

# Wild Heather Digital Research



## MARKET RESEARCH TOOLKIT #5:

### Survey Design – Top Tips

Follow these top tips in your survey design to ensure that your research project is successful.

**Set clear research objectives** – What do you want to know? Your survey should always be geared to answering your research questions. Therefore you should always ensure your questionnaire questions will allow your research questions to be addressed. There is also little point asking questions that do not relate to your research objectives.

**Think ahead** – From the outset you should consider how you will capture and analyse the collected data. Do you wish to segment your target population? If so, ensure your questions allow for this.

**Decide exactly what you want to know** – Consider the following question: do you have a car? This question is ambiguous and can be interpreted in many ways, personally owning a car, having an access to a car in a household or having a company car or a car for business use. If you want to know if the respondent owns a car ask him / her directly.

**How would you answer it?** – Put yourself in the position of the respondent, ask yourself the question and try and work out how you would respond. Ask colleagues to pilot and test your question for comprehension.

**Avoid ambiguous terms in questions** – Avoid terms such as ‘often’ and ‘regularly’ as measures of frequency. They can be very ambiguous because respondents may operate with different frames of reference when employing them. For example, ‘regularly’ may mean monthly to one person whereas it may mean weekly to another. Whenever possible try to ask about actual frequency such as, ‘more than once a month’, ‘once a month’, ‘2 or 3 times a month’ etc.

**Avoid double-barrelled questions** – Double-barrelled questions ask two questions and leaves the respondent unsure about how best to respond i.e. Do did you enjoy the play and was the seat comfortable?

**Avoid leading questions** - Leading questions appear to lead the respondent in a particular direction: ‘do you agree with the view that...?’ This question is suggesting a particular reply and the participant may be influenced into a certain direction.

**Avoid technical terms** – Avoid jargon! Use simple, clear and plain language.

**Make sure the answers provided for a closed question are balanced** – Ensure the frequency of available answers are balanced i.e. extremely satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, extremely dissatisfied.

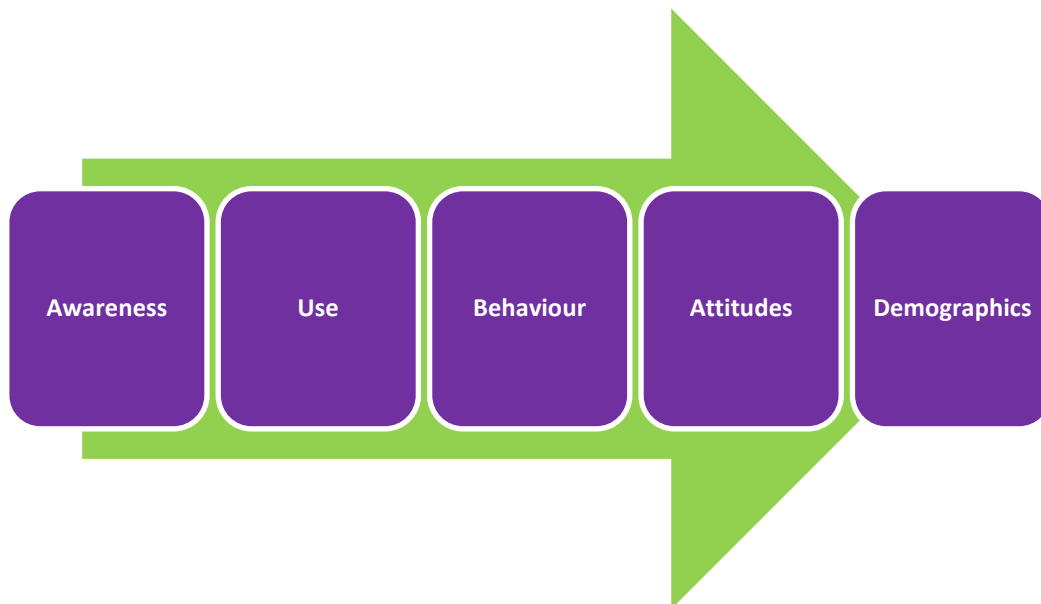
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**Use of space and design** – Make sure the survey is visually appealing and easy to read. Avoid cluttering questions together as it may confuse respondents.

**Piloting** – Test your survey on a small number of respondents, this can help you verify the survey and allows revising and editing questions before going live.

## Question Order

It is important that the order of questions does not influence the results. Therefore, questions have to be asked in a sequence that does not unnecessarily prompt or remind respondents prior to capturing their initial thoughts. Demographic and classification are best left to the end of the sequence as these can be the least interesting from the respondents perspective and if sensitive questions i.e. age, income and gender etc. are asked too early in the survey it can lead to early termination.



This sheet is part of series, for more information please see:

**Toolkit #1: Introduction to Market Research**

**Toolkit #2: Qualitative or Quantitative?**

**Toolkit #3: Online & Web-based Surveys**

**Toolkit #4: Online focus groups & Interviews**

**Toolkit #6: Types of Questions**

**Toolkit #7: Qualitative Research: Practical Advice**

This toolkit was prepared by Wild Heather Digital Research. WHDR uses the latest technology to deliver primary research insights to organisations. We offer online quantitative and online qualitative research services, including the development and use of panels, and broad based consultation programmes in addition to online group discussions, depth interviews and online surveys.