

Federal Statistical Office's reputation and acceptance by selected target groups

Heidrun Stirner (DESTATIS, Germany)

1. The purpose of the study

Reputation is considered the most important insubstantial value of a company or an institution. It is based on the personal experiences or perceptions of target groups and important multipliers. Their basic needs and “delighters” depend on their expectations and influence the drivers of reputation. A high reputation is of paramount importance in being accepted as an independent, reliable and trustworthy data provider. It can also be expected to yield indirect benefits through better participation rates in (voluntary) surveys, positive effects on data quality and an increasing use of the data by the media and societal decision makers.

2. Concept and survey design

A reputation analysis goes beyond traditional customer surveys. Customer surveys often focus on available products and services and registered customers. But there are many possible target groups influencing reputation: Opinion shapers, key institutions, respondents and multipliers.

The questions for the Federal Statistical Office of Germany's (FSO) analysis were: What is our reputation among different target groups? How can we increase reputation within fewer available resources and within the fast changes of the media environment? What are the basic needs or delighters concerning data search, data use and the process of data collection? To get a manageable frame for the study we focused on three target groups that have become increasingly important: respondents (private households and enterprises), fast multipliers (data journalists) and young multipliers (graduates and doctorates of social and economic sciences). To avoid biased answers, the analysis was conducted in 2013 in cooperation with a market researcher (LINK Institute). The conceptual basis of the reputation analysis was developed at the FSO. Our market researcher conducted almost 5000 interviews, so we have a reliable database.

● **Respondents** (*households*)

We needed to learn more about the willingness of the population to respond in household samples and about their attitude towards official statistics in general (regardless of whether they have survey experiences or not).

● **Respondents** (*enterprises*)

Enterprises in Germany must respond to a variety of mandatory surveys monthly and annually. We wanted to learn more about their attitude towards the reporting process and their perception of official statistics. The market researcher conducted interviews with managing directors or members of upper management who are in charge of the reporting process.

- **Fast multipliers** (*online and data journalists*)

The needs of online- and data journalists are interesting because their work is often data driven. They tell stories with interactive tools on the websites of big newspapers. Five leading data journalists were interviewed primarily to identify their special needs in data search and data use.

- **Young multipliers** (*young graduates and PhD students of social and economic sciences*)

Statistical data are important for the studies of many young multipliers and will be important for their work in the future. Most of the young academics will get jobs in the private or public sector or in the scientific community where they are important multipliers for official data.

Survey design

	Respondents	Fast multipliers	Young multipliers
Qualitative		individual focused interviews, n=5	discussion group, n=12
Quantitative	private households, computer-assisted telephone interviews, n=2200	online questionnaire, n=300	graduates online questionnaire, n=1000
	enterprises, computer-assisted telephone interviews, n=1000		PhD students online questionnaire, n=290

3. Measuring reputation, basic needs and delighters

For measuring reputation values, a multi-dimensional method was used, which is common in market research. The target groups were asked to assess the FSO Germany in different dimensions (responsibility, products, vision, and environment). The average over the different fields is the reputation index for each target group. The reputation analysis was based on the “Kano-Model”. It was developed by Narioki Kano, a former psychologist at Tokyo University. The model classifies user needs in different categories and is often used in quality management and product development.

The most important category is “basic needs.” Basic needs are taken for granted by the subject and they are typically unspoken. If they are fulfilled, they do not increase satisfaction. If they are not fulfilled, they cause dissatisfaction. Another important category is called the “excitement attributes” or “delighter.” Delighters are not expected by customers, so do not result in dissatisfaction if not present. But when delighters are present, they can result in high

levels of customer satisfaction and can increase reputation. Target groups were analyzed for their basic needs and delighters concerning data search, data use, data related services and the reporting process.

4. Results

In general the FSO is considered as a trustworthy, competent and accepted institution. But it was also characterized as being bureaucratic and less innovative.

60% of the journalists and young academics have already used data from the FSO. But the reputation values differ between survey respondents and multipliers. Part of this difference is explained by the fact that respondents are asked for their data and multipliers asked for our data. Nevertheless, FSO wishes to improve the results in a variety of ways.

● Respondents

Most of the managing directors in enterprises (59%) are of the opinion that official data is important for the German economy and democracy. But only 29% think that the results of enterprise surveys are important for their company. Obviously they are not aware of how they can benefit from the data. The analysis showed similar effects for the private households. It has a strong positive impact on the reputation results if respondents think that surveys are important for themselves.

Most important basic needs and delighters: Especially for the responding enterprises, it is an important basic need to get survey results after the survey is completed. Telephone help service is a basic need, especially for the bigger companies and households to support the reporting process. The results show how important it is to report the results of surveys directly to the respondents.

● Fast multipliers

The satisfaction among the group of the fast multipliers is very high. 89% of them are satisfied or very satisfied with the services of the Federal Statistical Office and 94% would even recommend it. The most important information source for the fast multipliers is the Internet. Half of the journalists work with smartphones and tablets.

Most important basic needs and delighters: Fast multipliers expect more than databases and datasets. For almost one out of two, telephone support is a basic need. Also, they expect to find the data they are looking for as fast as possible, and for free, to avoid dissatisfaction. After an average of 14 minutes of searching on the FSO website they will contact the information service if they are not able to find what they are looking for. Interactive charts would delight most of the journalists. Application programming interfaces (APIs) to grab huge amounts of primary data are a delighter, especially for the data journalists. The analysis showed that the data journalists are not aware of the existing API service. Another important delighter is explanatory texts on how to read tables and charts. It seems that we have overestimated the statistical knowledge of journalists because obviously many of them do not know how to read complicated tables and charts.

● Young multipliers

Most important basic needs and delighters: There are intersections between the young and the fast multipliers. Young multipliers also want data as fast as possible and for free on the Internet. Most of the PhD students expect detailed methodological descriptions related to the datasets. What are the delighters? Surprisingly, one half of the young academics mentioned examples on how to read tables and charts as a delighter. Similar to the fast multipliers, we have overestimated their statistical knowledge in the past.

Already more than one third of the students see the opportunity to search for data via smartphone or tablet as a delighter. Social media has no impact on the Kano-model. It is neither a basic need nor a delighter in Germany.

Results at a glance

	Respondents	Fast multipliers	Young multipliers
Kano basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • results of surveys (enterprises) • telephone-support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telephone-support • data quick to find • all data for free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data quick to find • all data online • all data for free • detailed methodological descriptions (PhD students)
Kano delighters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • results of surveys (households) • online surveys (enterprises) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interactive charts • explanatory texts for charts and tables • Application programming interface (data journalists) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explanatory texts for charts and tables • data on mobile devices

5. Reputation and conclusion

On a scale from 0 (very bad) to 7 (very good) the reputation values are 5.3 for the fast and the young multipliers, 4.7 for the households and 4.6 for the enterprises. After the analysis we know the basic needs and delighters of our target groups and we can use this knowledge to manage and improve our reputation.

The analysis showed how we can achieve quick wins to delight target groups. To add explanatory texts related to charts and tables is not much effort. We have to publish our data in a way that enables people without special knowledge in statistics to understand the facts. To satisfy the basic needs for young and fast multipliers, the FSO Germany has to continue our work on the search engine to make their search more effective.

The most difficult challenge is to meet the needs of the respondents. The results show that there is an urgent need to provide data for respondents after the surveys has been completed, which is not common practice at the moment. This affects the work of the statistical offices of the federal states.

Basic needs and delighters of target groups are most likely different in other countries, but the author hopes that the methodology and the survey design described above might be helpful in other national settings, as well.

References

Dr. Lauff, Helen, Wachenfeld, Alexandra, Abschlussbericht zum Projekt Reputations- und Akzeptanzanalyse für das Statistische Bundesamt, Link Institut, 2014.

Kano, Narioki, Attractive Quality and Must-be Quality. Journal of the Japanese Society for Quality Control, H. 4, 39-48, 1984.

Fombrun, Charles J. Reputaion: Realizing Value from the Corporate Image. Boston 1996

Willand, Ilka, Stimer, Heidrun, Dr. Lauff, Helen, Die Reputationsanalyse des Statistischen Bundesamtes, in: WISTA Wirtschaft und Statistik, 1/2015

Willand, Ilka, Beyond traditional customer surveys: The reputation analysis, Statistical Journal of the IAOS, 2015 (in preparation)