

Book and Software Reviews

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The Power of Survey Design: A User's Guide for Managing Surveys, Interpreting Results, and Influencing Respondents <i>Stephen Mistler</i>	267
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Giuseppe Iarossi. *The Power of Survey Design: A User's Guide for Managing Surveys, Interpreting Results, and Influencing Respondents* (2006). World Bank Publications, ISBN 0821363921, 250pp, \$35.

There are many books published in the field of survey research, but nearly all focus on only a portion of the survey process, rather than examining this process over its entire course. *The Power of Survey Design: A User's Guide for Managing Surveys, Interpreting Results, and Influencing Respondents*, by Giuseppe Iarossi, separates itself from similar works in that it constitutes an ambitious attempt at providing an introduction to the survey process from beginning to end. Guiding the reader through each step of the process, it covers such topics as: survey management, questionnaire design, sampling, respondent participation, and data management.

A topic often overlooked in survey design is data cleaning. Though most of the current literature advises readers on how to avoid making mistakes when conducting survey research, Iarossi's practical approach also offers readers the opportunity to salvage data after unforeseen errors have already occurred. The chapter on data management details the various types of checks that should be made on data, as well as recommendations for resolving inconsistencies. This chapter offers many examples, demonstrating each step of the data cleaning process in detail.

The chapter titled "Respondent's Psychology and Survey Participation" is easily the most engaging section of the work. It addresses the common techniques for acquiring cooperation from respondents, but acknowledges the fact that each respondent is unique and may react differently to a request for an interview. Iarossi draws conceptually from the field of Social Psychology to demonstrate how, for example, the norm of reciprocity and other techniques can help researchers obtain interviews and increase response rates. The section recommends methods for training interviewers and includes replies to common questions respondents may have and objections they may offer.

Though the book provides a general overview of survey management, its value derives from the information it provides specific to business and international surveys. This is particularly beneficial for researchers in these areas. For instance, anyone who has conducted a survey in multiple languages can attest to the fact that translation of a survey

involves balancing transliteration of the words with maintaining consistency of context across languages. A method for translating in such a way is provided here. Concerns specific to establishments are also provided for, such as the effect of changing establishment structure on sample weights and advice on how incentive use, survey timing considerations, and point of contact should be modified when surveying establishments.

Though Iarossi's text is certainly valuable, it also has its shortcomings. The most notable is the brevity of coverage given to some topics due to its goal of covering the entire survey process from beginning to end. As a result, the book fails to describe individual sections of the survey process to the same degree of detail employed by existing books. In one instance, Iarossi attempts to describe pretesting (a subject to which entire books are dedicated) in only nine pages. This gives the reader a general understanding of what a pretest is and why it is necessary but lacks sufficient detail on how a pretest should be implemented. The entire book follows in this vein, describing each step of the survey process in general terms, without in-depth specifics. It is not a sufficient substitute for reading more detailed descriptions of each step in the survey process.

Readers might find difficulty employing *The Power of Survey Design* as the user's guide it claims to be, but those wanting a general grasp of survey research can acquire it from this text. However, those seeking an introductory text would be better served by obtaining *Survey Methodology*, written by Robert Groves, Floyd Fowler, Jr., Mick Couper, James Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau. *Survey Methodology* covers much of the same material while providing the reader with greater detail and more readily understood explanations of each step. It also provides a better description of the theoretical underpinnings of the survey process. Despite these shortcomings as an introductory survey research text, *The Power of Survey Design* still deserves consideration for the details it includes related to surveying organizations and conducting surveys across cultures and countries. All told, this book is suited only to those with previous experience in survey methodology that wish to expand their knowledge of international and establishment surveys. Others would do well to pursue different options.

Reference

Groves, R.M., Fowler, F.J., Jr., Couper, M.P., Lepkowski, J.M., Singer, E. and Tourangeau, R. (2004). *Survey Methodology*. New York: John Wiley.

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