

In Search of Motivation for the Business Survey Response Task

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Increasing reluctance of businesses to participate in surveys often leads to declining or low response rates, poor data quality and burden complaints, and suggests that a driving force, that is, the motivation for participation and accurate and timely response, is insufficient or lacking. Inspiration for ways to remedy this situation has already been sought in the psychological theory of self-determination; previous research has favored enhancement of intrinsic motivation compared to extrinsic motivation. Traditionally however, enhancing extrinsic motivation has been pervasive in business surveys. We therefore review this theory in the context of business surveys using empirical data from the Netherlands and Slovenia, and suggest that extrinsic motivation calls for at least as much attention as intrinsic motivation, that other sources of motivation may be relevant besides those stemming from the three fundamental psychological needs (competence, autonomy and relatedness), and that other approaches may have the potential to better explain some aspects of motivation in business surveys (e.g., implicit motives). We conclude with suggestions that survey organizations can consider when attempting to improve business survey response behavior.

Key words: Data quality; incentive; organization; respondent; survey participation.

1. Introduction

It is a real challenge for today's survey organizations and researchers to collect information from their studied populations. This challenge is most visible in declining response rates (De Leeuw and De Heer 2002; Baruch 1999) that have stabilized at a low level in research on organizations (Baruch and Holtom 2008) but only because of response-enhancing techniques (Anseel et al. 2010). Less visible, though far from marginal, is the issue of the poor quality of reported data, which is the main (though not the only) reason for the high cost of data editing in governmental surveys of business organizations, which may represent as much as 30% (e.g., Adolfsson et al. 2010) of the total survey cost. Businesses describe statistical reporting as burdensome even if it only represents a tiny proportion of all administrative burdens (Haraldsen et al. 2013). The problems of declining or low response rates, poor data

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quality and burden complaints suggest that a driving force, namely the motivation for the business survey task, is insufficient or lacking.

Most commonly the term *motivation* is used to describe “why a person in a given situation selects one response over another or makes a given response with great energization or frequency” (Bargh et al. 2010, 268). Behavioral outcomes reflect, among other factors, the level of motivation to participate in a task and perform it well. The role of motivation has been acknowledged and indirectly tested in academic and commercial business surveys, for example, through research on incentives or survey design (for an overview of research on response enhancing techniques see, for example, Cycyota and Harrison 2006, or Jobber et al. 2004). More recently, a paradigm shift from a burden-centered to a motivation-centered approach seems to be occurring in governmental business surveys as increasing attention is given to improving the overall survey experience, especially through better communication and relationships with businesses and efforts to understand the business response environment (for a recent overview, see Snijkers et al. 2013). In the context of response burden, survey motivation is often associated with a respondent’s perception of the usefulness of the statistics to the business and/or society; it has been considered an important factor for perception of response burden and through that for data quality and response rates (Dale and Haraldsen 2007). Very few studies, however, have established an empirical link between motivation, perceived burden and response behavior (e.g., Kennedy and Phipps 1995; Hedlin et al. 2005; Hedlin et al. 2008; Giesen 2012). These studies provide some evidence that higher motivation (i.e., higher perceived usefulness of the survey or greater interest in survey participation) may be related to lower perceived burden and/or better response behavior.

Several studies have given an account of factors that affect participation or data quality in business surveys (e.g., Davis and Pihama 2009; Giesen and Burger 2013; Janik and Kohaut 2009; Porter 2004; Seiler 2010). Theoretically, these accounts are largely based on one or a combination of the frameworks provided by Groves et al. (1992), Tomaskovic-Devey et al. (1994, 1995), and Willimack et al. (2002). Some of these studies explicitly suggest that the identified factors (e.g., survey design, time spent on a previous questionnaire’s completion, business situation) affect participation through the motivation to respond; however, both the empirical accounts and the theoretical frameworks lack a detailed explanation about the precise role of motivation and how the factors affect response behavior or motivation for this behavior. These studies investigate neither the mechanisms about how motivation works nor the role of perceived response burden (for an exception addressing the latter, see Giesen and Burger 2013).

Recently, a psychological motivation theory, namely Self-Determination Theory (hereinafter SDT), has been applied to the field of household surveys (see Wenemark et al. 2010;

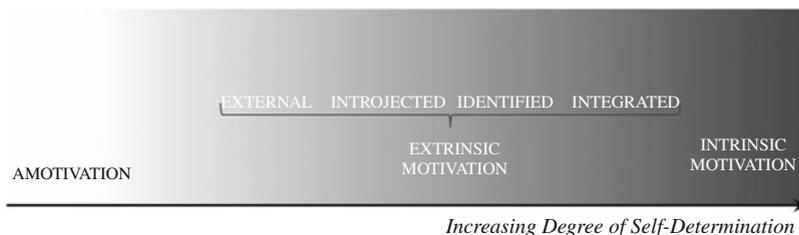


Fig. 1. A model of motivation according to Self-Determination Theory and its subtheory Organismic Integration Theory (based on Deci and Ryan 1985)

Wenemark et al. 2011). As illustrated in Figure 1, SDT posits motivation as a continuum between amotivation, that is lack of motivation, at one extreme, and intrinsic motivation, that is, completely self-determined, internally rewarding motivation, at the other extreme; extrinsic motivation, that is, originating from outside the individual, is in between (Deci and Ryan 1985; Gagné and Deci 2005). As Kruglanski (1975) puts it, with intrinsic motivation the task is an end in itself, whereas with extrinsic motivation the task is a means to an end. People may thus be completing business surveys because they find this kind of work interesting, or because some externally imposed reasons or incentives make them do it, for example, avoiding reminders or a superior's dissatisfaction, fulfilling duties to society, and so on. Given the importance of extrinsic motivation in the work environment where a business survey task usually takes place, a subtheory of SDT, Organismic Integration Theory, is used to detail the different variants of extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan 1985). As indicated in Figure 1, transitions from the least self-determined (i.e., external) to the most self-determined (i.e., integrated) extrinsic motivation are a matter of degree and may also change over time through processes of internalization and integration. Respondents can turn extrinsically motivating aspects of the business survey task into (more) internalized elements by making them more personal. Externally initiated motivation may become *introjected* if respondents accept an imposed regulation (though not as their own), or *identified* if respondents value certain behaviors for their congruence with their personal goals and identities, or even *integrated* if respondents completely identify specific behaviors with themselves.

Applying this theory allows survey participation theories to be broadened to also include task commitment and performance. Wenemark et al. (2011) use SDT as an inspiration to redesign data collection procedures and the questionnaire of a self-administered voluntary health-related survey of individuals. This redesign focused on promoting *competence*, *autonomy* and *relatedness*, which are regarded as innate psychological needs that facilitate intrinsic motivation according to Cognitive Evaluation Theory, another subtheory of SDT (Deci and Ryan 1980, 1985). Based on an experiment, they conclude that survey researchers should aim to enhance intrinsic motivation to achieve respondents' superior commitment to the task, as research suggests that the quality of experience and performance is higher when intrinsic motivation is stimulated (Ryan and Deci 2000), and that incentives undermine intrinsic motivation (see e.g., Deci et al. 1999). At the same time, they acknowledge that the topic studied may have been inherently interesting to respondents and that the possibilities of intrinsically motivating respondents may vary across different surveys and different populations.

Business surveys and businesses have many specific features (see e.g., Rivière 2002), which casts doubts on the applicability of Wenemark et al.'s (2011) conclusions for business surveys. The business participation decision and the survey response task occur in a business setting, where the response occupies participants' work time; respondents provide answers on behalf of their organization, and the task's rejection, inaccurate and late completion may have consequences for the participants and their organization (e.g., superiors' reprimands, or survey reminders, follow-up calls or even fines). To better understand survey response motivation in such a setting, we use a combination of primary and secondary data sources from qualitative research interviews conducted in businesses in two countries, the Netherlands and Slovenia. We use thematic analysis to identify sources of motivation according to theoretically defined types of motivation in the SDT

and its subtheories. We define *sources of motivation* as “those conditions that elicit, sustain, and enhance this special type of motivation” (Ryan and Deci 2000, 57). The data and methods are presented in the next section, followed by the presentation of results. In light of these exploratory data and specifics of the setting, we review and discuss the applicability of the SDT to business surveys. We propose that in the business setting: (a) extrinsic motivation calls for at least as much attention as intrinsic motivation, that (b) other sources of motivation may be relevant besides those stemming from the three fundamental needs in the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (competence, autonomy and relatedness), and that (c) other approaches may have the potential to better explain some aspects of motivation in business surveys than the SDT framework alone, for instance McClelland’s (1985) dual system approach to motivation that treats implicit motives (for simplicity, these approaches are presented together with relevant quotes in Subsections 3.3 and 3.4). The article concludes with suggestions for improvement of motivation in business surveys and ideas for further research.

2. Data and Methods

The presented study is based on data collated from primary and secondary data sources, using the different sources of evidence to support validity of findings. The *primary data* were collected as part of the international research project BLUE-ETS (BLUE Enterprise and Trade Statistics; see www.blue-ets.eu) that sought, among other topics (e.g., use of internal and external data), to understand what motivates businesses to participate in and report accurately and on time to national statistical institutes’ (NSI) surveys. Our study analyzed data collected from businesses in the Netherlands and Slovenia. The *secondary data* were collected as part of doctoral research that studied the actual response process to a specific business survey from start to finish (i.e., from the moment the survey instrument entered the business to the moment it left the business) in real business environments (see Bavdaž 2010). The survey studied, the Quarterly Survey on Trade, was a mandatory self-administered survey conducted in Slovenia by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia on a sample of units performing trade activities.

The two studies differed in many ways that might have an impact on the reported sources of motivation. One study addressed surveys in general so it collected general perceptions, while the other focused on a single survey when the experience of responding to that survey was still fresh and memories vivid (special attention was paid to minimizing the time that elapsed between the completion and the interview) so that it collected immediate perceptions about the situation as they arose. One study included units from different economic sectors that might have completely different attitudes towards data and surveys; the other included only units from the trade services that might be more homogeneous in this respect. One study addressed the motivation together with data use, thus extending the context to potential benefits of data reporting, while the other addressed motivation together with the response process, thus mainly focusing on the cost aspect of data reporting. One was conducted during the most recent economic downturn that might reduce motivation for survey response; the other was carried out in much better economic conditions. The secondary data source thus complements the primary data source well. More details about both data sources are given below.

2.1. Sample Selection

To ensure that the businesses had had some experience with business surveys, the sampling frame for primary data collection in the Netherlands was the sample of a large survey conducted by Statistics Netherlands. In Slovenia, the sampling frame for primary data collection consisted of all corporations as listed in the Slovenian commercial database GVIN. The sampling frame for secondary data collection was the sample of the studied trade survey.

In the case of both primary and secondary data sources, the selection of businesses aimed to gather as many different insights as possible in accordance with purposeful maximum variation sampling (Cutcliffe 2000). As suggested by Sandelowski et al. (1992) and Coyne (1997), this purposeful sampling was partially superseded by theoretical sampling: We targeted businesses of different size and economic activity because these two variables are generally hypothesized to influence survey response behavior the most and in multiple ways.

Businesses for the primary data collection were thus chosen from different size classes (small – fewer than 50 employees; medium – 50 to 250 employees; and large – 250 + employees) and diverse manufacturing, commercial and service activities. Three criteria guided our selection of the two-digit NACE activities from which we chose businesses: Activities had to have many businesses, because a high number of similar businesses increases the relevance of our findings; they had to be important for the national economy, because activities that have a significant contribution to national economic indicators typically receive considerable attention from survey organizations (they are surveyed more often and/or in more detail, which adds to a high response burden and increases the importance of motivation); or they had to have a large share of small businesses that deserve special attention, because they have a relatively high response burden given their modest resources (see Seens 2010) and are assumed to have problematic survey response behavior (such as nonresponse, item nonresponse or measurement errors). We selected businesses from activities that preferably satisfied more than one criterion. The national samples preferably avoided more than one business sampled from any two-digit NACE codes. We also sought to ensure as much variability as possible with respect to other criteria that were not explicitly defined as inclusion criteria. We can say that we covered both services and industry, internationally oriented and locally oriented business, foreign and domestically owned business, and different locations. The secondary data source, on the other hand, was already limited to a single economic activity. Its sample was selected systematically across all business sizes, but businesses that were the largest in size in a particular trade activity and/or in trade as a whole were oversampled.

2.2. Sample Recruitment

In the case of the primary data source, initial contacts were established by phone. The recruiting strategy was to start with one interview per business agreed in advance (with either a business survey respondent or a data user; the latter sometimes being in the managing position), and then ask for another interview on the spot using the “foot in the door” technique. In some businesses, we first targeted business survey respondents, while in others we targeted data users (e.g., accounting, economic, analytical and (quality)

control departments). As can be seen from Table 1, the strategy was especially successful in Slovenia, where most on-site visits resulted in more than one interview. In the Netherlands, gift vouchers for use in many Dutch shops were given before or after the interview as a token of appreciation.

The recruiting approach was different in the case of the secondary data source. An advance letter was first sent to respondents of the Quarterly Survey on Trade. Then a telephone contact was established to obtain information about the timing of the questionnaire's completion. This information was later communicated to them in written form (mail and/or email). Subsequent telephone calls served as final confirmation of the date of the on-site visit, which had to coincide with or follow the completion of the questionnaire. As can be seen from Table 1, a group interview was conducted in three cases because respondents were working together very closely (e.g., a novice and the preceding respondent). After the interviews with respondents, an attempt was made to contact other mentioned key people involved in the survey response process besides the respondents (mainly providers of data to respondents, but also some authorities), but these contacts were sometimes short, structured telephone interviews. Altogether the study included 28 different-sized businesses covering various combinations of trade activities and various kinds of merchandise.

Table 1. Overview of interviewed people and businesses in achieved samples of primary and secondary data source

Country	Data source	Total number of interviewees by role	Total number of businesses included in the field study by size class
Netherlands	Primary (BLUE-ETS project)	13 interviewees: 7 data users 5 business survey respondents 1 interviewee in both roles	11 businesses in different economic activities: 3 small 4 medium 4 large
Slovenia	Primary (BLUE-ETS project)	16 interviewees: 8 data users 7 business survey respondents 1 interviewee in both roles	9 businesses in different economic activities: 3 small 3 medium 3 large
Slovenia	Secondary (research on the survey response process)	44 interviewees: 25 respondents 6 respondents working in pairs 13 other key people involved in the response process	28 businesses mainly or partly involved in trade activities: 13 small 5 medium 10 large

2.3. Data Collection

The primary data come from interviews conducted in the Netherlands and Slovenia between September 2010 and February 2011. Questions about the motivational aspects of business survey response behavior represented an important part of the interview guide, which also included questions on the use of data in businesses and the links within businesses between business survey respondents and those who use internal or external data as part of their job (labeled as data users). The interview guide was used in two waves of interviews, with a slight adaptation for the second wave. The semi-structured interviews had a fixed list of motivational topics and objectives (e.g., organizational decisions and norms on survey participation and responding; organizational aspects of the survey response process; beliefs about survey participation, organizational and interviewees' perceptions of NSI surveys; interviewees' perceptions of organizational norms, the survey task, the meaning of participation, etc.) but only a suggested list of questions within each topic (see appendix in [Bavdaž 2011](#)). The semi-structured interview guide acted as a frame of reference and as a reminder to ask about certain issues, while unstructured interviewing within this frame allowed interviewers to uncover previously unsuspected elements. All interviews were conducted on-site, except one conducted on the phone.

The secondary data come from on-site visits to businesses in Slovenia arranged around two consecutive deadlines for the completion of the Quarterly Survey on Trade in 2005. The qualitative research interview was the primary method of investigation in businesses. It largely relied on retrospective probing ([Willis 2005](#)) and ethnographic interviewing ([Gerber 1999](#)) of the principal respondent to the survey on-site. Other people with a minor role in the response process (e.g., a respondent that only answered a single survey question or a data provider that prepared some data input for the respondent) were sometimes reached over the phone. Although the focus of the interviews was on the survey response process, attention was also paid to contextual topics such as the role of authorities and other organizational issues as well as attitudes towards the NSI and (official) statistics. This often produced insights into the motivational aspects, which made the data source useful for the present analysis.

2.4. Data Analysis

Interviews from both primary and secondary data sources were recorded and transcribed so that a verbatim account of interviewees' verbal utterances would be available (an exception was made for some shorter interactions over the phone that were noted down immediately). From the primary data source, all interviews with respondents, and those interviews with data users that contributed any insight relevant to surveys (e.g., interviews with superiors deciding on survey participation) were included in the analysis. From the secondary data source, segments of transcripts and notes bearing information on motivation were identified and included in the analysis.

The purpose of the analysis presented in this article was to assess the fit of the data to psychological theories. It has to be noted, however, that the analysis meant a re-examination of the previously coded data from the primary data source, that is, the second round of analysis of these data. The first round of analysis mainly relied on an inductive, "bottom-up" approach with no specific framework in mind, even though some

preconceptions and background knowledge of potentially relevant or related theories may have contributed to topics and questions in the interview guide (see [Coffey and Atkinson 1996](#); [Dey 1993](#)). This mainly data-driven process of coding resulted in the identification of several motivational themes that were then classified as either organizational motivation (corporate social responsibility, attention, prioritizing and statistical hub) or individual motivation (emotional aspects, habits and routines, worth attached to survey task and obligations) (see [Torres van Grinsven et al. 2011](#)).

The immersion in the data helped to achieve a deeper understanding of motivation in business surveys. As suggested by [Stern \(1980\)](#) and [Strauss and Corbin \(1994\)](#), we then systematically reviewed the literature, selected relevant psychological theories and brought in theoretically suggested themes. We also added the secondary data source. The second round of analysis that followed and is presented in this article relied on a deductive approach, in which the themes followed the SDT framework, namely the SDT and its subtheories Cognitive Evaluation Theory and Organismic Integration Theory ([Deci and Ryan 1980; 1985](#)). The sources of motivation that remained unassigned to the themes of the SDT framework were considered with respect to other relevant psychological theories.

Thematic analysis was applied in both rounds of data analysis. Thematic analysis can be defined as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” ([Braun and Clarke 2006](#), 79). A theme is manifested through “expressions”, that is, particular instances in data ([Ryan and Bernard 2003](#)) that are attributed to codes within that theme. We searched for expressions of motivation for business survey response behavior of the interviewees at the semantic or explicit level (as opposed to the latent level) within the realist/essentialist paradigm, which means that we reported the meaning, experiences and reality of interviewees without constructing or deriving other meanings from their words (see [Braun and Clarke 2006](#)). Codes sometimes applied to a longer passage of the interview, while at other times several themes applied to an interviewee’s turn of speech. Codes were developed by the three authors using a standard iterative process (see [MacQueen et al. 1998](#)). Each coded passage was assessed individually in several rounds of discussions for agreement between authors on the codes and attribution of codes to themes.

3. Results

In this section we give an account of sources of motivation for business survey participation and accurate and timely response as expressed in our data. The sources of motivation were structured around the two main types of motivation they trigger or influence according to the SDT, that is, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (see [Table 2](#)); amotivation is not included as it lacks a drive, an intention to act, while we were interested in the positive counterpart. The particular sources of extrinsic motivation found in our data were further attributed to the subthemes derived from the Organismic Integration Theory. The essential source of intrinsic motivation is “the fun or challenge entailed” that moves a person to act ([Ryan and Deci 2000](#), 56). Three other sources of intrinsic motivation, that is, perceived competence, relatedness and autonomy, were derived from the Cognitive Evaluation Theory. Some sources of motivation remained unassigned to the themes derived from the SDT framework after the data analysis; these sources are presented at the end of the

Table 2. Themes, subthemes and codes for sources of motivation for the business survey task

Themes	Subthemes	Codes for sources of motivation
<i>Extrinsic motivation</i>	<i>Externally regulated motivation</i> <i>Introjected extrinsic motivation</i>	Legal mandate Work tasks (explicitly assigned) Social responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for society in general • Value for specific purposes • Value for specific groups • Principle of reciprocity
	<i>Identified extrinsic motivation</i> <i>Integrated extrinsic motivation</i>	Value for own business or self Work tasks (adopted)
<i>Intrinsic motivation</i>		<i>Enjoyment and challenge</i> <i>Perceived competence</i> <i>Autonomy</i> <i>Relatedness</i>
		Mood Human curiosity disposition Disposition for accuracy and precision Routines Task characteristics

Note: Terms in italics are taken from the SDT and its subtheories Cognitive Evaluation Theory and Organismic Integration Theory

results section together with a possible theoretical explanation and are debated further in the discussion section.

All quotes are accompanied by information about the interviewees. It is indicated in parentheses if the interviewee was a respondent to business surveys [Respondent], a superior to business survey respondent(s) [Superior], or if the role was more specific, for example self-employed, a user of official statistics, and so on.

3.1. Extrinsic Motivation

Sources of motivation in our data could be assigned to all four subtypes of extrinsic motivation as defined by the SDT and its subtheory, Organismic Integration Theory (see Table 2). Several verbal accounts expressing extrinsic motivation were identified in each interview.

3.1.1. Externally Regulated Motivation

LEGAL MANDATE

In the case of “pure” external regulation, the task is executed with the sole purpose of satisfying an external demand. In business surveys this demand often comes from legislation and represents a legal obligation for the business. External regulation seemed to be the most common source of motivation in governmental business surveys. While some interviewees stressed the importance of participation, others also expressed concern with accuracy and timeliness.

“The only reason to participate is the legal mandate.” [Self-employed outsourcing reporting]

“We have to report, we are legally obliged to do it.” [Respondent]

“It is something that has to be delivered in time. And it also concerns correctness. It has to be correct.” [Respondent]

The obligation itself could be explicitly known or just assumed.

“I haven’t checked, but I assume it’s obligatory to report. If you are chosen and you agree on something, then you have to do it no matter what.” [Respondent]

Response-enhancing practices based on legal mandates seemed to be highly effective in the minds of the interviewees. In the occasional event that a business was late with the response to the survey request, reminder phone calls and letters, and threats of fines would lead the business to respond. Reacting to letters threatening fines represented a form of externally regulated behavior while reminders represented a softer form of extrinsic regulation (i.e., introjected), mainly relying on feelings of guilt for not respecting the deadline.

“Preferably we want to prevent that we receive letters [with fines].” [Respondent]

“That one was also postponed for a while, and then there came serious letters with the possible fines. And that became rather nasty. [. . .] So I caught up on that.” [Respondent]

Some other interviewees explained that the point at which they would finally respond was when the threats were communicated in a letter.

3.1.2. Introjected Extrinsic Motivation

WORK TASKS (EXPLICITLY ASSIGNED)

Obligations stemming from the organization and imposed on the respondent were an important source of motivation not only to participate in a survey, but also to respond in a timely and accurate manner. Introjected extrinsic motivation refers to behaviors performed under external pressure to avoid guilt and anxiety or to build self-esteem (Ryan and Deci 2000).

“The top management requests us to participate in as many surveys as possible in order to be more transparent.” [User of official statistics]

“The agreement in this company is that we neatly comply with the request and send it [the questionnaire] back in time.” [Respondent]

This obligation to comply was implicitly communicated by certain actions or explicitly part of one’s work tasks and remuneration basis.

“When a survey comes in, he [the superior] lays it down at my desk and just presupposes I will get it answered.” [Respondent]

“It’s a part of my job tasks.” [Respondent]

“It’s in my work description.” [Respondent]

These data showed that avoiding upsetting a superior was a reason to comply with the survey request, which would be an introjected type of motivation. From the point of view of the superior, though, this could be categorized as externally regulated extrinsic motivation, because from that perspective the avoidance of external punishments was salient.

“He instructs me to comply and to send those things back in time so that we don’t get any reminders or anything. Because if we get a reminder by post he will come to my desk asking if I forgot or what’s happening.” [Respondent]

It has to be noted, however, that in some cases people exhibited a higher degree of internalization or self-determination of their work tasks. In such cases, motivation for these tasks could be part of the identified or even integrated extrinsic motivation.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: VALUE FOR SOCIETY IN GENERAL, VALUE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES, VALUE FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS; PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY

Verbal accounts of value for society as a source of introjected external motivation were also found. Businesses seemed to acknowledge the importance of their data for society and other businesses.

“The government needs data to function properly.” [Self-employed]

“I think everybody has to just contribute their part, because the whole picture has to be right, because it will be used by politics, the national economic planning institution or any other institution.” [Respondent]

“If I’m not selfish, then I have to say that as I need some specific data, others might need some other data that I might find useless, thus we should report them.” [Superior]

“Data we are producing need to be accurate, that’s the most important thing. We are informing the public, so we must provide accurate data.” [Superior]

3.1.3. Identified Extrinsic Motivation

VALUE FOR OWN BUSINESS OR SELF

Identified extrinsic motivation refers to behaviors with which a person has identified so that he or she consciously values them (Ryan and Deci 2000). Our data showed that getting something back for the effort and time spent on responding to a business survey was an important source of this motivation. Value could be expressed with tangible benefits or rewards, or merely perceived as such.

[Referring to the gift voucher given for the interview] *“This is a good start. We, Dutch people, always want to have something. Get something.”* [Self-employed outsourcing reporting]

“I think it is useful to send a thank-you note. Just to let them know you had the response and you appreciate it.” [Self-employed outsourcing reporting]

“It gets a little on your nerves when you have to prepare it, and I say, ‘oh, why’, then you moan a little [about it] but if you know, that if you want to find, get something, you have to do something for it, then you do it.” [Respondent]

[Referring to the value of (official) statistics] *“Having no statistical data is like driving a car by night without lights on – you have no idea where are you going.”* [Superior]

“Look, everybody wants to receive data in return. And every company is very selfish in this.” [Superior]

“One good deserves another.” [Superior]

In fact, a commonly mentioned reason to participate in a voluntary survey was receiving results in return because they were relevant for the company’s operations management.

“We pay to participate in surveys from which we get data back.” [Superior]

“We participate in surveys if it’s interesting for us to get data back.” [Respondent]

When there were no perceived benefits, responding to the questionnaire was experienced merely as a cost.

“Replying to business surveys seems an extra job that doesn’t give any benefit.” [Respondent]

3.1.4. Integrated Extrinsic Motivation

WORK TASKS (ADOPTED)

Integrated extrinsic motivation refers to behaviors that are externally motivated but completely internalized (Ryan and Deci 2000). In the business context this can be interpreted as executing the tasks not because of an external requirement and control but because it is congruent with one’s work-related values. So although some interviewees said that they took part in official surveys because they had to, this obligation was in some cases integrated to the extent that it was neither checked nor questioned but simply accepted as part of the job.

“Actually the CBS [the Dutch NSI] surveys are all just answered.” [Superior]

“It’s just something you have to do.” [Respondent]

“This is not debated. It’s just something that has to happen.” [Respondent]

It is important to note that this integration affected not only participation, but also accuracy and timeliness.

“We just presuppose we will fill it in in good faith and accurately.” [Respondent]

Business motivation to respond seemed also to be guided to some extent by the concern for the public image. An interviewee thus reported that their company carefully followed the media news on their company, and that the company would treat any survey request carefully so as to maintain its positive image and avoid any negative publicity.

“Sometimes qualitative information could ruin our image, reputation, although our quantitative data is showing a positive direction. We have to be aware of that.” [User of official statistics]

3.2. Intrinsic Motivation

The sources of intrinsic motivation that are suggested by the SDT and its subtheory, Cognitive Evaluation Theory (see Table 2), were also all expressed in our data, as can be seen from the quotes below. Verbal accounts of intrinsic motivation were, however, fewer than those of extrinsic motivation. Still, as our data are qualitative, this does not necessarily mean that intrinsic motivation is less present or less important for the business survey response task than extrinsic motivation.

ENJOYMENT AND CHALLENGE

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts identified that some respondents enjoyed surveys and found them challenging, which is the essence of intrinsically motivating activities. They liked the survey task simply because they took pleasure in it, which showed their inherent motivation.

“I always found that the survey on finances and enterprises was a very enjoyable form. Yes, I like that. [. . .] That’s the kind of work I like to do.” [Respondent]

It also seems important that respondents enjoyed preparing data for surveys.

[Showing data in Excel files for reporting purposes] *“One has to be quite creative. If you enjoy it, then it’s not a problem . . . ”* [Respondent]

PERCEIVED COMPETENCE

Intrinsic motivation is triggered only if the person feels capable with respect to the task (Ryan and Deci 2000). Many respondents claimed that survey requests were intelligible and the questionnaires were clear and easy to them, which suggests that they perceived themselves as competent to perform the task.

“Questions seem to be clear enough, at least the majority of them.” [Respondent]

“Well, I think that the surveys that arrive are clear and understandable.” [Respondent]

Some respondents felt their capacity for successfully completing the task was low. In the first quote below, the survey task was outsourced and the respondent never completed the task alone. In the second quote, the respondent provided estimates because of inadequate information support, which made her feel frustrated.

“If I had to complete it [the questionnaire] myself, well then I think you would not understand anything. Then it would be riddled with inaccuracies because I just don’t know, you know. There is, there will be specific questions that are technical on accounting. Yes, for me it’s counting up and deducting and the rest is up to the accountant.” [Self-employed outsourcing reporting]

“This [question about sales broken down by types of buyers] is a problematic one, yes. It’s done according to a feel, and percentages. Now, in the beginning, 15 years ago, we already had something similar. [. . .] It could be done at that time. Now we have 15 thousand buyers so it is very difficult to get data. [The respondent explained that they contacted the NSI and got their permission to provide estimates but for her such a solution still represented a frustration:] We are used to accurate numbers.”
[Respondent]

RELATEDNESS

Intrinsic motivation can also arise from connectedness to others in the business and the survey organization. In the data, there were several expressions of appreciation of a good personal relationship with the NSI. Respondents described how their personal relationship with the designated NSI staff had advantages and made them feel obliged to maintain a good relationship. If respondents received help from the NSI staff, then that could make them want to do something in return.

“The advantage is that you’ve seen each other a couple of times. When I’m talking to somebody on the phone now, then I think, I know his face.” [Respondent]

“I think I have a good relationship. Yes, with X.” [Respondent]

[About the interview] *“My colleagues asked why I should do this interview. Then I replied: I find this is important now, because I’m the one having the contact [with the NSI], therefore I want to do this. Because I want to maintain the contact in good shape, so I want to do this now.”* [Respondent]

A friendly tone and language as an expression of a correct relationship seemed to be expected in communication that was addressed to businesses; they might have even been indispensable for survey requests to be considered.

[Discussing a polite tone and language] *“I think that’s the way to cooperate. If you attack from one of both sides, then somebody might get blocked and that’s worse.”*
[Respondent]

Some of the interviewed respondents also stated that they appreciated receiving a reaction when reported data seemed to be wrong or just an acknowledgment of receipt of the data. The awareness that the reported data were used made them feel that the time and effort they put into the questionnaire mattered, which enhanced a good relationship, contributed to positive feelings associated with the task, and influenced the perceived value of the performed task.

“But they do look at that, and yes, I like that, because if you get an answer then at least you know they do look at it. So that’s pleasant.” [Respondent]

AUTONOMY

Some respondents found it important that consultations and negotiations with the survey organization took place so that their working processes were considered and some autonomy about the deadline was granted.

“We don’t have all the data available at the deadline and as we are a large company that represents a great share of aggregated data, we made an agreement with the NSI that we report with a few days of delay in order to assure accurate and reliable data.”
[Respondent]

3.3. Beyond the SDT Framework

Sources of motivation presented in Subsections 3.1 and 3.2 could be categorized under one of the (sub)themes derived from the SDT framework. However, some remaining sources of motivation that were identified in the first round of inductive coding did not seem to fit easily in the SDT framework. They are presented in this section along with possible theoretical explanations.

MOOD

Some verbal accounts suggested that a person’s mood affected motivation at least temporarily. Here we show an account pointing to the relevance of mood for the decision on survey participation.

“When I’m in a good mood then I usually participate in all those surveys, but if I’m in a bad mood then I probably reject.” [Respondent]

“If they irritate me I just throw them away.” [Self-employed]

Mood is shown to be an important factor for motivation in [Seo et al. \(2004\)](#), who provide a framework in which emotion is theorized to be the central construct affecting both the processes and outcomes of work motivation. Mood also affects information processing and task performance; people in a good mood are less easily distracted from the task than people in a bad mood ([Bless et al. 1990](#)).

DISPOSITION

Our data showed the presence of two kinds of disposition that might be relevant for the business survey response task. One concerns a disposition for precision and accuracy that seems to be typically inherent in the accounting profession. This disposition stems from the accounting work methods that require precise balancing of accounts and from the accounting principles that require an accurate picture of business reality. Evidently, an accuracy-motivated disposition can also be present in other respondents regardless of profession. This disposition together with the explicit goal to respond to a survey promises to lead to an accurate response.

“If I do something, I do it well, that’s in a bookkeeper.” [Respondent]

“We do our best, we don’t just put any random data thinking it’s good enough for statistics.” [Respondent]

The other type of disposition concerns human curiosity, which is visible in the attraction to performing new, demanding tasks (e.g., searching for new data and solutions, optimizing processes etc.) or learning new things. This disposition is likely to lead to enhanced intrinsic motivation when applied to the survey task.

“I’m a searcher in my soul. It’s a challenge for me to search for new ways of obtaining and using data.” [Superior]

“Next year we are facing an exciting event as two different branches of our company have to be merged. That’s a challenge again, so I like to do that, yes.” [Respondent]

These dispositions seem to be congruent with dispositions based on implicit motives. Implicit motives provide a general orientation toward certain types of goals such as a general trend to do things well (McClelland et al. 1989). They thus generally sustain behavioral trends over time, such as an accuracy-motivated disposition.

ROUTINE

Our data also suggested that reporting ran smoothly on a routine basis after the first completion or introduction of changes. Once integrated into the usual work routine, the business survey response task became easier and less time consuming.

“So at least I personally have a structure that I fill in the questionnaires in a certain way and that I maintain this structure over the years.” [Respondent]

“Well, yes, then you have a certain way of getting out of things. And if something changes, yes, then I have extra work but, eh, you then finally figure out how to fill it in and then it runs again smoothly.” [Respondent]

The consistency entailed by routine might even be considered more important than reporting accurately.

“We keep the method the same over the years to maintain comparable figures. Ehm, a mistake, if you make a mistake in 2008, then you have to do the same in 2009 because then at least the trend is visible.” [Respondent]

Behaviors that were initially based on conscious (explicit) decisions may become habitualized and routinized through frequent execution and then be carried out independent of the implications of the original conscious judgment (Aarts and Dijksterhuis 2000; Ouellette and Wood 1998). According to recent research, due to characteristics of modern work life, a large proportion of daily cognitive and other processing is unconscious, occurring outside employees’ awareness and control (Uhlmann et al. 2012; Johnson and Steinman 2009), which calls for attention to implicit processes within organizations (e.g., Bing et al. 2007; Haines and Sumner 2006).

TASK CHARACTERISTICS

Interviewees mentioned some characteristics of the business survey task that seemed generally to support motivation for the successful completion of the task. One such characteristic was simplicity or simplification of the task. The most radical and preferred way, especially for mandatory surveys, was *“to make fewer surveys”*. Other ideas mentioned were that *“the NSI should look for a junction with the tax declaration”*, that the questionnaire should be adapted to the internal administration of companies, and other ways of simplifying response and *“automating things as much as possible”* in order *“to be as efficient as possible”*.

Moreover, our data showed that it was important to maintain the same questionnaire items and item order over time in recurring surveys, and give prior notification of changes. Respondents often had a routinized approach to the questionnaire's completion in these surveys, especially if repeated frequently, which made it more difficult to adapt to changes. It thus seems important to make the survey task predictable.

"I mean, don't be too specific and once you have such a survey and you have figured things out [. . .] then let it be the same next year, and don't change too much."
[Respondent]

"When there are changes then I have to change my models and that costs extra time."
[Respondent]

"I find it important to get notifications on changes. [. . .] I do things automatically, thus it is important for me to know if there are any changes to the deadline or questionnaire. Then I check what is different." [Respondent]

The task's simplicity, easiness, and predictability have previously been identified as factors affecting extrinsic motivation (Kruglanski 1975; Pittman et al. 1983; McClelland et al. 1989).

3.4. Dynamics Between Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

Several sources of extrinsic motivation reflect the importance of authorities for the business survey response task: Authorities determine work tasks and expectations; they speak through companies' values, policies and routines. Although extrinsic motivation might become more integrated through the process of internalization, it does not mean that extrinsic motives are transformed into intrinsic ones (Ryan and Deci 2000). However, extrinsic motives could be replaced by intrinsic motives. In business surveys this could happen if a person started the business survey response task only to answer an external demand for obligatory reporting (and avoid fines), but experienced the activity as interesting, challenging and enjoyable, presumably also because the recurrent completion reduces burden. Such cases are consistent with Kehr (2004), who proposes that externally imposed goals fueling extrinsic motivation can become intrinsically motivating, provided they are congruent with the person's implicit motives.

"Well, I start enjoying it much more every time. (. . .) In the beginning because you're still looking for your way it's never pleasant." [Respondent]

On the other hand, the negative side is that the same task might get boring over time, thus reducing the level of intrinsic motivation over time.

"If you do the same thing every year, then it gets boring." [Respondent]

As mentioned above, sources of extrinsic motivation were expressed in all our interviews. At the same time some respondents showed that they experienced the business survey response task as intrinsically motivating, which suggests that both types of motivation coexisted and drove the respondents towards desirable outcomes. However, most respondents reported not liking or particularly enjoying the business survey response task,

which seems to indicate a lack of intrinsic motivation. In spite of this, the task was still carried out, indicating that another (extrinsic) motivation should be at play. Some of these respondents even reported executing the task on time and as accurately as possible. The first two of the following quotes explicitly express an extrinsic motive, namely the legal mandate, and at the same time an absence of intrinsic motivation. The same combination of an extrinsic motive and the absence of intrinsic motivation was also seen in the other two quotes.

“You take it as a necessary evil, you complete it. You complete everything that you have to complete. I don’t think [about it].” [Respondent]

“Well, it’s not the greatest challenge to fill in those questionnaires. Yes, the obligation and, ehm, yes, of course, as accurate as possible. And on time.” [Respondent]

“Well we have nicer and less nice tasks, that everybody has in his job. And this is one of the standards. The tasks that are not always that enjoyable.” [Respondent]

“I think we fill in in good faith, but it’s seen as a necessary evil.” [Superior]

4. Discussion and Suggestions for Improving Business Survey Response Behavior

In this article we have shown specific sources of motivation for the business survey response task based on interview data from the Netherlands and Slovenia from two sources. Our empirical data have provided support for the *existence of all different (sub)types of motivation suggested by SDT and its subtheories*, Cognitive Evaluation Theory and Organismic Integration Theory. Although the quantity of verbal accounts of extrinsic motivation compared to those of intrinsic motivation is by no means indicative of their prevalence, it is impossible to ignore their presence and relevance in the business setting. On the other hand, it seems that influencing intrinsic motivation also has some potential even if intrinsic motivation for the business survey response task seems relatively weak. Research findings suggest that intrinsic motivation can positively influence commitment (Ryan and Deci 2000), albeit in different kinds of settings. We therefore suggest not overlooking any of these types of motivation in the business setting.

Moreover, the results suggest that *SDT cannot explain all sources* of motivation expressed in our data. A large group of such sources might be considered implicit motives that are part of implicit, automatic processes, which seem to be pervasive in organizational life (Johnson and Steinman 2009). Some dispositions (e.g., for precision and accuracy) seem to have been built over the years through multiple repetitions and some routinized behaviors have lost connection with their original intent. It thus seems reasonable to expect that implicit motives and implicit processes also play a role in business survey response behavior. Kehr (2004) proposes that the presence (or absence) of an individual’s implicit motives seems to determine if a task is experienced as intrinsically motivating (or not). Still, arousal of implicit motives does not necessarily lead to intrinsic motivation. It does not lead to intrinsic motivation if incompatible cognitive preferences exist at the same time (Kehr 2004). The influence of implicit motives may also disappear in the presence of powerful explicit motives, such as social constraints (Kehr 2004; McClelland et al. 1953). Some authors therefore propose a dual model of explicit and implicit

processes, in which the two types function in parallel and in interaction with one another (Fazion and Olson 2003; Strack and Deutsch 2004).

The concealed nature of implicit motives and processes, however, makes it difficult to recognize them and turn them to the benefit of the business survey response task. It might be easier to accomplish a mood change or simplify and predict the survey task, both of which also seem to influence the response behavior. The psychological literature also points to some other sources of motivation that have not been expressed in our data but might be relevant for the business survey response task. For instance, positive emotions are suggested to be essential elements of optimal functioning (Fredrickson 2001); accountability is shown to act as a source of motivation for more analytical cognitive processing (Tetlock 1985) and so forth.

Our study followed qualitative research in organizational psychology that studies how people “think, feel and behave in work and organizational contexts”, including their motivation (Silvester 2008, 489). Some other sources of motivation may still be identified using other methodological approaches than qualitative research interviews, which mainly relied on reported sources of motivation. Especially for specific unconscious, concealed or otherwise latent sources of motivation, it might be necessary to use an experimental and/or laboratory setting to provide evidence of their existence and relevance in the business survey setting. Moreover, focusing on business surveys with specific design features (e.g., voluntary or interviewer-administered business surveys) or conducting research in other institutional environments might bring new insights, and using larger samples can further support the external validity of findings. According to respondents in several interviews, it was normal that the survey questionnaires “came” to them; any deviation from such a routine calls for more attention to be given to other people involved in the business survey response task (e.g., gatekeepers and authorities). Although our study involved some data users that were not simultaneously respondents to business surveys, involving people with other tasks could open up new perspectives. We only touched upon motivation of survey nonrespondents marginally, as some of our interviewees claimed not to respond to all survey requests. Still, people refusing to participate in our study might have some (other types of) motivation for the business survey response task which remain to be identified. Nevertheless, the presented study provided some indication of the drives underlying business survey response behavior.

Suggestions for Enhancing Motivation

Unfortunately, awareness of the sources of motivation is just a starting point for thinking of how to effectively and efficiently increase the motivation for the business survey response task. Still, the knowledge of sources of motivation identified thus far can be valuable in designing and testing actions and strategies for enhancing response and response quality in business surveys. We provide several suggestions below. Some of them are not new, but we iterate them here for the sake of completeness. The suggestions are focused both on intrinsic and on extrinsic motivation. They are presented as specific actions and strategies that can be applied to enhance motivation, which is in turn expected to positively affect the outcomes related to the survey response task. Although the identified sources of motivation are theoretically founded, further (preferably

experimental) research is necessary to determine how specific interventions targeting these sources affect motivation and the resulting response behavior. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to expect that interventions triggering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation produce a larger effect than just triggering a single motivation type, and that interventions triggering intrinsic motivation produce a larger effect because they directly involve the person unless there are negative consequences for the business. Respondents that already have some motivation might be more affected than those without or with a very low level of motivation. The effects on outcomes thus seem likely to be dependent on the initial level of motivation and respondents' perception of additional effort to improve behavior.

Before presenting suggestions for enhancing extrinsic motivation, it has to be noted that some previous research in behavioral psychology and the field of social surveys advises against using incentives as extrinsic rewards because they seem to undermine intrinsic motivation, which is considered better for performance than extrinsic motivation (see e.g., [Deci et al. 1999](#); [Wenemark et al. 2011](#)). However, some studies suggest that such a conclusion is far from straightforward. A positive effect on intrinsic motivation is expected for praise (being delivered immediately, often and without clear stimuli) while a negative effect is limited to tangible rewards ([Carton 1996](#)). Rewards seem to enhance intrinsic motivation for low-interest tasks and also for high-interest tasks if they are linked to level of performance ([Cameron et al. 2001](#)). These findings have been taken into account when designing suggestions that focus mainly on enhancing respondents' extrinsic motivation, also taking note of limitations and cautions mentioned above:

- Current response-enhancing practices, that is, reminders and (threats of) fines in the case of nonresponse, seem to achieve their aim of assuring response though they typically represent negative, not positive *reinforcers*.
- *Value* of the survey, the survey organization and the survey outcomes should be improved and communicated. The value may be expressed with tangible benefits or rewards or merely perceived as such. Several 'stakeholders' should perceive this value, namely society, the economy, the business and the individual respondent. Influencing the *value in real terms* could be done by giving the businesses an appropriate incentive for the time and effort they have spent to fill in the questionnaire, though this might be costly or even have negative consequences if not tied to good performance. The *perceived value* can be increased by a communication strategy, for instance, by showing businesses in more concrete terms (e.g., with case studies and testimonials) what the data are used for and what the specific purpose of the requested data is.

Suggestions that focus mainly on enhancing respondents' intrinsic motivation are:

- Survey participation should be made as *enjoyable* as possible. Given that the task of answering survey questions is not attractive to most respondents, it might be necessary to think of other aspects of survey participation and make them enjoyable. The possibilities are greater or at least more convenient for electronic reporting and include, for instance, accessing an online questionnaire, printing the questionnaire, receiving a confirmation of receipt by email, and so on. These activities might become more enjoyable if accompanied by interesting figures, famous or wise thoughts, quiz-like questions, other

challenges and so forth. A respectful and friendly tone should be present in all communication.

- Respondents' *perceived competence* (or perceived abilities) should be enhanced, as it seems that perceived competence influences response behavior and, vice versa, having positive experiences with questionnaires influences perceived competence towards future questionnaires. This can be improved by using an appropriate communication strategy that stresses the easiness and the simplicity of the response task. This should of course be accompanied by a questionnaire that is both as easy and simplified as possible as well as user-friendly to make a good first impression.
- A good *relationship* with the business and the respondent should be built up to enhance relatedness. A good example of this is using dedicated staff (account managers) for businesses that are important for the aggregate statistics. However, such an approach is typically granted to only a handful of large businesses, so it is necessary to think of efficient ways of establishing and maintaining relationships with all businesses. Possible strategies are to target only new respondents, respondents involved in more surveys, respondents completing questionnaires for several businesses (e.g., in accounting firms), and so on. The relationship could be established through a live contact, with some tokens of appreciation, and so forth. It also seems important that nameless and faceless survey staff reveal their identity. Providing contact names is just the minimum; showing their picture and adding a few words about themselves could greatly deepen the feeling of relatedness. Given that a good relationship is typically based on reciprocity, giving different forms of feedback (from thank-you notes to statistical results) should also be useful in this regard, as explained below.
- Respondents should feel that they have some *autonomy* with regard to the business survey task. Two situations where more autonomy typically is or could be granted concern the deadline for reporting and the provision of estimates instead of precise figures, although some conditions could be set to avoid attributing less importance to deadlines and precise figures.

A different approach to enhancing motivation is to attempt to improve respondents' *mood*. As mood is a temporary state, it is important to focus on activities that immediately precede a questionnaire's completion. Given the impact of humor on people's mood, ideas for improving the mood could be sought, for instance, in humorous thoughts or instructive anecdotes of famous statisticians and so on. However, these ideas have to be applied with great delicacy to the business setting, which might exhibit certain expectations about professional behavior (Romero and Cruthirds 2006).

The business survey response task could also result in better outcomes if respondents were selected from those people that have *desirable dispositions*. As the disposition for precision and accuracy seems to be present in the accounting profession, we suggest treating them with special care, for example by targeting them through their professional organizations, events, publications, and so on. Better outcomes can also be expected if responding to a questionnaire is made as *easy, simple and predictable* as possible, which calls for the implicit processes in companies to be taken into account. This would include, for example, adapting the survey items as much as possible to the businesses'

administration; avoiding changes as much as possible, and if changes are made, communicating them early on and clearly to the business; using as much as possible a standardized format, for example in concordance with other data-requesting organizations such as the tax office, and so on.

It seems extremely important to reduce actual survey burden, defined as the time it takes to respond to the survey (Dale and Haraldsen 2007), because of its correlation with perceived response burden and data quality (see e.g., Berglund et al. 2013). The reductions of actual burden, however, may have a limit as some data have to be collected from businesses. The only way of improving survey outcomes thus seems to be through raising motivation. Whether raising motivation also affects perceived response burden or not might depend on the type of motivation invoked; intrinsic motivation and more internalized forms of extrinsic motivation presumably have more potential to further alleviate perceived response burden.

Some suggestions promise to affect intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, depending also on the exact form of implementation. This, for instance, holds for the provision of *feedback* that should be given to respondents because it can invoke motivation from several sources. For instance, a message confirming a questionnaire's receipt, thanking the respondent for a timely delivery and acknowledging their contribution to the timely release of official indicators should influence both intrinsic motivation (by enhancing a good relationship and perceived competence, thus making (the next) survey participation more pleasant) and extrinsic motivation (by influencing the perceived value of the task). Some kinds of feedback are already used on a regular or ad hoc basis, such as statistical results and thank-you notes. However, there is still a lot of potential for improving and diversifying even these two kinds of feedback. Immediate feedback should work better than delayed feedback. Statistical results can be customized and more tailored to the needs of a specific business, presented in a way to offer information (not only data) to the business or simply made more attractive, but survey organizations are not always aware of business data needs.

Acknowledging respondents' efforts can be supported with further-reaching marketing activities, such as rewarding the most deserved respondents once a year. Another strategy might be to send positive evaluations about good respondents to their superiors as well as requests for improvement of reporting, but a positive tone would have to be used to convey such messages so they can be clearly distinguished from reprimands and fines. Acknowledging organizational efforts, on the other hand, can be implemented with the cooperation of a reputable company that also excels in reporting and thus nourishes its social responsibility, or by publically naming companies that excel in reporting overall. These approaches, however, require NSIs to be able to determine the overall quality of reporting for every business (consisting of timeliness that is easy to measure and accuracy that is difficult to measure).

Many of these suggestions thus require good information about each business and each respondent. NSIs are typically in possession of such information, but not in a format that would allow further managing. It seems that without such support and a more customer-oriented focus, NSIs might have to relinquish more sophisticated and/or tailored forms of improving motivation.

5. Further Research

Research presented in this article is in line with the call for more research on motivation in business survey response behavior (Rogelberg and Stanton 2007; Rose et al. 2007). Application of motivation theories to business surveys promises to inspire new approaches to motivate business survey respondents to better respond to, and perform, the survey task. As our empirical data are limited, additional and somewhat different approaches might be recommended, especially if they are more focused on voluntary surveys, nonrespondents and reluctant respondents or other people involved in the response process. Nevertheless, our results should help with the development of actions and strategies enhancing motivation in the meantime.

Business surveys often embrace methodological advances from household surveys. A different perspective seems to be necessary to explain motivation for business survey response tasks which are done during work time, often require expert knowledge and rarely rely on monetary incentives. The theoretical framework should be expanded beyond the SDT framework, which seems to be insufficient to cover all specifics of the business setting. It seems necessary to bring in more research conducted in the work environment to understand the functioning of people involved in the response process.

More research is also necessary to conclude whether or not motivation to participate in business surveys and provide an accurate and timely response can be treated as a single and integral concept, what the relationship between motivation and perceived response burden is and whether it is appropriate to focus on respondents' motivation while acknowledging organizational motives as an important source of the individual motivation. An important step should be to implement and experimentally test interventions as a means to evaluate the proposed suggestions. Research is necessary to evaluate the specific impact of each of the different sources of motivation that appear to be of importance in the business survey response task, and also to evaluate in which cases each of the sources or a combination of the sources is most effective.

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