



# Consumer Survey

A market analysis should include local survey research to fully understand the uniqueness of your particular market and its consumers. Consumer surveys can provide information on when, where, why, how and for what people shop. They can reveal attitudes toward your downtown and how those attitudes affect shopping habits. Surveys also invite consumers to share their perspectives regarding the current and future economic health of a downtown or business district. Readily available demographic or lifestyle data from secondary sources described earlier in this toolbox cannot completely describe where local people shop or what they would like to see in their downtown.

This section provides details on what kinds of surveys and questions could help your analysis and provides samples of survey instruments for your use..

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# Conducting Survey Research – An Overview

Surveys are conducted to obtain data that can be used to assess trends and conditions, advance understanding, test theories, develop policy recommendations or business strategies, and much more. Surveys can be conducted by questionnaire (in writing) or by interview (by phone or in person).

One example of a survey is the nationwide poll conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau every 10 years. The census is unusual in that it seeks to query every member of its population base, i.e., every resident of the country.

More commonly, surveys rely on the responses of a sample population to gauge the feelings of a larger population. Two common examples are surveys to assess public opinion (mostly used by the media and elected officials or government) and surveys to assess consumer preferences and interests (mostly used by businesses and marketing firms hired by businesses). In our context, surveys are a way to assess consumer needs that goes beyond the information collected through demographic, lifestyle of other secondary data source.

As in all science, survey measurement is not error free. Procedures used to conduct a survey have major effects on outcomes. Therefore, your goal as an analyst is to choose the most appropriate survey procedures that, when applied, will reduce error and maximize the likelihood to accurately describe what is being measured.

A community-based survey effort has five key components: **Sampling, Question Design, Mode of Data Collection, Interpreting Data, and Communicating Results**. Following best practices in each component will enable a community to make more informed decisions.

In this section we will both provide textbook style definitions of survey procedures, then explain how they work for community and business leaders seeking to assess their business environment. We will also discuss each procedure in the context of solving the example questions presented below.

## *Anytown Example*

The leaders of “Anytown” are interested in improving retail sales in their central business district by expanding existing businesses or attracting new businesses in sectors they currently do not have. They ask you to identify the factors that determine where local residents do their shopping. Consequently, you put together a survey research program that seeks to understand this research question. You envision surveying a sample of consumers to obtain information on their shopping preferences and behaviors. Following the five key components, here’s how a survey research program can be implemented in Anytown.

## Sampling

Sampling consists of selecting a small portion of a population as representative of the whole population. It is this sample that you would actually survey. When sampling, you need to give all members of the population the same chance of being selected.

### *Anytown Illustration:*

Considering your budget, you decide to survey a sample of area residents by written questionnaire. Since you do not want your entire sample to come from the same neighborhood or demographic sector, you want to give all residents an equal chance of being chosen. You decide to randomly pick a sample of 1,200 owner occupied and rental addresses in Anytown's convenience trade area.

## Question Design

Survey questions must be carefully worded, double-checked by a fresh pair of eyes, and pretested to insure they are understood the way you intend them to be. A poorly worded question will greatly increase the chance of response error and limit the usefulness of the survey data you collect. Simply put, designing good survey questions involves selecting those needed to meet the research objectives, testing them to make sure they can be asked and answered as planned, then formatting them to make it easy for interviewers to ask them and for respondents to answer them.

### *Anytown Illustration:*

Now that you have selected your sample, you are ready to design the survey questionnaire itself. You decide not to hire a professional survey designer for budgetary reasons, so you instead search the web and ask around about communities that pursued a survey research program similar to the one you are commissioned to do.\* You found that Othertown ran a similar survey research program and is willing to share their questionnaire with you. Since Othertown has different amenities, you modify its questionnaire to reflect both the objectives of your research agenda and the different business environment of your community. \*Note – sample surveys are provided later in this section.

For a more comprehensive approach to data collection, you include both quantitative (forced-choice questions, such as yes or no, or true or false) and qualitative questions (open-ended questions that give respondents a chance to write their thoughts and feelings). After clearing the survey instrument of any possible confusion and receiving feedback from all your collaborators, you decide to test it by sending it to 10 consumers of Anytown who you know personally and who are not part of your sample. After receiving honest feedback from your 10 "testers" and making any necessary changes, you are ready to send out the survey to your sample of 1,200 residents.

## Mode of Data Collection

A survey can be administered by mail, telephone, web, or face to face—either one by one such as in a “sidewalk intercept survey” or in a focus group. Each of these survey alternatives, as discussed later in this section, have both benefits and shortcomings. The analyst must use good judgment to identify the survey method or methods based on project objectives, sensitivity of questions, and budget.

### *Anytown Illustration:*

After considering the pros and cons of the various modes of data collection, you decide to conduct a mail survey. A week before mailing the actual questionnaire, you send a letter to your sample explaining the survey and its importance to the betterment of Anytown. Since their participation is voluntary, you include an incentive to encourage them to complete and return the questionnaire promptly.

You include the same letter when you mail the actual survey one week or so later and emphasize the importance of returning the survey by the deadline. The deadline you provide is approximately two weeks before the deadline you set for yourself to start analyzing the data. After the deadline passes, you send another reminder to those in the sample that have yet to respond and you include another questionnaire just in case they misplaced the previous one. After all the data has been collected, coding may be necessary for use in computer software programs and to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. Coding may also enable easier transfer of data to other users.

## Interpreting Data

Once you deem the dataset complete, you can begin using it to address the research questions previously identified. For survey research, you may want to calculate the average, mean, median, or variance. Or you may want to estimate the association between and among key variables of interest. Such analyses can be done using software such as Microsoft Excel, SPSS, Stata, SAS, R, and others.

### *Anytown Illustration:*

Once you have collected data from your respondents, you can tally and rank factors that respondents said regarding their shopping preferences and behaviors. Specifically, you can tally and rank them by demographic attribute (age, income, education, etc.) to see differences within the population. You can use this information to propose demographic-specific business development opportunities. Depending on how sophisticated you want to be in interpreting data, you may run regression analysis to estimate, for example, the relationships between the various determinants of where people shop and why they shop there. You may find that the statistical results reflect the qualitative responses of your sample and you are now ready to write your report.

## Communicating Results

You can tailor communication of the results of your survey to different audiences. For example, a short news release with key information should be sent to the local media outlets. More comprehensive report should be made available to downtown business operators. You may consider a policy brief for an audience concerned with that type of interpretation. Consider the audience as well when including charts and tables explaining the results and their implications.

## Closing Thoughts

Like all social science research, you must administer your survey in ways designed to avoid risks to the respondents, participants, and interviewers. Federally-funded research must meet certain criteria for protection of human subjects. It's a good idea to follow these criteria even if your research project is not federally funded.

Finally, findings from your consumer survey should be integrated with other elements of your market analysis. The results of your survey of consumers help shape other components of your research.

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# Types of Consumer Surveys

There are five basic ways to survey consumers: **1) written surveys, 2) telephone surveys, 3) web-based surveys, 4) intercept surveys, and 5) focus groups.**

## Written Surveys

Written surveys (questionnaires) involve printing and distributing questions to consumers. Use a written survey if you want to collect comprehensive consumer information. You must keep written surveys short, or if you need to ask a lot of questions, format and organize them in such a way that encourage consumers to complete it.

It is best to mail the written surveys to a selected random sample as discussed earlier. You should also include a brief cover letter that states how the survey will help the business district, provides instructions, guarantees only aggregate data will be made public, and asks for participation.

Pros:

- Can reach a large geographic area;
- People are use to completing paper-and-pencil surveys;
- Allows respondents to take the survey with them and complete it anywhere and anytime;
- Are ideal for sensitive issues; and
- Have an easy to monitor response rate

Cons:

- Can be difficult to obtain mailing lists;
- Cost of printing and mailing can be prohibitive;
- Provide no quick way to answer respondents' questions or provide clarification of wording;
- Need a motivated population to return the survey ; and
- Requires respondents who can see, read, and write.

## Telephone Surveys

Telephone surveys are a technique where interviewers call consumers to ask questions. Use a telephone survey if you want to collect specific information that can be difficult to obtain in written surveys. When using volunteer interviewers, try to set up a phone bank (with multiple phone lines) where they meet as a group to make calls. The caller should first briefly state how the survey will help the owner's business, guarantee only aggregate data will be made public, estimate how long the survey will take, and ask for participation. The best telephone surveys use "quality" interviewers instructed to use similar techniques, speak clearly, ask a few simple questions and do not sway the opinion of the consumer.

Pros:

- Can be initiated rapidly;
- Requires a limited initial investment; and
- Have an easy to monitor response rate.

Cons:

- Are labor intensive;
- Can have a low response rate;
- Are limited to selected households with listed numbers;
- Access to cell phone numbers may be difficult; and
- Recipients may consider calls a nuisance.

## Web-Based Surveys

Web-based (online) surveys involve programming and emailing a web based set of questions to consumers. This method can include many of the same questions and formats as written and telephone surveys. Depending on the type of data needed, online surveys can be specific or comprehensive in nature.

These surveys are distributed via a hyperlinked URL embedded in an email and can be sent by one person with one mouse click. No volunteers are needed to distribute or administer the survey. The email that contains the survey link should also include a statement explaining the purpose of the survey, provide instructions, and guarantee the anonymity of private information. Online surveys are active and available 24 hours a day, typically for a week or two. You should also include the date and time that a survey is scheduled to close so respondents can complete the survey before the deadline.

Pros:

- Can be distributed worldwide, if necessary, at low cost;
- Low distribution costs;
- Order of questions can be preprogrammed;
- Can include links that provide additional explanation;
- Responses are automatically entered in a database and can be easily analyzed or exported;
- Allows easy tracking of user response rate;
- Allows automatic reminders, thank yous, spell checks, and math calculations;
- Allows easy pilot testing;
- Can show respondents a “progress bar” to indicate the percentage completed; and
- Can be programmed to enforce mandatory response to questions.

Cons:

- Respondents must have ready access to the internet and be “computer literate,” i.e., must be able to use a browser, a mouse and/or keyboard; and
- Computer system can go down or be unreliable.

## Intercept Surveys

Intercept surveys are a technique where you stop a representative sample of downtown patrons on the street or at their point of purchase and ask questions. Use an intercept survey if you want to collect specific consumer information from users of the downtown. The interviewer should briefly state how the survey will help the community, estimate how long the survey will take, and ask for participation. Provide respondents with a writing surface, a place to sit down, a place for packages, refreshments, and a shady spot in the summer. Allow them to share impressions of their entire shopping trip. The best intercept surveys have quality interviewers, often working in teams of two, using similar techniques.

Pros:

- Ability to target actual downtown users
- Immediate (downtown experience is fresh in their mind)
- Can target users by location, date and time of day
- Expressive (can observe/record body language)
- Cheapest (with volunteer interviewers)

Cons:

- More workers required
- Time consuming
- Misses nonusers
- Difficult to get a large sample

## Focus Groups

Focus groups may not technically be survey research, but is discussed here as an alternative information collection method. Focus groups bring together a representative group of consumers for organized discussions to gain information about their views and experiences of shopping in the trade area and beyond. Use focus groups if you want to collect rich and deep business information. You should personally invite 7 to 11 representative consumers, from specific market segments, to a 90-minute meeting by telling them why a focus group will help their community become a better place to live. Hold the meeting in a comfortable room and provide refreshments. An experienced interviewer or moderator should facilitate the dialogue and new idea development. At the end, thank participants through gifts, coupons or other tokens of appreciation. For more information, see the [Focus Group](#) section of this toolbox.

Pros:

- Great for pre-testing initial ideas;
- Can generate, explore, and identify key ideas/concepts;
- Helps you better understand your population/customer base;
- Can read non-verbal feedback;

- Aids in formal survey development;
- can assist respondents with unfamiliar words or questions;
- Can ask follow-up and clarifying questions as they arise;
- Can explore related and unanticipated topics as they arise; and
- Good for identifying themes and capturing ideas.

Cons:

- Potential for bias due to small group size;
- Require trained interviewers or moderators;
- Moderator may influence quality of data;
- Participants may feel reluctant to share personal information or beliefs;
- Cannot necessarily generalize findings to the broad population, thus—
- Unable to make major decisions based on the information provided; and
- Must find a suitable place to conduct focus group.

## Combination is Best

In an ideal world, most communities are best served by using a combination of survey techniques. A written survey would give you your best chance of getting comprehensive information from a large and representative sample of the population. Adding a telephone survey would provide a quick way to obtain simple follow-up information from those same consumers. Employing the online method accommodates specific and comprehensive approaches and does not require the help of as many volunteers as telephone and written surveys. Adding focus groups would allow you to delve deeper into consumer attitudes. What may determine your choice of a technique are the complexity of the questions you want to ask and the importance of a high participation rate.

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# Consumer Survey Questions

Once you have selected a survey technique or techniques, you must determine what questions you want to ask. Because respondents will only be willing to spend a limited amount of time, any survey must only ask the most important questions. Typically, mail surveys have the largest set of questions since respondents will be able to spend more time and will be able to work through more complex questions.

General categories of questions specific to retail shopping have been developed by faculty at Ohio State University-Extension. These categories are listed below. An example retail shopping survey from Ohio State that follows these categories is available for download in Appendix 2.

## Preference for Shopping Location

- We want know where people shop in the community and why.

## Characteristics of a Positive Shopping Experience

- We want to know the shopping district with the most positive shopping characteristics.
- We want to know the shopping mall/center with the most positive shopping characteristics.

## Shopping Event Specifics

- We want to know when shoppers typically shop (e.g. day, time, duration).
- We want to know the where shoppers most often shop.

## Suggestions for Improving the Shopping Experience

- We want to know what shoppers would suggest to improve the experience.
- We want to know the degree to which the suggested changed might encourage shoppers to shop more in the area.
- We want to know what potential shoppers believe to be desirable retailers for the area.
- We want to know where shoppers would prefer such new businesses be located.

## Advertising/Marketing

- We want to know what types of advertising shoppers notice the most.
- We want to know the extent to which the types of advertising influence decisions about where shoppers choose to shop.

General categories of questions that do beyond retail shopping and address a mixture of downtown uses have been developed by staff of the Wisconsin Main Street Program. These categories are listed below along with a sample of questions for each. A *Standardized Written Consumer Survey* developed by the Wisconsin Main Street Program containing these and other questions is available for download in Appendix 1.

## When, Where and Why They Go Downtown

- When they typically shop for non-grocery items
- During which extended hours they are most likely to shop for non-grocery items
- How often they eat breakfast, lunch, or supper out
- What restaurants or types of cuisine they would most like to see come to downtown
- How often they watch movies at a theater or rent movies to watch at home
- Which events they attended in the last 12 months
- How often they come downtown
- What are the biggest non-work reasons for them to stop downtown
- Where they typically park when they drive to downtown
- How far they live from downtown
- Where they are more likely to shop for non-grocery items: near where they work or live
- How often do they shop at competing locations/stores and for what reasons

## What They Want Downtown

- What businesses they would most like to see come to downtown
- Which community assets would they most like to see developed
- Have they ever lived downtown or have an interest in living there
- What is their opinion about someday living downtown
- What type of downtown housing and housing amenities would they prefer
- If they moved (or stayed) downtown, what size housing unit would they require

## Market and Marketing Data

- Their gender
- Their age
- By age, how many people live in their household
- Their home zip code
- Their marital status
- The highest level of formal education they have completed
- Their household's annual income
- Which leisure activities their household participates in
- What radio stations they listen to most
- What publications they read most
- Their level of interest in starting their own business
- Their attitudes about the downtown and the community

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# Administering a Consumer Survey

The best way to ensure successful administration of any project, including a written consumer survey, is to develop and follow a work plan. Below are tasks identified for a hypothetical written survey work plan. Many of the steps presented here assume that you are using the *Standardized Written Consumer Survey* developed by the Wisconsin Main Street Program. See Appendix 1.

## Step 1. Review Examples from Other Communities

Many communities have administered a written consumer survey and most are more than happy to share their methods and results. There is little advantage in trying to design your written consumer survey from scratch. If your community is like most, you will lack volunteers with significant survey experience. It is easy to make costly mistakes. If a question is worded incorrectly it will make the answers collected less useful.

In order for answers to be useful, questions must be unambiguous and should not lead the respondent to a particular response. For easier analysis and interpretation, to the extent possible ask multiple choice rather than open-ended questions. Also, ask about existing behavior since existing behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Match questions on demographics with census categories so that they can be compared. Even subtle differences in the wording of similar questions found on surveys from two different communities will prevent comparisons between those two communities. This is not meant to discourage you from administering your own written consumer survey but to encourage you to be cautious when writing questions.

## Step 2. Accept/Reject Standardized Questions

The *Standardized Written Consumer Survey* provided as an appendix includes questions that the Wisconsin Main Street Program staff believe to be important in a comprehensive downtown market analysis and useful for each point of the Main Street Four Point Approach; design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring. You are free to eliminate entire questions that are less important to your immediate efforts in order to shorten the survey.

When accepting or rejecting standardized questions, keep in mind that some of the questions in the *Standardized Written Consumer Survey* are designed to be used together with questions from the *Standardized Business Owner Written Survey* (see [Business Owners Survey](#) section). The paired questions allow for comparisons between the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of potential customers and business owners.

Shorter or simpler surveys such as intercept and phone surveys can use a smaller set of questions often selected from the mail survey set. If an intercept survey is conducted, ask additional questions that capture thoughts fresh in the minds of shoppers. Base added

questions on their current shopping trip, such as what they intended to purchase vs. what was actually purchased.

### **Step 3. Draft Customized Questions**

Always customize any borrowed survey to fit your unique local needs.

### **Step 4. Draft Introduction**

An introduction is an important part of all survey techniques. For mail surveys the introduction will be presented through a cover letter. For intercept surveys, phone surveys and focus groups the introduction will be presented verbally. The introduction should briefly explain the purpose of the survey and for whom it is being done. It should then explain to the resident that they were selected randomly or, in the case of focus groups, because they are a member of a specific group. It should also give them an estimate of the amount of time required and ask if they are willing to help.

### **Step 5. Proofread and Pretest Your Survey**

It is always good practice to proofread and pretest your survey, including your cover letter, before full distribution. Sometimes volunteers drafting the customized questions get too close to their work and fail to see the obvious. Have a few volunteers who are active in your organization, but who have not been involved in survey design, take your written consumer survey and give you feedback. Instructions and questions that are unclear and misinterpreted will show up in a pretest and can be corrected.

### **Step 6. Approve Final Survey**

Eventually editing must come to an end. Because distribution and collection requires a significant commitment of volunteer and financial resource it is important to have the organization or committee overseeing the project formally approve the final version of your written consumer survey.

### **Step 7. Answer Sampling Questions**

Once you have completed your survey instrument, you must decide who you want to answer your questions. For mail and telephone surveys, a random sample is best to ensure the sample reflects the demographic makeup of the trade area. In order to develop a sampling plan for your survey, you must first answer the following questions:

- What is the minimum number of completed surveys that you require?
- What is your expected response rate?
- What is your available budget?
- What is your available work force?

For mail, telephone or intercept surveys collect at least 400 completed surveys to reach a 95% degree of certainty that your sample represents the trade area population, or in the case of

intercept surveys, the downtown user population. You can calculate the number of surveys you will need to print and distribute based on the following equation:

$$\# \text{ of surveys distributed} = \text{required minimum number returned} \div \text{expected response rate}$$

For example, if you target the minimum of 400 completed surveys and expect a response rate of 30% your calculation would be as follows:

$$400 \div .30 = 1333 \text{ surveys distributed}$$

## Step 8: Develop and Promote your Survey Plan

Your financial and human resources will determine the best way to distribute the surveys. For mail surveys, consider sending the survey directly to a random sample of addresses. For phone surveys, consider randomly calling names from the phone book. For intercept surveys, randomly select downtown users at strategic locations, dates and times of day. For example, select every tenth person that walks by your selected location. Be sure to explore opportunities for corporate sponsorship to defray postage and printing costs.

To stay on task, you must set dates for distributing and returning your written consumer survey and assign specific responsibilities. It is recommended that all survey plans be thoroughly promoted in area newspapers and radio and TV stations prior to carrying out the survey. Potential respondents will be much more likely to participate if they understand the project and why it will help the community. Be sure to publicly thank your financial sponsors.

## Step 9. Print Survey

The number of respondents you plan to survey will affect your printing decisions. Photocopying surveys is more cost effective for low volumes while professional printing is more cost effective for high volumes. If photocopying, make sure the quality of the copy is good. Stray marks that sometimes show up on poor copies could affect the accuracy of computerized optical mark recognition software (if you are using this method).

## Step 10. Distribute Surveys

The printed surveys from Step 9 need to be delivered according to the plan from Step 8.

## Step 11. Collect Surveys

Collecting mail surveys involves providing a means to return the completed survey. This can include using a self-addressed form or envelope with prepaid postage so they can mail it back or having drop-boxes available throughout the community. For intercept surveys, phone surveys and focus groups collecting involves recording their answers. While collecting, be careful not to sway the opinion of the respondents. Be clear at all times and consistent with all respondents. When possible, consider offering incentives for participation to improve response rates. Finally, thank the respondents at the end.

## Step 12. Scan Surveys

Once survey responses are collected, enter the data into a spreadsheet or database program. The *Standardized Written Consumer Survey* in the appendix is scannable for automatic data entry of multiple choice questions.

## Step 13. Verify Data and Enter Open Ended

While most computerized optical mark recognition software is surprisingly accurate, there are always answers that will be unrecognized or incorrectly recorded. In addition, most programs are still unable to automatically recognize handwriting and open-ended responses. For these reasons it is necessary for someone, preferably a volunteer, to verify and correct the accuracy of scanned answers and to type open-ended answers.

## Step 14. Review Raw Data

Once the data is entered it is relatively straightforward to report the frequency of each response to each question.

## Step 15: Summarize/Interpret Data

Later, sort and create demographic or lifestyle groups of the respondents. For each group, use “cross tabulations” of the data to reveal their shopping habits and views of the downtown. For telephone and mail surveys, it is important to check the randomness of the sample selected by comparing their demographic characteristics with data for the entire trade area (see Analyzing Customer Demographics and Lifestyle section). The overall household income, age, gender, and other characteristics of those surveyed should parallel the percentages for the entire trade area.

The questions in the surveys will cover a variety of uses downtown including retail, dining, housing, and others. In analyzing the results by consumer group, keep in mind some of the fundamental questions your survey is attempting to answer:

- Which consumer groups go or use downtown the most?
- What are their preferences, likes and dislikes?
- Are their consumer needs and wants being met?
- Are there opportunities for downtown to serve these consumers more effectively?
- How can downtown business and building owners improve their capture of the market?
- What promotional methods are most effective?
- What physical aspects of the downtown should be improved?

The survey results should provide existing businesses and building owners with detailed answers to these and other questions. The information can be put to work immediately to improve business operations and marketing efforts. Survey responses will also be used in later sections of this market analysis guidebook to examine specific business and real estate opportunities. In these sections, your written consumer survey findings will be combined with various secondary data sources to more accurately assess business expansion and recruitment possibilities.

## **Step 16. Print Summary**

Human and financial resources should be directed toward quality editing not expensive printing.

## **Step 17. Distribute Summary**

Remember to share the results of your survey with the community and your existing business owners. Develop a press release summarizing the results to generate interest and coverage by your local media. Mail or hand deliver the summary report to existing business owners. Sharing this information is an important business retention activity. The report will demonstrate ways they might personally benefit from the results in the future.

# Appendix 1 – Standardized Written Consumer Survey

The Wisconsin Main Street Program's *Standardized Written Consumer Survey* includes 39 questions in the following categories:

- When, Where and Why They Shop - Questions 1-17
- What They Want - Questions 18-26
- Market and Marketing Data - Questions 27-39

You can download the survey in Microsoft Word (.doc) below. However, you must also download the bubble font and copy it into your font folder on your computer. This special font allows you to create bubbles (circles) for filling in answers (so that they are recognized by an optical scanner).

[Microsoft Word version](#)



[OMR Bubble Font](#)



The following steps should be followed to customize the survey instrument for your community:

**Overall** - Insert the name of your community wherever you see “City X”.

**Cover Letter** - Print the cover letter on your organization’s letterhead and insert the correct dates, addresses, phone numbers, names, and signatures. The Cover Letter was designed for Wisconsin Main Street communities so you may need to reword the opening paragraph. The survey instructions reflect the fact that the survey was designed for scanning and automated optical mark recognition. If you are planning to manually enter data you may adjust the instructions accordingly.

**Question 8** - List the events run by your organization and any other community events that you believe contribute to the downtown economy. If the number of events exceeds 12, you may want to consider only listing the most important. Choices should match question 23 from the *Standardized Business Owner Written Survey*.

**Question 16** - List the primary commercial competition to your downtown. This competition may include big box retail outside the downtown, other commercial districts within your community, other nearby communities, or specific commercial districts or big box retail in those nearby communities. Be sure to also include your downtown as a shopping option.

**Question 17** - Make sure your list in Question 17 matches your list in Question 16, minus downtown.

**Question 18** - List the businesses for which you are most interested in evaluating consumer demand and market potential. This is your wish list of businesses. Choices should match question 34 from the *Standardized Business Owner Written Survey*.

**Question 20** - Customize the list of choices for question 20 to include community development projects planned or proposed through comprehensive planning, town meetings, or strategic/work planning. Choices should match question 35 from the *Standardized Business Owner Written Survey*.

**Question 37** - For this question it is important to list specific radio, television stations and the primary news and advertising publications available locally. Just identifying station programming categories (i.e. country, rock) or station origins (i.e. primary city) is not enough. It is important for your organization to know the specifics in order for you to better coordinate cooperative advertising opportunities. It will also allow you to target your downtown image advertising to those radio stations and publications preferred by potential customers. List the primary local radio or television stations by using both the call letters and dial number to ensure business owners recognize their options. Be careful to make your lists complete. If you do a good job there should be a low percentage of business owners who reply with "other". Choices should match question 27 from the *Standardized Business Owner Written Survey*. Similar questions are asked in the *Standardized Business Owner Survey* in order to facilitate a comparison of where downtown businesses are advertising and where customers are getting their information.

**Question 39** - The statements in question 39 are intended to gauge attitudes that influence consumer behavior and to gauge perceptions about the quality of life in the community. A range of possible statements is included in the standardized survey. You may want to eliminate statements that are not important to you or add statements to address issues unique to your situation.

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# Appendix 2 – Other Sample Consumer Surveys

Customized and shortened adaptations of the Wisconsin Main Street Program's *Standardized Written Consumer Survey* provide additional examples for your use. The sample survey instruments that follow may include some additional questions not in the Wisconsin standardized survey. They can be downloaded in Microsoft Word (.doc) and Portable Document Format (.pdf) here.

## **Sample Retail Shopping Survey from Ohio State University-Extension**

Download: [.doc format](#) [.pdf format](#)

## **Sample General Downtown Survey for Superior, WI as prepared by the University of Wisconsin-Extension**

Download: [.doc format](#) [.pdf format](#)

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# Appendix 3 – Online Tools to Assist in Survey Research

A variety of reliable web-based survey instruments are now available. Some of these survey tools include Zoomerang®, SurveyMonkey®, and SurveyGold®. This appendix aims to give you a short explanation of each, as well as advantages and disadvantages.

In no way is this appendix an endorsement of any of the products discussed. Information on these products is provided here for educational purposes only.

## Zoomerang

Zoomerang® offers three types of products; Basic, Pro, and Premium. The Basic service is free, but very limited. You can only ask a maximum of 12 questions per survey to a maximum of 100 respondents. The Pro service is reasonably priced and offers unlimited questions per survey and unlimited respondents. In addition, it includes features such as professional survey creation tools and advanced survey reporting. Finally, the Premium service costs roughly three times more than the Pro version; it offers web security services, mobile phone features, and technical support.

Creating a questionnaire using Zoomerang® appears to be quite easy. After you create an account consisting of your email address and an alphanumeric-symbol password, you have the choice of creating a new survey from scratch or using a pre-made template based on your survey objectives. Once you complete your questionnaire, Zoomerang® will send it to your targeted audience by email. After the respondents complete the survey, you can analyze the results to produce a report, then export it to the software of your choice for more rigorous analysis.

## SurveyMonkey

SurveyMonkey® offers a Pro and Unlimited service. The Pro service offers unlimited questions, a maximum of 1,000 respondents per month, and an expertly designed survey template for a very reasonable monthly fee. The Unlimited service provides unlimited questions, and allows you to survey an unlimited number of respondents for a one-time fee.

Creating a questionnaire using SurveyMonkey® requires you to first create an account. You can create either a Basic account (free but very limited), a Professional account, or Pro services. You can write and manage the questionnaire after logging into your account. You can create a survey from scratch, use a template, or use a preexisting survey. You also can add questions and pages following the directions provided on the initial page. SurveyMonkey® also give you have the option of choosing the types of questions, which range from multiple choice to descriptive text. After writing the questionnaire, SurveyMonkey® will email a link to the survey to addresses you

have provided. You can check the response status, delete respondents, export data, create custom charts, create filters, and analyze the data.

## SurveyGold

SurveyGold® is software that allows you to conduct online surveys, Smartphone surveys, paper surveys, and others. The software is reasonably priced. You may buy web-based surveys after your first year of use for a nominal annual fee. SurveyGold® offers an unlimited number of surveys with no restrictions on the number of questions and respondents; it also offers discounts to non-profit organizations.

After downloading Survey Gold® software, you must design the survey in your computer—either creating a survey from scratch or using a pre-made template depending on the subject of the survey. Unlike Zoomerang® or SurveyMonkey®, you need not be online to design your survey on SurveyGold®. Once the survey is ready, you can upload it by clicking a button on your SurveyGold® web page. After uploading, respondents can be directed to the web page where they can complete and submit the questionnaire. SurveyGold® will notify you daily as new responses arrive. You can download responses to your computer where you can easily analyze them using SurveyGold® software, or you can export your data to other data analysis applications such as SPSS or Excel.

- Ability to link to many different type of media (web, email, social media, etc.);
- Ability to import pre-written questions from Microsoft Word or other word processing software.

**About the Toolbox and this Section**

The 2011 update of the Downtown and Business District Market Analysis toolbox is a result of a collaborative effort involving University of Minnesota Extension, Ohio State University Extension, and University of Wisconsin Extension. The updated toolbox was supported with funding from the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development.

The toolbox is based on and supportive of the economic restructuring principles of the National Trust Main Street Center. The Wisconsin Main Street Program (Wisconsin Department of Commerce) has been an instrumental partner in the development of this toolbox.

This section builds on work originally completed by Todd Barman and J.D. Milburn of the Wisconsin Main Street Program. This update includes new methods added by Greg Davis of Ohio State University Extension and Bill Ryan of University of Wisconsin Extension.