

# IN-THE-MOMENT RESEARCH:

PIVOTAL TO UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE & THEIR BEHAVIOUR



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## Being ‘in the moment’: what mobile research really means

The smartphone has not only changed the way that we connect with one another, but also the way that we access information and make decisions. Moreover, it comes everywhere with us: to the supermarket; on the train commute; walking the dog; to the movies; to bed; even to the bathroom.

This is the reason that mobile research holds so much potential – it presents a method to further step into consumers’ lives and move a great deal closer towards understanding consumer behaviour. Without physically attaching yourself to your consumers of interest, mobile presents a unique medium that allows us to be truly ‘in the moment’ in many situations. Couple this capability with the level of comfort people have sharing personal information via their mobile, and the power of mobile research is very clear.

Looking within the Market Research industry specifically, the onus sits with us to adapt methodologies to meet the progression of social behaviour and interaction. We must strive to reflect the impact that mobile is having on our lives and take advantage of the plethora of new personal insights it can provide.

Adaptation does not mean however, pushing old thinking onto new technology – it means customising research techniques to fit in with everyday lifestyles. We must conduct research on mobile in a way that makes sense to consumers in the context of this device, including short surveys, location-based situational cues, passive data collection, image/video sharing and capture, and utilising social, chat-based

# THE 'NEEDLE SHIFT' IN CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS

Looking back over the past decade, there have been dramatic developments with the way in which smartphones are used, and alongside this, the capabilities that have been made available via mobile – both from a technological perspective, but also from a commercial brand perspective.

Think for a moment about your everyday life – your banking, shopping, house-hunting, travel planning, daily commutes, music storage and management, photo capture & sharing. Mobile has moved way beyond being something simply social – it's now a fundamental cornerstone in consumer life.

From a Market Research perspective, it is all these intuitive, functional, simple & sexy day to day mobile experiences that have caused a huge 'needle shift' in consumer expectations when it comes to the way that people expect to be able to provide feedback. "You want me to share images with you?... Sure, where's the share button?"; "You want me to tell you what I'm thinking when I'm next in a café, no problem, just ping me with a perfectly rendered 4 question survey via geo-location when it's appropriate."

Consumers, brands & social platforms have worked in tandem to develop current mobile usage behaviours and expectations, while Market Research has trailed behind. It is for this reason that we need to look first to consumer behaviour before then adapting our research expectations and techniques.

## Mobile in Market Research

Despite the ubiquity of apps and mobile services in nearly every industry / aspect of consumers' lives, mobile in Market Research is still finding its feet. That said, there's a fine line that we need to hit when considering mobile Market Research – one which isn't too intrusive – consumers really aren't always keen on passive data collection & allowing research companies to view their every move; however one that is still intuitive & integrated enough to meet expectations set with regard to mobile functionality.

Achieving this is cornerstone to overcoming three of the fundamental pitfalls of the Market Research industry:



Reliance on claimed and often unreliable data.




The unfair burden of excessively long questionnaires.



The repetitiveness of needing to answer the same questions.

Well thought out in-the-moment mobile market research is a game changer that overcomes these drawbacks to traditional style research.



At MDI we have found that having an intuitive app that feels native to consumers provides a strong foundation for effective in-the-moment research.

Research facilitated on an app goes a long way to remove the abovementioned pitfalls because it effectively creates a longitudinal dataset for each individual – perhaps over a few days, a couple of weeks, or longer. This ensures that all of their data points can be connected, reducing the pressure to ask ALL the questions in one go. Beyond this benefit of being able to issue shorter surveys, it also means that questions – particularly static, profiling questions – don't need to be asked more than once. The Achilles heel of Market Research – the unreliability of claimed data – is also addressed, at least to some degree, simply by having research available on a mobile app. Being on an app means being in a pocket; in a hand; in front of a face... importantly – in the moment that matters to our clients.

There are 3 key elements that need to be overlaid on this kind of mobile platform to ensure effective in-the-moment research:

1. Being contextually relevant.
2. Maintaining ongoing communication.
3. Ensuring an individual research journey.

Being contextually relevant means only speaking to people when it makes sense to them – ensuring that they are the right people; they are in the right place; It is the right time for them. If research is issued within these parameters, it feels natural, and results are rich and valid. Mobile has the beauty of being able to check each person's status, location, time and deliver research accordingly.

Communication is the underpinning element of the mobile device – it only makes sense that it is a pillar of success within the realm of mobile research.

Staying in touch and being available are key elements of successful mobile research projects – personalized messages, to ensure that the research remains top of mind for people participating, and having a chat function for individualized information or responses.

While the power and the intelligence of mobile research should sit within the automation of a research design, the success will often rest more heavily than you would expect on connection and communication.

Finally, a mobile app structure allows the facilitation of an individualised journey for each person. Like any journey, even if a group starts together, they are unlikely to finish at the same time, or take the same route. If one person is very compliant and completes all their tasks on time, they don't need to receive reminder messages – perhaps instead, words of appreciation. A person who misses a task or a day of activity may need to repeat it, and have the subsequent survey issued later. Accounting for these different pathways and customizing each individual's journey through the app ensures that the experience feels natural and relevant to them... bringing us back to better, richer data.



# BEING IN MANY MOMENTS: THE IMPACT ON DATASETS

The benefits of mobile research reach far beyond convenience for the consumer. Being in-the-moment and on a mobile app allows the flexibility of consumer-led occasion-based research, causing dramatic increases in the volume of data. Suddenly, the dataset is not n=2000 people, but n=50,000 occasion responses – with n=150,000 images. This provides a rich and sometimes daunting dataset that becomes unlike that typically seen in Market Research. The level of insight into different occasions, subgroups, categories, brands etc. is immense – and the value that can be derived for businesses is a delight to see.

This does, however, undoubtedly beg the question of the next big thing in research – the role of AI and its most useful applications....



*MDI was formed 10 years ago, and during this time we have become Mobile Research experts. MDI's research philosophy is to design research that fits with consumers' mobile behaviours – making research convenient and accessible.*

*We believe in our approach, and in our team. We love what we do, and we love hearing the impact that the work we do has on our clients' businesses.*

*“ MDI have made accurate in-the-moment beverage consumption measurement an art form ”*

Surjit Swain – Director – Strategic Insights & Analytics –  
INSWA BU at TCCC

