

Advantages and Disadvantages of Surveys

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Among the different methods of data gathering for research purposes, the survey method is preferred by many researchers due to its various advantages, strengths and benefits. However, surveys also have their disadvantages and weak points that must be considered.



The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center, with the text "Quiz Time!" below it. Below the logo are three quiz cards: "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" (with a pair of red roller skates), "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" (with a fan of colored pencils), and "Quiz: Flags in Europe" (with a Ferris wheel). A link "See all quizzes =>" is located at the bottom right of the banner.

Advantages of Surveys

1. High Representativeness

Surveys provide a high level of general capability in representing a large population [1]. Due to the usual huge number of people who answers survey, the data being gathered possess a better description of the relative characteristics of the general population [2] involved in the study. As compared to other methods [3] of data gathering, surveys are able to extract data that are near to the exact attributes of the larger population.

2. Low Costs

When conducting surveys, you only need to pay for the production of survey questionnaires. If you need a larger sample of the general population, you can allot an incentive in cash or kind, which can be as low as \$2 per person. On the other hand, other data gathering methods such as focus groups and personal interviews require researchers to pay more.

3. Convenient Data Gathering

Surveys can be administered to the participants through a variety of ways. The questionnaires can simply be sent via e-mail or fax, or can be administered through the Internet. Nowadays, the online survey [4] method has been the most popular way of gathering data from target participants. Aside from the convenience of data gathering, researchers are able to collect data from people around the globe.

4. Good Statistical Significance

Because of the high representativeness brought about by the survey method, it is often easier to find statistically significant [5] results than other data gathering methods. Multiple variables [6] can also be effectively analyzed using surveys.

5. Little or No Observer Subjectivity

Surveys are ideal for scientific research studies because they provide all the participants with a standardized stimulus. With such high reliability [7] obtained, the researcher's own biases [8] are eliminated.

6. Precise Results

As questions in the survey should undergo careful scrutiny and standardization [9], they provide uniform definitions to all the subjects [10] who are to answer the questionnaires. Thus, there is a greater precision in terms of measuring the data gathered.

Disadvantages of Surveys

1. Inflexible Design

The survey that was used by the researcher from the very beginning, as well as the method of administering it, cannot be changed all throughout the process of data gathering. Although this inflexibility can be viewed as a weakness of the survey method, this can also be a strength considering the fact that preciseness and fairness can both be exercised in the study.

2. Not Ideal for Controversial Issues

Questions that bear controversies may not be precisely answered by the participants because of the probably difficulty of recalling the information related to them. The truth behind these controversies may not be relieved as accurately as when using alternative data gathering methods such as face-to-face interviews [11] and focus groups [12].

3. Possible Inappropriateness of Questions

Questions in surveys are always standardized before administering them to the subjects. The researcher is therefore forced to create questions that are general enough to accommodate the general population. However, these general questions may not be as appropriate for all

the participants as they should be.

A good example of this situation is administering a survey which focuses on affective variables, or variables that deal with emotions.

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Links

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