

# Using Card-Sorting Strategies to Examine Persuasive and Confidentiality Messaging in Surveys

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# Outline

- Background
- Participants
- Methodology (Card-Sorting)
- Letter Content
- Confidentiality Messaging
- Persuasive Messaging
- Conclusions

# Background

- Letters are our primary means of contact
- The U.S. federal statistical agencies are required to provide specific information about the response burden, confidentiality, privacy, and cybersecurity
- We were given time to test recommended language and make suggestions for wording
- In addition to this new language, we took this opportunity to test letter ordering, content, and persuasive appeals

# Participants

- 17 participants
- From the 2015 – 2016 Annual Survey of Manufactures and Report of Organization Sample
- Range of sizes and industries
- Mostly accountants

# Methodology

- Background info on respondent and company
- Letter ordering - card sorting
- Letter content
  - Half of participants were given Mandatory letters and half Voluntary
- Confidentiality Language Testing
- Persuasive Messaging – card sorting
- Wrap-up questions about survey request handling

# Card-Sorting

- Respondents are given a stack of cards shuffled in random order
- Each card has a single statement or letter section on it
- Respondents order or group the cards in a way that makes the most sense to them
- For the letter ordering, respondents put the cards in their preferred orders before being shown actual letter

# Letter Content

- Most respondents do not read entire letter
- Login info and steps were considered most important
- Placement of 'Mandatory' statement was unimportant
- Tested two greetings:
  - Your firm has been selected to participate in the 2016 Report of Organization.
  - We are requesting your cooperation with the 2016 Report of Organization.
    - Made survey sound optional.

# Confidentiality Messaging

- ‘Authority and Confidentiality’ section on back of letter
  - 9 out of 17 participants did not turn letter over without prompting
  - Most participants admit to only skimming our letters for most important information
- Test two versions
  - DOC provided Language
  - Revised Language



# Confidentiality Messaging

- General Findings:
  - The majority understood the main message of this section regardless of version
    - The majority mentioned our legal authority to conduct the survey, that the data would be used to produce aggregated statistics, and that the data they provided was confidential and protected.
  - Many participants described this section as ‘boilerplate text,’ ‘like a privacy policy,’ and ‘legal stuff.’
  - Most participants said they would not usually read this section of letter

# Confidentiality Messaging

- DOC Provided Language:

Title 13 United States Code, Sections 131 and 182, authorizes this collection. Sections 224 and 225 require your response. The U.S. Census Bureau is required by Section 9 of the same law to keep your information confidential and can use your responses only to produce statistics. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify your business, organization, or institution. Disclosure of this information is permitted under the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. Section 552a) to be shared among Census Bureau staff for work-related purposes. Disclosure of this information is also subject to all of the published routine uses as identified in the Privacy Act System of Record Notice titled "COMMERCE/CENSUS-4, Economic Survey Collection." Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data.

# Confidentiality Messaging

- Preferences:
  - Revised language: 7
  - DOC provided language: 5
  - The other 5 participants had no preference and assumed the statements were equivalent
- Of the participants that preferred the DOC provided language, most did not fully read the statements. When asked to compare selected sentences from each version, many of these participants admitted that the revised language was more clearly worded.

# Confidentiality Messaging

## DOC Provided Language:

Title 13 United States Code, Sections 131 and 182, authorizes this collection. Sections 224 and 225 require your response. The U.S. Census Bureau is required by Section 9 of the same law to keep your information confidential and can use your responses only to produce statistics. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify your business, organization, or institution. Disclosure of this information is permitted under the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. Section 552a) to be shared among Census Bureau staff for work-related purposes. Disclosure of this information is also subject to all of the published routine uses as identified in the Privacy Act System of Record Notice titled “COMMERCE/CENSUS-4, Economic Survey Collection.” Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data.

## Revised Language:

This collection is authorized under Title 13 U.S. Code, Sections 131 and 182, and is in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (Title 5 U.S. Code, Section 552a). You are required by law to respond to this survey (Title 13 U.S. Code, Sections 224 and 225). The U.S. Census Bureau is required by Section 9 of the same law to keep your information confidential and can use your responses only to produce statistics. The uses of these data are limited to those identified in the Privacy Act System of Record Notice titled “COMMERCE/CENSUS-4, Economic Survey Collection.” The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify your business, organization, or institution. Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data.

# Confidentiality Messaging

- *“Disclosure of this information is permitted under the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. Section 552a) to be shared among Census Bureau staff for work-related purposes.”*
  - Many participants were confused by this sentence, as it seemed to undermine the previous assurances of confidentiality. Despite this, many of the participants still assumed that their data would be protected.
  - A few participants assumed that this statement meant that their data could be shared with *any* Census Bureau employee, regardless of need-to-know, which made some of them uncomfortable.
  - Many participants assumed ‘work-related purposes’ referred to producing statistics, but some of the other participants were unsure.

# Confidentiality Messaging

- *“Disclosure of this information is also subject to all of the **published routine uses** as identified in the **Privacy Act System of Record Notice** titled **“COMMERCE/CENSUS-4, Economic Survey Collection.”**”*
  - Nearly all participants were confused by this sentence
  - None of the participants knew what a SORN was.
    - A few participants were able to make fairly accurate educated guesses as to the purpose and contents of a SORN.
    - After reading the revised version, it was easier for participants to make an educated guess as to the purpose of the SORN.

# Persuasive Messaging

- Tested 9 statements, topics included:
  - Data use
  - Ways companies could access/use data
  - Types of surveys
- 2 Card-sorting activities
  - Known vs. Unknown
  - Ranking most to least motivating

# Persuasive Messaging

- “Economic Census data is the foundation for accurate benchmarks for economic indicators such as the Gross Domestic Product, the Producer Price Index, retail sales, productivity, and other indicators.”
  - Ranked as most motivating
  - 12 out of 17 people knew this fact.
  - “Everyone knows GDP is important.”



# Persuasive Messaging

- Surprisingly few respondents knew that individual businesses could use the data (6 out of 17), but it still ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Very few respondents had heard of the *Census Business Builder*, but several felt it satisfied the ‘What’s in it for me?’ question, even if they wouldn’t use it.
- The explanation of the various types of surveys was ranked last; most respondents felt it was informational, not motivational.

# Persuasive Messaging

- Being mandatory was the biggest motivation
  - Some respondents assume all surveys are mandatory
- Many respondents did not know why we collect data or how we use it.
  - This was considered by many respondents to be the most important issue
- The majority of respondents would expect to find this information on the website.

# Conclusions

- Card-sorting allowed participants to evaluate and compare several components at once and identify what is most important to participants
- Using what we've learned in this round we are revising the confidentiality statements and will conduct a confirmatory round of testing
- Future research may include eye tracking

# Contact

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