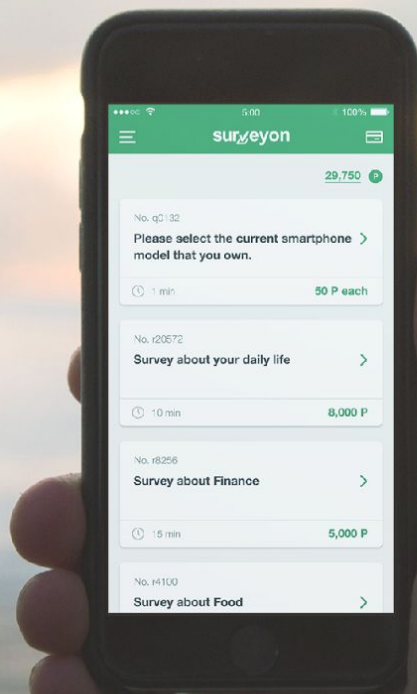# dataSpring

Mobile 101:

A Primer for Researchers
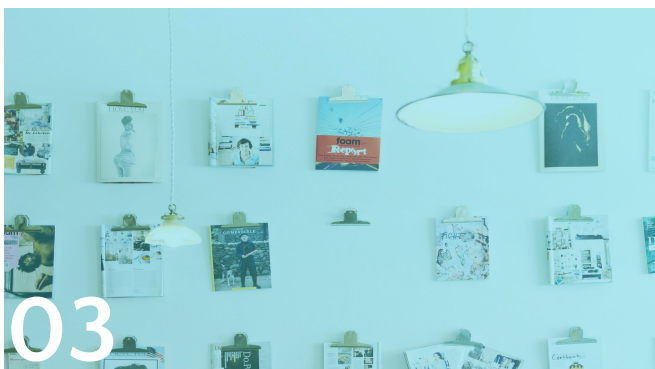
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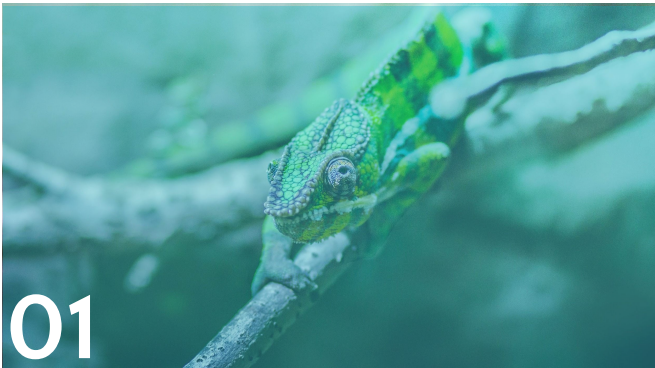
01

How to adapt your Online Study to Mobile

Before adapting your online study to mobile, it is worth considering if there is a valid research reason for the switch.

The use of mobile is one of the most exciting and dynamically changing aspects of market research today. Like the move to online data collection in the late 1990's, best practices for mobile surveys are still being developed. In the meantime, many clients and agencies have either experimented with mobile or are eager to conduct pilot studies.

So when is conducting a mobile study appropriate? It boils down to two considerations: methodology and sampling.

Methodology

Consumers today are almost always with their smartphones, making it invaluable for capturing respondent insights "in-the-moment" while they are traveling, shopping, exploring, experiencing or purchasing. Specifically, mobile is well suited for:

❖ **In-Home Usage Tests:** Mobile can simplify the process by getting respondents to purchase products themselves and only incenting those who fully complete the study. The smartphone then allows easy capture of usage through both structured questions and media uploads.

❖ **In-Store Shop Along:** Mobile gives researchers the opportunity to get immediate feedback on product packaging, placement, pricing, and promotion. The addition of location-based data and photo geo-validation adds to the credibility of the data.

❖ **Diary Studies:** Smartphones are used to manage consumer's daily lives and tasks, making them an excellent tool for diary studies. The average U.S. consumer checks their smartphone 46 times a day, providing ample opportunity to message respondents and keep participation rates high.

Sample Reach

These days there are certain demographics and global regions that are much more efficiently reached via mobile. Perhaps needless to say, younger consumers are much easier to survey via mobile, but also consider mobile for global initiatives.

In Asia and other emerging countries, mobile ownership continues to grow and is often the primary means of accessing the internet.

In addition to better reaching younger consumers and more effectively sampling certain regions, mobile respondents tend to be newer to survey participation. Also since it still somewhat of a novelty, participation rates are generally higher. All of these factors contribute to better, and often more thoughtful, data.

Adapting Your Online Study to Mobile

While there are many benefits to mobile, it does take work and thought to properly utilize the platform. Think about adapting your study in four key areas:

1) Text

Given the interface, it is important to edit the length of all text. Instructions need to be brief and to the point. Even more than online, content load times are crucial, and slow to render surveys will lead to high respondent dissatisfaction and higher incompletion rates. Google recommends: "…deliver and render the above the fold (ATF) content in under one second, which allows the user to begin interacting with the page as soon as possible."

Also avoid overly formal 'research' language. While you should never compromise good question design, try to make the feel a bit more casual and inviting. This will ultimately aid in comprehension and understanding, which is key to good research.

2) Question Types

This is an area where mobile is most limited versus online research. Anything that requires excessive scrolling, or pinch and expand generally won't work. This means that large blocks of attributes and grids are out. Also presenting stimuli can be limiting. That being said, streaming content can often be presented successfully.

While some question types won't work, there are other tools that are well suited to mobile, such as uploading photos and videos. These are activities that can add real depth to your study and capture the true emotions of your respondent. In mobile research, a picture can quite literally take the place of a thousand words.

These days there are certain demographics and global regions that are much more efficiently reached via mobile.

3) User Interface

Keep the design as clean as possible by avoiding unnecessary graphic clutter. Logos, headers, footers, etc. should all be eliminated. In general, mobile surveys should be limited to about 8-10 minutes, so you can also eliminate the progress bar that is standard on online surveys. Drop-down menus should also be avoided as they are difficult to use in mobile.

4) Add-ons

In addition to the specific methodologies that are particularly suited to online, mobile offers some unique capabilities. This includes passive data collection, which allows the capture of information on location, app installation and usage, and ad exposure. Respondents can also be asked to verify their location via photos for out-of-home studies.

Lastly, it is important to work with your research vendor to pre-test the user experience. A good mobile survey platform should be optimized for both Apple and Android OS, but it is still crucial to make sure questions and responses download quickly, render properly and that responses can be easily selected.

Final Thoughts

While not all study types are suited for mobile, the methodology has numerous benefits. Remember, what you give up in question type and survey length when adapting your online study to mobile, you make up in immediacy, depth, emotion and quality.

02

How Mobile Respondents can effect Data Quality

dataSpring's research on research suggests mobile respondents need to be a consideration in every online research study.

Consumers' use of mobile to access the internet overtook desktop computers last year, underlined:[accounting for 70% of internet use]. So it is no wonder that researchers and consultants are eager to conduct more mobile studies. One aspect of the growth in mobile that is often overlooked however, is its effect on "non-mobile" studies and the potential to introduce bias into the research results.

Whether intentional or not, your online studies are more than likely already including "mobile" respondents. It is estimated that [68% of email is opened on a mobile device], so many online respondents are first seeing study invites on their mobile device. Further, according to research on research reported in the [ESOMAR/GRBN Guideline for Online Sample Quality report], 20% to 30% of research respondents are already responding via smartphone or other mobile device. Given this, it is imperative to review all research methods and consider mobile respondent's potential implication on both sample representation and response rate, and questionnaire design.

Sample Considerations

Certain global regions (Asia, in particular) and demographics (younger consumers) are more effectively reached via mobile. In building dataSpring proprietary mobile panels in Taiwan and Indonesia we found mobile respondents tend to be newer to survey participation and participation rates are generally higher. This contributes to better, and often more thoughtful, data.

In addition, as part of a recent quality study on these proprietary mobile panels, some interesting insights emerged:

Taiwan

❖ A higher response rate is seen in mobile surveys among panelists under 30 years, particularly in the crucial first 24 hours of fieldwork.

❖ Panelists aged 30 and above have almost the same response rate whether they take the survey via desktop or mobile.

Indonesia

❖ Desktop response rate is higher than mobile, but when it comes to the rate of increase of responses over time, mobile is higher.

❖ Overall, however, there are minimal gender and age difference between desktop and mobile response.

As Semee Park, dataSpring Product Manger explains, "The difference between these two markets are significant in understanding the data. While smartphones are the primary device used to access the internet in both markets, respondents from Taiwan are more informed on answering online surveys. Indonesia is still developing as an online survey market as the majority of market research methodologies used in Indonesia are still offline."

So be sure to consider the potential of including mobile sample in your sample plan and supplier selection when looking to target younger demographics and certain regions of the globe.
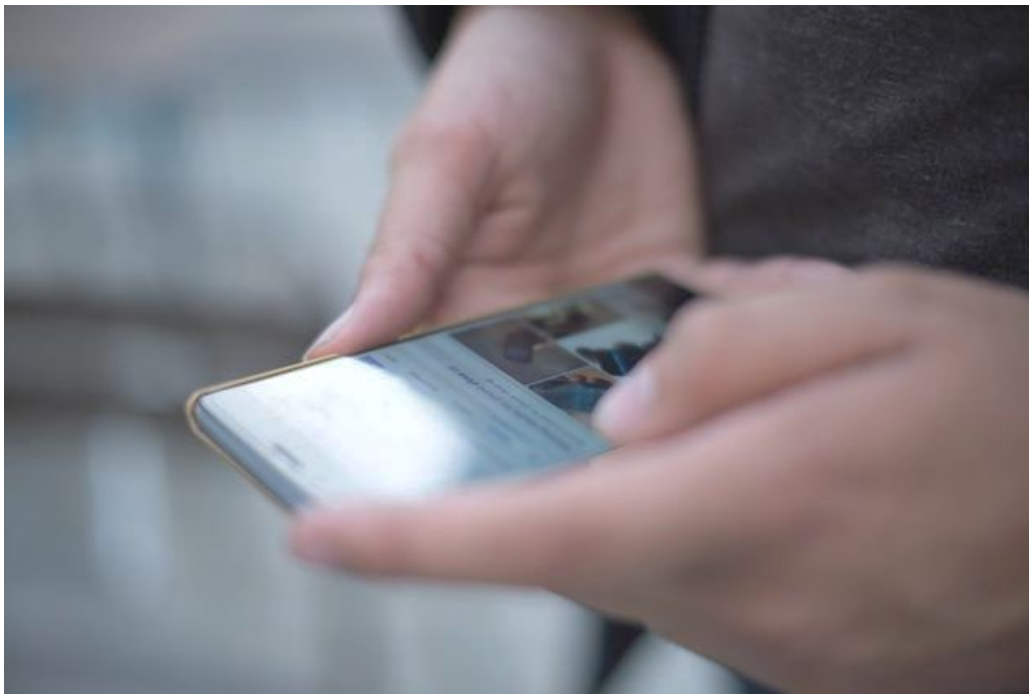
Questionnaire Design Considerations

Comprehension and clarity are imperative to good survey design. Given the limitations of the mobile interface, it is important to review all online questionnaires in an attempt to find a middle-ground where survey usability and readability is appropriate for both desktop and mobile devices.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the key things to review include:

❖ **Text:** Readability for any survey is key, so review the length of all text and be sure instructions are brief and to the point. Also consider editing more formal 'research' language to be more conversational.

❖ **Question Types:** Large blocks of attributes and grids are difficult to comprehend on the smaller interface and anything that requires excessive scrolling, or pinch and expand may result in respondents speeding or straight lining these questions. Consider breaking up grids into separate questions.

❖ **User Interface:** Keep design as clean as possible by avoiding unnecessary graphic clutter. Logos, headers/footers and the like should be eliminated or minimized. Drop-downs are difficult on mobile so <u>consider alternatives</u> that also work efficiently on desktops.

Lastly, as a general best practice, consider including a quality check question or two in order to flag suspect data. This can include a single question instructing the respondent to select a certain response, or a grid attribute directing the respondent to click a specific column.

Final Thoughts

Whether intentional or not, mobile is becoming a factor in online research and does have the potential to create bias in the results. This fact requires that researchers and consultants review their sampling approach and questionnaire design to ensure data quality is not compromised. Mobile respondents shouldn't have an adverse effect on data quality, and in fact can bring added benefit by enhancing survey response and more effectively reaching certain respondent groups.

**Mobile respondents shouldn't have an adverse effect on data quality**

03

Best Practices for
Questionnaire Design in
Mobile

Questionnaire design is one of the foundational elements in constructing a successful market research study.

Just as online surveys changed questionnaire design from telephone data collection, the rise in mobile surveys and availability of mobile panels has forced the industry to review and update some elements that have been taken for granted. And while the basics of good questionnaire design haven't changed, it is important to take into account the way people use their smartphones, and the unique interface and functionality.
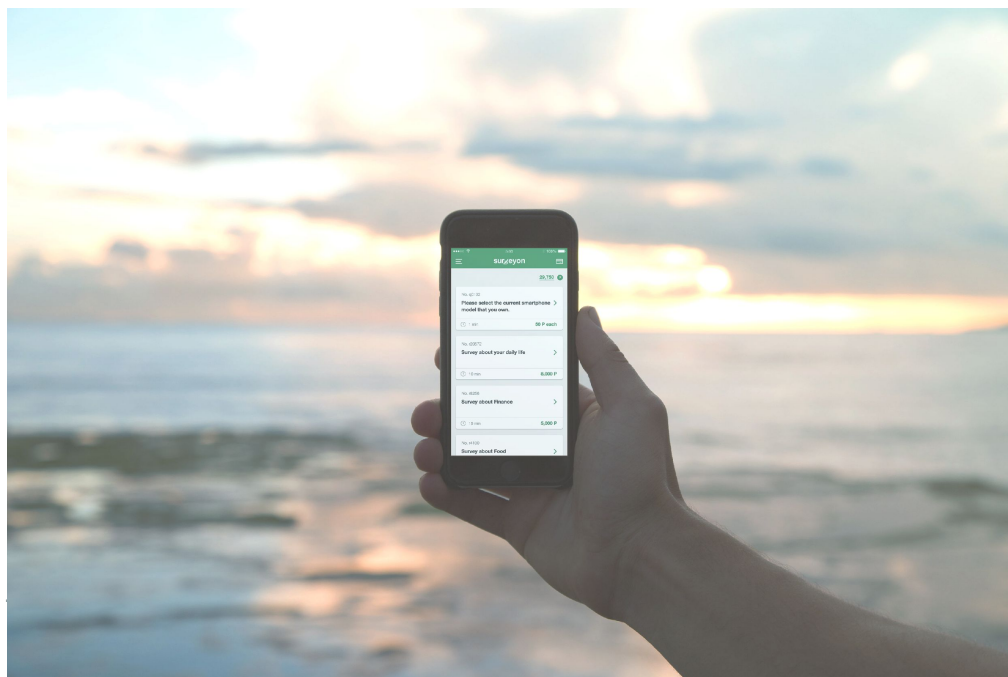
Start Fresh

Five minutes is the average time consumers interact with a mobile app, so It is important to keep mobile studies in the 8 to 10-minute range. Starting with an existing questionnaire will likely require extensive editing and can result in too long a questionnaire. By starting fresh you can create a more focused survey that will be more effective and garner higher participation and completion rates.

Consider the View

Mobile devices allow for a seamless change from portrait to landscape orientation – make sure your survey works in both. This means full answer choice lists should be visible in landscape/horizontal view and grids should fit in portrait/vertical view. Anything requiring pinching or scrolling may lead the respondent to miss choices which will compromise data quality.

Limit Design Elements

Mobile users are impatient so mobile load times must be quick (under 3 seconds according to Google). Eliminate graphics, headers, footers and other elements that are not essential to the questionnaire. And with the shorter survey length, the progress bar is unnecessary.

Edit Question Length

The language of mobile is short and to the point and so your questions and attributes should be too. The challenge is to ensure that intent and meaning is not lost. Start by eliminating needless instructions ("From the list below, please choose…") that are often carried over from online (and even telephone) surveys. Also review directions at the end of questions, such as "Choose One Item Below" when the question and the response functionality make the choice self-evident.

Leverage Mobile Functionality

First and foremost, make sure your survey platform supports key mobile functions. Some functional elements that are taken for granted with online survey design may not translate well to mobile. Long drop down lists are difficult to use, so consider steppers or radio groups – research shows these functions result in a 40% quicker execution time. Sliders are also a good alternative when using scales.

Add Media

Mobile has the unique advantage of allowing respondents to quickly and easily add photos, voice notes, and video. These can be particularly insightful for shopper insights, diary panels, and day-in-the-life studies. But don't overdo it. If your survey has numerous requirements for media uploads, be sure your survey invite specifically outlines the requirements for the study.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, thoroughly pre-test your survey. A good mobile survey platform should allow you to use all key mobile functionality and be optimized for both iOS and Android. As you review your survey on the mobile device, don't just give it a cursory review; look for opportunities to upgrade the experience. Your respondents will appreciate the effort and you'll be rewarded with greater engagement and better insights.

No matter what the method, market research questionnaires should always be reviewed with the following in mind:

❖ **Craft clear and concise questions that focus on one issue at a time.**

❖ **Ensure scales are balanced and consistent throughout.**

❖ **Make sure response options accurately reflect respondent attitudes and behaviors.**

❖ **Consider question order so early questions do not introduce bias.**

❖ **Visual design should be uncluttered to keep respondents focused.**

❖ **Respect respondent's time and watch survey length.**

04

Privacy in Mobile Market Research

Advances in mobile technology make it imperative for researchers and consultants to consider privacy in mobile research studies.

Mobile market research is on everybody's 2017 to-do list. And no wonder. Smartphone penetration continues to rise in key global markets, and there are numerous benefits to the methodology. The technology also provides some unique opportunities in data capture, both directly from the respondent and through passive data collection. This can result however in significant ethical and data privacy concerns. It is imperative therefore that researchers and consultants understand these issues and how best to deal with them.

The issues around mobile research gained attention in the industry in late-2011 when a study was conducted in U.S. that tracked shoppers' as they moved through a shopping mall. Their movements were logged by tracking the unique signal of each phone. The "respondents" did not opt-in nor agree in advance, and the only way they knew they were being tracked was through signage posted around the mall. The only method to opt-out of the study was to power off their phone. This study drew attention from the U.S. Congress and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the topic of mobile privacy was officially on the radar.

Semee Park, Product Manager who oversees dataSpring's Taiwan and Indonesia mobile panels outlines the key mobile privacy issues and how your mobile research study should differ.

Consent & Transparency

It is apparent to respondents who fill in a questionnaire what data is being collected, but passive data collection is another thing altogether. While data privacy issues around mobile phones have fairly broad awareness, most consumers do not know the specific types of data that can be gathered.

Success Criteria:

❖ Be up-front with potential respondents about what non-questionnaire based data you'll be collecting and why it is important to the studies' objectives.

❖ Ensure they understand how the information will be used and who will have access to it.

> **The technology provides some unique opportunities in data capture. This can result in significant ethical and data privacy concerns.**

Data Privacy

In order to give up personal information, respondents want to know who is collecting the data and be assured it is secure. Respondents should feel confident and in control of their personal data and have an easy means to protect it.

Success Criteria:

❖ Be sure your sample supplier has a robust privacy policy (see dataSpring's mobile privacy policy for guidance) that clearly outlines how the collection, utilization, and distribution of personal information is handled.

❖ Make it easy for respondents and panelists to opt-out of providing cookie and AdID/IDFA data.

Confidentiality

Personally identifiable information (PII) can only be collected if the participant understands the use and has provided express consent. This use can be for market research purposes only and before being passed to end-users, must be anonymized.

Success Criteria:

❖ Utilize only reputable and recognizable market research and sample suppliers who follow and adhere to ESOMAR guidelines.

❖ Avoid tech or marketing companies who may follow less stringent PII policies.

Security

Mobile research provides the opportunity to collect deeply personal information (photos, video recordings). Respondents will be reluctant to produce this type of feedback unless they feel their information is secure.

Success Criteria:

❖ Ensure your data security meet or exceed industry standards and respondents understand how their personal information is stored and for how long.

Legality

Laws on data collection and storage can vary significantly from country to country. Some countries restrict some types of data collection without robust opt-in procedures or do not allow personal information on citizens to be stored outside the country.

Success Criteria:

❖ Consider carefully the countries you plan to research and ensure your methodology is in compliance.

❖ While it may not be practical to research data protection laws in each country you plan to survey, make sure you feel comfortable your supplier it up-to-date.

Mobile market research is quickly becoming an established approach and one that most researchers and consultants are looking to add to their methodology toolbox. Given the rapidly changing smartphone technology and growth of consumer concerns over data privacy make it critical to consider the legal and ethical issues.

This will not only protect you legally but encourage high quality respondent participation both in the short and long-term.

Consider carefully the countries you plan to research and ensure your methodology is in compliance.

Rethink the world of market research with dataSpring's mobile research panels

LEARN MORE

dataSpring offers one-stop research solutions to ensure
that market researchers around the world succeed.

We provide Global Sample in over 35 countries,
a one-stop Fieldwork Suite from questionnaire design to tabulation,
and a proprietary survey programming and reporting tool.

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