

MR Excellence Award Winner 2020: Making a Business Impact

Convenor: Rachel Medcalf, Adelphi Research

Mobile: *"Don't Break the Data!"*

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With an explosion in the use of mobile devices for completing market research surveys over the last five years, particularly in markets such as China and the USA where up to 40% of the surveys that are fielded are conducted using mobile technology, Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) worked with Instar Research to evaluate the impact of mobile device usage on market research surveys.

Business needs and research objectives

- The business needs identified by BI included:
- The impact on market research surveys if they were moved specifically to mobile devices.
- The considerations needed for any variants seen in the data.
- The degree of optimisation that needs to be factored in when using mobile devices and the impact this will have on the data that is seen.

A key objective was to evaluate device type (PC versus mobile) in terms of any potential impact on the data - the 'platform effect'. It was also important to assess the impact of setting the same question up in different ways to optimise it for a mobile device and comparing this to the test group using a traditional survey to see if there was any data variance. A further objective was to explore how carrying out surveys on mobile devices potentially increases the engagement of physicians and participation rates.

How the research was conducted

The research was conducted in three stages.

1. A hypothesis testing exercise was run via a workshop which explored what BI thought the results were likely to be and how this might differ across the team. All of this information was then put into a survey design, picking up on perceptions of what the market research data might say, including differences, what the quality might look like and what the physician experience might look like. This provided an essential context for framing the deliverable and the storyline became more engaging as it sat within the context of what BI thought might happen.
2. The testing phase involved a scheduled tracking arm for one of BI's brands which was split three ways with 120 healthcare professionals per arm involving:
 - A traditional arm with a traditional grid layout.
 - A mobile friendly arm, which took the same survey with slight tweaks so that it looked better on a mobile device while sticking as close to a traditional survey layout as possible. It involved scrolling up and down.
 - A mobile first arm which was optimised for viewing on a mobile device, plus a modified survey layout and sequencing to work better for a mobile. It involved swiping right for yes and left for no.

Considerable effort was made to use a design that was a true enhancement of a traditional mobile survey. In running the study three ways, it was possible to isolate the impact of the device i.e. the 'platform effect'. The impact of changing the way the question looked and whether there was any statistical variance in the data could also be seen. While the invitation to physicians did not insist that they completed the survey on either their desktop PC or mobile device as specified, there was a very high degree of compliance.

3. The project debrief involved a myth-busting exercise in the context of the hypotheses that had been developed and the myths that needed to be busted from the results obtained. A lot of the predictions, hopes and fears expressed in the hypothesis testing exercise turned out not to be true at the end. For example, although the survey layout impacted on consistency, there were similar completion rates and the fieldwork times were not improved. These were surprising findings for BI and they have provided a blueprint that can be overlaid on discussions about their mobile strategy to give areas for consideration and what they need to be mindful of if they go down this route.



Key findings in order of impact

- The mobile trend is only likely to be one way.
- The device type impacts KPI performance, even when it is optimised for a PC versus a mobile device.
- The survey layout did not impact as far as the KPIs were concerned but there were significant differences in how doctors responded in terms of attributes and grid questions.
- Optimised survey layouts took longer to complete although the post-survey did not yield any complaints from doctors.
- All three physician groups said that they would be willing to participate in the future, even though one of the groups took noticeably longer.
- There were no differences in key fieldwork statistics (response rate, screen-outs, drop-outs and length in field were all the same).

Summary of strategic implications

- **Piloting** - make sure that the questionnaire is working as it should on both PCs and mobile devices to ensure that there are no significant differences in data collection or quality.
- **Analytics** - monitor surveys in terms of the number of completes on PCs versus mobile devices and include this as a banner point on all data tables.
- **Reporting** - for each study, there should be an appendix that clearly highlights that different platforms have been used to conduct the market research as well as key similarities and differences.