

Critically analyzing an experimental design for a product that was created by the experimenter can be a difficult task due to the personal connection between the experimenter and their product. Using a small trial study can help identify strengths and weaknesses of not only your design, but your product as well. One of the strengths of this design that was commented on was the value of the survey. It can be easy to understand why the survey itself was viewed positively when it is understood that it came from a measure that IBM used to analyze their systems for usability, information quality, and interface quality. For web delivery and ease of recording so as not to inaccurately transcribe a participant's response, a Google Form was created to deliver the survey. With the purpose of the experimental website being to reduce cognitive load, it seemed appropriate to take the same approach to the implementation of the survey. Rather than have all 19 questions on a single page for the participant to scroll seemingly endlessly through, the questions were divided into their segments that were related to each other.

One of the components of this trial that posed some difficulty that was not first addressed was what the experimenter would be doing while people participated. Two of the trial participants completed this while in the presence of the experimenter who verbally gave them the same explicit directions on what to do at each stage of the trial: website use, survey, website use, survey. But to prevent a desirability effect, the experimenter had to be preoccupied or in just the next room while the participant engaged in the material. This let the participant do what they wanted to do and say what they wanted to say without any expectation bias, but still have the experimenter be close if a question arose and needed clarifying. This was determined to be the best way for procedures in the cases where the participation was being completed in person. Yet to obtain an adequately large sample, the resources needed to have an experimenter at all times throughout the study to answer questions like "can I leave it blank?" are unreasonable. A solution will have to include explicitly clarified directions the written directions posted with the survey.

Two other users completed this task remotely with what were thought to be explicit, clear, and guided directions throughout the process received in writing. One of these users completed the trial perfectly following all the steps and providing accurate responses and submissions throughout the steps. On the other hand, the other user mistook the directions and completed the Episode Calendar task twice and completing the survey twice while not ever entering the experimental condition of using TV Schedule. The reason for this was that the directions were misread; there was a step that instructed the participants to repeat a series of earlier steps. The participant assumed that they were to redo the Episode Calendar portion of the experiment again. Furthermore, the participants that did not complete the survey with the experimenter nearby did not ask if they could skip a question if it did not pertain to their experiences, while the participants with the experimenter nearby did ask if they could skip the question on error messages. The scoring of the survey allows for participants to skip questions.

Based on the information gathered from this pilot study, it has become clear that there were issues with the directions for "distance participants." These directions will be reworded to explicitly state what is to be done at what given time. Therefore, there will not be a shortcut of a section that only instructs the participant to repeat steps from earlier and instead will clearly outline those steps again in a context specific manner to clarify they are to be applied to the new experimental condition. In addition, a more structured introductory statement to the Google Form survey will be provided that informs the participant of their ability to not answer a question if it is not applicable to their experiences.

Link: <http://youtu.be/3jB8V8V2pzc>