



**SIMPSONSCARBOROUGH**  
Intelligent Marketing for Higher Education

# Using Surveys to Conduct Effective Market Research

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# Pressing Questions Among Colleges and Universities Today



- How does our institution's image compare to that of our competitors?
- In what area(s) are we TRULY superior to competitors?
- Do these differentiators exist only in our own minds? Or, are they clearly understood by our key target audiences?
- What are the gaps, if any, in how we feel we are different and how our key audiences feel we are different?
- What are our current brand associations?
- What are the brand associations we want to emphasize, maintain, or lose?
- What marketing tactics should we use to develop that image?
- How can we ensure our messages are penetrating with maximum effectiveness?

# Branding Is More Than What You Do To A Cow

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## DEFINITION OF BRAND

- The sum total of all existing associations made with your institution
- Including the good, the bad, and, possibly, the ugly

Your logo, visual identity, and/or marks are simply reflections of your brand.

## DEFINITION OF BRANDING

- The process of influencing those associations

Your brand is where you are now. Your positioning is where you want to be. Branding takes you from point A to B. You are successful when brand equals positioning.

## DEFINITION OF POSITIONING

- Your organization's researched and documented desired brand associations

# What is a Positioning?



- Positioning is not a tagline and is not used externally

Company/Product	Positioning	Tagline
Wheat Thins	A healthy alternative snack for busy, working women	"A girl's gotta eat"
Saturn	Moderately priced, moderately sporty, no haggle cars	"Rethink"
Citigroup	The people's partner in business and personal achievement	"Let's get it done"
American Express	The credit card for the elite	"Are you a cardmember?"
Coricidin	Cold & flu medicine for people with high blood pressure	"Cold medicine with a heart"
Miller Lite	The best tasting, low calorie beer	"Less filling, tastes great"

For better or for worse, you already have a brand...what you probably need is a positioning.

- Your research will help you develop your positioning
- As a next step you will work with your internal or external creative partner(s) to develop the creative strategy that brings your brand to life

# The Role of Research in Branding



- Explore existing brand associations
- Identify existing integration or fragmentation of image between audiences
- Establish measurable benchmarks of image and brand
- Compare your image to the competition; identify a niche you could serve
- Test the appeal of possible brand strategies
- Explore issues related to any sub-brands you may have
- Identify gap in how we view ourselves and how the world views us

“The more you engage with customers, the clearer things become and the easier it is to determine what you should be doing.”

John Russell,  
President, Harley-Davidson

# Establishing Guiding Questions



- “Guiding Questions” are the 5-8 questions you want your research to answer
- They are not actual survey questions
- Imagine they could be the section headers on your PPT of the findings
- If you have more than 8, your study probably lacks focus
- Refer to the guiding questions throughout the project to avoid mission-creep
- List the guiding questions on all communications regarding the project; include them at the top of every draft of your survey instruments

Many survey research studies try to gather information about too many topics rather than delving deeply into one or two pressing issues.

After you develop your guiding questions, you will be able to decide if qualitative or quantitative research (or both) is best to address your needs.

# Defining The Sampling Frame



- “Sampling frame” is the exact and very specific definition of the audience(s) your study is targeting
- Sampling frame can have a HUGE impact on cost
- Example:
  - Target audience: prospective parents
  - Sampling frame 1: [more expensive] adults living in IL, IN, and OH who have at least one child age 14-17 living in the household and planning to go to college immediately following high school
  - Sampling frame 2: [less expensive] parents of inquiries for Fall ‘09
- Cost, availability of sample, method of data collection, time are all considerations that are influenced by the sampling frame definitions
- You will likely find yourself reviewing many pros and cons when making sampling frame decisions

# Defining Scope of Work and Research Plan



Research Plan			
Target Audience	Sampling Frame	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Prospective Traditional Age Students	Inquiries for Fall 2008 (pop=approx. 26,000)	2 online focus groups	Phone survey (sample size 400)
Internal Audiences (Faculty, staff, and current students)	All currently enrolled traditional students (pop=approx. 3,500), graduate students (pop=approx. 2,500), and full-time faculty and staff	2 online focus groups with faculty and 2 with traditional undergraduate students	Online survey (sample size at least 400 for trad. and 400 for grad students, TBD for faculty/staff)
Alumni	Living alumni with email addresses on file (pop=approx. 19,800)	2 online focus groups	Online survey
Parents	Parents of currently enrolled undergraduate students (pop-approx. 3,500)	none	Online survey (sample size at least 400)
Guidance Counselors	Counselors in the field for 5+ years and working in schools in the primary market area	25-30 depth phone interviews	None
Business Leaders	Adults working full-time in primary market area firms of 500+ employees and carrying the title VP or higher	25-30 depth phone interviews	None

Example of an actual research plan for a project currently underway.

# Choosing Research Methods (1 of 2)



Methods of Survey Data Collection		
Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Direct Mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Less bias</li><li>-Respondents work at own pace</li><li>-Ensures anonymity</li><li>-Less expensive</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Significantly longer response time</li><li>-No probing</li><li>-No control over response pool</li></ul>
Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Strong response rates</li><li>-Quicker than direct mail</li><li>-Sequence is flexible</li><li>-Allows for probing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-No visual aids</li><li>-Difficult to establish rapport</li><li>-Interviewer bias</li><li>-Overused</li><li>-Expensive</li></ul>
Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Quickest response time</li><li>-Generally less expensive</li><li>-Allows for complex branching</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Difficult to ensure representation</li><li>-Difficult to identify usable sample</li></ul>

There are pros and cons to every form of data collection; decision on which method is best for your study requires you to accept the limitations of your chosen approach.

# Choosing Research Methods (2 of 2)



Common Data Collection Techniques by Audience	
<b>Recruitment</b>	
High school students	Phone
Your institution's inquiries	Online
Your institution's applicants	Online
Your institution's deposits	Online
Current students	Online
The general public	Phone
Guidance counselors	Phone/depth interviews
Teachers	Phone/depth interviews
<b>Development</b>	
Alumni	Online
Donors	Online
Friends	Online/Phone
<b>Comm/Gov't Relations</b>	
The media	Depth phone interviews
Legislators	Depth phone/in-person interviews
Faith leaders	Phone
Faculty/staff	Online

These are the methods of data collection we most commonly use when studying these audiences; not all are quantitative approaches.

- Generally we are seeking to secure a “representative sample” of our target population
- All else being equal, a larger sample size  $n$  leads to increased precision in estimates of various properties of the population
- But larger samples are not necessarily better because of the opportunities for non-sampling error
- To achieve desired sample size ( $n$ ), make an educated guess as to what your response rate ( $r$ ) will be; then select a sample that is  $n/r$
- If you want 400 and expect a 40% response rate, select sample of 1,000

- Raosoft-<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>

Example Sample Size Calculations			
Population Size	Margin of Error	Confidence Level	Recommended Sample Size
2,000	5%	95%	323
5,000	5%	95%	357
10,000	5%	95%	370
20,000	5%	95%	377
100,000	5%	95%	383

# Designing Survey Instruments



- Keep it simple
- Exclude interesting but not vital questions
- Pay close attention to design, layout, and perceived ease of completion
- Avoid leading or ambiguous questions; maintain objectivity
- Open with simple, interesting questions
- Progressively narrow the scope of questions
- Place difficult, sensitive, or complex questions toward the end
- Include personal information/demographics last
- Address important issues more than once
- Plan time into the research process for extensive re-writing of the instrument
- Ask the HARD questions
- Avoid instruments that take longer than 10 minutes to complete (whether phone, online or direct mail data collection)

# Structuring Survey Questions (1 of 5)



- Consider the basis of comparison carefully:

- “How helpful were the materials you received from XYZ College?”

- Very helpful – 55%
- Somewhat helpful – 35%
- Not helpful – 10%

Compare to other colleges or compare individual pieces or tools to each other.

- “On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means XYZ College’s location is very undesirable and 5 means the College’s location is very desirable, how do you rate XYZ College?”

Compare to other colleges or compare additional college attributes.

## WHAT'S WRONG HERE?

Example University addresses the local educational, training, and lifelong learning needs of the community

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

### Problem

- Three questions in one
- Wording is too sophisticated

### Solution

- Be specific – isolate issues
- Simplify wording

## WHAT'S WRONG HERE?

How far is Example University from your home?

- Less than 50 miles
- 50-100 miles
- 100-150 miles
- 150-200 miles
- More than 200 miles

### Problem

- Response options are not mutually exclusive
- Respondent can't answer question
- Better ways to get information

### Solution

Measure distance by home zip code

# Structuring Survey Questions (4 of 5)



## WHAT'S WRONG HERE?

What is your high school GPA? \_\_\_\_\_

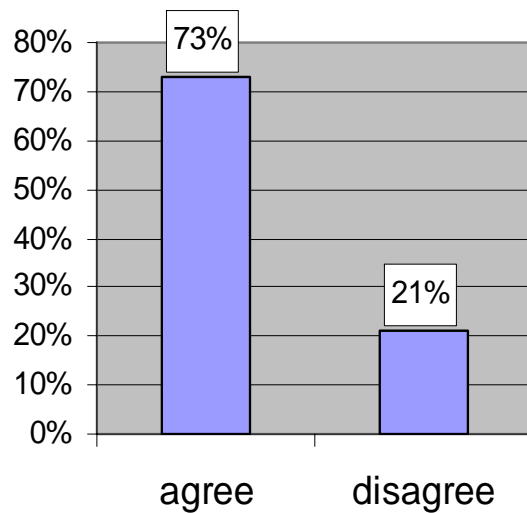
### Alternative

- A / 90-100 / 3.5 or higher
- B / 80-89 / 2.5 to 3.49
- C / 70-79 / 1.5 to 2.49
- D / 60-69 / 0.5 to 1.49
- F / Less than 60 / Less than 0.5
- I don't know

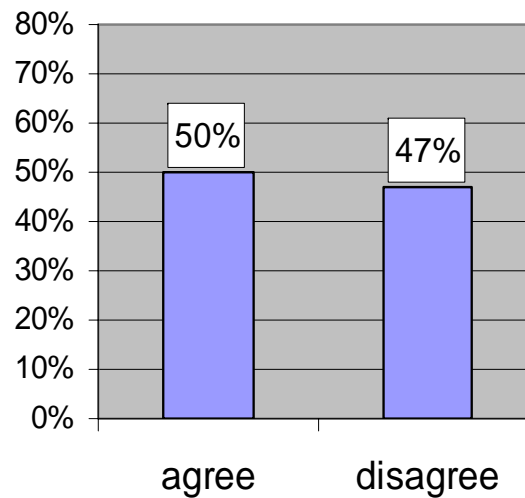
# Structuring Survey Questions (5 of 5)



**"It is a good idea to make a law requiring people to wear seat belts in automobiles."**



**"There should be a law to make all passengers wear a seat belt or pay a fine."**



Avoid implied assumptions such as the question on the left. Be clear about the implications of the resulting data.

# Stimulating Participation in Your Study

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- Sell value of research
- Guarantee confidence, but not anonymity
- Avoid non-vital questions; long questionnaires
- Avoid questions you already have the answers to in your own data records
- Use an attractive design and layout
- Use preliminary notification
- Double drop mail/internet surveys, use call backs for phone surveys
- Include return envelope with postage
- Use incentives; cash is the universal incentivizer

Incentives are a critical consideration when working to generate survey response; offer an incentive that your target audience values and be creative.

# Response Rates

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- Response rate will be directly linked to your target audience's interest in you and your topic; higher interest level....high response
- Typical response rates
  - Your own prospects – 7% to 12%
  - Your current students – 25% to 35%
  - Your alumni – 15% to 25%
  - Your faculty – 35% to 55%

When you click on a link to complete an online survey, you carry through an ID code which allows the sponsor to link your responses back to all of your customer data

- Think about your data analysis as you are preparing your instrument
- Create a DAP/“data analysis plan” as you finalize your instrument
- Create “dummy tables” which mock up the tables and charts you will prepare once your data is collected and analyzed
- Go beyond means and frequencies; mine your data through exploratory crosstabs, t-tests, and ANOVAs

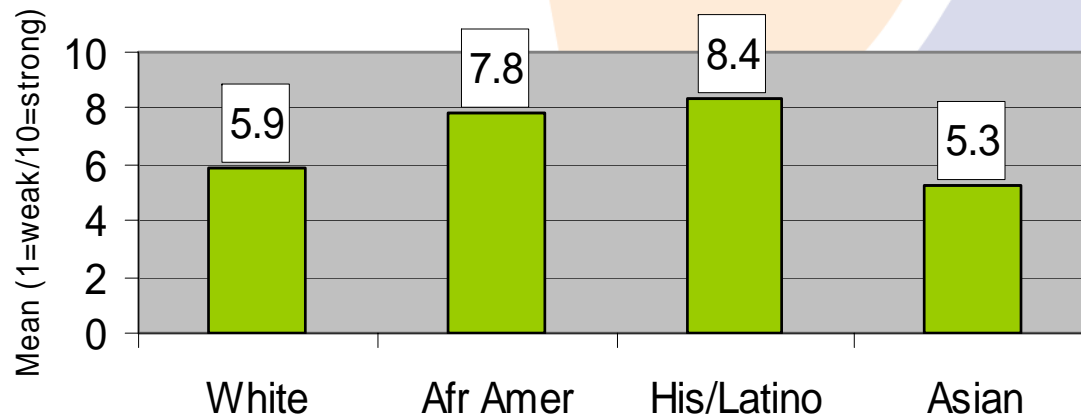
	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested		Mean Interest Level
Atlanta Metro	55%	40%	5%	Atlanta Metro	7.9
Other GA	40%	22%	38%	Other GA	5.4
Out-of-state	10%	14%	76%	Out-of-state	2.1

A mean is a more flexible and straightforward metric



- Include all information the reader needs to interpret the findings accurately when you are not around

**Rate the academic reputation of Example University**



Hispanic/Latino students rate quality highest while Asian students rate quality lowest?

What conclusions can we draw from this chart?

African American and Hispanic/Latino students rate quality on a par and significantly higher than White and Asian students; ratings by White and Asian students are statistically equal.

# Managing the Research Process



- Create an internal management team
  - Assist in final decisions about project scope
  - Review moderator guides and survey instruments
  - Vet the research findings and assist with interpretation
  - Participate in devising the brand strategy based on the findings
- Include at least one social scientist on your team
- Beyond the research project, your project management team can easily segue into integrated marketing issues
- Meet with faculty often

At Loyola College (MD), the internal project team is named IMPACT and includes faculty, staff, and administrators from most divisions of the College.

# How much will it cost?



- Cost influenced by:
  - Number of audiences you choose to study
  - Method of data collection
  - How much qualitative and quantitative research is done
  - Amount of work you are able to do internally
- In-house vs. Outsourcing
  - What expertise exists internally?
  - Can internal provider be objective?
  - Can internal provider meet ambitious deadlines?

A comprehensive image and branding initiative can cost \$50,000 to \$250,000 for research and strategy development.

# Working With Data Collection Firms



- Cost of data collection is influenced by:
  - Instrument length (in mins)
  - Number of interviews
  - Incidence; impact of screeners
  - Data integrity
- Example: approx. \$8,000 for:
  - 400 alumni interviewed
  - 10 minute instrument
  - All possible respondents qualify
  - 90% accurate phone numbers

The data collection business is very competitive; get several price quotes and compare them carefully to find the best deal.

- The Green Book - <http://www.greenbook.org/>
- Sample Research RFPs - <http://simpscar.hosted.velocityserver.com/RFPs.htm>
- Survey Monkey - <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>
- Question Pro – [www.questionpro.com](http://www.questionpro.com)
- Inquisite Online Survey Software - <http://www.inquisite.com/>
- Market Research Association (MRA) - <http://www.mra-net.org/>
- ESOMAR - <http://www.esomar.org/>
- Survey Sampling - <http://www.surveysampling.com/>
- International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice - [http://www.esomar.org/uploads/pdf/ESOMAR\\_Codes&Guidelines\\_ICCCode.pdf](http://www.esomar.org/uploads/pdf/ESOMAR_Codes&Guidelines_ICCCode.pdf)
- Sampling Error Calculator - [http://www.rogerwimmer.com/mmr/mmrsampling\\_error.htm](http://www.rogerwimmer.com/mmr/mmrsampling_error.htm)
- Statz Rappers (for fun) - <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=489221653835413043&pr=goog-sl>
- Determining Appropriate Sample Size in Survey Research (white paper) - <http://www.osra.org/itlpj/bartlettkotrlikhiggins.pdf>
- Stone Research Services (quantitative) – [www.stoneresearchservices.com](http://www.stoneresearchservices.com)
- Acrobat Research (quantitative) – [www.acrobat-research.com](http://www.acrobat-research.com)
- Vernon Research (qualitative) – [www.vernonresearch.com](http://www.vernonresearch.com)