In developing an internet questionnaire that will evaluate loyalty and customer attitudes it is important to understand some of the limitations of the medium as well as best practices used by companies with a web presence. The questions, and in particular the exact wording and style in which the questions are asked, can greatly alter the efficacy and amount of reliable data which any given questionnaire can produce.

In Ambrose’s paper “Questionnaire development: Demystifying the Process” the author relates how internet technology has advanced the state of research tools, particularly in regards to language and wording of surveys (2010). Fifty-seven questionnaires were reviewed for the article, and from this pool they crystallized the 7 most common survey study tools used to varying degrees of success in online surveys. These seven research tools include demographics, attitude, behavior, knowledge, intentions, propositions and preferences (2010). One point that was stressed in the article is that successful surveys need not collect data points using all seven tools, but rather these are just the standard categories in which data is often collected. Of the fifty-seven questionnaires that Ambrose reviewed in point of fact very few used all seven tools. In my own research I will be using only the first five tools in order to determine customer attitudes.

These different tools all require questions to be asked, and the language and type of answers that survey responders used can vary greatly from person to person. Often surveys use scales to determine attitudes, with values ranging on a numeric scale. In the “The Application of Fuzzy Linguistic Scale on Internet Questionnaire” the author Chu states that numeric scales are not absolute, but rather vary greatly depending on the size of scale and those being surveyed (2010). Fuzzy linguistic with values ranging from Disagree (or Disagree Strongly) to Agree (or Agree Strongly) with a median point being Neutral or No Opinion are often closer to actually gauging a survey taker’s attitude. Chu realizes that the words used often are somewhat “fuzzy” in that those that choose Agree or Strongly Agree sometimes have an overlay that correlates to a smaller difference than if only a numeric scale is used. This discrepancy is one that exists in all survey methodology, but must also be taken into account for internet surveys in particular where follow-up questions are not applicable.

The data that typical surveys generate often leave holes in the information that businesses require in order to provide better segmentation of their market. As Rea points out in the article “Shatter the Crystal Ball” surveying for psychographic data helps to fill in these holes. The most common psychographic factors that companies look for in collected data are “frequency, monetary value and loyalty” (2012). These indicators of brand loyalty are important in online customer surveys, and as Rea argues this increase in collected data helps connect with customers. Rea also gives focus to the importance of “social media listening” which entails staying connected to your customer base via social media (2012). This is a form of observation research that I plan on utilizing in order to correctly analyze any data that the questionnaire will gather.
Determining the correct questions to ask in order to get the best quality data from those surveyed is “more of an art than a science” (Ambrose, 2010). The article “Psychographic segmentation” by Morgan describes many ways in which the questions can be asked in order to get valuable data from the research (2003). The examples of psychographic questions attempt to answer “why” over simple “what” questions, including asking why certain products are purchased over others, and from your own company or the competition. (2003). Morgan provides many examples of questions that companies today use on surveys in order to properly segment their marketing strategies. Many of these strategies I plan on adapting, looking toward then as loyalty indicators. By combining the tactics of psychographic segmentation and questionnaire development from these articles I plan to focus my own survey, fine tuning the questions in order to zero in on the best quality data that is possible.

References


