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CAN WE PREDICT BREAKOFF AND INTERVENE APPROPRIATELY IN WEB SURVEYS?

Abstract: With increasing use of the internet for social research, Web surveys have become one of the most important and efficient tools for collecting survey data. One of the biggest threats to data quality in Web surveys is breakoff, which we see in this mode of data collection much more prominently than in any other mode. Given the (already) lower response rates in web surveys compared to more traditional data collection modes, it is crucial to keep as many diverse respondents in a given web survey as possible and prevent breakoff bias, maintaining high data quality and producing accurate survey estimates. We fitted a dynamic survival model to data from a real web survey to predict the likelihood of breaking off at both the respondent and page levels. This model makes use of the survey data, along with rich paradata and accessible administrative information from the sampling frame. After we evaluated the quality of predictions based on the model, we applied the model as part of a randomized experiment designed to reduce breakoff in the same on-going online survey on sustainability conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. We used the model to predict page-level breakoff risks in a live fashion while respondents were taking the Web survey. Respondents in the treatment group saw an intervention message once their risk of breaking off passed a certain threshold, while respondents in the control group had the standard collection procedure. Our analyses show that female respondents and students reacted positively on intervention messages and broke off at lower rates when assigned to the treatment group. Additionally, breakoff respondents within the treatment group answered more survey questions than untreated breakoff respondents.

THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2021

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