Exploratory diary study of survey request frequency among research professionals

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Abstract

The survey commons is a global common-pool resource that consists of all populations of potential survey participants that researchers share. As survey research methodology and technology advances, the survey commons has become more accessible and used by an ever-growing variety of professional and non-professional researchers, which creates a climate for potential survey participants of seemingly constant requests to complete various types of questionnaires. Among other factors, the frequency of survey requests likely influences burden, fatigue, and data quality. Yet, few studies have explored the frequency and characteristics of survey requests. In contribution to this growing research area, we conducted an exploratory diary study of survey requests among research professionals for a 1-month period. Participants tracked survey request dates, contact mode, response mode, title, sponsor, host, and completion progress. We observed participants receive a survey request every other day, on average, but only fully completed one-quarter of requests. Marketing surveys were the primary request source, the main contact mode was email, and the main response mode was web-based. While marketing surveys were the most frequently experienced by participants, they also had the lowest completion rate; administrative and academic survey requests had the highest completion rate. Overall, our exploratory diary study told an intriguing story of the quantity and characteristics of survey requests among a select population and adds to growing interests in survey request inquiry.

Keywords: deskillling, survey burden, survey climate, survey fatigue, surveys-on-surveys

Introduction

Survey research and its associated sampling and contact methodologies have advanced markedly over the past 75-years. The 1936 Literary Digest presidential poll, for example, ushered in considerable refinement and scientific acumen to public opinion polling (Squire, 1988). Further refinement to probability sampling followed issues associated with the 1948 Gallup presidential poll (Lusinchi, 2018). Throughout the mid-20th century, advances in telecommunications essentially made telephones ubiquitous in households, which added an additional mode of contact and response, but also complexity. The process has repeated itself with the emergence of internet and cellular technology, including email, short message services (SMS), and social media applications that now are more commonplace and trend towards ubiquity. From non-probability in-person and subscription-based mail surveys to complex, mixed-mode probability-based surveys, to rapid assessment, fit-to-purpose web-based panels, the survey research arena has evolved into an expansive enterprise that is intertwined with everyday experiences.

As modes of contact and ways to respond to surveys proliferate, some rise in favor and others fall. Take, for instance, the current proclivity of certain socio-demographic segments to communicate more via the internet or text messages, which has affected a marked decrease in random digit dialing (RDD) and other telephone-based survey responses (Dutwin & Buskirk, 2021). That shift is exacerbated by societal trends, which show decreases in landline phone usage and increases in predatory robo and telemarketing calls to all phone types, reducing the general likelihood of any phone being answered (Lavrakas et al., 2017). This trend is evidenced by declines in RDD response rates, from 30% in the 1990s to 9% in the 2000s onwards (Dutwin & Lavrakas, 2012). The internet era has seen a concomitant and exponential increase in the use of web-based surveys (Pew Research Center, 2015). Yet, despite ever-growing internet access, response rates are generally low for surveys that rely solely on an email contact to request participation (Stern, Bilgen, & Dillman, 2014). The combination of survey response

mode and response rate trends have necessitated the development of mixed-mode approaches, which combine multiple contact and response modes to improve response rates (Dillman et al., 2014).

The evolution of survey contact and response modes, in combination with the volume of available contact information we share and our increasing reliance on the internet in much of the world's everyday life, has facilitated an exponential expansion of survey research. Recently, that expansion has been further facilitated by a deskilling trend—the process of technological advancement replacing experts and allowing fewer untrained workers to complete similar amounts of labor (though not necessarily equivalent or high quality (Braverman, 1998). The basic tools of survey research, and the ability to develop fit-to-purpose (“plug-and-play”) instruments, are now available to virtually anyone with internet access (e.g., Google forms, Qualtrics, QuestionPro, SurveyMonkey, and Alchemer). The ability of individuals and organizations to design and implement their own surveys via low-cost online platforms allows individual surveyors to contact thousands of individuals by email with survey requests that cost little more than a traditional mail or phone survey of a few hundred people. The electronic collection of data also makes it possible to process response data at little cost. Never before have large-scale surveys been implemented so inexpensively, with all steps of data collection able to be undertaken by a single individual.

This reality, in parallel with omnipresent marketing and advertising, builds a sense that the people who comprise the populations we target for survey participants—a common-pool resource shared by all who use surveys—is potentially overused, overburdened, and fatigued (Olson, 2014; Leeper, 2019). Empirically, studies have shown that survey fatigue, the cumulative burden placed on respondents contacted multiple times, can have negative impacts on response validity (Asiu, Antons, & Fultz, 1998), attitude towards surveys (Goyder, 1986), refusal rates (McCarthy, Beckler, & Qualey, 2006), and feelings of social contract obligation (Porter, Whitcomb, & Weitzer, 2004). Surveys perceived as invasive, lengthy, or useless are

73 particularly fatiguing and can have a strong impact on subsequent responses to survey
74 requests, either generally or specific to a survey sponsor. Together with informal observations,
75 research suggests we may be approaching a watershed moment in the survey research field
76 where practices must be reformed or risk becoming so ineffective that the methodology is no
77 longer useful. To sectors in private industry advertising or marketing, these concerns may not
78 be particularly salient or concerning, but for others in the nonprofit, governmental, political, or
79 academic arena, these concerns are crucial to data validity, decision-making, and the relevance
80 of their profession.

81 Generally, these trends are to the detriment of the cornerstones of survey research and
82 the overall survey climate (Grove & Couper, 1998; de Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008; Loosveldt &
83 Joye, 2016). In the current era of surveys, an individual is likely included in numerous sample
84 frames for probability-based surveys but also a potential convenience sample respondent for in-
85 person, mail, phone, email, text/push notification, or various other requests in the form of
86 customer receipts, websites landing pages or pop-ups, and customer feedback terminals.
87 Survey requests can come from a spectrum of illegitimate to legitimate public opinion
88 researchers, pollsters, marketers, academics, etc. using single or multi-question, short to long-
89 form opinion, feedback, or evaluative survey instruments. The state of the survey commons is
90 influenced by the number administered, their perceived legitimacy, and, importantly, the burden
91 or fatigue experienced by respondents in the form of request frequency, source legitimacy, and
92 instrument quality; a “finite survey population can support a finite survey burden” (Olson, 2014,
93 p. 94). However, few studies have attempted to empirically describe or track the state of the
94 survey commons to ask, are we collectively surveying people to such an extent that neither the
95 surveyor nor the individuals being surveyed benefits? Or, more somberly, are we collectively
96 leading to the decline of surveys as a useful methodological tool?

97 As an initial attempt to answer this question and describe the state of the survey
98 commons, we follow the tradition of “surveys-on-surveys” research to conduct an exploratory

diary study. We use a convenience sample of survey research professionals who are members of WERA-1010, a U.S. Department of Agriculture Multistate Research Coordinating Committee and Information Exchange Group. Over a period of 1-month, we monitor survey request frequency, contact/response mode, source/sponsor, and instrument type. Our objective is to add to survey researchers' understanding of how the survey commons is being used, particularly in the modern survey era. As exploratory research, the objective is to by no means represent the survey commons as a whole, but to demonstrate a particular method that can be used to empirically observe how individuals are surveyed and the forms of data and interpretations that emerge from the method.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

A total of 23 out of 33 WERA-1010 members volunteered to participate (69.6% response rate). Participants were 13 female and 10 male members and ranged in age from 32-75. Each participant was sent instructions that included a spreadsheet (offline and web-based options) to serve as a survey diary. The survey diary data was collected over the course of one month, from 11 November 2019 to 13 December 2019. A prenotification email to WERA-1010 members was sent on 4 November 2019 to announce the study and provide members with the option to opt out. The formal invitation with instructions and personal spreadsheet hyperlink and document was sent on 5 November 2019. Reminder emails were sent at the end of week one and the beginnings of weeks two, three, and four. The coordinating researcher was available by email to answer questions from respondents about how to complete the diary.

Materials and Measures

The survey diary contained 9 columns of information for each participant to record about each survey that they received an invitation for over the course of the month: (1) date survey received, (2) request type, (3) contact mode, (4) response mode, (5) sponsor organization, (6) host/platform, (7) title/topic, (8) participant completion, and (9) notes. Potential responses were

available via a dropdown menu for some items. Respondents were also able to enter their own text on any column. View example survey diary spreadsheet here: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.14396300.v1>.

Data Analysis

All analyses were conducted in R (R Core Team, 2021). The analysis code is present in our appendix accompanying this article. Descriptive statistics were calculated for total surveys received, survey contact mode type, survey response mode type, survey type (i.e., sponsor) category, and survey completion status. . Initial contact and response modes were provided to participants as predetermined categories—email, internet, mail, phone, in-person, other—within the diary, but additional categories emerged from participants' experience such that additional categories were added: receipt, kiosk, web pop-ups. Barring basic descriptive statistics, we also examined 1) survey type (i.e., sponsor) category by contact mode type, 2) survey type (i.e., sponsor) category by response mode type, 3) survey type (i.e., sponsor) category by completion status. Additionally, we calculated the percentage that each individual participant contributed to contact mode types, response mode types, and survey type (i.e., sponsor) categories that were reported.

Categorizing Survey Type

Survey type categories were developed via an inductive process by the researchers, as the diary did not provide a preselected category for the survey type. Data suggested a survey typology based on the survey sponsor organization and survey topic/title. We created a typology of five survey request types: academic, administrative, political, marketing, or unknown.

Academic surveys were defined as surveys that had a scholarly research focus, e.g., surveys addressing the effectiveness of educational websites, fishing attitudes and behaviors, scientists' public engagement activities, female faculty experiences in agricultural education, and bladder health. Administrative surveys were defined as surveys that were solicited from a group or organization the respondent belonged to, e.g., a university or professional

organization. Examples included requests for input on changing the name of an academic conference, research priorities at a university, satisfaction with campus services, support for a campus smoking ban, and an organizational t-shirt logo contest. Political surveys came from various listservs respondents were subscribers of and, generally, were specific to a political candidate. Marketing surveys requested feedback on experiences, services, products, and other consumer-related activities, and were the most common and varied category. Examples ranged from mundane post-service satisfaction surveys from hotel chains and airlines to health services, e.g., satisfaction with a recent surgery and non-topical pre-appointment questionnaires at an urgent care clinic, to survey requests on receipts or after online purchases. Finally, surveys that did not have a clear purpose were listed as unknown; respondents noted that these surveys seemed suspicious because no topic was specified.

Results

The 23 participants received a total of 314 survey requests over the 1-month period of the study, with an average of 13.65 survey requests per person ($SD = 8.77$). The lowest number of survey requests received by a participant was 1 and the highest 33. The median number of surveys was 12, and the mode was 12 and 13 (three participants each).

Survey Contact Mode

Email was the predominant contact (invitation) mode, with 74.85% ($n = 235$) of survey requests coming via email. The second most frequent was receipts 8.60% ($n = 27$), followed by internet sites 6.69% ($n = 21$). All remaining modes, individually, made up less than 3% of the requests (see Table 1).

Table 1
Contact Mode

	Frequency	Percent
Email	235	74.85
Receipt	27	8.60
Internet	25	7.96
<i>General Internet</i>	21	6.69
<i>Pop-up</i>	4	1.27
Phone	8	2.55
In-person	7	2.23
Mail	7	2.23
Text (SMS)	2	0.64
Kiosk	1	0.32
Other	2	0.63

Survey Response Mode

For response mode, 75.79% ($n = 238$) of surveys requested responses via filling out an online form (internet website). Approximately 16.24% ($n = 51$) of surveys requested responses by email, and less than 2% of surveys requested responses to be given by mail ($n = 6$), phone ($n = 6$) or receipt ($n = 5$; see Table 2). All remaining modes, individually, made up less than 1% of the response mode requests (see Table 2).

Table 2
Response Mode

	Frequency	Percent
Internet	238	75.79
Email	51	16.24
Mail	6	1.91
Phone	6	1.91
Receipt	5	1.59
In-person	1	0.32
Text (SMS)	1	0.32
Tablet	1	0.32
Other	5	1.59

Individual Contributions to Survey Contact & Response Modes

Overall, we found online survey contact and response requests to be the most widely experienced by our participants. In particular, all of our participants experienced at least one survey contact request online-- all but one of the participants were contacted via email at least once (95.65%; $n = 22$), and the remaining person (Participant 13) was contacted through the internet, generally. Eight (34.78%) of the participants were contacted through the internet, generally (pop-ups included) at least once. After online contact modes, the contact modes experienced by the most participants were receipts (30.43%, $n = 7$) and mail (30.43%, $n = 7$). Figure 1 below shows the percentage that each individual participant contributed to each contact mode request type.

Figure 1*Individual Contributions to Total Contact Mode Requests*

Note. Shows the percentage of survey requests each individual contributed for each contact mode request type.

Similar to contact modes, all of our participants experienced at least one survey response mode request online-- all but two of the participants were asked to complete at least one survey via an online platform (e.g., Qualtrics, Survey Monkey, etc.; 91.30%; $n = 21$), and the remaining two individuals (Participants 17 and 21) were asked to complete at least one survey via email. Five of the participants were asked to respond to at least one survey via email (21.74%). After online response modes, the response mode requests experienced by the most participants were mail (26.09%, $n = 6$) and email (21.74%, $n = 5$). Figure 2 shows the percentage that each individual participant contributed to each response mode request type.

Figure 2*Individual Contributions to Total Response Mode Requests*

Note. Shows the percentage of survey requests each individual contributed for each response mode request type.

Survey Type Count

The three authors each individually categorized all survey diary entries into one of the five categories. All coders agreed on the survey type categorization for 83% of diary entries during the first round of survey type coding (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .82$). At least two of three coders agreed on the survey type categorization for all entries, which provided a consensus approach to finalize categorization. Out of all 314 survey requests, we observed that 47.13% ($n = 148$) were marketing surveys, 30.89% ($n = 97$) were administrative surveys, 8.28% ($n = 26$) were political surveys, 4.14% ($n = 13$) were academic surveys, and 9.55% ($n = 30$) were an "unknown" survey type.

217 Individual Contributions to Survey Type Categories

218 We were interested in how much any specific person contributed to the number of total
219 surveys in each survey type category to 1) determine how much our results for each survey type
220 category may be influenced by any one individual and 2) determine if different survey type
221 requests were experienced by many, or just a few, of our participants. Figure 3 shows the
222 percentage of survey requests that each individual participant contributed to each survey type
223 category.

224 We found administrative and marketing survey invitations to be the most universally
225 received among our participants, with 95.65% ($n = 22$) of respondents receiving at least one
226 administrative survey invitation and 86.96% ($n = 20$) of participants receiving at least one
227 marketing survey invitation. On the other hand, only 30.43% ($n = 7$) of our participants received
228 an academic survey invitation, and an even smaller percentage of our respondents received a
229 political survey invitation 21.74% ($n = 5$). Approximately 65.22% ($n = 15$) of our participants
230 received survey invitations that fell outside of our four main survey type categories, into the
231 “undefined” category.

Figure 3*Individual Contributions to Total Survey Type Requests*

Note. Shows the percentage of survey requests contributed by each individual participant for each survey type category.

Survey Type Contact Modes

For all survey types, email was the primary contact mode experienced by our participants. In particular, 93.81% ($n = 91$) of administrative surveys, 58.11% ($n = 86$) of marketing surveys, 96.15% ($n = 25$) of political surveys, 84.62% ($n = 11$) of academic surveys, and 73.33% ($n = 22$) of undefined surveys received had contact requests over email. For all survey types besides marketing, all other contact modes made up equal to or less than 10% of the contact request modes for a given survey type (see Figure 4). Marketing had the most diverse contact mode types, with receipts (18.24%, $n = 27$) and internet (12.17%, $n = 18$, pop-ups included) also making up a decent percentage of contact requests. All other contact mode

types for marketing surveys made up less than 5% of the total marketing survey contacts (see Figure 4 and Appendix).

Figure 4

Contact Modes by Survey Type

Note. Shows the percentage of contact modes used for each survey type category. A majority of contacts made for each survey type category were through email.

Survey Type Response Modes

For all survey type categories besides political, responding through an internet platform was the primary response mode experienced by our participants. In particular, 84.54% (n = 82) of administrative surveys, 75.68% (n = 112) of marketing surveys, 92.31% (n = 12) of academic surveys, and 83.33% (n = 25) of undefined surveys requested that participants respond over the internet. On the other hand, a majority of political surveys asked for responses over email (69.23%; n = 18), followed by the internet (26.92%; n = 7). Email response requests also made

up a decent amount of response requests for both administrative (12.37%, $n = 12$) and marketing (12.84%, $n = 19$) surveys. Besides the response modes outlined above, all other response mode requests made up less than 8% of the contact request modes for a given survey type (see Figure 5 and Appendix).

Figure 5

Response Modes by Survey Type

Note. Shows the percentage of response mode requests for each survey type category. A vast majority of response modes requested for each survey type category were internet or email.

Survey Completion

Approximately 4.46% (14 out of 314) surveys did not have completion status reported. By survey type, 6.67% (2 out of 30) undefined surveys did not have completion status reported, 5.41% (8 out of 148) of marketing surveys did not have completion status reported, 3.85% (1 out of 26) of political surveys did not have completion status reported, and 3.09% (3 out of 97)

of administrative surveys did not have completion status reported. All academic surveys had a completion status reported.

Figure 6 shows completion distribution by survey type category. Of the 300 surveys where completion status was reported, approximately 68.33% percent ($n = 205$) of surveys were not completed, even partially, 26.0% percent ($n = 78$) of surveys were completed fully, and 6.0% ($n = 18$) of surveys were partially completed. Of the surveys where completion status was reported, administrative surveys were the most completed, with 47.87% (45 out of 94) of them being *fully* completed, followed closely by academic surveys (46.15%; 6 out of 13), and more distantly by marketing (12.14%; 17 out of 140) and political surveys (12.0%; 3 out of 25).

Figure 6

Completion by Survey Type

Note. Shows the total number of surveys within each survey type category that were completed, partially completed (i.e., partial), or not completed. Surveys that did not have a completion status reported ($n = 14$) by the participant are excluded from this graph.

Figure 7 shows percent of surveys that were not completed, even partially, by survey type category; 88.0% (22 out of 25) of political survey requests received were not completed, followed closely by marketing surveys (82.86%; 116 out of 140), and more distantly by academic surveys (53.85%; 7 out of 13) and administrative surveys (42.55%; 40 out of 94).

Figure 7

Percent of Surveys Not Completed, by Survey Type

Note. Shows the overall percentage of total surveys that were not completed, even partially, by survey type category. Surveys that did not have a completion status reported ($n = 14$) by the participant are excluded from this graph.

Discussion

This exploratory study examined the quantity, frequency, and characteristics of survey requests, such as contact and response mode, source and sponsor, and instrument type, via a self-report diary method for a 1-month period among a convenience sample of survey research

professionals. We observed these individuals receive 12-13 survey requests over a 1-month period and that these requests are primarily from a marketing source/sponsor, the main contact mode type is email, and the main response mode type is web-based. Examining contact and response modes by survey (i.e., sponsor) type category showed the ubiquity of email contact and web-based (internet or email) response modes across all survey type categories. Though marketing surveys were the most frequently reported survey type, they also had the lowest completion rate among the sample. Administrative and academic survey requests, whose cumulative percentage was lower than marketing requests, nonetheless, had the highest completion rate. However, this high completion rate of administrative and academic surveys could be a systematic bias given the sample was all survey researchers/professionals. Perhaps unsurprising in consideration of the downward trend of response rates (Tourangeau & Plewes, 2013), over two-thirds of survey requests went unheeded, even among a sample of survey professionals. In terms of individual differences, we observed a large majority of participants received at least one marketing and administrative survey request, but only a smaller portion of our sample received at least one academic and political survey request over the course of the month. Overall, our exploratory diary study tells an intriguing story that warrants further investigation either via similar scale replicates or larger scale application among various populations.

From our main objective to investigate survey request frequency and type, findings suggest our sample exists in a state of constant survey requests, receiving, on average, 12-14 requests in the study's one-month period. However, it is a subjective interpretation to conclude that a population is overused, overburdened, and experiencing survey fatigue (Olson, 2014; Leeper, 2019). What people define or recognize as a survey request, and the extent to which their attitude towards that request frequency is positive or negative, is likely highly individualized and relative to circumstance and experience. Recently, de Leeuw, Hox, Silber, Struminskaya,

and Vis (2019) developed a survey attitude scale that may add an explanatory covariate or complementary dimension of understanding to survey request frequency research.

Relatedly, we did not ask participants to complete each survey requested or to record the survey length and their overall experience with the survey if they did. Because of this, we do not have a specific understanding if any survey was perceived as invasive, lengthy, or useless. As we note, research and survey research professionals are beginning to question which practices, if any, should or can be reformed to address survey commons issues. Private sectors may also share these concerns, but the relationship between public, nonprofit, and private survey, polling, and marketing researchers is not well facilitated. This might be expected given the ubiquity of marketing messages and advertisements in Americans lives, and receptivity to them (American Association of Advertising Agencies, 2007; Media Dynamics, 2014), marketing surveys were the most frequent request received by participants but also the least completed. But unlike research into the frequency of daily marketing messages and advertisements experienced by individuals, survey request frequency is a relatively new domain of inquiry, and no baseline research exists with which to compare our results. Whether via diary methods or more traditional methods, our results, because interpretation from an exploratory study of an opportunistic sample, suggest needed inquiry at the intersection of survey frequency, subjective burden, and receptivity (i.e., general survey attitude), either via additional exploratory or more systematic designs. It would also be beneficial to further refine survey typologies (e.g., “academic”, “administrative”, “marketing”, etc.) and determine how survey typology may interact with subjective burden and receptivity.

Contact and response mode results were consistent with general trends of web-based surveys becoming the dominant form (European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research, 2018). Moreover, the accessibility, user-friendly operations, and do-it-yourself ethos of online survey platforms, likely plays a role in the predominance of web and email, regardless of survey type. These characteristics of online survey platforms can make it easier to create and

administer an online survey quickly, without needing to consult a survey professional. Given the survey research issues of the 21st century, telephone and mail surveys must now be implemented on a well-funded project in a skillful and strategic manner, based on several factors associated with the target population, question types, budget, timeline, and other logistics. In contrast, web-based contact and survey instruments appear to be a general default (though many considerations should be considered to determine an appropriate contact and response mode). Given that most online survey platforms are (a) developed and marketed for questionnaire design rather than research or sample design and (b) relatively cheaper to implement, it seems logical their user and logistics friendly nature would facilitate prevalence. Although our sample results show a dominance of web-based surveys and contact, it would be valuable for future research to determine how different demographic characteristics and life experiences of individuals may affect the modes of the survey requests that they receive.

Survey completion rate, though not a direct research objective of the survey diary, was an interesting finding. Considering the study sample was survey research professionals, one might assume fewer refusals and less reluctance to complete any given survey. However, from a diversity of survey types, modes, sponsors, and, presumably, lengths, over two-thirds of surveys were not completed by our sample. Moreover, only half of administrative and academic surveys were completed, which are the sectors in which all participants primarily work. Perhaps, not surprisingly, marketing and political surveys were of the least interest to participants. Yet, these are the sectors that have the infrastructure and capacity to inundate the survey commons with repeated and differentiated survey requests. From that, combined with the trends of high refusal and low survey completion observed in our study, we may surmise that the survey commons could presumably suffer with coinciding response, cooperation, contact, and completion rate decreases (Krosnick, Presser, Fealing, Ruggles, & Vannette, 2015). Though, it should be noted that while this sample completed approximately half of the academic and administrative surveys, only ~20% of political and marketing surveys were completed.

Seemingly, participants differentiate between survey type (i.e., sponsor) categories that were worth their time, which suggests a varied attitude towards surveys dependent on the survey sponsor type (de Leeuw et al., 2019).

Limitations and Future Research

The extent to which these findings represent the survey commons, as a whole, is not an appropriate interpretation, but our results are consistent with empirical and anecdotal trends (Couper, 2017; Krosnick et al., 2015). That is, we cannot draw particularly strong conclusions beyond our study's parameters, given the convenience and homogeneity of the sample, but do consider them within the scope of conventional wisdom concerning contemporary issues affecting the survey climate and the survey commons (e.g., Leeper, 2019; Olson, 2014; Porter et al., 2004). Future research may employ more systematic methodologies to achieve results with more generalizability. Relatedly, while one of our working assumptions was that deskilling influences survey request frequency, we were unable to determine the extent to which that influences survey fatigue or the number of deskilled surveys (i.e., plug-and-play/do-it-yourself questionnaire design and implementation by untrained/under-trained researchers). Research designs and methodologies other than a diary study are better suited to address these assumptions directly.

An important limitation and avenue for future research is the fact that awareness of a survey request is contingent upon what one considers a survey and a request. For instance, do minimally invasive or passive requests on a receipt or presented on a kiosk contribute to survey burden or negatively affect the survey commons? Are they considered a request? The same question might be asked about bothersome but easily ignored product feedback survey requests one receives for a product they purchased or an event they attended. We developed our own survey typology through a standard inductive process, but future studies might consider allowing participants to self-categorize the survey requests they receive given their perceptions of the request and associated burden is the essential element to understand any issues

associated with the survey commons. Likewise, providing participants with examples of what the researchers view as survey requests and allowing participants to render their opinion on whether they consider them requests is another consideration. In addition to allowing participants to contribute to survey type categorization, future research may also consider research designs and data collection instruments that facilitate examination of differences in the types of survey requests that individuals receive based on demographic characteristics and other relevant segmentation variables. In general, limitations imposed by the study design and our choice of analytical procedures had significant bearing on what questions could be answered and how findings could be interpreted.

Conclusion

As exploratory inquiry, our findings and interpretations are admittedly limited to the parameters of the cross-sectional study design and convenience sample. Yet, results are intriguing and point towards a novel and salient line of inquiry that is a growing research imperative for the future of survey research and our shared survey commons. That inquiry is one that considers not just the gross frequency of survey requests, but the net, based on a typology of survey requests that aligns with current practices and technologies, each of which may pattern receptivity and participation in distinct ways. Individual and group differences in refusal and completion rates by mode and demographics, while known to some extent in generalities, may become more nuanced and predictive when request frequency is considered. Overall, the diary method was a useful method to achieve our objectives and provide answers to our research questions while simultaneously opening the door to more questions. In conclusion, we hope future research can use all or parts of the framework we have provided here to examine the landscape of survey requests and completion rates. We anticipate and encourage survey research practitioners and methodologists to pursue survey request frequency investigations and view our findings as facilitating that pursuit.

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Supporting Information

Appendix includes an outline of our data analyses in R (<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.15907551>). Analysis code in R is also available as an R Markdown file (<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.15910749>). The survey diary spreadsheet template is available (<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.14396300.v1>). The authors are solely responsible for the content and functionality of these materials. Queries (other than absence of the material) should be directed to the corresponding author.

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