Chapter 6. Final survey

Quy Khuc

©Vietkap team, Hanoi, Vietnam

Date: January 31, 2021

Preprint DOI: 10.31219/osf.io/2arhj

Abstract

A pilot survey is conducted to test a survey design and increase its likelihood of success, followed by a final survey - the most crucial step in the primary data investigation ecosystem. Its objective is to obtain standard information and or data for in-depth research. What poses questions is how to conduct final survey successfully? Well handling this work is fairly challenging, especially when it comes to young scientists of insufficient experience in primary data investigation. This chapter will present a winning formula for final survey as a source of useful reference for scientists. Procedures, content and principles constitute this formula in primary investigation.

Keywords: primary data, questionnaire, operation, procedure, principles

1. Introduction

Compared with the pilot survey [1,2], a final survey is conducted on a large-scale with a much higher degree of complexity, and its duration depends on research types, characteristics and conditions [3]. However, final survey usually lasts for one or two weeks, which is believed to be a period of optimal productivity and quality of the research group. This chapter is divided into three main parts: (1) Investigation contents associated with separate steps in the main study, (2) Principles of reacting to potential risks/situations arising in the operation process, (3) a list of tasks for check before, during and after the field investigation.

Figure 1. A three-dimension diagram of final survey

2. Procedures: Preparation - Operation - Evaluation/Synthesis

The 3-step procedure involves three phrases: before, during and after field data investigation. Pre-investigation can be conducted either at the office or at home, followed by on-site work and comprehensive evaluation at the office in phase 2 and 3, respectively.

Phase 1: Preparation

1. *Planning*. In this phase, scientists collaborate with the research team to devise a concrete plan for official investigation in terms of questionnaires, survey sample determination, cost estimates, human resources, material resources and expected outputs.

2. *Communicating with locals*. Scientists will search for possible channels to contact locals including commune and village officials. This phase aims to inform, inquire and hold preliminary discussions with locals about the upcoming empirical survey to drum up support and coordination to work effectively and efficiently.

3. *Preparing questionnaires*. This phase requires scientists to complete the questionnaire design. Throughout the pilot survey, the revision process is ongoing until the questionnaire is finalized for use in the main study.

4. *Preparing human, material and financial resources*. Scientists will provide precise estimates for labor within budget and the time limit. Besides, financial resources, facilities and tools need working out to serve the official survey process. Step 4 demands elaborate preparation in readiness for investigation.

5. *Plan approval*. Scientists will recontact the locals for confirmation as to the investigation duration, scale and content. This step aims at locals' willingness to participate in the final survey.

Phase 2: Operation

6. *Liaison with the communal authorities*. In this phase, the survey crew will move to local communes, and usually meet up with the authorities. Secondary documents about the general socio-economic status of each commune are expected to be collected. Another vital output is the referral to higher authorities

of districts and hamlets prior the crew's arrival. In many cases, the authority will provide accommodation for the survey crew.

7. *Liaison with hamlet authorities.* A key component of this phase is communication and liaison with the hamlet leaders. The outcome should be a list of households who are eligible to join the official research, with food and shelters provided.

8. *Interviewing.* In this phase, the research crew will begin the interview process with households. Ideally, district authorities will accompany the crew in order to boost the research's legitimacy and reliability, as well as to solve any arising issues. The expected outcomes of this phase are correctly and detailedly filled out questionnaire forms.

9. *Finishing.* The investigation concludes. The survey crew organise a farewell meeting with the authorities, then safely travels back. Upon returning home, the most pressing task is finishing, checking, and inputting data from filled-in questionnaires to the datasheet. Usually this task should be completed promptly within the first week of returning. In order to succeed, the research crew ought to prepare input spreadsheets in advance, and devise a thorough plan on questionnaire checking.

Phase 3: Comprehensive evaluation

10. *Summary and evaluation.* A meeting will be held for evaluation of results of primary data investigation. Members raise their voice as to all aspects ranging from questionnaires to human resources, finance and operation methods to draw valuable lessons for future further research.

3. Worklists

Details of the list of tasks are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. A list of 11 work contents in the final survey

4. Principles of reacting to potential risks/situations that arise

Despite meticulous preparations for main studies, scientists still encounter various situations unaccounted for in local areas. There are 4 main types of incurrence. The first type is increased workload. Scientists may face unwanted issues with regards to the actual work, namely a failure to meet with the locals or interviewees, or a member of the researching group having health problems, or having to leave the crew due to personal matters. The second issue lies in the weather, which is also an external factor, involving but is not limited to extreme heat, heavy rain, thunderstorms, blizzard,... Thirdly, time may also act as an impediment. This is mainly subject to either subjective or objective reasons, which can lead to lengthy interviews that stretch past planned schedules, or force the crew to extend the proposed timeline in order to manage the workload successfully. The final and also most commonly occurring issue is arising fees. These incurred costs may stem from transportation, or compensations to the locals.

Upon encountering an arising issue, the majority of inexperienced researchers will crumble while trying to find a solution. Through years of accruing real life experience in raw data investigation, we have devised a strategy of “*Di bat bien ung van bien*” (using unchanged principles to respond to and or manage the change), which involves 8 critical points: **Safety, Quality, Excitement, Rapport, Efficiency, Note taking, Efficacy, Proactiveness**

- **Safety** of the survey crew is of utmost importance, to avoid any potential risks to each member
- For questionnaires, **quality** is prioritised over quantity. Any form collected must be of high standard
- Striving to maintain a high level of enthusiasm and **excitement**, as well as harmony within the crew
- Building and maintaining good **rapport** with local authorities and citizens
- Achieving **cost efficiency** on work related matters
- **Keeping notes** of daily activities and information of each crew member, as well as an analysis and recap of each day's workload
- Thorough in preparation, calm and flexible in execution, decisive in action. Use **efficacy** as a unit of measurement in working

- **Proactive** in all scenarios, always come prepared with back-up plans

In summary, success in the data collection phase for his research is heavily dependent on real life investigations. In spite of the importance of internal factors such as labor force, means of transportation and financial resources, scientists ought not to overlook external factors or arising matters that can impede the research's safety, schedule or quality. "*Di bat bien ung van bien*" is the key to overcome these problems.

Review questions

1. Present procedures of final survey in detail
2. Present principles to overcome difficulties and or challenges encountered over the course of final survey

References

- [1] Kennethe D. Bailey, Methods of Social Research, fourth ed., The Free Press, New York, USA., 1994.
- [2] P. Tran, T. Nguyen, T. Tran, Q. Khuc, Pilot survey, OSF Prepr. (2021) 29–33. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/dwhja>.
- [3] R.B. Uma Sekaran, Research Methods For Business: A Skill Building Approach, 7th Edition, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_102084.