A Tool For The Advocacy Tool Box: Opinion Research

Presentation to the Oregon Environmental Education Conference

By DHM Research, Inc

March 20, 2015
DHM Research Expertise

- Opinion Research For Private, Public, and Non-Profit Organizations
- 35 Years
- Qualitative and Quantitative
- Independent and Non-Partisan
- Client list: Nike, Microsoft, Governor’s Office, Metro, City of Portland, Port of Portland, Foundations for a Better Oregon, Grantmakers of Oregon and SW Washington, Northwest Health Foundation, United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, Black Parent Initiative, Oregon Public Broadcasting
- Oregon Values & Beliefs and Your City, Your Choice studies
Presentation Topics

- Value of Opinion Research For Public Policy Advocates
- Opinion Research Basics
- Case Studies
- Discussion
Value of Opinion Research For Public Policy Advocates

- Current demographic and psychographic information
- Current attitudes information—values and beliefs
- Current behavior information
- Issue awareness and knowledge levels
- Message development
- Message testing
- Messenger testing
- Message targeting
- Message control
- Initiative or proposal testing
- Program evaluation
- Monitoring changes in awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior over time
- Client and public education/relations
Opinion Research Basics

- Qualitative techniques
- Quantitative techniques
- Validity and Statistical Reliability
- Research design issues
Qualitative Techniques

- More than focus groups
- Project stages
- Video
- Advantages and disadvantages
- Best in combination with quantitative
Quantitative Techniques

- Surveys: telephone, mail, online
- Project stages
- Tradeoff methodologies
- Advantages and disadvantages
- Best in combination with qualitative
Validity and Statistical Reliability

- There’s a difference
- Focus groups: recruiting, written exercises, group-to-group validation
- Surveys: questionnaire development (triangulation), sample size (full population vs. subgroups (stratification))
MaxDiff Importance Scores

Among the following items, which is most...least important for your local government officials to fund with taxpayer dollars?

Promoting economic vitality and access to quality jobs to all 13.7
Ensuring access to health care and other human services for children and low income families 13.3
Maintaining a financially stable city and county 10.9
Ensuring a safe and peaceful community 10.2
Ensuring decent, affordable housing 10.1
Ensuring services for seniors and the disabled 9.7
Improving public education by supplying supplemental services to school districts 9.6
Building a livable city and county through good planning and well managed growth 8.7
Improving and maintaining the transportation system 5.4
Maintaining and improving our parks, green spaces, water and air sheds 4.4
Promoting inclusion of under-represented neighborhoods and groups in public activities and services 2.5
Keeping the central city vital 1.6
Research Design Issues

- Research objectives?
- Who is your audience?
- Budget?
- Timeline?
- Benchmark potential?
Case Study 1

Reservoir Operations Study
Case Study 1 - TVA

To determine public values and beliefs regarding TVA’s integrated energy and river management system. Secure support at federal level for funding natural resources management.

- Current demographic and psychographic information
- Current attitudes information—values and beliefs
- Current behavior information
- Issue awareness and knowledge level
- Message control
- Client and public education/relations
Case Study 1 - TVA

- Large group studies throughout 7-state region – discussions and administration of policy capturing written exercise
- Regional survey, n=3,600 (150 voters in 24 congressional districts)
Case Study 1 - TVA

Perceived Highest Priority of TVA. Respondents were read a list of 6 ways TVA manages the Tennessee River system of lakes and reservoirs and were asked which one they believe is TVA’s single highest priority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Method</th>
<th>% Perceived Highest Priority</th>
<th>% Desired Highest Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electricity Production</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the Natural Environment</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Supply</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood Control</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Recreation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Navigation</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure/No Response</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Case Study 1 - TVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future Trend (in next 10 years)</th>
<th>Probability(^1) (mean score)</th>
<th>Desirability(^2) (mean score)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The population in your area will grow considerably</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There will be stronger regulations in your area protecting the Environment</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your area will have more jobs</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your area will have a greater variety of businesses and Industries</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More protection will be extended to fish and wildlife habitat in your Area</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental protection will become more important in your area than economic growth</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in your area will be concentrated in existing cities, and undeveloped areas will be left undeveloped</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Probability scale: 1=very unlikely, 3=neutral, 5=very likely  
2. Desirability scale: 1=very undesirable, 3=neutral, 5=very desirable
Case Study 2

The Salmon Project
Research Summary

• **7 Focus Groups**
  - Fairbanks (2), Mat-Su (1), Kenai/Soldotna (1), Anchorage (3)
  - 39 participants (14 women + 25 men)
  - Discussion and written exercises

• **25 In-depth Interviews With Leaders From:**
  - Native Alaskan organizations (for profit, non-profit, tribal orgs)
  - Business and industry (fishing and other)
  - Government
  - Academia
  - Conservation
Alaskan Values

• Not crowded
• Unspoiled
• Wilderness
• Natural beauty
• Fish and wildlife
• Outdoor recreation opportunities
• People
• Friendliness
• History
• Freedom
## Associations with Wild Salmon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lifeblood of Alaska:</strong></td>
<td>“It’s the basis of life up here” – Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“A lot of Alaskan identity is tied to wild salmon” – Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural:</strong></td>
<td>“I listened to one of the Native elders explaining what the fish camp meant to them. It was amazing” – Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic:</strong></td>
<td>“It brings a lot of dollars up here” – Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental:</strong></td>
<td>“The pristine, rich, unspoiled environment—salmon epitomize that” – Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political:</strong></td>
<td>“I used to say Native politics was rough until I started listening to fish politics” – Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think the state has pretty good laws and processes to protect the resource. I hope they have the courage and wherewithal to follow them” – Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multivalent:</strong></td>
<td>“I think all my values connected back [to salmon] with a ‘yes,’ in some way or some form” – Fairbanks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Wild Salmon Free Association – Regional Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PW/SE</th>
<th>Cook Inlet</th>
<th>SW</th>
<th>Interior</th>
<th>North</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good eating</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Good eating</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Economic value</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic value</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Need protection</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Need protection</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food / subsistence</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>General value</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Food / subsistence</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need protection</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Diminishing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>General value</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General value</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Economic value</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Good eating</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminishing</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Food / subsistence</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Top row values illustrative of regional differences throughout survey
  - Economic value in SW
  - Subsistence culture in North
Attitudes Toward Development – Statewide

**Statement A:** Lower energy costs from hydropower, and jobs and income from mining and other development projects, are important, but we need to develop these industries in a balanced way that ensures the future health of the wild salmon resource—even if that means paying significantly more to plan and build a project or, in some cases, foregoing such projects altogether.

**Statement B:** Protecting wild salmon is important, and we need to pay attention to that resource in our planning for dams and other development projects, but we don’t need to make significant extra costs or sacrifices. Salmon are a resilient species and they will find a way to come back even if we build the dams and mines we need.
Case Study 3

Gray Family Foundation
Oregon Outdoor School
Survey Specifications

- From September 4-7, 2014, Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc. (DHM Research) conducted a telephone survey of 400 registered voters in Oregon.

- The survey covered several topical subjects, including reason to support funding for Outdoor School, and reasons to oppose funding for Outdoor School.
Supporting Statements

Study after study show that when children connect with nature, they are mentally and physically healthier.

Outdoor education programs develop leadership, critical thinking and social skills—they have been proven to help children learn better and give an understanding of how natural systems work.

Giving our children hands-on, outdoor educational experiences is critical so future generations value Oregon's legacy and are good stewards of our natural resources.

Outdoor education makes Oregon stronger by helping keep kids in school and preparing them for jobs that are essential for Oregon to be competitive in a 21st century global economy.

Natural resources are important to Oregon's economy. Providing hands-on access and experience in Oregon's outdoors will provide paths to career opportunities for the next generation.

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Natural resources are important to Oregon's economy.Providing hands-on access and experience in Oregon's outdoors will provide paths to career opportunities for the next generation.
Opposing Statements

Outdoor School only serves children in one grade for a single week; we should use scarce resources to provide opportunities to kids of all grade levels

Families should provide kids with camping and extracurricular activities, not schools

With the cost of basic education continuing to go up, we can't afford "nice-but-not-necessary" programs like Outdoor School

Outdoor education programs are just strategies to push environmentalist agendas on children

Sending children outdoors for a week is taking them away from important class time and puts them behind on core requirements

TOP BOX (4+5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sending children outdoors for a week is taking them away from important class time and puts them behind on core requirements</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor education programs are just strategies to push environmentalist agendas on children</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the cost of basic education continuing to go up, we can't afford &quot;nice-but-not-necessary&quot; programs like Outdoor School</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families should provide kids with camping and extracurricular activities, not schools</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor School only serves children in one grade for a single week; we should use scarce resources to provide opportunities to kids of all grade levels</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Funding Sources

- Using $20 million of bottle and can deposits that are not redeemed each year: 4.1 (74%)
- Reallocating a percentage of the State's lottery funding: 3.9 (69%)
- Offering a tax credit program for outdoor school contributions: 3.7 (63%)
- Raising the bottle deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents with additional funding going to Outdoor education: 3.2 (46%)
- Increasing the state's solid waste charge by $3 per ton: 2.8 (29%)
- The General Fund, recognizing that this could reduce funding for other services: 2.8 (27%)

The TOP BOX is (4+5) with 74%.
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