Surveys

a  Introduction – What is a survey?

• A survey is a research tool used to collect data from a sample group of individuals.
• The purpose of a survey is to collect information, views and opinions of individuals on certain issues.
• There are different types of survey depending on how surveys are conducted.
  – In geography fieldwork, the types of survey often used are face-to-face interviews using questionnaires or interview survey, fill-in questionnaires and land use surveys (e.g. transect survey and traffic survey).
• Survey questions must be kept simple so that the average respondents can fully understand the questions.
• The survey must be kept short so that it will not put off the respondents from participating or completing the survey.

b  Questionnaire

• A questionnaire requires the use of pen and paper for the respondents to register their responses.

Why use a questionnaire?

• To get opinions of the people on issues, patterns and processes
• Data collected is not available from other sources
• To get information about the people themselves
• Questionnaire can often be used together with other sources of data

Questionnaire design – Points to consider

• Respondents
  – Who to sample?
  – Type of sample?
  – Size of sample?

• Questions to avoid
  – Sensitive questions
  – Irrelevant and redundant questions
  – Biased questions
  – Double-barreled questions

• Questions to consider
  – Open and closed questions
  – Length of questionnaire
### Questions to avoid

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<tr>
<th>Sensitive question</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| • A question that is overly personal and is likely to make the respondent uncomfortable | • What is your monthly income?  
• Does your income allow you to make ends meet? |

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<tr>
<th>Irrelevant question</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<td>• A question that does not relate to your hypothesis.</td>
<td>• (Hypothesis: Tourism at the Singapore Botanic Gardens brings about negative environmental impacts.) How did you get here today?</td>
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<th>Redundant question</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| • A question that has unnecessary repetition, or which already contains the answer it seeks | • Do you think the discounted airfare is an added bonus for visiting the city this year? (The word "added" is redundant. "Bonus" is already an extra feature.)  
• (After respondent has indicated that she does not visit beach resorts) What activities do you take part in at a beach resort? |

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<th>Biased question</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| • A question that leads your respondents to answer in a certain way | • (Before your respondent has expressed an opinion on his observed environmental impacts of tourism)  
• Why do think tourists have little regard for the environment? |

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<th>Double-barreled question</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<td>• A question that touches on two topics or issues, and yet allows only one answer.</td>
<td>• Do you agree that alcoholism is a tourist-related problem and that more training can be given to locals who work in the tourist sector?</td>
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### Pilot survey

- What is a pilot survey?
  - A pilot survey is a small-scale, preliminary survey that is undertaken to prepare for the actual survey. You can use it to improve your survey questions.

- How can a pilot survey help you? It allows you to collect feedback on the following:
  - Which questions were confusing?
  - Were there any redundant questions?
  - Based on the responses, did respondents interpret the questions as you intended?
  - How long did it take respondents to complete the survey?
  - For a questionnaire, were there any typo errors? Did you have any problems tabulating the results?
  - Did you have all the data you need?

- What affects your survey results?
  - Your choice of sampling affects your results. Besides the size of your sample, your choice of location, time and day can exclude certain groups from participating in your survey.
d Interview survey

- An interview survey is utilized when a specific target population is involved.
- The purpose of conducting an interview survey is to explore the responses of the people to gather more and deeper information.
- You read out the questions from your prepared questionnaire and record the respondent’s answers.
- Below are a few pointers you need to bear in mind when carrying out an interview survey in order to collect valid data.

DO’s

- **DO** start your questionnaire with a title and introduction or welcome message – this will help respondents to better understand what and why they are being asked to respond, which hopefully will create a better sense of buy-in and increase the response rate.
- **DO** provide confidentiality and anonymity – Make sure you have a statement, in the introduction, to assure the respondent that his or her responses will remain anonymous or confidential and will only be combined with many others to learn about overall responses.
- **DO** keep it simple – some questionnaires are so lengthy that they cause annoyance and frustration on the part of the respondents. This may result in non-return of questionnaires and incomplete or inaccurate responses.
- **DO** design responses that are mutually exclusive – It simply means that response categories should not overlap if you are interested in obtaining a discrete response to a particular question.
- **DO** allow “don’t know” and “not applicable” responses where appropriate – Sometimes “don’t know” or “not applicable” will really represent some respondents’ most honest answers to some of your questions.
- **DO** test your questionnaire – Be sure you pilot or pre-test it on individuals representative of your target audience. This will help identify weaknesses and potential difficulties in the wording and design of the instrument from their point of view.
- **DO** Dress appropriately for the environment in which you are carrying out the survey interview. This could help you establish a feeling of trust with the respondent and encourage him/her to respond truthfully.

DON’Ts

- **DON’T** be vague – Try to avoid using vague quantifiers such as “regularly,” “often,” “rarely,” etc. These quantifiers don’t convey the same meaning for all respondents.
- **DON’T** ask double-negative questions – Respondents can easily be confused deciphering the meaning of a question that uses two negative words. For example, “Should tourists not be directly responsible for the impacts of tourism?” The question is ambiguous.
- **DON’T** ask leading questions – A leading question suggests an answer. Consider this example: “In order to improve lives of the locals, should tourists be charged a fee on top of their daily expenditure?” This question presents a widely accepted goal (improving the lives of locals) accompanied by the assumption that the means suggested (charging a fee) will accomplish the goal – and thus will influence the respondent to answer “yes”.
- **DON’T** influence the respondent’s answer by the tone of your voice, your body language or facial expression. Ask each question in a neutral manner.
e Transect survey

- A transect is a path or route along which you can walk, observe and record the land use along the selected route. The observing and recording of such information is called a transect survey.

Example – A transect survey on the types of amenities and services provided in a seaside resort

1. Decide on the starting and ending points of the route to be surveyed.
2. Draw the route on an appropriate map of the area or a blank sheet of paper. This is your field map.
   - As you walk along the route, observe and record on the field map the services and amenities you see on either side of the route.
3. Copy the route onto a new map and use appropriate symbols and shadings to show the amenities and services along the route.
   - Brief notes can be written in appropriate spaces on either side of the features along your transect route.
   - Include photographs to show the services found along the route.
   - Make sure that the transect presentation has a title and legend.

f Traffic survey

A traffic survey involves counting the number of pedestrians (or visitors/tourists) or vehicles at a particular site at a particular time of the day. For example, you can conduct a traffic survey to find out the pedestrian traffic or vehicle traffic at a selected tourist site. You can use a tally counter to count the number of vehicles in your traffic survey.

*Why is it important to consider the following when conducting a traffic survey?*

(a) where to conduct the traffic count
- It is important to identify a site that has the data that is most relevant to the area under survey.

(b) the most appropriate time to conduct the traffic count
- Based on what is being surveyed, you need to choose the most appropriate time to ensure that you get the data required. For example, choose a peak hour if you are surveying heavy traffic flow and problems associated with it.

(c) how much time to allocate for the traffic count
- It is not practical to spend the whole day doing traffic survey without taking a break. One way is to divide survey time into fixed time blocks (e.g. 15-minute blocks). This will also allow comparison of results.