

Chapter 14

Internet Surveys

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The aim of this chapter is to introduce the readers to the methodology of Internet surveys, especially Web surveys which are the prevailing Internet survey mode. We want the reader to get an insight into the different opportunities in survey implementation that the Internet technology offers. At the same time we want to highlight the problems that may occur (from non-coverage, through non-response to measurement errors). We do this by presenting the different types of Internet surveys and the areas of their application (section 2) and by guiding the reader through some steps in the Web survey implementation process (section 3). We also offer the reader some information on available software packages (section 4) and give an insight into the cost issues of web surveys (section 5).

GLOSSARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

Banner ad. A graphical part of a web page usually used for advertisements. In case of web surveys it can be used to invite visitors of a web page to participate in a survey. It provides link to a web survey.

Check box. Design element used to present response options in computerized questionnaires. Check boxes are usually used to present response options for questions with multiple possible answers. A respondent can select individual response options by clicking on them.

Cookie. A file that is sent from a web server to a web browser to be stored on user's disk for later retrieval. It contains data that enable the web server to recognize returning visitor of a web page, though it cannot reveal user's identity. This enables some control over multiple responses to web surveys by potentially recognizing persons who have already completed the survey.

Data security. Protection of data against loss and unauthorized access. It applies to the protection of data during the collection process and when stored at the server. Problem of data security is salient for web surveys since sufficient protection (e.g., encryption) of communication between respondent and server and also data server itself is necessary.

Drop-down menu. A design element used to present response options for single-answer question in web questionnaires. When a respondent

clicks on a drop-down menu a list of available response options is opened. The respondents can choose one of them by scrolling down the list and select it.

Dropout rate. Proportion of respondents who only partially complete the questionnaire and preliminary abandon it. It is calculated as the ratio between number of respondents who abandoned the questionnaire prior its completion and number of all respondents to survey.

Interactive web survey. A web survey using an interactive survey questionnaire – a questionnaire where interaction with the server occurs during its completion. It enables interactive features such as conditional branching, randomization of items, inclusion of multimedia elements, control of answers, and so forth.

Intercept web survey. A web survey in which respondents are recruited by intercepting them during their visit to a specific web page. This is usually done using pop-up windows or banner ads on web page.

Internet survey. Broad term for all surveying modes implemented through one or more Internet services. These include World Wide Web (web surveys), email (email surveys), and WebTV (WebTV surveys).

List-based web survey. A type of web survey where a list of units from the target population (sampling frame) is available.

Login procedure (to web survey). A procedure used in web surveys with restricted access to authenticate respondent's permission of entering the web questionnaire. We speak about automatic login procedure when respondent's identification is part of the survey's URL address provided to him/her to access survey. We speak about manual login when respondent is asked to manually enter his/her username and password to access the survey questionnaire.

Opt-out (in web panels). Feature usually available in web panels. It enables participant to opt out from the panel, that is, to leave the panel when convenient to them.

Progress indicator. A graphical or textual element of computerized questionnaires that informs respondent about the proportion of the questionnaire that he/ she has already completed. It is usually implemented in web surveys.

Radio button. Design element used to present response options in computerized questionnaires. Radio buttons are usually used to present response options for questions with single possible answer. A respondent can select an individual response option by clicking on it.

Static web survey. Web survey based on simple HTML form without interactive features (in contrast to *Interactive web survey*). The web questionnaire is static – the same for all respondents.

Volunteer opt-in panel. A panel of units which self-selected themselves to it (inclusion in the panel is voluntary, not based on a probability sample from a certain sampling frame). It is a common approach in web surveys where such panels assure large number of participants of desired characteristics. Because such panels are not based on a representative sampling frame, statistical inference from such surveys is questionable.