

The 24/7 Focus Group

How to get better data from a constantly connected customer community.

Mobile is the future of market research.

The Pew Research Center estimates that 47% of US adults will **only** have mobile phones in their households by the end of 2016, and the number of interviews conducted by their firm on cellphones is expected to reach 75% this year. And 30% of market research surveys are estimated to start from mobile devices, a pace that is expected to increase by double figures each year.

But while consumers have overwhelmingly made the switch to mobile, most platforms haven't caught up with the times. Only 18% of surveys are optimized for mobile (according to Research Now as of July 2015).

Smart research companies realize there is the potential for tremendous insight with the emergence of smartphones. But most platforms haven't been able to take advantage of these benefits.

In this guide we'll discuss some of the benefits of mobile as a medium for conducting market research, as well as discuss the pitfalls of traditional market research software.

Benefits of Mobile

There are several reasons why consumer's transition to mobile represents a potential boon for market research and consumer insights.

Always On.

The first huge benefit of mobile as a platform is the always connected nature of the device. Users literally have it with them everywhere, which means you can engage participants throughout the day. This makes mobile ideal for diary studies, mobile blogging and other ethnographic studies, because you can capture data points *as they are happening* rather than relying on users to guesstimate when an activity took place. This improves accuracy of data and makes data entry easier for the participant.

Native Device Features.

If research is done with a native app, organizations can leverage features available only at a device level. Access to the camera allows for painless uploading of photos and video (again, extremely useful for diary studies and other ethnographic studies).

By requesting access to location information, you can attach location data to any artifacts created by a user. You can even request background location access, and know a user's location when the app isn't open. This can be great data for augmenting mobile diaries (by limiting the amount of data input from users while still capturing location-based data).

Mobile is perfect for numerous types of studies:

Online focus groups

Diary studies

Mobile blogging

Passive tracking

1:1 in depth interviews

Online discussions / forums

Rapid response rates

Native apps also allow for push notifications, Push notifications allow for much more rapid customer response rates than traditional web platforms. It's not uncommon to get dozens of responses within minutes.

Passive market research.

Mobile is the perfect outlet for social, community-based research. By creating an invite-only community you can engage with a community of participants over an extended period of time. You can also encourage participants to talk amongst each other, mining insights similar to a focus group. The result is effectively a "24/7 panel". And by owning the network (vs. renting users from a platform like Facebook) you have access to all of the content being created, appended with a user's demographic data.

What To Look For in a Mobile Platform

Not all platforms are created equal, and not all are designed with the user in mind (which decreases adherence and ultimately the usefulness of the data.) Some things to keep in mind.

Is it truly native?

Most platforms are "web friendly", meaning they have a responsive version of their web interface. This is not sufficient, as you miss out on most of the benefits of mobile - additional meta data, access to notifications, etc.

Some apps are native-ish. They are web views inside of a native application. This reduces the elegance of the app and often has limitations in terms of system access. Users expect

native apps to “feel” responsive and smooth. They can usually tell the difference between a native animation between screens and a web view.

It goes without saying that “native” means multiple platforms. Ideally your platform has iOS and Android apps, and each are designed based on the interface guidelines for that platform. Apple’s Human Interface Guidelines and Android’s Material Guidelines were created to ensure apps look and feel appropriate for the platform. While the apps should most likely be functionally the same, they should take advantage of the nuances of each platform.

Are survey instruments cumbersome?

What works on web doesn’t necessarily work on mobile. Survey instruments on mobile should generally be much shorter, and should rely much more heavily on pre-selected inputs and use of photos rather than requiring heavy text input.

When designing surveys it’s wise to ask only the questions you need, and/or to space them out throughout the duration of a study.

Am I able to fully leverage the features inherent in the mobile device?

Make sure the platform you select allows for simple uploading of photos, can access location data, allows you to send your own push notifications, can simplify registration with social sign on, and if necessary can leverage address book for referring other participants. Many platforms are lacking some or all of this functionality.

Can I access my raw data?

Make sure the provider doesn't lock you into a web-based dashboard for viewing and manipulating your data. Ideally you should be able to get an export in CSV or SQL so you can run your own analysis.

The Future of Research is Exciting

Mobile is going to enable much richer insights than were previously possible, allowing companies to create better products and services for their customers.

As a truly native platform, SocialQnect might be a useful tool in your market research toolbox.

For more information on SocialQnect or to schedule a demo, contact us:

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