



# **Listening to the Customer: Survey Research Philosophy and Practice**

**Rena Cheskis-Gold, Principal  
Demographic Perspectives, LLC**



## **How Did I Get Into this Business?**

- **You can't provide the right data for strategy if you don't listen to your customers....and clients.**
- **Predominantly quantitative survey research may need to be supplemented with a qualitative component.**



# **General Philosophy of Survey Research**

## **Customers/Respondents**

- 1. Survey is a marketing encounter**
- 2. Surveys gather data but also *convey* information**
- 3. How to maximize response rates – attitude of excellence**
  - Get the culture/climate right**
  - Make it interesting**
  - Perfection in design**
  - Draw them into the story**



# **General Philosophy of Survey Research**

## **Design and Process: Clients**

- 1. Getting beyond “We need to have a survey.”**
- 2. Interview the client(s)**
- 3. Get larger stakeholder buy-in**



# **Research Steps Process**

- 1. Background philosophy**
- 2. Background data**
- 3. Communications**
- 4. Stakeholder information**
- 5. Research method**
- 6. Research protocol – design (look), length, content**
- 7. Project administration**
- 8. Analysis and reporting**



# **Research Methods Choices**

- 1. Web survey**
- 2. Paper survey**
- 3. Telephone survey**
- 4. Focus groups**
- 5. Interviews**
- 6. Participant observation**
- 7. Data analysis, data modeling**
- 8. Peer benchmarking or other research**



# Survey Content

## Question Design

1. **Work hard to get all the options listed, or add an ‘other’ category**
2. **Start with a useful question of interest to participant**
3. **Always ask for comments at end**
4. **Winnow out ‘interesting’ questions**
5. **Watch your endpoints.**

**How much is the total monthly rent of your apartment or house for all housemates?**

- Under \$500**
- \$500 to \$599**
- \$600 to \$699**
- \$700 to \$799**
- \$800 to \$899**



# Question Design

## Pick Your Scale and Stick to It

How likely is it that you would be willing to pay more to have each of the following housing features?

	Not likely to pay more		Very likely to pay more		
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Private bath	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Fireplace	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Double bed	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

Please rate the quality of the information that AJR has provided to you in the past two years.

	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Excellent
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Academic policies	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
On-campus events	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Community news	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>





# Question Design

## Talking to your audience

### Section E. Envisioning Living in the North Delmar Loop Neighbor

*WUSTL is considering the development of an attractive, vibrant, environmentally sustainable, safe and secure residential community for WUSTL Undergraduate Students and other residents in the neighborhood that begins on the north side of the Delmar Loop, and bounded on the east through Skinker Blvd. and North Campus. The North Delmar Loop neighborhood is already home to some WUSTL undergraduate, graduate and professional students, is a 15 to 20 minute walk from the Library, and includes many WUSTL-owned small and large apartment buildings and academic buildings, other residential buildings, and the Loop shops.*

[Click here for map](#)



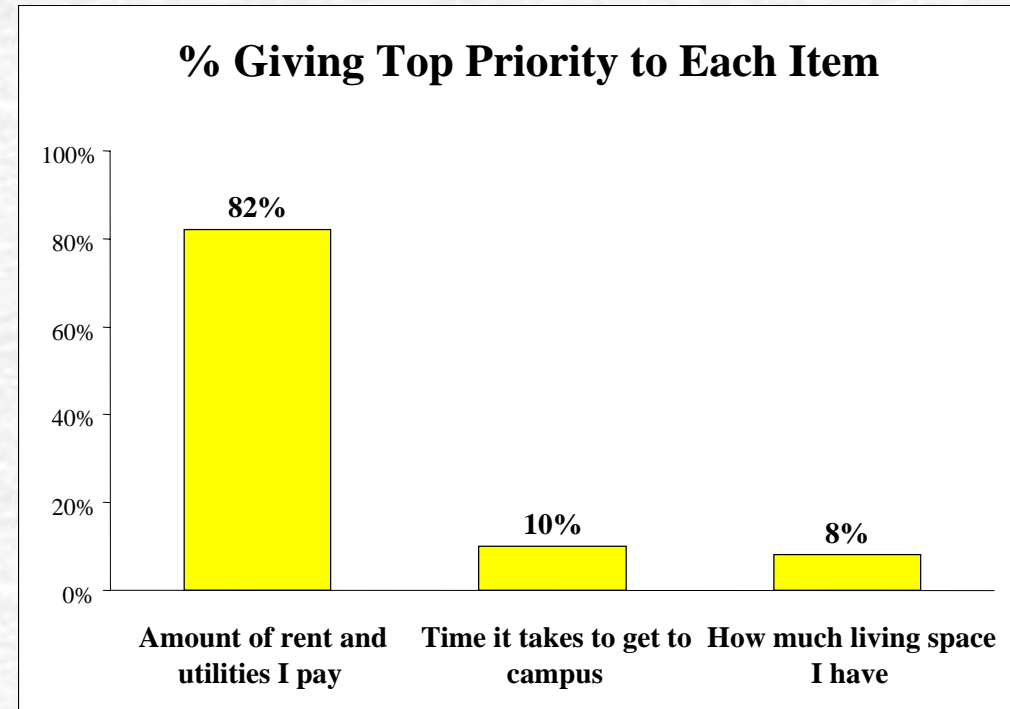


# Question Design Rate, not Rank

## *Unhelpful Formulation*

“Rank which item was most important to you in choosing housing from (1) Least important, to (3) Most important.”

- o Time to get to campus
- o Amount of rent and utilities
- o Amount of living space





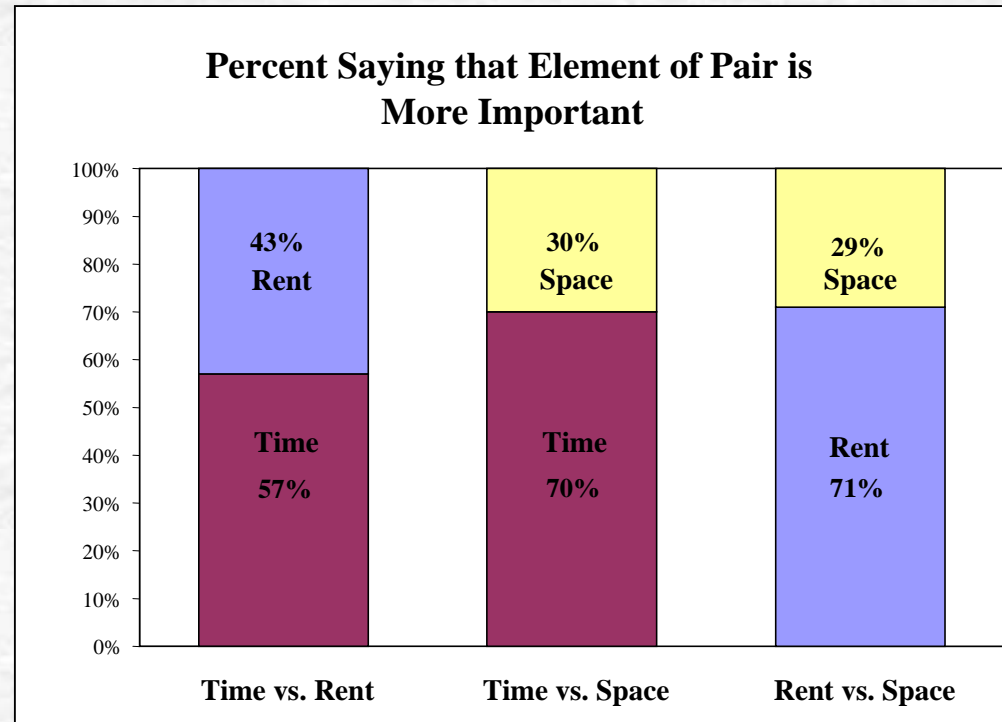
*(Continued)*

## Ratings: Better Question Formulation

### 3 Paired Questions

We all make tradeoffs in choosing housing. Tell us which option was more important to you for your first year of graduate school?

- Time to Campus vs. Cost?
- Time to Campus vs. Living Space?
- Living Space vs. Cost?



Source: 2005 Harvard Graduate Student Housing and Transportation Survey.



# Question Design Rate, not 'Check'

## *Wasted Question*

“Mark all aspects of your undergraduate experience where you feel satisfied.”

- Housing
- Courses in your major
- Social climate on campus
- Access to faculty

## *Better Question*

“Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of your undergraduate experience.”


	Very dissatisfied				Very satisfied
Housing	1	2	3	4	5
Courses in your major	1	2	3	4	5
Social climate on campus	1	2	3	4	5



# Questionnaire Design

## Other considerations, including ‘The Look’

1. Length of questionnaire, progress bar
2. The Look

 Washington University in St. Louis *Off-Campus Housing Study*

**We thank you in advance for participating in the WUSTL Undergraduate Student Off-Campus Housing Study.**

**A few details about the survey:**

The survey has 6 sections and it is very important to us that you complete all of them. Please be sure to click 'SUBMIT' at the end of the survey.

You may exit and return to the survey at any time using the link provided in the original email.

If you experience any technical problems with the survey, please email [HousingStudy\\_Support1@wustl.edu](mailto:HousingStudy_Support1@wustl.edu). General comments and non-technical questions about the survey may be submitted to [UG\\_HousingStudy@wustl.edu](mailto:UG_HousingStudy@wustl.edu).

Your participation in this survey is important for helping us to develop a meaningful off-campus housing community for undergraduates. All survey responses will be treated confidentially.

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Questions? Please contact [HousingStudy\\_Support1@wustl.edu](mailto:HousingStudy_Support1@wustl.edu).



# **Project Administration**

## **Just as Important as a Quality Questionnaire**

- 1. Select population, gather contact information**
- 2. Prepare background datasets**
- 3. Who will sponsor/endorse survey?**
- 4. If necessary, Institutional Review Board  
(Human Subjects Review)**
- 5. Make good technology choices**
- 6. Appoint support people for questions during live  
project**
- 7. Marketing of project; incentives**
- 8. Select, purchase, and distribute incentives; schedule  
and feed people during focus groups**



# Questionnaire Design

## More details

1. **Test web survey on many browsers**
2. **Pre-testing and pre-testers**
3. **Monitoring response rate and pacing of reminders (email or mail)**
4. **Length of time survey is live**
5. **Days survey is live**



# Keeping Up With Technology

## New Methodologies

1. How does your survey look on a smart phone?
2. Phone survey samples – cell phone only bias
3. Panel surveys – Amazon Mechanical Turk
4. Emerging methodologies –Google grant to develop *allourideas.org* – a website where participants can vote on user-generated ideas as well as the professionally-selected options





# Results

## Actionable!

1. **Strategic Planning Survey: Faculty housing**
2. **Student Survey: Fuzzy curricula**
3. **Admissions Survey: How did you learn about school?**
4. **Demand Survey: How many, and who?**
5. **Test-Marketing Options: Product choices**
6. **Administrative Data: Rigorous networking**



## **Q & A**

- **Show and tell**
- **Questions**
- **Your Experiences**



## **For more information:**

**Rena Cheskis-Gold**

**Demographic Perspectives, LLC**

**(203) 397.1612**

**[Rena@demographicperspectives.com](mailto:Rena@demographicperspectives.com)**

**[www.demographicperspectives.com](http://www.demographicperspectives.com)**

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