

Marketing Factsheet: **Marketing Research Questionnaires**



A market research questionnaire is a useful tool for collecting the views of your existing or potential customers and for structuring an interview or session with a focus group. This factsheet describes the different types of questionnaire and how to compile them.

Questionnaire techniques

There are three main questionnaire techniques to use, depending on what kind of information you want to collect and from who (see table below).

Questionnaire technique	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Personal Survey (generally using a mixture of types of questions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater flexibility – can clarify questions as required ▪ Can ask supplementary questions ▪ High response rate ▪ Can watch body language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time-consuming ▪ Expensive ▪ Respondents have little time to think ▪ Results can be difficult to analyse ▪ Responses can be inaccurate
<p>Telephone (generally using a mixture of 'closed' and 'open' questions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More flexibility and often higher response rate than postal questionnaires ▪ Reaches people who won't give personal interviews ▪ Fast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews must be fairly short ▪ Respondents have little time to think ▪ Respondents may give inaccurate responses
<p>Personal Survey (generally using a mixture of types of questions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cheap ▪ Respondents have time to think ▪ Objective because of lack of interview interface ▪ Useful when respondent is difficult to contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possible low response rate ▪ No flexibility to clarify answers ▪ Limited information obtained



Types of questions

There are five main types of market research question:

- Closed questions -to which the respondent can only answer yes/no/don't know (e.g. Do you drink coffee?)
- Direct questions -which ask the respondent for specific facts relating to their own situation (e.g. How many children do you have?)
- Indirect questions -which aim to get the respondent to reveal something about themselves by asking them about other people (e.g. which school do you think most parents in the area would prefer to send their children to?)
- Multiple-choice questions -which give a series of alternative answers for the respondent to choose from (e.g. what would be your first choice of bread in sandwiches? A, B, CorD?)
- Open questions -which invite an expansive answer and give freedom to the respondent to answer as they please (e.g. what do you think of the service we offer?).

Some 'dos' and 'don'ts'

- Make sure the first question tells you whether it is appropriate to continue with the respondent.
- Put the easy and interesting questions at the beginning; the personal and complex questions at the end.
- Ask only necessary questions, not those that are 'just interesting' or 'nice to know', but those that are really relevant to what you want to find out.
- Make the questions as simple and precise as possible, and ensure they only need one answer.
- Avoid leading questions (e.g. most people choose Brand X for its quality. Why do you buy it?).
- Test the questionnaire's effectiveness on a small sample of people before using it. Try family and friends first to make sure they understand the questions.
- Make sure that the questions are appropriate to what you want to find out from that particular group. You might have roughly the same question but it will be phrased slightly differently for potential customers or for existing customers or for competitor's customers.
- The larger the sample of people that you use the more accurate the results will be.
- Use a spreadsheet or -for a large number of replies -a database to analyse the data.
- Consult www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk for what you should do with the data under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Based on Cobweb information: *A guide to using a market research questionnaire*