

RNW MEDIA – BRIEF GUIDE TO MAKING SURVEYS

This document serves as a guide to making good surveys. It is divided into two parts. The first part is a **basic checklist** for making survey, while the second part gives **tips and examples** on **question wording (2.1)**, on **response wording (2.2)** and on making surveys **more fun and engaging (2.3)**.

PART 1: CHECKLIST FOR MAKING SURVEYS

1) Goal

Start with the end in mind: what do you want to know, what is the goal of the survey, how are you going to use your results, how are you going to present your results? Based on this, come up with a long list of questions (apply the Rule of Ten here) that you would like to ask.

2) Less is more

Go through your list of questions and take out the ones that are not relevant to reaching your goal. Aim for as few questions as possible to reach your goal, to prevent respondents from dropping out because the survey is too long. Which questions are ‘need to know’ and which are ‘nice to know’?

3) Structure

Think carefully about the structure of the survey. Start with a broad question and then move towards more specific ones. Group questions about the same (sub)topic together. Place the sensitive questions towards the end of the survey. Place background questions such as age and gender at the very end of the survey. Consider asking respondents if they wish to be interviewed by RNW about the topic so that the topic can be discussed in more detail in an article or radio show.

4) Asking the right question

Your respondents should immediately understand what you mean by a question. See page 2 for more information and tips and examples on formulating good questions.

5) Making the right answer options

Make sure the answer options match the question and are exclusive and exhaustive. See page 3 for more information and for tips and examples about this.

6) Everything mandatory?

Think about which questions you would like to make mandatory and which ones not. Making your questions mandatory has the advantage that it will always lead to a response but on the other hand it also increases the risk of respondents dropping out. Especially open question which are mandatory are often an obstacle for respondents.

7) Keeping respondents motivated

Use various types of questions and engaging elements to prevent respondents from becoming bored and replying to a survey without really thinking. See page 4 for more information and more tips on making fun and engaging surveys.

8) Introduction and ending

Include a short introduction in which you tell the respondents about the goal and topic and about the number of questions or the time it will takes to fill it in. Indicate if the survey is anonymous. In the end page, thank respondents for their participation, tell them when and where the results will be

published and encourage them to visit your website or social media to learn more about the topic or take part in discussions.

9) Consent

If your survey covers sensitive topics, or if you are going to use the survey results for specific purposes, you need to collect survey consent, the explicit agreement of your respondents to submit their data via your survey. An example of a consent form can be found at the end of this guide.

10) Layout

Make sure to have an appealing layout with a clear and readable font. Adding a logo or an image can liven up your survey.

11) Testing

Test your survey before publishing it. Test on desktop and mobile devices and on several browsers. Send your test version to colleagues in Hilversum or regional representatives. Check the spelling, the loading speed, the time it takes to fill in, whether or not questions are understandable.

12) Results

To put the results of the survey into perspective, consider adding external research statistics to your content and comparing them to your own results. How do your results compare to external research? How do your results compare to statistics from other countries? When reporting, also keep in mind the wishes of the audience and the local media who will share the results. What is popular among the audience and what do the media prefer to publish: charts, numbers or infographics?

PART 2.1 – TIPS AND EXAMPLES FOR QUESTION WORDING

✓ Make questions as short and simple as possible

- ✗ Have you consumed food and/or beverages purchased from an informal eating out place in the past two weeks? By that we mean a casual place where you can purchase a quick, inexpensive prepared meal or snack or beverage that you either eat there, take with you or eat in the car?
- ✓ Have you been to a fast food place in the past two weeks?

✓ Use clear and specific wording without abbreviations or jargon

- ✗ How do you evaluate the work of the PI team?
> It might not be clear to all respondents what PI means.
- ✓ How do you evaluate the work of the PI team? PI stands for Programme Implementation.

✓ Make sure a question can be interpreted in just one way

- ✗ Do you like football?
> It is unclear if this means playing football, watching football, reading about football, etc.
- ✓ Do you like watching football on television?

Or combine different questions by adding answer options:

- ✓ Do you like football?
A) No
B) Yes, I like to play football
C) Yes, I like to watch football
D) Yes, I like to read about football

- ✗ In the past year, did you visit an offline event of RNW?
> It is unclear if this means 'past 12 months', 'current year until now' or 'whole past year'.
- ✓ In 2018, did you visit an offline event of RNW?

- ✗ Do you often go to the cinema?
> Terms such as 'often', 'sometimes' and 'seldom' have a different meaning for different people.
- ✓ How often did you visit the cinema in the past month October?

- ✗ What do you like to drink?
A) coffee
B) tea
C) beer
D) wine
E) other
> This question is hard to answer as the response is likely to depend on the time of day/year.
- ✓ What do you like to drink at dinner?

✓ Make sure each question is about one issue only

- ✗ How organized and interesting was the speaker?

✓ How organized was the speaker?
AND
How interesting was the speaker?

✗ What is your most often used and most trusted source of information?

✓ What is your most often used source of information?
AND
What is your most trusted source of information?

✓ How likely are you to go out for dinner and a movie this weekend?
A) dinner and movie
B) dinner only
C) movie only
D) neither

✓ Avoid double negatives

✗ I am not incompetent when I am part of a multi-disciplinary team.

A) Strongly Agree B) Agree C) Disagree D) Strongly Disagree E) Don't know

✓ I am competent when I am part of a multi-disciplinary team.

A) Strongly Agree B) Agree C) Disagree D) Strongly Disagree E) Don't know

✓ I am competent when I am part of a multi-disciplinary team.

A) Strongly Agree B) Agree) C) Neutral D) Disagree E) Strongly Disagree

✓ Avoid leading questions

✗ How good do you think our website is?

✓ How would you rate our website?

✗ To what extent do you agree that this website has useful information?

✓ To what extent do you agree or disagree that this website has useful information?

✗ How would you rate the career of legendary striker Johan Cruijff?

✓ How would you rate the career of football striker Johan Cruijff?

✓ Do not make assumptions

✗ Are you ever frustrated by salesmen on the street?

> This question assumed that the respondent has been approached by salesmen on the street.

✓ Are you ever approached by salesmen on the street?

FOLLOWED BY

How often are you approached by salesmen on the street?

FOLLOWED BY

How do you feel about salesmen approaching you on the street?

PART 2.2 – TIPS AND EXAMPLES FOR RESPONSE WORDING

✓ Make sure your answers options are mutually exclusive

✗ How many conferences did you attend this summer?

- A) 1 B) 2 C) 3 D) 3 or more

> What if someone did not attend any conferences?

> What should someone who attended 3 conferences, fill in?

✓ How many conferences did you attend this summer?

- A) 0 B) 1 C) 2 D) 3 or more

✓ Cover all possible answer options

✗ You indicated that you eat at KFC once every three months. Why don't you eat there more often?

A) There isn't a location near my house

B) I don't like the taste of the food

C) It is too expensive

> This question doesn't include options such as healthiness, value for money, etc.

✓ You indicated that you eat at KFC once every three months. Why don't you eat there more often?

A) There isn't a location near my house

B) I don't like the taste of the food

C) It is too expensive

D) The food is not healthy

E) The value for money is not good

F) Other, please explain your answer...

Piloting your question among a small group will help you find out the answer options.

✓ Use a balanced scale, i.e. an equal number of positive and negative responses

✗ What is your opinion of this website?

- A) Good B) Great C) Fantastic D) Incredible E) The best ever

> In this scale, there are no negative options.

✗ What is your opinion of this website?

- A) Good B) Poor C) Very poor D) No opinion

> In this scale, there are more negative options than positive ones.

✓ What is your opinion of this website?

- A) Very good B) Good C) Poor D) Very poor E) No opinion

✓ What is your opinion of this website?

- A) Very good B) Good C) Neither good nor poor D) Poor E) Very poor

✓ **Make sure the answer options match the question**

✗ How satisfied are you with the website?

A) Very helpful B) Helpful C) Unhelpful D) Very unhelpful E) Not applicable

> The question asks about satisfaction but the answer options are all related to helpfulness.

✓ How satisfied are you with the website?

A) Very satisfied B) Satisfied C) Dissatisfied D) Very dissatisfied E) Not applicable

✓ **For sensitive questions, include the option 'I prefer not to answer'**

✓ **Place options such as 'Don't know' or 'No opinion' at the end of a scale**

✓ **If your responses include neutral options such as 'neither good nor bad', place them in the middle of your scale**

PART 2.3 – TIPS AND EXAMPLES FOR FUN AND ENGAGING SURVEYS!

Use a fun and engaging promotion message to motivate potential respondents to take part

- ✘ Tell us what you think of this product.
- ✔ You're the judge! This is a special survey where we ask you to judge a product and give your verdict.

- ✘ Let us know what your favorite music is.
- ✔ In this survey we would like you to have a go at designing your PERFECT music radio station.

- ✘ Tell us what you think about your shampoo.
- ✔ Take part in a quest to design the best shampoo in the world.

Use surprise to start a survey: use a surprising or silly question that you do not necessary want the answer to, but that is fun to answer for respondents and that keeps them captured

- ✘ Which brands of shampoo are you aware of?
- ✔ Which of these celebrities hair would you most like to have?

- ✘ Please rate your bank on a scale of 1-10
- ✔ Is your bank perfect?
How close to perfect is it?
OR:
- ✔ If your bank gave you a t-shirt with their brand on it, would you wear it?

Use imagery: ask respondents to use their imagination to insert themselves in invented scenarios

- ✔ Imagine you owned your own radio station and could play any music you liked. Which of these artists would you place on your play list?
- ✔ Imagine this brand is a human being. What words would you use to describe this person?
- ✔ Imagine you are a judge who can judge the new president of your country. What would be your verdict?
- ✔ Imagine you could set up your own perfect shopping center with just shops that you want. Can you make a list of the shops you would have in your shopping list?

Reframe questions: pose a question in a personal context

- ✘ What is your favorite color?
- ✔ If you were to paint your bedroom in one of these colors, which would you choose?

- ✘ What would you wear?
- ✔ What would you wear on a first date?

- ✘ What is your favorite video game?
- ✔ If you could play one video game for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Apply rules to your question to make it more specific

- ✘ Describe yourself.
- ✔ Describe yourself in EXACTLY 6 words.

Give a choice: make two surveys (e.g. one for males, one for female / one for people who like buying shampoo and one for people who don't) and give them the choice

- ✔ Which survey do you want to complete?
 - Tell us what you like about your favorite brand of shampoo
 - Tell us what you find frustrating about buying shampoo

Include quiz elements: let respondents make predictions or answer quiz questions and give them a reward for getting it right

- ✔ Who do you think will be the winner of the elections?
- ✔ Which of these three do you think is the most popular design?
- ✔ What percentage of Saudi-Arabian women are working women?
- ✔ Predict what three things most people selected from the list as Yemen's biggest concerns.

Include share buttons at the end so respondents can share the survey with friends

- ✔ Invite your friends to fill in this survey as well!