The University of Sheffield Information School

Participant Information Sheet

1.   Research Project Title:

User Interface and Behavior Analysis of Web-based Long Surveys

2.   Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. We are therefore providing you with the following information. Please take time to read it carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

3.   What is the project's purpose?

This is a study about investigation of user interface, user experience and user behaviour analysis of web-based long surveys. For online surveys, dropout is one of the most significant problems especially when surveys are designed with greater length. This research aims to study whether designing with alternative layouts could help to enhance user experience and enhance completion rate and filling-out rate of surveys. Device type, browsers, interests, electronic usage, and hobbies will be related to the analysis of survey dropouts. The duration of the study will be three months from June to August 2022, and this is part of the dissertation project for the graduate degree requirement in University of Sheffield.

4.   Why have I been chosen?

People aged over 21 years old with internet access are being invited to take part. Ideally 900 people are expected to be recruited for the study for an adequate number of entities. Participants with access to public web links shared through social media including Weibo, Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, and several other crowdsourcing platforms are invited. Members in student volunteer list maintained by the University of Sheffield are invited as well.

5.   Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. We can assist to explain the study and go through the information details. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to give this information sheet to keep be asked to sign a consent form. To do this, you will be asked to agree to the terms on the welcome and consent page of the online survey by clicking the start button. You can still withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You do not have to give a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact Xiwen Li (xli346@sheffield.ac.uk) or Mengdie Zhuang (m.zhuang@sheffield.ac.uk).

Please note that that by choosing to participate in this research, this will not create a legally binding agreement, nor is it intended to create an employment relationship between you and the University of Sheffield.

6.   What will happen to me if I take part? What do I have to do?

You will be asked to complete a brief online questionnaire that includes 30 questions that will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. All questions are optional, and you may skip any questions if you feel reluctant to answer. You can only take the survey once. The survey will be closed on July 30, 2022. All data collected will be analysed through data visualization, descriptive analysis, and A/B/n testing. The research results will be included in the dissertation coursework which will be stored in the dissertation database managed by the University of Sheffield.

7.   What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

As the topics included in the survey is about casual questions regarding interests, hobbies and technologies, and the survey will be delivered virtually, there will be no risk of taking part both mentally and physically.

8.   What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of the study include enhancing the future user experience of online surveys and improving the data quality collected from online surveys in terms of filling-out rate and completion rate. This could potentially help to make surveys more interesting and immersive for participants and provide researchers and organizations with novel designing directions. There is no intended monetary benefit delivered from taking part in the project.

9.   Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to members of the research team.   You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this. If you agree to us sharing the information you provide with other researchers (e.g. by making it available in a data archive) then your personal details will not be included unless you explicitly request this.

10.   What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?

No sensitive personal data will be collected throughout the study. According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.'

As we will be collecting some data that is defined in the legislation as more sensitive (information about …), we also need to let you know that we are applying the following condition in law: that the use of your data is necessary 'for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific research purposes or statistical purposes' (9(2)(j)).

11.   What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?

The data collection will be based on website click retrieval that tracks user behavior (clicks of a checkbox, radio selection, typed-in action, and buttons.), click position (mouse position of clicks), scrolling action (scrolling position with time recorded), and submitted survey inputs. Browser types like Chrome, Safari or Firefox, and device type including desktop, tablet and mobile will be collected. Sensitive data like full names, IP address, contact method, and any other personal information of users will not be recorded by the website. The gathered data will be safely stored under support of AWS DynamoDB service with password and configured IP access, and the website security will be constantly monitored by correspondent AWS services. Data will be available to supervisor, dissertation markers, Exams Officer, and the Unfair Means Officer upon request, and will be submitted and safe-kept by a secure server provided by the University of Sheffield once the data collection procedure is finished. None of the raw data collected will be published or linked to public platforms and will be deleted once the marking of the dissertation is completed (around November 2022). Only aggregated statistics such as mean of completion rate and survey completeness, heatmap of click patterns will be included in the dissertation submission.

The overall findings of the study may be submitted in a form of a dissertation coursework. You will be not mentioned in any way. All data entries will be anonymised and will not be identifiable based on information collected. If you would like to receive information about the results of the study, please let us know, and we will forward a summary of the findings to you at the end of the study. Due to the nature of this research, it is very likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. We will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way.

12.   Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is part of the dissertation requirement under master's degree in the University of Sheffield and is with no funding.

13.   Who is the Data Controller?

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that The University of Sheffield is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

14.   Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by Information School department.

15.   What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding your treatment by researchers or something serious occurring during or following the participation in the project, you can contact the study supervisor Mengdie Zhuang (m.zhuang@sheffield.ac.uk). If you feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the Head of Department, who will then escalate the complaint through the appropriate channels. If the complaint relates to how the personal data has been handled, information about how to raise a complaint can be found in the University's Privacy Notice: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.

16.   Contact for further information

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the project supervisor Mengdie Zhuang (m.zhuang@sheffield.ac.uk) or the research creator Xiwen Li (xli346@sheffield.ac.uk) who will be happy to discuss the study or answer any questions you may have. If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, please contact Professor Peter Bath & Dr Sophie Rutter, Research Ethics Coordinators, Information School, The University of Sheffield (ischool_ethics@sheffield.ac.uk). The copy of the information sheet and the signed consent form can be downloaded or printed from the website.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering taking part.