



# Mobilising the Research Industry

## Considering the mobile phone as a research tool

Technology cycles tend to last about ten years, from the personal computing era of the '80s, through the desktop computing era of the '90s to the mobile computing era of the early 21st century. Each has brought more computing power, better user experiences, lower prices and expanded services to more people. And with every new technology comes new opportunities for the research industry. None more so than the saturation of mobile phone ownership and the increasing power and capabilities of the modern smartphones.

GfK has been investigating various ways that mobile technology can be leveraged for research purposes, and this is a brief introduction to a few of our recent initiatives.

## Taking mobile-based surveys mainstream: a Nokia case study

Nokia challenged GfK to monitor their whole portfolio of digital channels, including both standard and mobile websites or online shops. This posed a number of challenges in developing an online survey that would work on both the mobile phone as well as the PC, across all possible brands and models of mobile phone, on the various different mobile operating systems, as well as in all the languages for the countries in which Nokia operates.

We achieved this by linking from a banner on the Nokia mobile sites to a mobile-web survey hosted by GfK, which adapted the content and layout depending on the country, language and phone model - information which was pulled from the Nokia server. While this survey needed to be focussed on key metrics only to manage interview length, we were able to develop a solution in-house that solved all of these challenges and we've now achieved over 100,000 completed interviews in less than a year.

## A picture's worth a thousand words: a GfK case study

With the proliferation of channels communicating brand messages to consumers in today's world, there is a growing need to help businesses understand which are the most effective and how they interact. 'Mobile Moments of Truth' is a research tool being developed by GfK that uses the mobile phone to capture and collect the full range of brand experiences. Rather than waiting to ask consumers to recall all brand exposures during a given time frame, panellists are able to take an image using their mobile phone every time they see or experience a brand and give a short report on where, why and how they felt.

This is all achieved through a simple online survey tool which not only gives time sensitive, granular feedback, but also consumer-created images that give a real-life context for each experience.



## If phones can be smart, why not research: a GfK & Revelation case study

As well as using the mobile phone for online quantitative research, GfK has been investigating its potential for qualitative approaches. In a recent project in conjunction with Revelation (a GfK partner for online qualitative research) a sample of iPhone and Google Android users in the US and UK were invited to take part in a five day online qualitative session about their phone and how they use it in their daily lives; using both their PC and their smartphone to participate in the study.

While most respondents would usually default to their PC when convenient or available, they were more than happy to complete tasks using their smartphone, and when doing so the length and quality of their responses were comparable across the two methods. And when you include the added benefits of response frequency and image

uploads of where they are and what they are doing from their phone, the smartphone offers a whole new dimension to the research. Most importantly however, users of these devices genuinely enjoyed using their phones to take part in the research; fitting the exercises into their lives when and how they wanted, from wherever they were.

That said there are some limitations to the smartphone. Not least the size of screen and keyboard limiting the length of time one could expect somebody to spend on an individual task. Ultimately we feel that the smartphone should be used in conjunction with the PC within an online qualitative or ethnographic study where there are short, repetitive, time or location-critical exercises where consumer-generated images would give valuable social context.

While part of this exercise used the phones' internet browser, the ideal way forward is to use

an app-based approach where the respondent downloads the application to the home screen of their device, accessing a customised research platform with a single click. The Revelation iPhone app is now available and proved to be the ideal way to conduct research within this pilot among iPhone users.

### Where do we go from here?

One of the key questions we need to ask ourselves is whether there will be - or even - should there be - a distinction between mobile and online research in the near future? As mobile devices and methods of connectivity converge there may simply be different screens through which the consumer will choose to interact with the research community... if we can make the experience engaging enough to entice them to do so.

For more information on any of these case studies please contact:



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