

SWAT 47: Incentives and reminders to complete an online survey

Objective of this SWAT

- 1) To test the effects on the completion of an online questionnaire of telling invitees that they will be entered in a prize draw.
- 2) To assess the relationship between incentive amount and completion of the online questionnaire.
- 3) To test the effect of one versus two reminders on completion of the online questionnaire.

Study area: Recruitment, Outcomes

Sample type: Participants

Estimated funding level needed: Very Low

Background

Questionnaires are frequently used in online research, but recruiting participants and getting them to answer all the questions can be challenging [1-4]. Poor recruitment and completion can result in underpowered research that may not be representative of the sample population. This can also increase costs and delay the findings if the recruitment period has to be extended until sample size is reached. Inadequate recruitment and completion rates can lead to research waste if the study has to be terminated and the answer to the research question remains unknown.

To mitigate these challenges, incentives may be offered in the form of gift certificate draws. There is uncertainty about whether this strategy is effective in online research and if the size of the incentive alters the outcome.

This SWAT (SupMatQT) is being implemented in a survey that will be sent to more than 20,000 people to gather their opinions on supplementary material for journal articles (SupMat). Three separate surveys are being done of peer reviewers, authors and readers. The SWAT tests the effects of a prize draw incentive and the use of one or two reminders to non-respondents.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Invitees are informed that they will be entered into a prize draw for a £100 Amazon gift card (or currency equivalent) if they complete the online questionnaire.

Intervention 2: Invitees are informed that they will be entered into a prize draw for a £75 Amazon gift card (or currency equivalent) if they complete the online questionnaire.

Intervention 3: Invitees are informed that they will be entered into a prize draw for a £50 Amazon gift card (or currency equivalent) if they complete the online questionnaire.

Intervention 4: Invitees are informed that they will be entered into a prize draw for a £25 Amazon gift card (or currency equivalent) if they complete the online questionnaire.

Intervention 5: Invitees are not given any information about the prize draw.

Intervention 6: One survey reminder is sent to non-responders at 14 days.

Intervention 7: survey reminders are sent to non-responders (at 14 days and at 28 days).

Index Type: Incentive, Method of Invitation

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation

Outcome measures

Primary: Completion: Proportion of questions completed in the questionnaire.

Secondary: Recruitment: Proportion of invitees who start the questionnaire

Analysis plans

All invitees are randomly allocated to intervention 1-5, and non-respondents are randomised to intervention 6 or 7. The main analyses will compare the completeness of the questionnaires in groups 1-5 and in groups 6 versus 7, and the number of invitees who start the questionnaire in groups 1-5 and 6 versus 7. Subgroup analyses will assess differences between peer reviewers, authors and readers.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

If a participant wins the draw but is unable to access Amazon, we will give them an equivalent prize that they can use.

References

- 1) Asch DA, Jedrzewski MK, Christakis NA. Response rates to mail surveys published in medical journals. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 1997;50(10):1129-36.
- 2) Baruch Y, Holtom BC. Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research. *Human Relations* 2008;61:1139-60.
- 3) Cobanoglu C. The effect of incentives in web surveys: application and ethical considerations. *International Journal of Marketing Research* 2003;45:475-88.
- 4) Edwards PJ, Roberts I, Clarke MJ, DiGiuseppi C, Wentz R, Kwan I, Cooper R, Felix LM, Prata S. Methods to increase response to postal and electronic questionnaires. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2009; (3): MR000008.

Publications or presentations of this SWAT design

Examples of the implementation of this SWAT

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Revisions made by:

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