



PSI EBRIEF #6
BEST PRACTICES FOR
MOBILE SURVEY CREATION:
INDUSTRY RECOMMENDATIONS AND
USEFUL GUIDELINES

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Disclaimer. These guidelines are generalizations based on research, but they do not represent an exhaustive list of supporting literature research. Credentialing organizations should consult with a market research professional because unique situations may require other evidenced-based approaches and/or industry best practices. PSI believes this is a working document and any feedback is highly encouraged. Please send your feedback to marketresearch@psonline.com.

Background. In February 2015, PSI released eBrief #5, Survey Best Practices. As Internet usage via smartphones and tablets increase, PSI recognizes the need to ensure that mobile data collection is valid and reliable. Failure to adapt survey practices to mobile platforms will lead to increased incomplete responses and less reliable data. This eBrief intends to supplement the Survey Best Practices eBrief.

Studies show that smartphones are increasing in use. Recent research shows a stark increase in the use of mobile devices such as smartphones to both receive and respond to surveys. As early as 2011, an estimated 6 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide existed, which grew to 7 billion by the end of 2014 (International Telecommunication Union Report, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, up to 3 million mobile users will have internet capabilities beyond SMS survey potential.

PSI collected information about the use of mobile survey research and understand the benefits of a mobile-focused approach to survey research. Multiple studies found that surveys by users on a mobile device were completed on average 5 minutes faster (survey mean times were 17.9 minutes for computer-based versus 12.4 minutes for mobile), though this may significantly increase based on the survey length (Buskirk, T. D., & Andrus, C. H., 2014, p. 9).

Time from invitation to initial response of the survey significantly differed between mobile and email invitations. Surveys with invitations texted directly to a participant's smartphone were responded and started in an average of 171 minutes, a stark difference from emailed invitations which led to an average start time of 734 minutes from initial invitation receipt (Buskirk, T. D., & Andrus, C. H., 2014, p.17).

Mobile survey invitations lead to a minor increase in survey response rates when compared to email invitations (74% vs. 70%) for individuals who completed the survey via a computer. For individuals who responded with a mobile device, mobile invitations led to a 71% response rate compared to 57% response rate from respondents who received an email invitation (de Bruijne, M. & Wijnant, A, 2013, p. 6).

References

Buskirk, T. D., & Andrus, C. H. (2014). Making Mobile Browser Surveys Smarter Results from a Randomized Experiment Comparing Online Surveys Completed via Computer or Smartphone. *Field Methods*. 26(4), 322-342.

de Bruijne, M. & Wijnant A. (2013). Can mobile web surveys be taken on computers? A discussion on a multi-device survey design. *Survey Practice*. 6(4) 1-8.

International Telecommunication Union Report. (2014). Retrieved March 29, 2015, from <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2014-e.pdf>

Factors to Consider

Create a seamless experience across devices. Layout may affect response behavior if it takes respondents longer to complete. Instead of designing for different platforms, look for ways to optimize one layout for compatibility across different devices, such as using an app. Test surveys on different devices and browsers.

Supporting Literature

Buskirk, T. D., & Andrus, C. H. (2014). Making mobile browser surveys smarter results from a randomized experiment comparing online surveys completed via computer or smartphone. *Field Methods*. 26(4), 322-342.

de Bruijne, M. & Wijnant A. (2013). Can mobile web surveys be taken on computers? A discussion on a multi-device survey design. *Survey Practice*. 6(4) 1-8.

Cook, W.A. (2014). Is mobile a reliable platform for survey taking? Defining quality in online surveys from mobile respondents. *Journal of Advertising Research*. 54(2). 141-148.

Callegaro, M. (2013). Do you know which device your respondent has used to take your online survey? *Survey Practice*. 3(6).

Questions should be short and direct. Small screens do not work well with long questions, and scrolling can cause respondents to miss category options.

de Bruijne, M. & Wijnant A. (2013). Can mobile web surveys be taken on computers? A discussion on a multi-device survey design. *Survey Practice*. 6(4) 1-8.

de Bruijne, M. & Wijnant, A. (2013). Comparing survey results obtained via mobile devices and computers: An experiment with a mobile web survey on a heterogeneous group of mobile devices versus a computer-assisted web survey. *Social Science Computer Review*. 31 (4). 482-504.

Wells, T., Bailey, J.T., & Link, M.W. (2013). Comparison of smartphone and online computer survey administration. *Social Science Computer Review*. 32(2) p. 238-255 DOI: 10.1177/0894439313505829

Callegaro, M. (2013). From mixed-mode to multiple devices: Web surveys, smartphone surveys and apps—has the respondent gone ahead of us in answering surveys? *International Journal of Marketing Research*. 55(2). 317-320.

Buskirk, T.D. & Andrus, C. (2012). Smart surveys for smart phones: Exploring various approaches for conducting online mobile surveys via smartphones. *Survey Practice*. 5(1). 1-11.

Peytchev, A. & Hill, C.A. (2010). Experiments in mobile web survey design: Similarities to other modes and unique considerations. *Social Science Computer Review*. 28(3). 319-335.

Mavletova, A. (2013). Data quality in PC and mobile web surveys. *Social Science Computer Review*. 31 (6). 725-743.

Stapleton, C.E. (2013). The smartphone way to collect survey data. *Survey Practice*. 6(2). 1-7.

Mobile surveys should be short. One study provided evidence that surveys should take less than 15 minutes to complete as a means of minimizing impacts on respondent satisfaction.

Buskirk, T.D. & Andrus, C. (2012). Smart surveys for smart phones: Exploring various approaches for conducting online mobile surveys via smartphones. *Survey Practice*. 5(1). 1-11.

Stapleton, C.E. (2013). The smartphone way to collect survey data. *Survey Practice*. 6(2). 1-7.

Fine, B. & Menictas, C. (2012). The who, when, where and how of smartphone research. *Australasian Journal of Market & Social Research*. 20(2). 29-46.

Because fingertip navigation is required to complete surveys on mobile devices, certain question types do not perform well in the mobile environment.

de Bruijne, M. & Wijnant A. (2013). Can mobile web surveys be taken on computers? A discussion on a multi-device survey design. *Survey Practice*. 6(4) p. 1-8.

Callegaro, M. (2013). From mixed-mode to multiple devices: Web surveys, smartphone surveys and apps—has the respondent gone ahead of us in answering surveys? *International Journal of Marketing Research*. 55(2). 317-320.

Keep images small because they be rendered differently across different devices and may take up more room than expected.

Peytchev, A. & Hill, C.A. (2010). Experiments in mobile web survey design: Similarities to other modes and unique considerations. *Social Science Computer Review*. 28(3). 319-335.

Wells, T., Bailey, J.T., & Link, M.W. (2013). Comparison of smartphone and online computer survey administration. *Social Science Computer Review*. 32(2) p. 238-255 DOI: 10.1177/0894439313505829

Buskirk, T.D. & Andrus, C. (2012). Smart surveys for smart phones: Exploring various approaches for conducting online mobile surveys via smartphones. *Survey Practice*, 5(1). 1-11.

International research describes Short Message Service (SMS) surveys for marketing research, but issues exist with the SMS methodology, including limited characters, single questions per message, and the inability to use multimedia. Researchers should be aware that not all participants have unlimited messaging and should take steps to compensate participants appropriately.

Alam, I., Khusro, S., Rauf, A., & Zaman, Q. (2014). Conducting surveys and data collection: From traditional to mobile and SMS-based surveys. *Pakistan Journal of Statistics & Operation Research*. 10(2). p. 169-187.

Steeh, C., Buskirk, T. D., & Callegaro, M. (2007). Using text messages in US mobile phone surveys. *Field Methods*. 19(1), 59-75.

Hoffman, W. & Patel, P.V. (2015). Survey Signal: A convenient solution for experience sampling research using participants' own smartphones. *Social Science Computer Review*. 33(2). 235-253.

Avoid open-ended questions because they require typing. Although this is becoming less of an issue as keyboards are available on smartphones, evidence suggests that it takes more time to answer these types of questions.

Peytchev, A. & Hill, C.A. (2010). Experiments in mobile web survey design: Similarities to other modes and unique considerations. *Social Science Computer Review*. 28(3). 319-335.

Mavletova, A. (2013). Data quality in PC and mobile web surveys. *Social Science Computer Review*. 31(6). 725-743.

De Bruijne, M., & Wijnant, A. (2014). Improving response rates and questionnaire design for mobile web surveys. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 78(4), 951-962.

Like SMS restrictions, data plan limits could be an issue for respondents completing a survey over a cellular network.

Buskirk, T.D. & Andrus, C. (2012). Smart surveys for smart phones: Exploring various approaches for conducting online mobile surveys via smartphones. *Survey Practice*. 5(1). 1-11.

Nitsche, P., Widhalm, P., Breuss, S., Brändle, N., & Maurer, P. (2014). Supporting large-scale travel surveys with smartphones—A practical approach. *Transportation Research Part C: Emerging Technologies*. 43(2). 212-221.

ABOUT PSI

PSI has over 70 years of experience providing worldwide testing solutions to corporations, federal and state government agencies, professional associations, certifying bodies and leading academic institutions. PSI offers a comprehensive solutions approach from test development to delivery to results processing, including pre-hire employment selection, managerial assessments, licensing and certification tests, distance learning testing, license management services and professional services. More information is available at www.psonline.com.

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