Chapter 1
Online Survey:
Best Practice

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to demonstrate how the online survey tool was used during the PhD and postdoctoral research stages to evaluate and assess the New Participative Methodology for Developing Websites from the Marketing Perspective. After reviewing techniques from numerous disciplines for methodology integration, a new methodology was produced and an online survey to assess the methodology was completed by website industry participants and information systems professionals in Western Australia. A new online survey was developed on the basis of the PhD results and 210 Web developers and information technology professionals from Australia assessed the new methodology. This chapter will discuss three factors: the advantages and disadvantages of using an online survey in helping to facilitate high quality research and an overview of the functionality of the online survey tool(s) from a researcher's point of view. Finally, a practical set of recommendations and endorsements is presented regarding the adoption of an online survey from the researcher's standpoint.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet, or the Global Internet, as some people call it, is the name given to a certain network of computers around the world. The Internet is also known by other names such as Cyberspace or the Information Superhighway. The Internet itself is a network of thousands of computer networks utilising a common set of technical protocols to create a worldwide communications medium. Users reach the Internet through their computers and terminals at home or at educational institutions,

or through commercial Internet access providers and other organisations (Mitchell, Lebow, Uribe, Grathouse, & Shoger, 2011; Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011; Sun, 2011).

The contents of the Internet range from high technology research papers to low technology childcare. The total amount of data on the Internet has not been measured in recent years and an estimate of several hundred terabytes probably falls far short. Its development is not slowing at all. The Internet provides common services such as electronic mail, online shopping, electronic news, and information access, via Gopher and other info-bases. These services are accessed through various application programs available for a variety of computer operating systems. All these services work over the common network structure of the Internet. The Internet itself is just a massive communication medium (Kung, Picard, & Towse, 2008; Tsai, et al., 2009; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2009).

The Internet is not limited to e-commerce and information. Now includes an online survey approach which was created on the Internet to work simultaneously with telephone interviewing and mail surveys, since the rate of response is decreasing as the majority of people decline to answer these surveys (Boyer, Olson, Calantone, & Jackson, 2002; Couper, Traugott, & Lamias, 2001; Dillman, 2007; Porter, 2004).

Several studies (Couper, et al., 2001; Dillman, et al., 2009; Fleming & Bowden, 2009a, 2009b; Umbach, 2004) indicate that there has been a shift and change in survey research in recent years, as a majority of researchers have started to use the online survey facility to collect survey data quickly and inexpensively via the Web. However, it is important that, before conducting the online survey in any research, researchers should understand the positives and negatives behind online survey usage. This chapter will assess and investigate the current literature review with respect to the online survey, provide examples from the researcher's own experience of using online surveys, and based

on the researcher's perspective a set of practical recommendations regarding online survey adoption is presented.

This chapter is organized into three sections: first, the researcher will highlight the current literature with respect to the new website development methodology, then expand the literature review on the research methodology, which was adopted in her PhD and postdoctoral stages, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of mixed methods. Secondly, the researcher will present her experience of using online surveys during the PhD and postdoctoral stages. Finally, a set of recommendations regarding online survey tool adoption will be discussed on the basis of the researcher's experience.

Finally, this chapter will examine the advantages and disadvantages of online survey usage in information systems research.

BACKGROUND

This section will highlight the current literature with respect to the new website development methodology and emphasize the research methodology, which was used in the PhD and post-doctoral research.

New Website Development Methodology: New Participative Methodology for Marketing Websites

In order for systems (or websites) to be widely accepted and used effectively, they need to be well designed. To achieve this, designers and users need to use a specific methodology to produce the "system" (or website). A methodology "should tell us what steps to take, in what order and how to perform those steps, but, most importantly, the reasons why those steps should be taken, in that particular order" (Jayaratna, 1994, p. 242).

The term "methodology" is used significantly in information systems development, as each

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