

Quantitative methods and analysis - polling research paper

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to determine the importance of polling and how they can be used as a tool to predict sentiments of a specific or a general population. Three particular polling cases will be considered in this paper, namely; entertainment survey, political survey and general survey. Upon analysis of the surveys conducted in these three different polling scenarios, we wish to identify if there are any similarities and differences between the process of data gathering and interpretation. One of the underlying purposes of this paper is to acquire the knowledge needed to prepare and conduct a personalized survey with reliable results. Basing on the polling analysis that was conducted on the three surveys, a sample survey will be conducted that would reflect the knowledge and skills that was developed on the previous three-survey analysis.

Introduction

Polling is a survey of public opinion or of a particular population sample that is considered as a representation of the target population. The principle behind polling is quite simple. According to Mendelsohn and Brent, the basic principle of polling is to gather a sufficiently large sample of a whole population and to conduct the information gathering in random. Polling or the survey of public opinion can be traced since the 19th century parallel with the development of the printing press that enhanced the spread of books and newspapers. Initially, the polls only reflect the sentiments of the reading public and so it could not be regarded as an accurate source of the general public opinion. However, as magazines and newspapers became a

popular mode of public communication, public opinion surveys became an influential prediction tool especially in the political arena. Since 1930's, with the contributions of George Gallup and his colleagues, a scientific approach to polling was gradually developed. Since then, polling was not only used in political purposes but was also used in social and economic applications. Today, some people still see polling as a mysterious and unreliable process yet for those who know exactly how polling works, it is considered as a valuable and indispensable tool that encompass a wide variety of applications.

Entertainment survey from Newsstand (Proquest): ' Meeting the Changing Research Needs of Students An eBook Survey on China Students' by Conita Leung

The eBook popularity survey by Leung was conducted from April 2 to 20, 2012. The survey was sponsored by China Academic Library and Information System (CALIS) and was participated by individuals from 80 different academic institutions. The number of respondents is 4, 755 individuals wherein 79% are undergrad students, 20% are undergrad students and 1% is faculty members. One of the key objectives of this survey was to determine the importance of e-books for university and college students. Among the questions asked is the awareness of the respondents regarding eBooks in their libraries, if there are any eBooks available in their libraries as well as how often each respondents use eBooks in their research. Also, the reason for not using eBooks was also determined and compared to usage of different sources. Apparently, the survey showed that almost all students (87%) are aware that their libraries have eBook sources yet most rely still on

printed books for academic and personal use. However, it is also worth noting that eBooks are increasingly used as reference as more than 50% of the respondents are already using it for academic and personal purposes. The survey respondents of 4, 755 in 80 different institutions are a considerably large sample. And since academic individuals are quite homogeneous in their preference for academic sources, it can be said that the survey results reflects the general preference of academics in universities and colleges. Knowing that there is an increasing trend of eBook usage among academics, authors, publishers and academic institutions can realign their strategies based on this information to maximize their economic gains.

Political survey (from Gallup or Pew Research): ‘ Obama Approval Drops among Working-Class Whites’ by Frank Newport

Political surveys are among the earliest type of public opinion surveys ever conducted in polling history. In his article, ‘ Obama Approval Drops among Working-Class Whites’, Newport conducts another political survey to determine Obama’s popularity among the working-class white Americans. Newport conducted the survey by calling potential respondents using random-digit-dial methods and was conducted from 2009 through October 2014. Accordingly, the sample numbered 355, 000 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U. S. states and the District of Columbia with a margin of sampling error at 1% with a 95% confidence level. A sample size of 355, 000 may be adequate to represent white American adults. As a result, the opinion is accurate enough to be worthy of consideration.

General survey (from Gallup or Pew Research): ‘ Cost Still a Barrier Between Americans and Medical Care’ by Rebecca Riffkin

Healthcare is everyone’s concern. Apparently, any information that concerns healthcare also concerns the general public. Riffkin’s article, ‘ Cost Still a Barrier Between Americans and Medical Care’ aims to answer why some Americans are not getting adequate medical attention. The survey was conducted from November 6 to 9, 2014 through telephone interviews using random-digit-dial methods. The number of respondents for this survey is 828 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U. S. states and the District of Columbia. Based on the number of respondents, it appears that the survey sample is quite inadequate to be conclusive. Perhaps a more rigid survey should be conducted by increasing the sample size or by narrowing the target population. Healthcare information is important to the general public, healthcare providers and policy makers. For the same reason, the information from this survey can be used to aid in making important decisions in healthcare policies.

Overview

Among the three survey results, the political survey conducted by Newport considerably offers the most accurate information. As compared to the other two surveys, Newport’s sample of 355, 000 clearly exceeds the rest. Also, the survey was conducted using the random digit dialing method, which effectively eliminates any biased opinion. Apparently, the larger the sample is and the more randomly it is conducted the more accurate and reliable the interpretation of the polling data would be. Political surveys are among the

earliest form of polling. Since the 19th century, political surveys have been conducted to determine public opinion before an election starts and are sponsored by individuals and organizations with political interests. Also, political surveys are often conducted by news groups to pique public interests and to create intriguing headlines. However, it can also easily become a tool for propaganda and political maneuvering. In most instances, political parties are the ones who sponsor political surveys because of their underlying interests on political outcomes. For the same reason, political surveys can easily become biased as compared to business oriented and general information surveys. On the other hand, business oriented surveys such as the one conducted by Leung is required to be very accurate. Most often, organizations that have economic interests sponsor surveys of this sort to guide them in their business strategies. Compared to the two previously discussed surveys, perhaps the general survey is considerably the least demanding. Obviously, this type of survey has no direct economic or political implication and so it is often not as extensive as business oriented and political surveys are. Even so, general information surveys may serve as an indicator of social tendencies that may inspire further research.

Application: copy of survey

The purpose of this sample survey is to determine if people still believe in the importance of college education. The three questions that will be asked during the interview are:

- If you are a millionaire, would you still go to college? (yes, no, unsure)
- Do you believe that graduating in college will make you rich? (yes, no,

unsure)

- Do you believe that college graduates are smarter than the general population? (yes, no, unsure)

Application: Results

In conducting this type of survey, a bar chart would be more appropriate. The y-axis of the chart would reflect the number of respondents while the x-axis would reflect the three answers of the survey questions. Below is the chart created in Excel using chartered columns:

Application: Results Analysis

Based on the results, it appears that people would still go to college even though they are already rich. However, it also shows that most people are quite unsure whether graduating in college would make them rich. Lastly, it shows that public opinion is also divided on whether college graduates are really smarter than the general population. From the survey, it appears that the drive to have college education is not very strong based on this sample. This data could also mean that college participants are not driven by economic reasons for going to college as what most people think.

Application: Surveys and Business

The possibility of a decreasing intention among people to go to college is an important concern for educational institutions. Also, the notion that economic benefits is not the main driver for people to go to college could also become an eye-opener that is worthy of consideration. The survey though is definitely raw and requires a lot more polishing as well as

resources to become conclusive. Even so, it clearly demonstrates how polls can become influential in determining the general sentiments of the public that could guide policy makers in making decisions.

Conclusion

Based on the information and exercise conducted on this paper, it is clear that polling is an important aspect in generalizing the common attitude or attributes of a target population. So far, it is quite apparent that polling is an indispensable tool that can be used in personal, business, social, scientific and political applications. Using this tool, one can make a knowledgeable analysis and prediction that could guide them in their decision making.

References

Kazin, M., Edwards, R., & Rothman, A. (2012). public opinion polls. Retrieved November 2014, from <http://blog.press.princeton.edu/>: <http://blog.press.princeton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/2Predicting-Politics-Public-Opinion-Polls.pdf>

Leung, C. (n. d.). Meeting the Changing Research Needs of Students Needs of Students. Retrieved November 2014, from <http://media2.proquest.com/>: <http://media2.proquest.com/documents/Meeting+the+Changing+Research+Needs+of+Students+-+An+eBook+Survey+on+China+Student.pdf>

Mendelsohn, M., & Brent, J. (2001, Autumn). Understanding Polling Methodology. Retrieved November 2014, from <http://www.queensu.ca/>: http://www.queensu.ca/cora/_files/mendlesohn_e.pdf

Newport, F. (2014). Obama Approval Drops Among Working-Class Whites.

<https://assignbuster.com/quantitative-methods-and-analysis-polling-research-paper/>

Retrieved November 2014, from <http://www.gallup.com/>: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/179753/obama-approval-drops-among-working-class-whites.aspx>

Riffkin, R. (2014, November). Cost Still a Barrier Between Americans and Medical Care. Retrieved November 2014, from <http://www.gallup.com/>: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/179774/cost-barrier-americans-medical-care.aspx>