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THE IMPACT OF INVITATION MODE ON PARTICIPATION IN AN ONLINE ESTABLISHMENT SURVEY

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Abstract

Establishment surveys are increasingly shifting from paper-and-pencil interviewing to web survey data collection in order to reduce costs and improve data quality. However, a complete shift to web may not be enticing to all establishments, especially those that are accustomed to participating in paper-based surveys. The survey designer is therefore faced with the challenging task of enticing establishments, who may be otherwise willing to participate in the survey, but are reluctant to engage with an online medium. One design decision that may influence the propensity of survey participation is the mode in which the survey invitation is administered. The invitation mode is an important design decision for any survey, but it takes on even greater importance when the aim is to push previous paper-based survey participants to the web. We consider the decision of whether to use a paper or email invitation mode to invite establishments to a web survey. While email invitations may be effective for online-savvy establishments, paper invitations may do a better job of “bridging” previous paper-based respondents to the online mode. We investigate this notion by conducting an experiment in which establishments that participated in a previous paper-based survey were recruited to participate in a follow-up Web survey in Germany. The experiment varied the invitation mode (paper vs. email) as well as the mode of the reminder (paper vs. email). We analyze the effect of the invitation and reminder modes on the response rate in order to identify the combination of modes that optimizes participation. We also utilize an extensive array of auxiliary information on the full sample to determine whether mode combination has a strong effect on the representativeness of the responding establishments.