

# CHAPTER 11

## EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS



In this final chapter a number of sample questions are presented which can be used as templates for constructing a questionnaire.

### Questions for starting the questionnaire

In consumer research it is normal to screen out people who should be excluded from the surveys. Very often exclusions are applied to those employed in market research, advertising or those involved in some way with the study itself. Thus, in a survey which tested the advertising awareness of heating appliances, it was thought necessary to screen out people who work for one of the gas or electric utilities. The screens eliminate people who are not relevant to the detailed questioning which follows later. Note that in the sample question below, no mention is made of the theme of advertising at the time of introducing the interview because the researcher may wish to creep up on the subject.

Q1 Good morning/afternoon. I'm from Business & Market Research. We are carrying out a survey about energy usage and would be grateful if you could spare some time to answer a few questions. The interview will take around 20 minutes.

Firstly, can I check whether you or any members of your household work in any of the following occupations? **READ OUT.**

Journalism/the Media	1 }
Marketing/market research	2 } <b>CLOSE</b>
Advertising	3 }
British Gas/An electricity company	4 }
None of these	5 - <b>CONTINUE</b>

**Q2** And what is your main ITV station? **READ OUT IF NECESSARY**

Granada	1 } <b>CONTINUE</b>
Border	2 }
Other	3 - <b>CLOSE</b>

If the first question in the questionnaire is not there to screen people, it could act to win people's interest or to get them talking. In a business-to-business interview it can be helpful to ask a question which enables the interviewer understand all the responses which will follow. The opening question could be almost a 'how are you' in a business capacity.

**Q1** My questions are all about adhesives but just before I start, would you tell me what you make at your factory? It will help my understanding of your answers to other questions.

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The researcher may need some product knowledge from the outset and we have seen in an earlier question about the Prelude (Chapter 7) how this can be collected.

Equally, at an early juncture, it may be important to find out the part that the respondent plays in the buying decision:

Q Can I start by asking you which of these statements best describes your involvement in choosing your suppliers of electric motors:

I usually make the decision alone 1 → ***proceed***

I have most influence but as part of a team or group 2 → ***proceed***

I have some influence as part of a team or group 3 → ***proceed***

***but ask:*** What influence? Who are the others who are involved in the decision?

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### Questions for testing the awareness of brands or companies

Researchers very often want to test the awareness of brands or companies. This is usually achieved in two stages, first asking the question without prompting and then using a prompted list. The names which are given in the unprompted questioning may be left out of the prompted question but coded up by the interviewer. The subject of study in the sample question which follows (see below) was a special type of printing press. The interview was administered over the telephone and the interviewers were allowed to script their own introductions following a number of guidelines. As it happens, the awareness question was also the first question in the questionnaire and acted to move the respondents' minds into gear and get them thinking about the manufacturers of the machines.

**MAKE CONTACT WITH THE APPROPRIATE RESPONDENT. EXPLAIN THAT SURVEY IS ABOUT ATTITUDES TO MANUFACTURERS OF FLEXOGRAPHIC PRINTING PRESSES WITH A VIEW TO HELPING MANUFACTURERS IMPROVE THEIR PRODUCTS AND SERVICE. IF ASKED, SAY THAT THE IDENTITY OF THE SPONSOR WILL BE DISCLOSED AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW. GIVE AN ASSURANCE THAT ALL RESPONSES WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL AND ONLY THE POOLED RESULTS WILL BE USED.**

Q1 Can I start by asking you to think about the manufacturers of flexographic printing presses. Which names come to mind? **DO NOT PROMPT.**

Ameriflex/Wolverine	1
Schiavi-Padani	2
Carrint	3
CMF	4
Cobden Chadwick	5
Comexi	6
Fischer & Krecke (F & K)	7
Flexotechnica	8
Kidder-Stacy	9
PCMC	10
Uteco	11
Windmoeller & Hoelscher (W & H)	12
Others _____	
Others _____	

Q2 Now I would like to read out some companies which make flexographic printing presses. As I read them out would you tell me which you have heard of? **ROTATE START. TICK START. CIRCLE THOSE MENTIONED IN Q1 WITHOUT READING THEM OUT.**

Ameriflex/Wolverine	1
Schiavi-Padani	2
Carrint	3
CMF	4
Cobden Chadwick	5
Comexi	6
Fischer & Krecke (F & K)	7
Flexotechnica	8
Kidder-Stacy	9
PCMC	10
Uteco	11
Windmoeller & Hoelscher (W & H)	12

- Q3 I am now moving on to talk about how you started dealing with your printing press suppliers. First can I check the makes of printing presses installed at your plant.
- Q4 **FOR EACH MAKE USED ASK:** And what is the application for this manufacturer's machines - is it for paper sacks, linerboard, tissue, wallcoverings etc.

Q3 Make of printing presses installed	Q4 Application of press

A further sophistication to this question could be to separately record the order in which people list the brands. The companies or brands which are mentioned first can be assumed to be more 'front of mind' than those which are mentioned second or third.

- Q1 I would like to ask you some questions about petrol. Off the top of your head can you give me the names of some petrol companies? **DO NOT PROMPT. RECORD BELOW IN ORDER GIVEN.**

	First	Second Mentioned	Third
BP	1	1	1
Burmah	2	2	2
Elf	3	3	3
Esso	4	4	4
Gulf	5	5	5
Jet/Conoco	6	6	6
Mobil	7	7	7
Shell	8	8	8
Texaco	9	9	9
Total	10	10	10
Hypermarket (specify)	11	11	11
.....			
Other (specify)	12	12	12
.....			

## Questions for obtaining behavioural information

In one respect, behavioural questions are the simplest to ask but there can be problems deciding on sensible intervals for a fixed response. With some questions the subject is within everyday experience and the responses are easy to anticipate. The following example is about petrol purchasing and some licence has been taken in the intervals which are used for the buying frequency.

Q2 Now thinking about buying petrol or diesel. How often do you buy petrol/diesel? **READ OUT LIST - CIRCLE ONE CODE ONLY.**

Every day	1
2 to 3 times a week	2
Once a week	3
2 to 3 times a month	4
Less often	5

Even where the subject is relatively common place, such as buying petrol, the way people behave can be quite complicated. In such circumstances it could be worth thinking about reducing the response categories to phrases with which people can identify.

Q3 Which of the phrases on this card (**SHOW CARD**) best describes how you buy petrol?

Buy most of your petrol from one particular station	1
Buy most of your petrol at 2 or 3 stations and they are all the same brand	2
Buy most of your petrol at 2 or 3 stations and they are all different brands	3
Buy your petrol at many different stations but usually the same brand	4
Buy your petrol at many different stations and many different brands	5
Buy most of your petrol at a hypermarket	6
Something other than these (please specify) .....	7

Researchers often have to work around subjects where they have no inkling of what the answer could be and in these circumstances open ended responses are used. The next example comes from a survey of packaged sewage treatment plant. This sort of equipment is bought relatively infrequently and so the interval over which the question relates is two years and this needed to be

emphasised. The terminology used to describe the products may be alien to the reader of this book but it was common parlance to respondents in the industry. A grid type question was used to reduce the space taken up on the page.

Q3a Would you tell me how many *trickling filtration* plants your establishment has installed in the last **two years?** REPEAT FOR ROTATING BIOLOGICAL, CONTACT STABILISATION AND "OTHERS".

Q3b How many of these plants are for stand alone situations?

Q3c How many are extensions to existing plants?

Type of plant	3a Number installed over 2 yrs	3b Stand alone	3c Extensions to plants
Trickling filtration	_____	_____	_____
Rotating biological	_____	_____	_____
Contact stabilisation	_____	_____	_____
Others (specify).....	_____	_____	_____

### Questions for obtaining attitudinal information

A very common approach to asking attitudes to products is to ask the simple question *why?*

Q Why did you not consider an electric central heating system?

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So, scalar questions are frequently used to obtain attitudinal information. The 'how likely' scale must be one of the most popular.

Q How likely are you to consider buying ..... in the next year?

Very likely	1
Quite likely	2
Neither likely nor unlikely	3
Quite unlikely	4
Very unlikely	5


Those who answered codes 3, 4 or 5 would probably be asked "why?".

Attitudes people have to a product can be obtained by asking them to agree or disagree with statements. In order to obviate the respondent getting into a groove and giving all one answer, the positive and negative statements have been mixed up in the following example. Also, there is no opportunity for sitting on the fence and people have to say whether they either agree or disagree with the statements.

Q Having used the toothpaste, would you now tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements. Choose one of the levels of agreement off this card to tell me what you think. **SHOW CARD. READ OUT EACH STATEMENT IN TURN. ROTATE START. TICK START.**

	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree Slightly</b>	<b>Disagree Slightly</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
Tastes very minty	1	2	3	4
Feels gritty	1	2	3	4
Tastes sweet	1	2	3	4
Hasn't got much taste	1	2	3	4
Makes my mouth feel fresh <sup>1</sup>	2	3	4	
Feels smooth	1	2	3	4





## Questions for finding out about buying motivations

Surveys frequently need to find out why people buy in a certain way. The obvious and direct question can often be the best.

Q1 What above all else influences the choice of your supplier of .....?

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This type of open ended questioning could be extended to include specific probes on the importance of subjects of interest such as the importance of price, quality, delivery, technical service and so on. Some of these issues are subjects in their own right. For example price could be opened up to include net price paid, credit terms and rebates. Delivery covers availability off the shelf, delivery on time. Quality includes durability, reliability and build integrity.

Beyond the open ended questioning, the researcher could consider prompted questions to explore the buying motivations. One approach to this could be where the respondent is asked to 'trade off' the various factors in the buying decision by spending points out of 10. Of course, the question presupposes that some preliminary work has been carried out to show which are the important factors people are interested in trading off.

The following example has a list which is read out and pushes the limits of people's memories. Most respondents coped with the question but, in an ideal world, the list would have been half the length.

- Q I will now read out a list of factors which some people have said are important in influencing their choice of supplier of electric motors. To measure how important you think they are I would like you to allocate 10 points across the different factors. The more important a factor, the more points you should give it. But the more points you give to one factor, the less there are to give to the others. First I will read out the list. **READ LIST. ROTATE ORDER. TICK START. TOTAL MUST ADD TO 10.** Now, how would you like to spend your 10 points?

Factor	Points out of 10
Delivery just in time	
Reliable delivery	
The lowest price	
Reliable motors	
Motor is specified by customer	
Supplies non standard designs	
Noise level	
Made to IEC standard	
Can supply electronic controls	
Service/back up facilities	
Other (specify _____ )	
<b>T O T A L (must add to 10)</b>	<b>10</b>

### Questions for testing customers' preferences for different products

This book emphasises the benefits of keeping questions and questionnaires as simple as possible. Over complicated questions lead to problems for the field force, for the analysis team and for the person who has to make sense of them when the work is completed. However, there are occasions when simple questions are not good enough. Take for example, questions which seek to find out why people choose certain types of cars. Simple questioning is likely to indicate that safety is one of the most important factors in people's minds and yet evidence of how people act in the car show room indicates that what people say is not what they do. Researchers have tried to overcome the problem of looking at factors in isolation by grouping them into concepts, the sort that may be relevant to real life situations. Using special computer programmes this data produces an indirect measure of customer preferences and is known as *conjoint analysis*.

Take a simple product such as an envelope which has three different attributes each with two variations.

<b>Method of sealing</b>	<b>Address facility</b>	<b>Colour</b>
Self seal	Window	White
Glue	No window	Brown

It is possible to devise eight different types of envelope concepts from these variations, viz:

<b>Concept Colour</b>	<b>Method of sealing</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>facility</b>
1	Self seal	Window	White
2	Self seal	Window	Brown
3	Self seal	No window	White
4	Self seal	No window	Brown
5	Glue	Window	White
6	Glue	Window	Brown
7	Glue	No window	White
8	Glue	No window	Brown

Each of these concepts could be presented to a respondent who would be asked to classify them into piles, correspondent to 'very interesting' through to 'not particularly interesting'. Having done this, the respondent is then asked to rank the concepts in each pile to show which is most appealing and least appealing. This type of questioning can work with products which have a relatively small number of concepts but it becomes extremely tedious for the respondent if there are many attributes and therefore many concepts. Twenty five to thirty concepts is about the maximum that should be attempted.

Q I would like you to look through these cards on which you will see different styles of envelope. Place the cards into three piles which illustrate whether you think that for your company the envelopes would be:

- Interesting
- Maybe interesting
- Not interesting at all.

Now would you take each pile in turn and sort them into an order so that the card on the top is the envelope style you think is best for your company and that on the bottom is the one you think is worst.



## Questions for testing customers' satisfaction

Customer satisfaction studies are made up of special types of attitudinal questions which provide benchmarks for comparison with other companies and against which the performance of a company can be judged at some future date if the study is ever repeated. The example shown below is for a special type of printing machine but the format of questions could apply to most products. The questions begin by finding out, in open ended fashion, what influences the buying decision. This is followed by a prompted question on the same subject. Answers to these questions enable the researchers to show the importance which should be attached to answers to the rating questions. For example, if 'printing quality' proves to be a far more important influence on the buying decision than say, 'change over time', then 'printing quality' should be the factor which has more of the company's resources devoted to getting it right.

Q1 Can I ask you to imagine that a manufacturer of flexographic printing machines - a name that is known to you - is seeking to win business which you are due to place. What are the factors you would weigh up in deciding whether or not to give him your business?

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- Q2 I would now like you to think about the importance of some factors which could play a part in the buying decision and help me assemble them in the order of importance from your point of view. I will read the factors out and then would you tell me which is most important, which is second most important, and I will finish with that which you think is third most important. **ROTATE ORDER OF START. TICK START. READ LIST.**

<b>Factors Influencing The Buying Decision</b>	<b>RANK</b>
Reputation of the company	
Printing quality	
The change-over time	
The price	
The reliability of the machine	
Delivery	
The availability of automation features	
Other (specify)	

- Q3 And now I would like you to tell me what you think of five manufacturers of printing machines, whether or not you use them? I would like you to give me a score out of 5 where 5 is very good and 1 is very poor. **(SCORE 6 FOR DON'T KNOW, WON'T SAY)** Can I start with ..... **(ROTATE ORDER OF COMPANIES)**. What do you think of it for "Reputation" **(ROTATE ORDER OF START)**. **(TICK START)**.

<b>Factors Influencing The Buying Decision</b>	<b>Cobden Chadwick</b>	<b>Fischer &amp; Krecke</b>	<b>Windmoeller &amp; Hoelscher</b>
Reputation of the company			
Printing quality			
Change-over time			
Price			
Reliability of the machines			
Delivery			
Availability of automation features			

Q4 **FOR ANY COMPANY WITH ANY SCORES WHICH ARE 3 OR BELOW AND ASK:** I see that you gave ..... (**NAME COMPANY**) a low score for ..... (**NAME ASPECT**) Why was this?

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I will now read out some phrases and would like you to tell me to what extent you agree or disagree that they describe three European flexographic press manufacturers. **ROTATE ORDER OF START OF COMPANIES.** A score of 5 means you strongly agree, and a score of 1 means that you strongly disagree.

Statements	Cobden Chadwick	Fischer & Krecke	Windmoeller & Hoelscher
Q5 The company is innovative			
Q6 The company is safe to deal with			
Q7 The company reacts quickly to your requirements			
Q8 The company's product range suits my business			
Q9 The company is pleasant to deal with			
Q10 The company communicates well with its customers			
Q11 The company is very visible in the market			

Here are 8 key questions which could be considered in almost any customer satisfaction survey. In such questioning, any neutral or negative response would be followed by the question, "Why did you say that?".



Q1 How satisfied are you with the quality of products from ABC Ltd? Are you:

Very satisfied	1
Quite satisfied	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Not very satisfied	4
Not at all satisfied	5

Q2 How satisfied are you with the reliability of the products from ABC Ltd? Are you:

Very satisfied	1
Quite satisfied	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Not very satisfied	4
Not at all satisfied	5

Q3 How satisfied are you with the value for money of products from ABC Ltd? Are you:

Very satisfied	1
Quite satisfied	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Not very satisfied	4
Not at all satisfied	5

Q4 How satisfied are you with the sales service from ABC Ltd? Are you:

Very satisfied	1
Quite satisfied	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Not very satisfied	4
Not at all satisfied	5

- Q5 How satisfied are you with the speed of delivery from ABC Ltd? Are you:
- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Very satisfied                     | 1 |
| Quite satisfied                    | 2 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 3 |
| Not very satisfied                 | 4 |
| Not at all satisfied               | 5 |
- Q6 How satisfied are you with the reliability of delivery from ABC Ltd? Are you:
- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Very satisfied                     | 1 |
| Quite satisfied                    | 2 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 3 |
| Not very satisfied                 | 4 |
| Not at all satisfied               | 5 |
- Q7 How likely or unlikely are you to buy from ABC Ltd next time you require these products? Would you say you are:
- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Very likely                 | 1 |
| Quite likely                | 2 |
| Neither likely nor unlikely | 3 |
| Not very likely             | 4 |
| Not at all likely           | 5 |
- Q8 If you were asked by a friend to suggest a supplier of these products, how likely or unlikely would you be to recommend ABC Ltd? Would you say you are:
- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Very likely                 | 1 |
| Quite likely                | 2 |
| Neither likely nor unlikely | 3 |
| Not very likely             | 4 |
| Not at all likely           | 5 |



## Questions for testing the price people will pay for a product

Determining the price which people are prepared to pay for existing products and services can be ascertained by behavioural and attitudinal questions. There will be occasions when buyers in industry refuse to answer these questions as the information could be commercially sensitive. Do not expect to be able to phone buyers at large superstores and pop a simple question which will tell you how much they are paying for the products within their responsibility.

Buyers in the motor industry are similarly circumspect about what they are paying for their components from certain suppliers. In the main, however, buyers in industry and consumers in the home will tell you what they are paying for products and services.

Unless it is essential that the information is precise, it can help to band the responses so that the respondent does not feel obliged to remember the exact money value. The choice of words in the question can sometimes help soften its intrusive nature. In the following question the intervals were chosen to straddle the price points around the £3.50, £4.00, £4.50 etc.

Q I am trying to obtain an indication of the price of photocopying paper. I shall read out some price bands and I would like you to tell me which band reflects the price your company is paying?

Less than £3.25 per ream	1
£3.26 to £3.75 per ream	2
£3.76 to £4.25 per ream	3
£4.26 to £4.75 per ream	4
£4.76 to £5.25 per ream	5
£5.26 to £5.75 per ream	6
£Over 5.75 per ream (specify)	7
.....	
Don't know	8
Refused	9

The researcher may want to plot a demand curve for a product so that the optimum price level for a product can be determined. The following example shows how regional railways used a simple test for their customers in which they were asked how likely they would be to make a journey at different price levels. The increases ranged from +3% to +20% and were labelled on a card with letters `P' to `T'. These letters `P' through to `T' were written in random order on the questionnaire with the corresponding prices against them. Prices

were then read to respondents in the order they had been written on the questionnaire and were therefore random. After each question respondents were asked to state, using a scale, their likelihood of purchasing at that price. The principle of testing prices in random order is an essential part of this type of research. If the prices were to be tested in ascending order (in this case up to +20%), the respondent could be expected to vary the response with each step up the scale rather than considering each absolute price level. This problem is reduced or removed by presenting the prices in random order.

Q I am now going to read out a number of prices which you might be charged for your ticket for the journey you are making. I would like you to tell me how likely you would be to buy a ticket at each price? **ASK FOR EACH PRICE IN TURN IN THE ORDER RECORDED ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE.**

How likely would you be to buy your ticket at £x? Would you be .....

- Definitely
- Very likely
- Quite likely
- Not very likely
- Not at all likely

to buy your ticket at this price?

	P	R	T	U	Q	S
	£..	£..	£..	£..	£..	£..
Definitely	1	1	1	1	1	1
Very likely	2	2	2	2	2	2
Quite likely	3	3	3	3	3	3
Not very likely	4	4	4	4	4	4
Not at all likely	5	5	5	5	5	5
Don't know	6	6	6	6	6	6

This simple method of finding out the optimum price could just as readily be applied to any other product as to a railway ticket. However, the researcher sometimes wants to find out how much people will pay for individual aspects of a product. This information can be useful when deciding on the specification of a new product as it gives the designers some indication of what they could leave out or build in to create a product at the ideal price. One option is to use the *Simalto* technique in which respondents are asked to say which features they would like in an ideal product and then to trade off each of the features by

saying whether or not they would buy the product if the feature had a certain price tag. An example of a Simalto questionnaire which was used to test the price of features of a franking machine is given below. In the question, the actual details of each respondent's franking machine (called also a mailing machine) were written in the blank boxes. Questioning then determined whether people wanted bigger, better or faster features. Those that did were then asked, in a separate question not shown here, how much more they would pay for the improved features.

### Questions for classifying respondents

Classification questions for consumers could include the following demographic breakdowns:

Q Thank you for helping me. Just so that we can classify the answers you have given could I ask you a number of short questions about yourself and your household?

#### **Sex** (This would not be asked)

Male	1
Female	2

#### **Household status** (this classification is now becoming contentious)

Head of household	1
Housewife	2
Other adult	3

#### **Age**

17-24	1
25-34	2
35-44	3
45-54	4
55-64	5
65+	6

#### **Marital status**

Single	1
Married/Partners	2
Widowed	3
Divorced/separated	4

**Working status**

Full time (30+ hours per week)	1
Part time (8-30 hours per week)	2
Housewife (full time at home)	3
Student (full time)	4
Temporary unemployed	5
Permanently unemployed (e.g. chronically sick)	6
Retired	7

**Socio-economic Grade (SEG)**

AB (Managerial)	1
C1 (Supervisory/junior admin)	2
C2 (Skilled manual workers)	3
DE (Semi/unskilled and pensioners)	4

Other consumer classification questions can be used and there are no rigid rules as to what categories to use. If there are government statistics which relate to the subjects, it makes sense to use breaks which are compatible:

- income of the head of the household or respondent
- final educational level of head of the household or respondent
- aggregate income of the household
- type of housing – e.g. terraced, semi-detached, detached, flats
- size of house – e.g. number of bedrooms
- age of housing
- location - this could be by government Standard Region, by television region or Nielsen regions.
- type of area – e.g. as indicated by one of the companies which classify neighbourhoods such as Acorn or Pinpoint.
- number of people in the household
- number of children in the household
- number of cars in the household
- ownership of certain products such as computers or TVs

In exactly the same way, questions would be asked of business-to-business respondents. There are no fixed categories in these types of surveys and a choice should be made that is useful to the objectives of the study. The following are by way of example and the response categories which are used should be adjusted to suit.

Q Thank you for helping me. Just so that we can classify the information you have given, could I ask you a number of short questions about the establishment on whose behalf you have been answering?

How many people do you employ at your establishment including both staff and works? **PROMPT WITH RANGES**

Less than 25	1
25-50	2
51-150	3
151-250	4
251-750	5
Over 750	6

And what is the approximate turnover of your establishment? **PROMPT WITH RANGES**

Less than £½ million	1
£½ to £¾ million	2
>£¾ to £1½ million	3
>£1½ to £3 million	4
>£3 to £7 million	5
>£7 to £15 million	6
Over £15 million (specify)	7


.....

What is the nature of the business carried out at your establishment?

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**CLASSIFY INTO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES**

Manufacturing	1
Distribution	2
Retailing	3
Services	4
Utilities (gas/water/electricity)	5
Education	6
Government/public service	7
Agriculture/mining/quarrying	8
Other	9



Other classification questions which could be considered for business-to-business surveys are:

- geographical region - standard region or simply North, Midlands and South
- size of spend on a certain product
- number of establishments within the group
- whether head office or subsidiary.