



HELLENIC OPEN UNIVERSITY
School of Social Sciences
MBA Programme

The
Questionnaire

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Questionnaire Definition

- A **questionnaire** is a formalized set of questions for obtaining information from respondents.

Questionnaire Objectives

- It must translate the information needed into a set of specific questions that the respondents can and will answer.
- A questionnaire must uplift, motivate, and encourage the respondent to become involved in the interview, to cooperate, and to complete the interview.
- A questionnaire should minimize response error.

Questionnaire Design Process

Specify the Information Needed



Specify the Type of Interviewing Method



Determine the Content of Individual Questions



Design the Question to Overcome the Respondent's Inability and Unwillingness to Answer



Decide on the Question Structure

Questionnaire Design Process (Cont.)

Determine the Question Wording



Arrange the Questions in Proper Order



Identify the Form and Layout

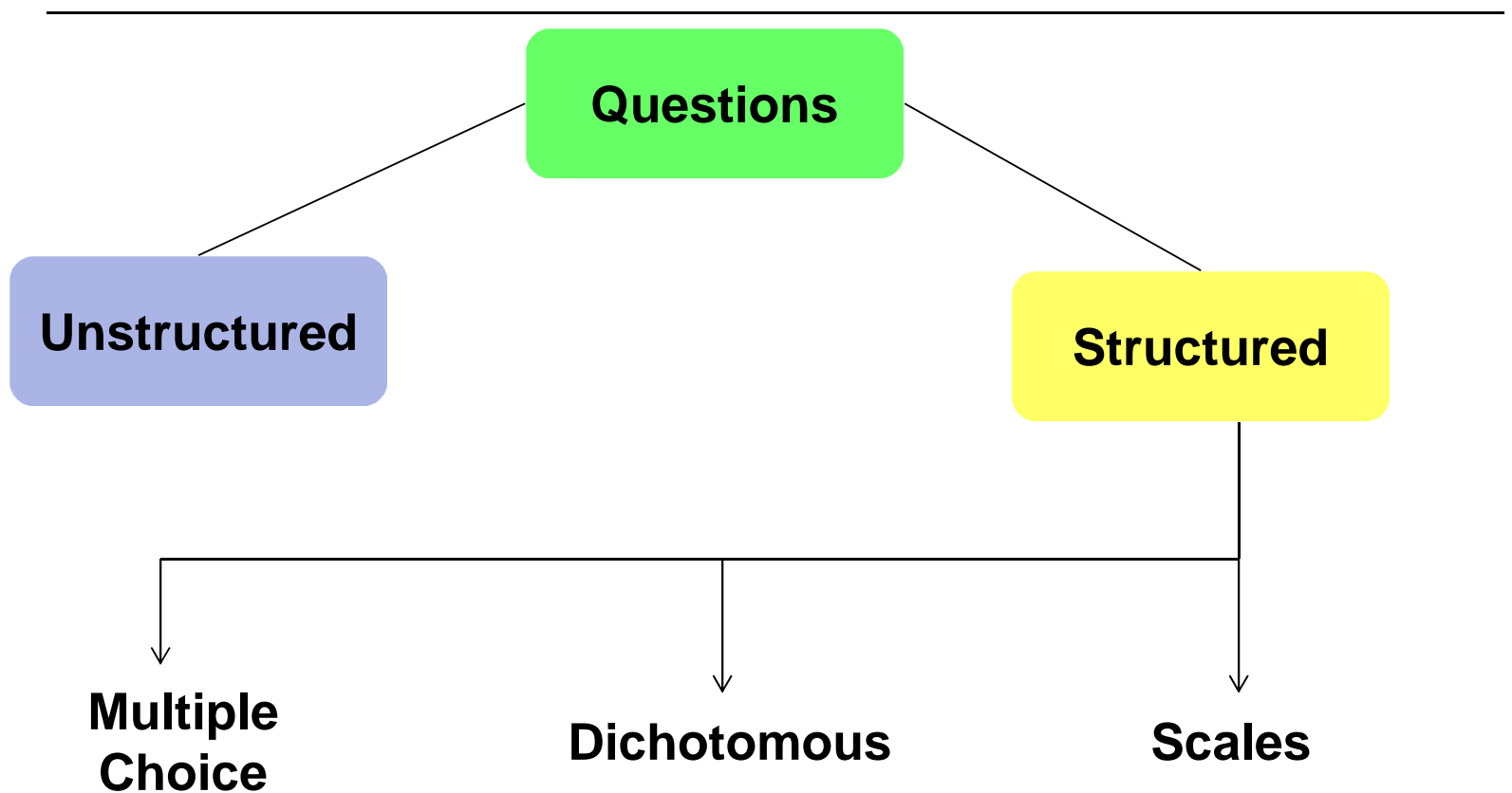


Reproduce the Questionnaire



Eliminate Bugs by Pretesting

Figure 11.4 Types of Questions



Choosing Question Structure: Unstructured Questions

- **Unstructured questions** are open-ended questions that respondents answer in their own words.

Do you intend to buy a new car within the next six months?

Choosing Question Structure: Structured Questions

- **Structured questions** specify the set of response alternatives and the response format.
- A structured question may be multiple-choice, dichotomous, or a scale.

Choosing Question Structure: Multiple-Choice Questions

- ◉ In multiple-choice questions, the researcher provides a choice of answers and respondents are asked to select one or more of the alternatives given.

Do you intend to buy a new car within the next six months?

- _____ Definitely will not buy
- _____ Probably will not buy
- _____ Undecided
- _____ Probably will buy
- _____ Definitely will buy
- _____ Other (please specify)

Choosing Question Structure: Dichotomous Questions

- ⦿ A **dichotomous question** has only two response alternatives: yes or no, agree or disagree, and so on.
- ⦿ Often, the two alternatives of interest are supplemented by a neutral alternative, such as “no opinion,” “don't know,” “both,” or “none.”

Do you intend to buy a new car within the next six months?

_____ Yes
_____ No
_____ Don't know

Choosing Question Structure Scales

- Scales were discussed in detail in Chapters 8 and 9:

Do you intend to buy a new car within the next six months?

Definitely
will not buy

1

Probably
will not buy

2

Undecided

3

Probably
will buy

4

Definitely
will buy

5

Advantages and Disadvantages of Unstructured and Structured Questions

Question Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Comments
Unstructured	Good as first questions Responses are less biased Can provide rich insights	Potential for interviewer bias Coding is costly and time consuming Greater weight to articulate respondents Unsuitable for self-administered questionnaires	Useful for exploratory research
Multiple-Choice	Interviewer bias is reduced Easy to code and analyze Improved respondent co-operation	Order or position bias Difficult to design response options	Responses should be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive Useful in large surveys

Advantages and Disadvantages of Unstructured and Structured Questions

Question Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Comments
Dichotomous	Same as multiple-choice	Wording can bias the responses	Use split ballot technique
Scales	Same as multiple-choice	Difficult to design multi-item scales	Scales should be evaluated for reliability, validity, and generalizability

Choosing Question Wording: Define the Issue

- ◉ Define the issue in terms of who, what, when, where, why, and way (the six Ws). Who, what, when, and where are particularly important.

Which brand of shampoo do you use?
(Incorrect)

Which brand or brands of shampoo have you personally used at home during the last month? In case of more than one brand, please list all the brands that apply. (Correct)

Choosing Question Wording

The W's

Defining the Question

Who

The Respondent

It is not clear whether this question relates to the individual respondent or the respondent's total household.

What

The Brand of Shampoo

It is unclear how the respondent is to answer this question if more than one brand is used.

When

Unclear

The time frame is not specified in this question. The respondent could interpret it as meaning the shampoo used this morning, this week, or over the past year.

Where

Not Specified

At home, at the gym, on the road?

Choosing Question Wording: Use Unambiguous Words

In a typical month, how often do you shop in department stores?

Never

Occasionally

Sometimes

Often

Regularly

(Incorrect)

In a typical month, how often do you shop in department stores?

Less than once

1 or 2 times

3 or 4 times

More than 4 times

(Correct)

Choosing Question Wording: Avoid Leading or Biasing Questions

A **leading question** is one that clues the respondent to what the answer should be, as in the following:

Do you think that patriotic Americans should buy imported automobiles when that would put American labor out of work?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

(Incorrect)

Do you think that Americans should buy imported automobiles?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

(Correct)

Determining the Order of Questions

Opening Questions

- The opening questions should be interesting, simple, and non-threatening.

Type of Information

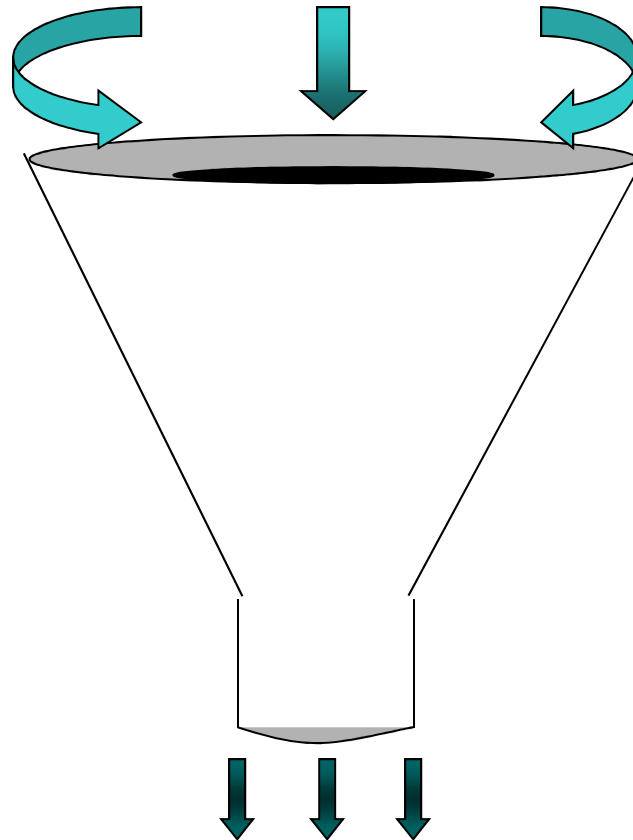
- As a general guideline, basic information should be obtained first, followed by classification, and finally, identification information.

Difficult Questions

- Difficult questions or questions which are sensitive, embarrassing, complex, or dull, should be placed late in the sequence.

The Funnel Approach to Ordering Questions

Broad or General Questions



Narrow or Specific Questions

Form and Layout

- Divide a questionnaire into several parts.
- The questions in each part should be numbered, particularly when branching questions are used.
- The questionnaires should preferably be precoded.
- The questionnaires themselves should be numbered serially.

Pretesting

- ⦿ A questionnaire should not be used in the field survey without adequate pretesting.
- ⦿ All aspects of the questionnaire should be tested, including question content, wording, sequence, form and layout, question difficulty, and instructions.
- ⦿ The respondents for the pretest and for the actual survey should be drawn from the same population.
- ⦿ Pretests are best done by personal interviews, even if the actual survey is to be conducted by mail, telephone, or electronic means, because interviewers can observe respondents' reactions and attitudes.

Pretesting (Cont.)

- After the necessary changes have been made, another pretest could be conducted by mail, telephone, or electronic means if those methods are to be used in the actual survey.
- A variety of interviewers should be used for pretests.
- The pretest sample size varies from 15 to 30 respondents for each wave.
- Protocol analysis and debriefing are two commonly used procedures in pretesting.
- Finally, the responses obtained from the pretest should be coded and analyzed.

Questionnaire Design Check-List

Step 1 Specify The Information Needed

1. Ensure that the information obtained fully addresses all the components of the problem.
2. Have a clear idea of the target population.

Step 2 Type of Interviewing Method

1. Review the type of interviewing method determined based on considerations discussed in Chapter 7.

Step 3 Individual Question Content

1. Is the question necessary?
2. Are several questions needed instead of one to obtain the required information in an unambiguous manner?
3. Do not use double-barreled questions.

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 4 Overcoming Inability and Unwillingness to Answer

1. Is the respondent informed?
2. If respondents are not likely to be informed, filter questions that measure familiarity, product use, and past experience should be asked before questions about the topics themselves.
3. Can the respondent remember?
4. Questions which do not provide the respondent with cues can underestimate the actual occurrence of an event.
5. Can the respondent articulate?
6. Minimize the effort required of the respondents.
7. Make the request for information seem legitimate.
8. Is the information sensitive?

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 5 Choosing Question Structure

1. Open-ended questions are useful both in exploratory research and as opening questions.
2. Use structured questions whenever possible.
3. In multiple-choice questions, the response alternatives should include the set of all possible choices and should be mutually exclusive.
4. In a dichotomous question, if a substantial proportion of the respondents can be expected to be neutral, include a neutral alternative.
5. Consider the use of the split ballot technique to reduce order bias in dichotomous and multiple-choice questions.
6. If the response alternatives are numerous, consider using more than one question.

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 6 Choosing Question Wording

1. Define the issue in terms of who, what, when, where, why, and way (the six Ws).
2. Use ordinary words. Words should match the vocabulary level of the respondents.
3. Avoid ambiguous words: usually, normally, frequently, often, regularly, occasionally, sometimes, etc.
4. Avoid leading questions that clue the respondent to what the answer should be.

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 6 Choosing Question Wording (Cont.)

5. Avoid implicit alternatives that are not explicitly expressed in the options.
6. Avoid implicit assumptions.
7. Respondent should not have to make generalizations or compute estimates.
8. Use positive and negative statements.

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 7 Determine the Order of Questions

1. The opening questions should be interesting, simple, and nonthreatening.
2. Qualifying questions should serve as the opening questions.
3. Basic information should be obtained first, followed by classification, and finally, identification information.
4. Difficult, sensitive, or complex questions should be placed late in the sequence.
5. General questions should precede the specific questions.
6. Questions should be asked in a logical order.

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 8 Form and Layout

1. Divide a questionnaire into several parts.
2. Questions in each part should be numbered.
3. The questionnaire should be precoded.
4. The questionnaires themselves should be numbered serially.

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 9 Reproduction of the Questionnaire

1. The questionnaire should have a professional appearance.
2. Booklet format should be used for long questionnaires.
3. Each question should be reproduced on a single page (or double-page spread).
4. The tendency to crowd questions to make the questionnaire look shorter should be avoided.
5. Directions or instructions for individual questions should be placed as close to the questions as possible.

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 10 Pretesting

1. Pretesting should be done always.
2. All aspects of the questionnaire should be tested, including question content, wording, sequence, form and layout, question difficulty, and instructions.
3. The respondents in the pretest should be similar to those who will be included in the actual survey.
4. Begin the pretest by using personal interviews.
5. Pretest should also be conducted by mail, telephone, or electronically if those methods are to be used in the actual survey.

Questionnaire Design Check-List (Cont.)

Step 10 Pretesting (Cont.)

6. A variety of interviewers should be used for pretests.
7. The pretest sample size is small, varying from 15 to 30 respondents for the initial testing.
8. After each significant revision of the questionnaire, another pretest should be conducted, using a different sample of respondents.
9. The responses obtained from the pretest should be coded and analyzed.



Acronym: Questionnaire

The objectives and steps involved in developing a questionnaire may be defined by the acronym QUESTIONNAIRE:

Objectives

Q uestions that respondents can answer

U plift the respondent

E rror elimination

Acronym: Questionnaire (Cont.)

Steps

- S** pecify the information needed
- T** ype of interviewing method
- I** ndividual question content
- O** vercoming inability and unwillingness to answer
- N** onstructured versus structured questions
- N** onbiased question wording
- A** rrange the questions in proper order
- I** dentify form and layout
- R** eproduction of the questionnaire
- E** liminate bugs by pretesting

Acronym: Words

The guidelines for question wording may be summarized by the acronym WORDS:

- W** ho, what, when, where, why, and way
- O** bjective questions: Avoid leading questions
- R** egularly, normally, usually, etc., should be avoided
- D** ual statements (positive and negative)
- S** imple, ordinary words