

Motivation and burden in business surveys



Andreas Persson, Unit for cognitive methods,
Statistics Sweden

Outline of presentation



- What is burden?
 - Actual burden
 - Perceived burden
- Links between perceived burden and motivation
- Studies on how to increase motivation
 - Facilitating businesses use of official statistics
 - Providing beneficial feedback to the businesses
- Some challenges



Why is respondent burden important



The burden of participation in business surveys should be minimized, as low as possible

The business perspective

Surveys = Time and resources spent on responding instead of on productive, profit-making, activities

National Statistical Institutes (NSI) perspective

High burden = decrease data quality, increase costs of data collection



The concept of burden



Burden = "costs" of participating (time, irritation etc)

Two parts

- 1) Actual burden (objective)
- 2) Perceived burden (subjective)



Actual burden



Actual burden = an objective measure of the amount of resources (usually time) spent responding to a survey

How is it measured?

- With survey questions on time spent on responding (in total or split into subtasks such as filling out the questionnaire, retrieving information etc)
- By estimation by NSI staff/experts



Actual burden



How can the actual burden be reduced?

By:

- Reduction of information request
- Improved questionnaire design
- Support functions
- Timing of the survey
- Using administrative data
- Flexible data collection
- Sampling (reduction of sample size or frequency of data collection, spreading the burden etc)

Perceived burden



Perceived burden = a subjective measure of how burdensome the respondent perceives that the survey task is.

How is it measured?

- With survey questions on how easy/difficult the questionnaire was, how quick or time-consuming it was etc.



Perceived burden



How can the perceived burden be reduced?

The same factors as for actual burden *should* also reduce the perceived burden...

By:

- Reduction of information request
- Improved questionnaire design
- Support functions
- Timing of the survey
- Etc ...

... but sometimes they do not. Since it is about perceptions, it's much more complex

A related concept - motivation

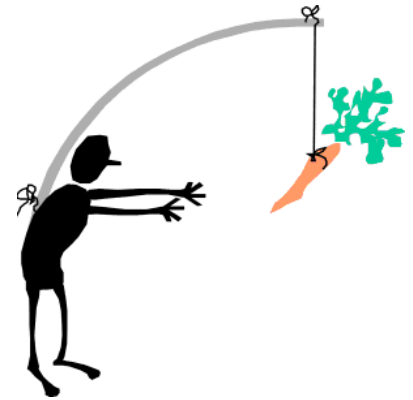


What is motivation?

A huge concept in psychology, several theoretical frameworks

A, somewhat simplified, definition:

An inner drive to act towards a goal



An individual's motivation can vary in strength (from low to high). In general, highly motivated respondents should experience less burden but not necessarily...

... it depends on what the individual's goal is.

Examples of goals respondents might have



I respond to avoid reminders and fines

I respond because the statistics are important to society

I respond because it benefits my business

Respondents with these goals might be equally likely to respond but for different reasons and with different consequences concerning burden

Why?

A general finding in research on motivation psychology:

Individuals provide better output and associate the task with more positive feelings if they, themselves, think that the task is important, compared to if they do it for external reasons (due to pressure, to avoid negative consequences, for a separate reward etc).

Applied to the survey context

Respondents who think the survey is **important** should provide better data and experience less burden, in general, compared to those who respond for **external reasons**

Examples of goals respondents might have



I respond to avoid reminders and fines

I respond because the statistics are important to society

I respond because it benefits my business

Blue goals (importance): perceive less burden, better data
Red goal (external): not necessarily so

Then, how can these be promoted?

I respond because
the statistics are
important to society

I respond because
it benefits my
business

By, for example:

- 1) Facilitating businesses' use of the output of surveys - NSI statistics
- 2) By giving useful information back to the businesses (i.e. feedback)

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Study 1

1) Facilitating businesses' use of the survey output - NSI statistics

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Examined in the Blue-ets project – **how businesses use NSI statistics and whether there are obstacles**



Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

- Co-authors/Collaborators
 - Norway: Dag F. Gravem, Gustav Haraldsen, Tora Löfgren
 - Slovenia: Mojca Bavdaž, Irena Bolko, Rudi Seljak
 - Sweden: Boris Lorenc, Andreas Persson, Dan Hedlin
 - The Netherlands: Deirdre Giesen, Ger Snijkers, Vanessa Torres van Grinsven
 - Italy: Silvia Biffignandi, Matthias Oehler
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Methods

- Three sources of information
 - I. **The perspective of NSIs as producers of NSI (official) statistics** (data on user support services, customer satisfaction surveys, invoices to businesses etc)
 - II. **The businesses' perspective** (39 interviews with different types of businesses)
 - III. **The perspective of external experts** (21 interviews with businesses association representatives, chambers of commerce etc)

Results - use of NSI statistics

- In general, NSI statistics not widely used.
- Depends on businesses size and industry
- Sometimes NSI statistics is used via a business association without the business necessarily realizing its' origin

Results - use of NSI statistics

- Statistics used were those on:
 - wages and labour market, productivity, economic growth, trade, national accounts, CPI and other indexes, import and export, demographics



Results - use of NSI statistics

- Statistics used were those on:
 - wages and labour market, productivity, economic growth, trade, national accounts, CPI and other indexes, import and export, demographics

These statistics were used for:

- benchmarking (comparison with competitors, industry, economy)
- market analysis (exploring new markets and new potential customers)
- reporting (annual reports, annual planning)
- tenders and official applications
- contracts and agreements (wage negotiations, price adjustment, etc)



Obstacles – using NSI statistics

- 1) Lack of awareness what statistics exists at the NSI
- 2) Lack of awareness how it can be of use for the business





Obstacles – using NSI statistics

- 1) Lack of awareness that what statistics exists at the NSI
- 2) Lack of awareness how it can be of use for the business
- 3) Issues with
 - a) finding data
 - b) using/interpreting data
 - c) correspondence of NSI data with internal data
 - d) timeliness of data
- 4) Need for additional (usually, more detailed) data or other classifications

Thus, these are things to work on and try to counter if to improve businesses' use of NSI statistics.



Then, how can these be promoted?

I respond because
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By, for example:

- 1) Facilitating businesses' use of the survey output, official statistics
- 2) By giving useful information back to the businesses (i.e. feedback)

Study 2

2) By giving useful information back to the businesses (i.e. feedback)

Lorenc, Persson, Berg, Ansanius, Bergman and Karlsson

2) By giving useful information back to the businesses (i.e. feedback)



- An experiment – if/how different text additions to a reminder letter in SBS influence motivation and, in that way, the response rates

Påminnelse2 November 2011

FORETAGETS NAMN
ADRESS
POSTORT

Företagens ekonomi 2010

Ert svar saknas

För en tid sedan fick ni brev angående *Företagens ekonomi 2010* som ni bad er fylla i. Vi saknar fortfarande ett svar. Vi ber er därför att svara på skicka in utesida uppgifter. Syftet med undersökningen är bland annat att beskriva den ekonomiska utvecklingen för svenska företag per bransch och region.

Om ni skickat in efterfrågade uppgifter under de senaste dagarna kan vi av denna felaktig denna påminnelse.

För att understryka betydelsen av att alla svenska företag medverkar, omfattas undersökningen av uppgiftsskyldigheter enligt lagen (2001:99) om den officiella statistiken. Statistiken registreras även av förordningen (2001:100) om den officiella statistiken och SCS:s föreskrifter (SFS 2009:33). Om uppgifter som omfattas av uppgiftsskyldigheten inte lämnas kan ni komma att föreläggas vid vite av denna uppgiftsämnd.

Uppgifterna ska även organiseras som:

Användare: Verdane 11
Lösenord: Verdane 11

Skicka in efterfrågade uppgifter snarast via www.scb.se/leg där det finns mer information om undersökningen.

Tack på förhand för er medverkan!

Med vänlig hälsning
Ulrika Wernholm
Ulrika Anonimus
Produktionsavdelning

Om uppgiftsämndandet
Uppgifterna ska lämnas till Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB) senast den 14 augusti 2011. Uppgifterna ska lämnas till Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB) senast den 14 augusti 2011. Uppgifterna ska lämnas till Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB) senast den 14 augusti 2011.

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Fax: 018-178104
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Postadress: 701 88 ÖREBRO

2) By giving useful information back to the businesses (i.e. feedback)

The ideas were:

- 1) Information about getting beneficial feedback ("key ratios") should improve motivation -> response rates
- 2) Explaining the purpose of the survey and how useful it is to society should improve motivation -> response rates

I respond because
it benefits my
business

I respond because
the statistics are
important to society

2) By giving useful information back to the businesses (i.e. feedback)

Four experimental groups

- 1) Standard SBS reminder (mentions feedback but peripheral)
- 2) Enhanced version (more emphasis on the feedback part)
- 3) Useful to society (replaces feedback)
- 4) None of the motivating paragraphs

Businesses randomly assigned to the four groups.

2) By giving useful information back to the businesses (i.e. feedback)



1: business, standard	2: business, enhanced	3: society	4: none
1541	1541	1540	1541
410	366	355	370
0.27	0.24	0.23	0.24

No significant differences

2) By giving useful information back to the businesses (i.e. feedback)

Conclusions

- Letters might be a too weak form of communication
- The respondents might not have read the letter carefully enough
- Sample persons did read but were not influenced by the letters (perhaps didn't find the feedback useful?)

-> follow-up study

Study 2b

2b) Follow-up on how the feedback was perceived

Lorenc, Persson & Wibell

2 b) A follow-up study on the feedback

- All the businesses that responded to the survey (SBS) got the feedback in a separate letter after the data collection
- What happened with the feedback?:
 - Did they notice the feedback letter?
 - How did they react to it?
 - Did they download the key ratios?
- A qualitative interview study-among 30 of the (randomly selected) businesses that received the feedback

2 b) A follow-up study on the feedback

- 22 respondents remembered the letter
- 15 remembered the possibility to download key ratios from SCB:s web page but only 3 did so.
- 4 respondents forwarded the letter to someone else in the business
- 8 respondents were spontaneously positive to getting feedback
- Timing of feedback (at the end of year)
- The requirement to log in on SCB:s webpage might have been a threshold

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Thus, many remembered, some were spontaneously positive but, in the end, few downloaded the feedback.

Summary of the feedback study

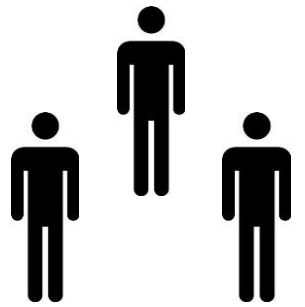
- 22 of 29 respondents remembered the letter
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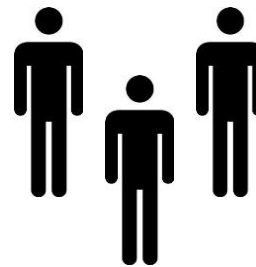
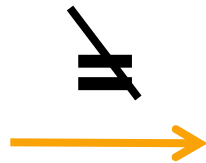


A final challenge

Who should be motivated?



Data users



Respondents



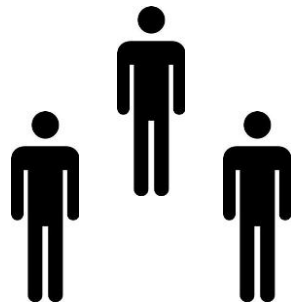
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They might use and be motivated by NSI statistics

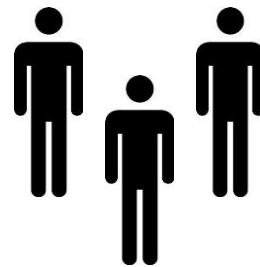
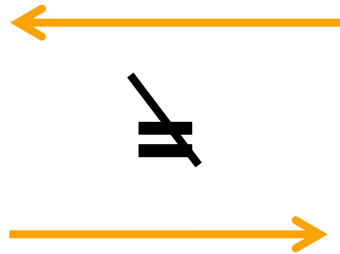
From an NSI perspective, we want to increase their motivation

A final challenge

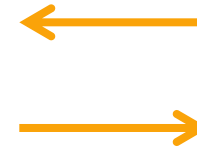
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Data users



Respondents

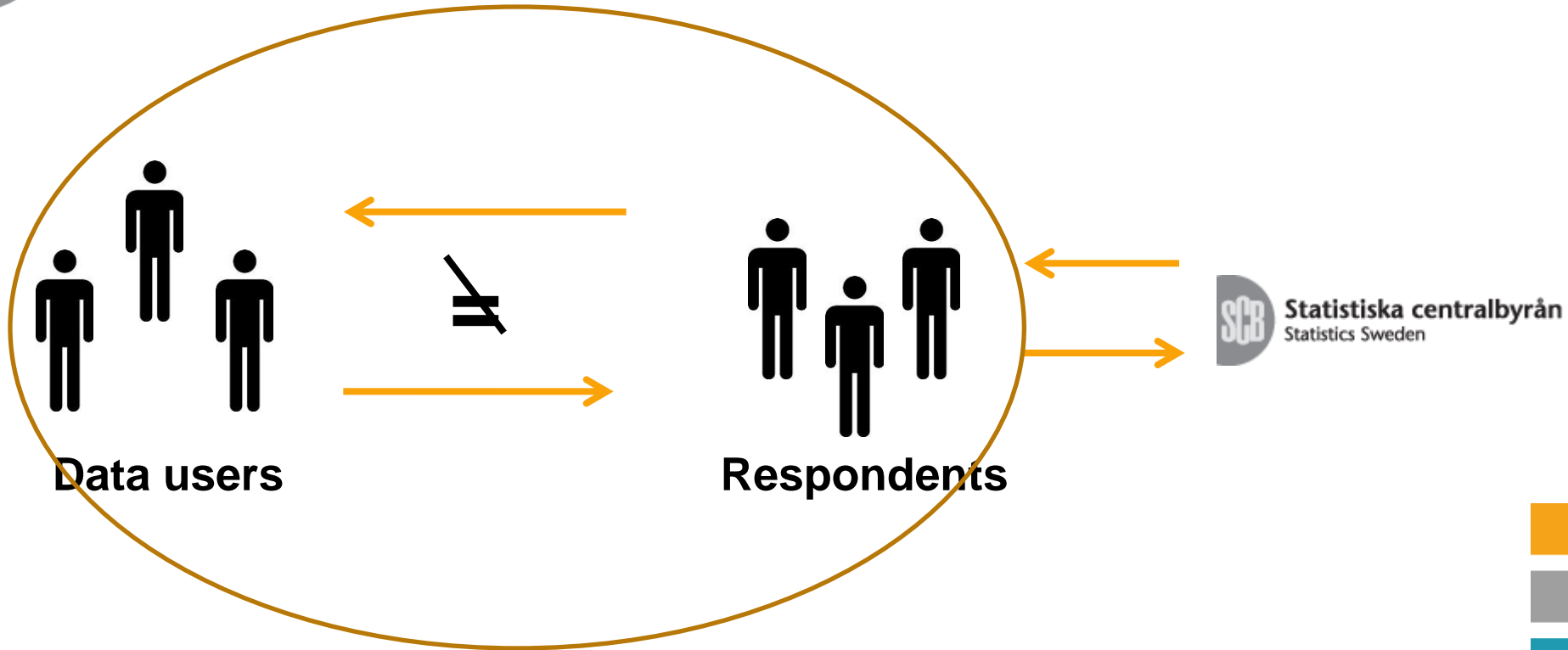


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However, the data users are unknown to the NSI, we have to communicate through the respondents/contact persons

A final challenge

Who should be motivated?



This communication within the business is beyond the NSI's control. A communication challenge – how do we reach the "right" persons?



Summary

- Burden should be minimized
- One way to reduce perceived burden can be to increase motivation
- Motivation should be increased by making responding to the survey beneficial for businesses...
- ... by facilitating businesses use of NSI statistics
- Challenge to communicate what the NSI can offer, how it can be useful and to reach the "right" persons within the business

Thank you!



References

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- Giesen (ed.) (2011). Response burden in Official Business Surveys. Blue-ets report
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