

Dear Readers,

In my recap of June 11, 2024 I did a brief summary of the issues, as I saw them, with the 2024 Community Survey. I thought it was an unreliable tool to guide making major decisions.

Since sending out that recap I was contacted by one of my readers, (SL) provided an analysis of the survey below. I included SL's background information so readers can judge SL's qualifications.

My wife, an editor and publisher of academic books for 45 years, agreed with SL's analysis. She has published twelve books in the area of Survey Research Methods, mostly in the "How To" category.

We need to do better. Se

George Weiss

To read what I said about the survey in my recap of June 11, 2024 go to:

<https://www.georgeweisscitycouncil.org/>

Professional Survey Researcher's Comments on the Laguna Beach Community Survey

I have several methodological concerns, which I list in detail below, but I want to highlight the major design flaws, which in my opinion make the data **extremely** unreliable:

1) The survey is very long, with several nested questions, inconsistent rating scales, and lengthy statements that differ only in a few words. As a rule, the quality of the data is **degraded** the longer the survey, the longer the list of choices, the less consistent the scales, and the longer (and less differentiated) the statements. This particular survey puts an exorbitant cognitive load on the respondents. Most of them would lose interest and focus about half-way through. This is true for both online and phone respondents, but it is exacerbated for phone interviews (more details on this below).

2) Survey design should always be neutral, in order not to "lead the witness". This is research 101. The wording of the ballot measures is a **sales pitch**, which primes respondents to anchor them on all the benefits before introducing the key information. While this may be an acceptable political communications tactic, it is not appropriate for research. In real life, people are likely to evaluate these statements very differently, and to consider available sources of information and counterpoints before they vote. The reliability of the data collected this way as a predictor of true sentiment and action in an election is questionable.

3) By the time respondents get into Q15-Q20, the agenda behind the survey becomes transparent to respondents: “Whatever you say here is what we’ll repeat back to you in political campaigning”. One of the principles of good research design is to avoid leading respondents telling you what you want to hear - or to tell you what they want you to tell them a few months later. This survey fails at that.

Beyond these two overarching issues, these are my specific concerns in more detail:

- The 3-point Likert scale used in many questions is a very limiting choice. I would have recommended a 5 or 7-point scale to get more nuance and more actionable insights.
- **GW:** See definition of Likert scales here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likert_scale
- Switching back and forth between 3 and 4-point scales and then to an agree/disagree format (Q3, Q4, Q5 and Q6) is **exhausting** to respondents that need to jump across different formats to answer each question - and ultimately compromises data quality. This is exacerbated for phone interviews, where the scale is not visible and must be remembered, only to be replaced in the next question.
- Lumping Laguna Beach Police, Fire, and Marine Safety Departments together (Q3) is not ideal. Someone might think one is doing great, the other so-so and the third terribly, and that information is lost. This is important, as it cascades into prioritization and verbiage for the measures introduced later.
- Part of the sample was collected via phone. Asking about a 17-item priorities/satisfaction list (Q7/Q8) this way **gets exhausting** to the respondent and compromises data quality. Same goes for the concerns list (Q9/Q10). These 4 questions put extreme cognitive load on the respondent. Online, this is time consuming and demands a lot of attention. Over the phone, you lose attention and data quality after the second or third statement on the list. Prioritization over the phone is impossible.
- The wording of Q11-Q14 is not neutral. It is a sales pitch rather than an unbiased statement. In research, we always teach junior associates not to lead the witness. That basic guideline was missed here.
- Q15-20: The message to respondents is: “I want to hear what you want me to repeat back to you”. From here onwards, the data collected in this survey is tainted and unreliable. Also, the 3-point Likert scale is too narrow.
- The rest of the survey follows the same structure and has the same problems stated above. Additionally, the statements for all the measures start with identical wording, and the key differences are buried at the end of each blurb. This again is exhausting and puts undue cognitive load on the respondents, in the second half of an extremely long and dense survey - which translates into even less reliable data.

In sum, between the technical shortcomings, the far-from-neutral wording of the measure statements, the obvious agenda revealed half-way through, and the sheer length and density of the survey, I would not rely on any findings for decision making.

Best, SL

SL Background from LinkedIn:

- Senior UX Researcher Senior UX Researcher
Walmart · Full-time Walmart · Full-time Aug 2019 - Present · 4 yrs. 11 mos. Aug 2019 to Present · 4 yrs. 11 months Orange County, California, United States · Remote Orange County, California, United States · Remote

- Designed and conducted user experience (UX) research through every phase in the development of associate- and customer-facing apps - with emphasis on merchandising, supply chain and store operations.
Supported the development from the ground up of a new generation of AI-enabled omni-channel merchandising tools: assortment planning, pricing, day-to-day operations management and financial reporting. Developed business acumen to represent the voice of every user and stakeholder across roles and responsibility levels.

Conducted primary research with Spanish-speaking customers that changed the course of strategic decisions. Consulted as Spanish-speaking cohort expert, supporting projects for both associates and customers. Trained designers and product managers to conduct their own generative and evaluative research.

Coached junior researchers in using mixed methods for complex projects. Designed and conducted user experience (UX) research through every phase in the development of associate- and customer-facing apps - with emphasis on merchandising, supply chain and store operations. Supported the development from the ground up of a new generation of AI-enabled omni-channel merchandising tools: assortment planning, pricing, day-to-day operations management and financial reporting. Developed business acumen to represent the voice of every user and stakeholder across roles and responsibility levels. Conducted primary research with Spanish-speaking customers that changed the course of strategic decisions. Consulted as Spanish-speaking cohort expert, supporting projects for both associates and customers. Trained designers and product managers to conduct their own generative and evaluative research. Coached junior researchers in using mixed methods for complex projects.

Self-Employed

Marketing and Strategy Consultant Marketing and Strategy Consultant
Self-Employed Self-Employed Mar 2010 - Jul 2019 · 9 yrs. 5 months Mar 2010 to Jul 2019 · 9 yrs. 5 months Orange County, California Area Orange County, California Area

- Conducted feasibility studies in the China market for a European client in custom publishing.

Developed branding strategies for visual artists, designers, non-profit organizations, and entrepreneurs in Southern California. Conducted feasibility studies in the China market for a European client in custom publishing. Developed branding strategies for visual artists, designers, non-profit organizations, and entrepreneurs in Southern California.... see more.

Communication and Qualitative Research

Head of Research & Consumer Insights, Asia Pacific & Africa Head of Research & Consumer Insights, Asia Pacific & Africa

Ford Motor Company Ford Motor Company Jan 2009 - Feb 2010 · 1 yr. 2 mos. Jan 2009 to Feb 2010 · 1 yr. 2 MOs Bangkok, Thailand and Shanghai, China Bangkok, Thailand and Shanghai, China

- Directed the research function for the Asia Pacific and Africa region with an annual budget of \$15 mil. Supervised all product, marketing and tracking research for the region.
- Managed global research programs working with teams in North America, Europe and South America. Represented Asia Pacific's VOC to inform global product decisions.
- Identified the strategic opportunity and ideal brand positioning to introduce the Lincoln brand into the China market.

Recruited and developed a regional research team of 10 upon centralization of the function into the regional office. Managed the transition of operations from Bangkok to Shanghai when the regional office relocated in 2009.

- Developed agency relationships in the region and trained them to support specific research needs within the global Ford product development process. Directed the research function for the Asia Pacific and Africa region with an annual budget of \$15 mil. Supervised all product, marketing and tracking research for the region. Managed global research programs working with teams in North America, Europe and South America. Represented Asia Pacific's VOC to inform global product decisions. Identified the strategic opportunity and ideal brand positioning to introduce the Lincoln brand into the China market. Recruited and developed a regional research team of 10 upon centralization of the function into the regional office. Managed the transition of operations from Bangkok to Shanghai when the regional office relocated in 2009. Developed agency relationships in the region and trained them to support specific research needs within the global Ford product development process....see more.

Brand Development Manager Brand Development Manager

Mazda Motor Company Mazda Motor Company Aug 2005 - Dec 2008 · 3 yrs. 5 mos. Aug 2005 to Dec 2008 · 3 yrs. 5 MOs Hiroshima, Japan Hiroshima, Japan

Chaired the revision of the global brand positioning strategy. Defined the process, managed the collaboration of global stakeholders, secured approval by the Board of Directors and rolled it out to regions and marketing agencies.

Oversaw global brand consistency in the development of marketing communications across all regions.

Developed and launched a global customer magazine in 25 markets with circulation of 2 mil. and an annual budget of \$20 mil. Won APA's Custom Publishing Award to "Best Automotive Title" in 2009. Tracking research in top 10 markets demonstrated positive ROI from the first issue and dramatic improvement in brand perception among readers. Chaired the revision of the global brand positioning strategy. Defined the process, managed the collaboration of global stakeholders, secured approval by the Board of Directors and rolled it out to regions and marketing agencies. Oversaw global brand consistency in the development of marketing communications across all regions.

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Ford Motor Company Ford Motor Company

5 yrs. 3 mos 5 yrs. 3 MOs Dearborn, MI Dearborn, MI

Market Research Manager - Trends and Future Market Research Manager - Trends and Futuring

Apr 2003 - Jul 2005 · 2 yrs. 4 mos Apr 2003 to Jul 2005 · 2 yrs. 4 mos

- Monitored consumer trends and futured their implications for the automotive industry.

Produced organizational intelligence on multicultural cohorts in the US.

Defined and deployed advertising research standards. Awarded the second runner-up 2005 ARF David Ogilvy Award for Excellence in Advertising Research for Jaguar's "Temptations" campaign.

Implemented global research standards in five South American markets.

Managed cross-functional teams in different continents working on simultaneous projects.

Conducted brand tracking and customer satisfaction studies in multiple markets. Monitored consumer trends and futured their implications for the automotive industry. Produced organizational intelligence on multicultural cohorts in the US. Defined and deployed advertising research standards. Awarded the second runner-up 2005 ARF David Ogilvy Award for Excellence in Advertising Research for Jaguar's "Temptations" campaign. Implemented global research standards in five South American markets. Managed cross-functional teams in different continents working on simultaneous projects. Conducted brand tracking and customer satisfaction studies in multiple markets....see more.

CRM Senior Analyst CRM Senior Analyst

Sep 2001 - Mar 2003 · 1 yr. 7 mos. Sep 2001 to Mar 2003 · 1 yr. 7 mos.

- Led cross-functional team of 10 in the development of a reporting environment to measure the financial performance of direct marketing campaigns. Defined business rules for the attribution of incremental sales, defined the architecture of the reporting environment, and managed the development project from inception to implementation. Consulted with CRM managers and ad agencies to effectively design, execute and measure direct marketing campaigns. Led cross-functional team of 10 in the development of a reporting environment to measure the financial performance of direct marketing campaigns. Defined business rules for the attribution of incremental sales, defined the architecture of the reporting environment, and managed the development project from inception to implementation. Consulted with CRM managers and ad agencies to effectively design, execute and measure direct marketing campaigns....see more.

Communication, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and +1 skill

Product Development Finance Senior Analyst Product Development Finance Senior Analyst

May 2000 - Aug 2001 · 1 yr. 4 mos. May 2000 to Aug 2001 · 1 yr. 4 mos.

- One of four analysts in controller's team for a \$400-million product development program. Responsible for investment and variable cost control for chassis and powertrain components of a vehicle platform with three individual car lines.

Controller for a derivative product's development program.

Performed feasibility studies for additional derivative products. Worked with pricers to develop high-profit vehicle option packages. One of four analysts in controller's team for a \$400-million product development program. Responsible for investment and variable cost control for chassis and powertrain components of a vehicle platform with three individual car lines. Controller for a derivative product's development program. Performed feasibility studies for additional derivative products. Worked with pricers to develop high-profit vehicle option packages....see more.

Communication and Financial Analysis

Education

Columbia Business School Columbia Business School

MBA, Marketing MBA, Marketing

- Activities and societies: Beta Gamma Sigma, Dean's List, Marketing Association
- Activities and societies: Beta Gamma Sigma, Dean's List, Marketing Association
- Beta Gamma Sigma, Dean's List Beta Gamma Sigma, Dean's List

University of Buenos Aires University of Buenos Aires

Lic. en Administracion, Business, Marketing Lic. en Administracion, Business, Marketing

- Grade: Top 5% of class Grade: Top 5% of class
 - Activities and societies: Cum Laude Activities and societies: Cum Laude
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Have a question about city government, need a document, or help finding the right person to talk to or anything else, please know that our City Clerk, Ann-Marie McKay is there to assist you professionally and capably. Email: amckay@lagunabeachcity.net or call 949-497-0309

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