CHAPTER 1: When to listen to your customers

How to Use Surveys to Make Sure Your Brand's a Winner

SurveyMonkey® Audience
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If you see anything you want to learn more about, visit the last page for the “Start your brand surveys!” section at the end of this guide to find links to articles explaining the concepts covered in this guide.
Welcome!

As a marketer, you’re getting new ways to measure what’s going on with your business almost every day. From census data to web analytics to market research, you probably know a ton about your customers. And chances are you can do sophisticated projections around how much business your next campaign will drive.

While you may be able to quickly see the sales lift from an ad spend, how do you know whether a campaign changes the way people think about your company? Or what your customers think about your competitors? Or if existing customers trust you more or less than they used to?

Online surveys can be the most cost-effective way to understand what your target market really thinks about you. This branding eGuide is designed to make it easy to get the skinny on your brand’s performance. You’ll learn:

- **What you should measure** with branding surveys and why
- **How to create branding surveys** and send them to the right audience
- **What survey results mean** to your brand
- **How to track marketing campaigns** and see how your brand’s value changes over time

You’ll also find links to additional in-depth resources and survey templates.

💡 Get inspired!

It’s easy to start thinking narrowly, but remember that your brand’s not your logo, tagline, or your latest ad. It’s how consumers distinguish you from everyone else. In fact, it’s your identity. Many businesses go to great lengths to craft a brand that encapsulates everything about their products, vision, and integrity. And you should too!
Uh oh! Most marketers don’t know branding. Do you?

We used SurveyMonkey Audience to ask more than 400 marketers what they know about their brands. While 80% of them believed building brand awareness is “extremely” or “very” important, 76% admitted that they don’t know what percentage of their target market is aware of their brand. And nearly 70% said they weren’t sure how to measure brand awareness.

Where do you stand when it comes to building brand awareness?

[Bar charts showing the importance of brand awareness and the percentage of marketers who know the awareness level of their target market.]
Part I: Learn what consumers think of your brand

There isn’t any significant difference between the various brands of whiskey, or cigarettes or beer. They are all about the same. And so are the cake mixes and the detergents, and the margarines. The manufacturer who dedicates his advertising to building the most sharply defined personality for his brand will get the largest share of the market at the highest profit.

—David Ogilvy, known as “The Father of Advertising,” on brand image

When you offer a product or service that’s similar to others, you need to stand out from the crowd. Sizing up the power of your brand is key, but what exactly are you sizing up?

Marketing experts like David Ogilvy believe that there’s more to a company’s success—or failure—than pricing, convenience, or location. Success is defined by brand equity or overall brand power, which is your brand’s value as determined by consumers’ positive or negative attitudes about your brand.

You want to understand whether potential customers like you, but it’s also important to understand how they feel about various aspects of your brand (like whether they see you as traditional or innovative), so you can position yourself the right way and address perceived shortcomings.

And even if your brand is resonating with consumers right now, you want to keep an eye on the competitive landscape, adjust to changing consumer expectations, and make sure you stay number one.

The ultimate quick win

Part of building a great brand is showing customers (and potential customers) that you care about what they have to say. A 2013 study published in the Harvard Business Review found that the mere act of asking customers for their feedback increased customer retention.
How to measure brand equity

You can assess your brand equity by looking at three major areas:

- **Brand Awareness**
  Are customers familiar with your brand, products, or services?

- **Brand Loyalty**
  Do your customers plan to stick with your brand? Would they recommend you?

- **Brand Attributes**
  What characteristics do people associate with your brand?

By looking at your brand from these three angles, you get a good sense of how you’re really doing—and you can know what kind of action you need to take. If people know you, do they think of you the way you want them to? And if you’re cultivating the right image, are customers excited about what you actually deliver? Having the answers to these questions is critical for refining your brand strategy.

Get a quick snapshot of your overall brand power

Check out the [Brand Equity Survey Template](#), designed by SurveyMonkey and branding experts BAV Consulting.
Unaided brand awareness

Is your brand on consumers’ minds when they’re looking to make a purchase? When you know how visible (or invisible) you are to consumers, you’ll understand how strong your brand is in your target market, and whether you need to tailor your marketing efforts to building awareness.

To measure your company’s brand awareness, test your target market by using two types of survey questions. The first set of survey questions are unaided questions which test for brand recall—your customers’ ability to name your brand on their own.

Unaided survey questions should ask survey respondents to recall brand names, attributes, and other observations about your category without any prompts or suggestions about the answers you’re hoping to see. Answers should be given in an essay or comment box, and you should avoid mentioning any brand names or attributes. Unaided questions are used to eliminate possible bias and give you a true sense of how respondents look at the market.

Example:

When you think of online streaming video services, what brands come to mind?

We asked a group of consumers the example question on the left. Here’s a visual representation of the answers we collected:

Pro Tip

If you aren’t sure who your competitive set includes, run an unaided brand awareness survey before you do your full brand awareness survey. And if you feel pretty confident about who your competitors are, make sure you ask any unaided brand recall questions first so you don’t accidentally influence your respondents’ answers.
Measuring brand recognition

Whether you do it in the same or a separate survey, the next thing you should measure is aided **brand recognition**, which is consumers' ability to recognize your brand among a list of the others in your category.

For these questions, use a known competitive set (or the brand names you collected from your unaided recall survey) to give people a list of brands to choose from. Now you can see 1) Who your major competitors are and 2) How you rank compared to them.

**Aided survey questions** should be presented as closed-ended questions (e.g., multiple choice or ranking questions) that ask survey respondents to choose brands they know from a list of relevant brand names, attributes, and more. Below are more targeted questions designed to show you where you stand.

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**Example:**
Which of the following brands have you heard of? (Select all that apply)
- [ ] Apple
- [ ] Hulu
- [ ] Roku
- [ ] YouTube
- [ ] Netflix
- [ ] Amazon

---

**Example:**
How familiar are you with Netflix?
- [ ] Extremely familiar
- [ ] Very familiar
- [ ] Moderately familiar
- [ ] Slightly familiar
- [ ] Not at all familiar

---

**Are you number one?**
If you want to find out who consumers think of first, check out our [Brand Awareness Survey Template](#) to get a head start on your research!
How does Netflix stack up?

To take brand awareness research a step further, you can also include questions that will help develop more nuanced competitive insights. When SurveyMonkey Audience put together a competitive study on Netflix’s brand awareness, we also looked at product usage and asked consumers why they make the choices they do. For example, we learned that:

- 34% of respondents prefer competing solutions over Netflix.
- Of those people, well over half (56%) prefer Amazon Instant because it’s “more cost effective” and has “more of the content I want.”
- Compared to Android owners, more iPhone owners use online video streaming services (48% vs. 37%).
- 8.2 hours is how long the average person spends streaming content on Netflix in a typical week.

See this whole study

Contact us to get a similar study for your brand

Brand Recognition:

99% of respondents had heard of Netflix when given a list of brands

Key Industry Attributes:
Research your category’s attributes

"It is often the case not what the brand stands for, but what consumers perceive the brand stands for." — Sudio Sudarsan, brand strategist and marketing professor

It’s one thing for consumers to be aware of your brand—but knowing what they think about your brand category (or which brand attributes or characteristics they associate with it) is just as important. If your market is bottled water, for example, what brands within that category come to mind for most people? And what are the good, bad, and even ugly traits people associate with bottled water?

When you know the answers to these questions, you can shape your brand image to combat negative attributes and play up the positive ones. Start gathering these details by asking unaided questions about your category—just like you would if you wanted to understand brand awareness.

Unaided brand attribute question:

Example:
What are some qualities you look for in bottled water? (Please write your answer in the box below.)

Once you get a sense of what people expect from your product (e.g. “source,” “flavor choices,” “price”) you can use those attributes in another survey that includes aided questions to learn which positive and negative aspects of your brand category are most important to consumers:

Example:
What are some qualities you look for in bottled water? (Select all that apply)

- Flavor choices
- Taste
- Price
- Source
- Packaging
Get to know your brand attributes

"Consumers build an image [of a brand] as birds build nests. From the scraps and straws they chance upon." —Jeremy Bullmore, marketing guru, in a case study on IT branding

Once you know what consumers expect from your product category, you should compare it with how they view your brand so you can see if you’re living up to expectations. If consumers expect bottled water to be cold, refreshing, clean, and filtered, you can now survey potential customers to see how you rank compared with your competitors—and discover what other attributes consumers assign to your brand. When you know how both you and your competitors fare against the brand attributes associated with your category, you can play up strengths and work to address perceived weaknesses.

Example:
Select all of the characteristics you think apply to each brand.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clean</th>
<th>Refreshing</th>
<th>Eco-friendly</th>
<th>Healthy</th>
<th>Best brand in category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethos</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How loyal are your customers?

How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?

Once you know both how aware consumers are of your brand and what they think of it, you’re on your way to understanding what makes your brand tick. But having great awareness and admirable attributes won’t help you at all if your customers don’t buy from you again—or if they’re not recommending your brand to their friends and family.

When your customers have the opportunity to go with another brand and they continue to choose yours—that’s not only great for business—that’s brand loyalty. Here are some great ideas for measuring brand loyalty:

1. **Measure your overall customer satisfaction.** Find out what keeps customers coming back (or what’s keeping them away) by asking them targeted questions about products, prices, service, and convenience. Here’s a [satisfaction survey template](#).

2. **Calculate your Net Promoter® Score.** The Net Promoter Score (NPS) survey question was developed by the customer experience experts at Satmetrix to help companies get a standard customer loyalty score that’s benchmarkable across industries. You can read about [how to calculate your score](#) once you’ve used the [Net Promoter Score Survey Template](#) to measure how loyal customers are to your brand.

3. **Listen to the voice of the customer by collecting customer comments.** Sure, you can collect quantitative data, like “23% of customers say they trust our company,” but asking for open-ended feedback will help you make targeted improvements to your brand.

Got room for improvement?

Use our [Brand Loyalty Survey Template](#) to get to know whether customers are recommending your brand to others. These survey results will shine a spotlight on not only your brand loyalty, but also the things that customers value overall in a brand—data that can help you as you develop your brand over time.
Part II: Understanding your survey results

Track growth and change over time

So far we’ve shown you how to assess your brand at a single point in time. While doing so is critical, you’ll probably need to take a longer term view because results from just one survey won’t give you enough context.

For example, if 65% of your target market has heard of you, is that a good thing or a bad thing? It’s hard to say in the abstract, but if you improve unaided awareness from 65% to 90%, you’re probably doing something right.

Tracking your brand over time will help you set both performance baselines and appropriate goals. And it will help you understand whether your efforts are making a difference.

These baselines are also important for understanding the impact of specific campaigns. After your next product launch or ad buy, you’ll be able to see an immediate impact on sales, but you may not know whether those efforts have long-term implications for your brand. By repeating brand tracking surveys, you can identify which efforts make a difference.

Pro Tip

Setting business benchmarks needn’t be limited to your brand surveys. In fact, none of your KPIs mean much without a little context. If you need help setting goals and laying out mile markers, here are a few ideas.
How internal benchmarks work

So, you’ve run surveys to measure and track information about your brand. What do you do with all that data? You put it into perspective. Say you want to measure brand loyalty using one of our Branding and Brand Identity Survey Templates:

1. Send out a survey to gauge customers’ loyalty: “How likely are you to recommend or purchase our product in the near future?”

2. Gather the results of this initial survey question and look at your numbers. In this case, let’s say your survey’s “likely to recommend” number is 67%.

The hard part is over: Your benchmark has already been set at 67%. Here’s how to quantify your progress from there:

3. Set goals: Say you want to raise that number by 15% within six months. Make 82% your goal and work hard to meet it by improving your product, customer service, or whatever you think it will take to get there. Easy, right?

4. Send subsequent surveys: Send the exact same survey to customers again in six months. At least twice a year is best, at regular intervals.

5. Compare results: When the new survey results are in, compare that number with your benchmark. Maybe this time, you’ll get 77%.

6. Refocus your strategy and reset expectations: Every time you collect feedback, you’ll want to review and possibly adjust your goals. If you happen to dip below your benchmark, you’ll need to make some serious improvements to get your head above water again. Also, keep an eye on quarter-over-quarter trends. Depending on the nature of your business, customers’ opinions of you may vary seasonally.

“I have a BMW. But only because BMW stands for Bob Marley and The Wailers, and not because I need an expensive car.”

—Bob Marley
There’s a reason why it’s important to keep surveying consumers about your brand attributes. Many different factors, including your company’s leadership, can affect how consumers view your brand. For example, global strategic consultancy BAV Consulting has been tracking Apple’s brand attributes for two decades.

They found that late CEO Steve Jobs brought vision and technical innovation to his company’s brand. But since his death, the way people feel about the Apple brand has shifted.

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<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>percent change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique</strong></td>
<td>–33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliable</strong></td>
<td>–6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Progressive</strong></td>
<td>–16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Different</strong></td>
<td>–17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>+33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helpful</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>+17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obliging</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>+55%</td>
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Steve Jobs’ absence from Apple's leadership post corresponded with a shift to seeing the brand as less unique, reliable, progressive and different, but more traditional, helpful and obliging.

Although it’s tough to say whether or not this shift will have a negative or positive impact on Apple’s brand in the long run, it’s important to track these changes so that if the numbers do start to go south, Apple has more context and can make targeted changes to its messaging, customer outreach, and products.
Are specific campaigns helping your brand?

So how do you understand whether your company’s new series of ads is having a positive impact on your brand? Once again, benchmarks are your best friend!

If you measure brand attributes, awareness, and customer loyalty immediately before and after an ad campaign, you’ll be able to isolate its impact.

You’ll also get signals on what your messaging or offers are likely to mean for your brand over a longer period of time.

For example, a campaign that advertises low prices might drive new business, but it might also erode your position as a premium brand.

The Smell of Success

Remember when Old Spice seemed, well, old? Antiquated? Stale? Marketers at Old Spice sure do.

Upon learning that Old Spice was associated with old men, its savvy marketers wanted to cultivate a younger, fresher image. To do so, they embraced social media, got former NFL player Isaiah Mustafa on board (or on a horse, if you’re familiar with the commercials), and created a series of YouTube videos that went viral. Their sales doubled following their first video campaign. Old Spice even inspired a popular online meme (pictured on the right) that seems like it’s not going away anytime soon. Smells like success!
Getting good responses

“Products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind.”
—German “brand design legend,” Walter Landor

When you’re ready to start surveying your target market, asking the right questions is only half the battle.

Who to ask about your brand:

While it’s valuable to get feedback from existing customers, you shouldn’t focus on them specifically. Instead, you need a representative sample of the larger market— all the people who are potential customers.

How can you reach a broad, unbiased sample of your market? That can be a little tougher. A great place to start is SurveyMonkey Audience. Specify your criteria, and we can draw from millions of potential respondents to give you the feedback you need.

And how often to ask:

Fast-growing companies or companies in a rapidly changing market should run brand tracking surveys four times a year. Companies in more developed markets should run brand surveys 1–2 times a year, or when they want to track the results of a specific campaign.

Make sure to run identical surveys each time. That way, you’ll know you’re comparing apples to apples when you look at the trends in your survey results.

How many responses do you need? How should you write questions?

When you get into the nitty gritty of writing a survey, there can be lots of ins and outs. For help at every stage of the process, check out our Surveys 101 guide.
Sure, internal benchmarking helps you set and meet your goals. But **external benchmarking** (or industry benchmarking) gives you perspective across your category.

With external benchmarking, you’re measuring consumers’ opinions of your company against companies that are similar to yours. A 15% increase in brand loyalty over six months is great for your internal metrics, but what if one of your competitors surged 20% during the same period from a higher original benchmark?

There a few ways to get at this information. For example, you can try to cobble it together by looking at publicly available industry data. Or you can keep a list of competitors in your own surveys, which makes it easy to review results, side by side.

We asked consumers which brands they thought of first in different industries and generated a proprietary brand awareness score for each brand. Now other companies can see how they stack up against the biggest brands in their industry.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fast Food</td>
<td>McDonald’s</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Apparel</td>
<td>Nike</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streaming Music</td>
<td>Pandora</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pro Tip**

Want to see where your company stands? Find out if SurveyMonkey has benchmarking data relevant to your organization.

**Share This Guide**
Understanding where you really fit in

“A business based on brand is, very simply, a business primed for success.”
—David F. Alessandro, former CEO John Hancock

If 80% of marketers think their brand is important, but only 24% of them know how to measure brand awareness, you probably have a great opportunity to make inroads against the competition. Simply do the research they don’t know how to do!

You now know all the basics on how to:

- Measure unaided brand awareness
- Identify your competitive set
- Measure aided brand awareness
- Discover attributes consumers expect from your category
- Learn whether they feel you and your competitors deliver what they expect
- See the impact of marketing campaigns
- Find out how loyal your customers are

So you’re ready to go off, build an incredible brand—and quantify the results. But if you feel like you need a little help, turn the page...
Start your brand surveys!

Complete Brand & Competitive Insights Studies

Get the information you need to build your brand. SurveyMonkey Audience offers a comprehensive service to evaluate your brand, as well as the competition.

We'll write your surveys, get them in front of your target market, and deliver the results in a presentation-ready report.

Contact us to learn more ➔

Or check out additional services and resources for creating branding surveys:

**Services**
- SurveyMonkey Audience – Market Research
- SurveyMonkey Benchmarking – Consultation
- SurveyMonkey Enterprise – Team Accounts

**Survey Templates**
- Brand Equity Survey Template
- Brand Awareness Survey Template
- Brand Loyalty Survey Template

**Articles**
- Advertising and Brand Equity
- Aided and Unaided Survey Questions
- Benchmarking Survey Results
- Understanding Your Brand Attributes
- How To Measure Brand Awareness
- 5 Metrics for Measuring Brand Loyalty
- Brand Tracking Surveys
- Branding and Brand Identity
Who are we?

SurveyMonkey Audience is the home to millions of on-demand survey respondents who are ready to tell you what they think of your brand. From creating surveys to finding the right people to take them, SurveyMonkey Audience makes brand research easy.

After running thousands of brand management studies, we’ve developed a sophisticated research methodology to get data on brand awareness, product usage, competitive insights, comparative positioning, and other key brand metrics in less than two weeks.

Measure your brand power

It’s the fastest way to talk to your competitors’ customers.

Contact us to get started —>

What we deliver

- Quarterly in-depth insights on your brand and competitors
- Complete analysis in report format, ready to present
- Two-week project cycles to get insights fast
- A proprietary iterative survey design process