Survey Design Exercise and Case Study: Trade Research Capacity Building Needs of Research Institutions

Recommendations and Elements of Solutions

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On the Methodology

- Specific objectives and research questions are missing
  - ToR should be used as the starting point:
    - “what the trade research capacity building needs of these research institutions really are”… “their existing trade research capacity”… “if they differ across countries”
    - “to identify innovative ways in which some countries or organizations in the region have addressed these needs”
On the Methodology

Survey method need to be clarified
- Day 0: questionnaire sent by email
- Day 2: e-mail follow-up
- Day x?: fax and phone-call follow-up

Recommendations:
- Specify testing procedure of survey instrument
  - Ex: pilot testing with domestic institutions?
- Conduct phone interview (rather than just follow-up) of non-respondents after a third email and fax follow-up
- make the questionnaire downloadable from a website
  - Tip: size and format of file very important!
On the Methodology

Sampling

- Is there a complete list of research institutions in Asia-Pacific or a database which can be used as a reference?
- Survey of only 27 institutions is proposed. ToR requires data on at least 25 institutions...

Recommendations

- Since survey method seems to be email, consider surveying a larger sample or the entire population of institutions
- Statistical techniques can be used to correct for or estimate effect of geographic location, WTO membership, and type of institution on capacity building needs
On the work plan

- Testing of the questionnaire is not included
- The interviews for the case study occur after questionnaire has been finalized

**Recommendations**

- Conduct case study of selected research institutions before finalizing and conducting the survey
On the Questionnaire

- Incomplete information on cover page
  - Objective, Use of results, confidentiality

- Recommendations
  - Increase trust/legitimacy by mentioning UNESCAP, and possibly also IDRC, and putting logos
  - Provide an incentive to respond by explaining the benefit of the study to institutions
  - Provide detailed contact information
On the Questionnaire

- No cover-letter or email draft
  - Text and Subject of the email is determinant

  Recommendations
  - Subject should be short and of interest to respondents “Capacity Building of Research Institutions”
  - Text of email should be clear and concise
  - DO NOT put the words “survey” or “questionnaire” in the subject and avoid them in the text as well
    - Anti-spam software may block your email!
On the Questionnaire

Content
- Difficult to comment as detailed objectives and research questions have apparently not been identified

Recommendations
- Write down specific objectives of the survey
- Write down a list of important research question, hypotheses
- Identify important variables (independent and dependent variables)

See HANDOUT for details…
On the Questionnaire

- Formulating Questions
  - Questions should be spelled out
    - Q.1, 2, 3, 7, 13
  - Some questions are redundant
    - Q.4 and Q.5
    - Q.12 (can be inferred from Q.7 and 11)
    - Q.13 (you already have exact numbers!)
  - Avoid making assumptions
    - Q.7
  - Avoid asking questions for which the respondent would have to do some research to answer accurately
    - Q. 3, 4, 17
On the Questionnaire

- Formulating Questions
  - Avoid branching
    - Q.26-27; “In what occasions do senior staff of your institution meet with trade policy makers?” or “how often do senior staff of your institution meet with…”
    - Q21-22; Please indicate to which trade res. Network your institutions belong to, if any:______
  - Avoid using vague terms
    - Q. 27 (forum vs. dialogues), 31 (networking), 11 (publications)
  - Be careful with the use of “select all that apply questions”
    - Q.6,8,9,10,19,25,27,31,32,33,34… Low information content + difficult to analyze
On the Questionnaire

- Ordering / sequencing of questions
  - 4 sections with vague titles
  - Boring questions at the beginning
  - The most important questions seem to be at the end

- Recommendations
  - General (demographic) questions should be moved to the end
  - Potentially sensitive questions should be moved to the end (Q. 3)
  - Reduce the burden of the respondent to the strict minimum (Q. 1)
On the Questionnaire

- Other recommendations
  - Use letters (a,b,c…) for choices, not numbers
  - Include clear instructions for every question
    - Q.2,3,4,23, 24
  - Check for spelling mistakes and quality of English
  - Tables/Matrices should be at the top of pages (if possible)
  - Underline important words in questions
  - Define “trade research”
  - Shorten questionnaire
  - Focus (only 6 questions on capacity building!)

See ARTNeT UNESCAP CDRI questionnaire…