structure
    – Follow-up site - *.htm
  • Week #2 focuses on *.htm code for the “Information and Consent” Web site

26 Final Thoughts
  • Mixed Mode Surveys
    – In our case, mixed mode surveys serve two purposes
      • Expediency – rapid response from online responders
      • Totality – eventual response from mail responders
    – Dillman proposes unimode construction
      • Deliberate effort to assure equivalent stimulus in all modes
  • For next week:
    – Continue exploring the Internet for relevant materials to discuss in the next class