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Survey Response Formats

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In order to collect answers from the survey participants, the response format is utilized. The response format is comprised of survey response options found in the questionnaire. Basically, response formats are divided into two types: structured and unstructured response formats.

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

Structured Response Formats

Between the two kinds of response formats, the structured response formats help both the researcher and the respondent better than the unstructured ones. They are more beneficial because respondents can answer the survey in a more efficient and easier manner. Researchers find it easier to summarize participant responses through structure response options.

There are many types of structure response formats, but the most commonly used ones include fill-in-the-blank and multi-option format.

1. Fill-in-the-Blank

Using the fill-in-the-blank format requires you to choose the manner by which the respondent should answer the question. One of the most common uses of fill-in-the-blanks is to determine the name, age, gender, age group and other demographic data indicators by putting a mark on the blank. An example of this is:

Name: _____ Age: _____

Put a check mark on the blank which applies:

1. Do you use the Internet for research purposes?

____ Yes

____ No

Another type of fill-in-the-blank response format is rating the options. For instance:

In a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the following according to your preferred car brand, where "1" as your most preferred, and "5" as your least preferred.

____ Ford

____ Honda

____ Nissan

____ Toyota

____ Others (please specify: _____)

2. Multi-Option Format

As the name suggests, you present a question to the respondent and he will answer it based on the multiple options available. Here is an example:

How many hours do you usually spend using Facebook per day?

- a. less than 1 hour
- b. 1-3 hours
- c. more than 3 hours

Structured response formats are also classified according to the number of response options. Dichotomous response formats include only 'Yes' or 'No' as the options, while multi-chotomous response formats may include 'Yes', 'No', and 'Maybe' as the options. If the respondent is allowed to select all the options that apply, the multiple response format is used. If the response options are in the form of symbols, words or numbers, the response format is an idiographic format. Structured response formats that utilize scales [1] include the Likert scale, graphical rating, and semantic differential.

Unstructured Response Formats

While researchers utilize structured response formats [2] for greater efficiency, many use unstructured response formats to gain more understanding about what the respondent really means when he answers a particular question. These response formats are used in qualitative research studies, especially those which try to explore the feelings, experiences and perceptions of the respondents.

Unstructured response formats simply require the respondent to write his answer in detail. An example of this is:

Question 1: How do you use the Internet in your daily life?

Answer: _____

Some survey questionnaires contain both structured and unstructured response formats. First, the researcher asks questions with a structured response format, and then the questionnaire is ended by an unstructured format with "Please add any thoughts regarding [the subject] and placing blank spaces to accommodate the respondent's answer."

Source URL: <https://explorable.com/survey-response-formats?gid=1576>

Links

[1] <https://explorable.com/measurement-scales>

[2] http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Survey_design