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Incentives in Physician Surveys: An Experiment Using Gift Cards and Checks

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Introduction

- Introduction
- Background on Incentives in Surveys of HCPs
- Purpose of research
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions

Introduction

- Key research questions:
 - Does the method of payment affect survey response rates?

Background

Background:

- Effect of pre-paid incentives on response rates (Kellerman & Herold 2001; Delnevo et al. 2004).
- Effects on data quality (Tambor et al. 1993).
- Misdirected funds are a small risk to available funds (Hogan 2007).
- Gift cards are a widely used method in reputable surveys (Kay 2001).

Background

Why do we care?

- Survey research has noted the utility of cards in other populations, but not among physicians acting in their professional capacity.
- Survey research is an important tool in assessing many aspects of health care delivery and costs in the United States.
- Better MD survey cooperation is better understanding of healthcare.
- Survey researchers need to find advantages in getting MD cooperation.
- Serve client interests with cost-efficiencies and improved response rates.

Purpose of the research

- Project: Purchasing Program Evaluation
- Physician Survey
 - Program-participating and Non-participating respondents surveyed
 - Multi-modal data collection effort

Embedded experiment:

- To test whether there is a significant difference in response rates between Rs receiving cards or check incentives in MD survey.

Methods

Sample:

- 1200 physicians participating in the Program
- 1200 physicians known not to be participating.
- All 50 of the United States
- Sample source: UPIN registry

Methods

Methods:

- Data Collection initiated in January 2008
- 5 wave mail (advance, survey, postcard, survey, survey)
- Multiple Response Options
 - Mail, web, phone, fax
- Teleprompting for non-respondents

Methods

Instrumentation:

- **Survey:** 6-pages PAPI survey for non-participants, 10-page for participants.
 - Topics
 - Program satisfaction, how program is used, why physicians/practice elected to use (or not use) program, some demographics.
 - Multiple-choice, Likert scales.
- **Cover letters:** on official stationery signed by client program officer, letter explaining how and why to complete from project director at RTI
- FAQ included
- **Inserts: Incentive:** Pre-paid \$25 personal check, or gift card.

Results

- Response rate data captured after 3rd round of mailing (reminder postcard)
- Subsample of 103 respondents
 - 55% gift card, 45% check

Results

- Overall response rate at time of analysis was 38%.
- A simple logistic regression model was used to analyze the effects of incentive type and program participation on response rate.

Results

	Non-Response	Response	
Gift Card	41(71%)	16 (16%)	57
Check	23 (50%)	23 (50%)	46
			N=103

Results

	Non-Response	Response	
Participating	28 (61%)	18 (39%)	46
Non-Participating	36 (63%)	21(37%)	57
			N=103

Results

- Logistic Regression Model
 - Forward Selection
 - Binary DV (Response vs. Non-Response)
 - Predictor variables: Incentive, Participation Group
- The forward selection method retained only the **incentive** variable as significant, with a Wald's $\chi^2=5.0915$, $p=.0224$.
- The Odds Ratio Point Estimate=2.562. Thus, a respondent receiving a check was 2.562 times more likely to respond.

Results

- Specialization
 - Data available, though diverse. No coherent groups of any reasonable size could be computed.
- Gender
 - Frequencies show that males were somewhat more likely to respond than females, however this difference is not significant.

Conclusions

Bottom line:

- Gift cards do not seem to be a good choice of incentive type for physician samples.
- A starting point.
 - More research needed on other professional populations
 - Additional variables may shed more light on complexities of response

Conclusions

- The cost of using a gift card incentive is actually higher than the cost of using a check of the same value.
 - Value of checks only lost if cashed, gift card value lost in all situations except returns.
 - Service charge for gift cards (up to \$3 on a \$25 card)
 - To date, 45% of checks have been cashed.
 - Unlikely that additional checks will clear at this point; checks are void after 90 days

Questions & Comments

A copy of this presentation is available at
www.rti.org/aapor