

Public Service User Satisfaction Surveys: challenges when testing in immigrant populations

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User satisfaction surveys: background

- User orientation in public service
 - Growing demand for documentation
 - Government strategy to monitor public sector success rate
 - Private survey agencies do user surveys on commission
- 2009
 - Annual national public sector user satisfaction survey
 - ♦ Measure both general impression and specific user experience
 - Statistics Norway: project commissioned by immigration authorities
 - ♦ *To secure coverage and validity for immigrant population*
 - ♦ *Development of guidelines for user surveys covering immigrant populations*

Public Service User Satisfaction Surveys

- Analytical purpose
 - To measure service users' experience and satisfaction
- Practical purpose
 - Management information
 - Often linked to strategic work
 - Instant need for data

User satisfaction survey questionnaires

- More or less standardised question batteries
- Objective: to measure satisfaction *and* importance
 - i.e. non-observable items: feelings and impressions, attitudes
- Level of analysis
 - Very general and very specific user satisfaction
- Common dimensions:
 - Use, availability, (quality of) information, run-through time, quality of advice/subject matter service, quality of frontline/desk service
 - Do ordinary users have the competence to evaluate all aspects of quality in a given service?
 - Difficult concepts with diffuse and varied meanings ("quality")
- Local government adaptations – various methods in use

Cross-cultural testing and development

- Relatively new issue in Statistics Norway
- Practical data collection issues: translation of questionnaires, training of multilingual interviewers, non-response follow up on minorities
- Increased attention towards language and understanding, cultural framework for communication
- Meaning of concepts and institutions in different cultures: ex. civil servant, public service, confidence, statistical agency
- Expectations and power structures differ: tendency to show negative response differ
- The meaning and use of response scales differ

What do we know of public service user satisfaction for immigrants in Norway?

- User satisfaction vary strongly between different minority groups
- Some minority groups are less satisfied with public services than the majority population (after controlling for socioeconomic status and place of living)
- Confidence in education system and health system is relatively high compared to majority group
- Self reported discrimination from civil servant less frequent (vary between 10 and 20 percent)
- Young immigrants less confidence in the police

Method for cognitive interviews

- Testing draft user satisfaction questionnaire from national government surveys
- Different formats of questions on experiences and evaluation of contact with national employment and welfare office (NAV)
- Cognitive interviews with immigrants
 - Sample:
 - five years + in Norway
 - recently in contact with NAV
- Concept mapping
- Think-aloud sessions
- Follow-up questions

Example question 1

- To what extent do the quality of NAV* fullfill your expectations?

*Response scale: 7-points
(from -3 to +3) and DK*

*NAV: national employment and welfare office

*Source: Draft Government User
Satisfaction Survey*

Example question 2 (directly translated from Norwegian)

- What is your impression ("how good or bad impression") of NAV when it comes to the following....:
 - Total impressions
 - Societal responsibility
 - Effectivity and financial management
 - Openness and information
 - Competence and professional knowhow

*Response scale : five points (1 – 5)
with specified eticettes +
"impossible to answer"*

Source: Synovate MMI's impression survey

Results from cognitive testing

- Problems with the cognitive tasks
 - Q2 immediately viewed as "easier" (because of less words, more direct question?). Then problems arise: "what do you want me to do here?"
- Interpretation of questions – different from test group
- Meaning of scales: scale is seen as a rating of different objects or units
 - Better to avoid negative numbers
- Social meaning of response process
 - "what is the effect of this survey on my future relationship with NAV"?

Concept meanings in Q2

- Most clear: "societal responsibility", but depends on point of departure (origin culture)
- Unclear: "financial management". Understood both as assistance to achieve private financial management and as financial support
- "Professional knowhow": discussions between colleagues in a public office is seen as a weakness
- "Openness": understood both as a feeling of being welcome, and to give correct type of information. Not understood as "availability"...
- Blurred difference between "competence" and "professional knowhow"

Implications for development of guidelines for user survey questionnaires

- Established question batteries from user satisfaction surveys are often too general
 - makes cognitive task very difficult
- Important quality dimension for immigrant respondents:
 - Feeling of being welcome, met with respect, seen as an individual
 - How can we measure this?
- Concept mapping important
 - Examples: civil servants, public sector, public service, quality
- Understanding social setting important
 - negative response is problematic