8 tips on constructing your online questionnaire

Introduction

Collecting information using an online questionnaire to measure patient satisfaction, experience and health outcomes is now common practice. There is a variety of health questionnaire types that can be used. Whichever way questionnaires are used and for whatever purpose, designing an online questionnaire however, requires some very specific design characteristics.

1. Use a welcome screen

This is the first interaction your potential respondent has with your survey so it needs to be attractive and motivating. The welcome screen needs to emphasise the ease of responding, and shows respondents how to move to the next page. The page should also include details about how the information will be used, whether it's confidential or will be shared or anonymised. It should include details of the organisation and contact details.

2. The first question is very important

There is evidence that the first question on the screen can have a significant impact on whether the respondent continues to complete the survey or not. So make it's easy to answer, does not ask for sensitive or embarrassing information and applies to all your audience. and is not a filtering question.

3. Limit question line length to 20 words

A question comprising about 20 words is good practice. However, it's not just the number of words but, also the number of concepts the respondent has to keep in mind when answering the question.

4. Use a conventional format

Avoid fancy or complex graphics and layout. Also the choice of font colour is important. Keep to a black or grey colour font against a white background which will ensure the screen looks clean and tidy but, also is suitable for respondents who are colour blind. Think about: *font sizes and variations, arrows to guide the respondent through the questionnaire, numbering questions and response options.*

5. Keep to one question per screen

Keep to one question a screen as this enables the respondent to focus on one thing and avoids the respondent having to scroll. Having one question per screen also enables efficient use of instructions and question skip logic.

6. Give a time to complete the survey

This does not have to be accurate but, be realistic. When using one question on the screen, the respondent has no way of knowing how long the survey will take. Providing a realistic time prior to the survey is a useful guide for the respondent. Don't under estimate the time to complete the survey. You will lose your respondents if they are still completing the questionnaire 10 minutes after they should have finished.

7. Keep the survey to 10 minutes or less

A 10 minute survey is about the maximum you can expect respondents to adhere to before survey fatigue sets in. Building in the ability to save the survey at anytime and return later to complete will help minimise respondents abandoning the survey altogether if the survey is going to take longer.

8. Provide motivating cues

Additional statements on the screen that encourage respondents to continue can do no harm in helping the respondent to continue to complete the survey.

About Health Outcomes Insights

Health Outcomes Insights is an independent research consultancy serving academia, life science researchers, healthcare agencies and the pharmaceutical industry, get targeted answers to patient behaviour, experience and health outcomes across a range of conditions and diseases – with particular expertise in diabetes.

Email: info@healthoutinsights.com

Tel: +44 (0) 1367 615 052

www.healthoutinsights.com

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