

Universal Communications

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It is stating the obvious that we are living in a period of exponential change in terms of our ability to communicate with others. This pace of change will not abate in the foreseeable future. This will be powered by the increasing computing power we have at our fingertips. Computing power is doubling every 18 months, bandwidth is doubling every nine months and we are capable of doubling data storage at the same cost every year.

These computing developments will make smart-phones even smarter, evidenced, for example, by the imminent arrival of 3D mobile phones.

It is already the case that Australian mobile phone penetration is to all intents and purposes universal. Indeed, the average Australian household currently boasts three mobile phones. Mobile phones are already the most common web-access device.

In the same way as on-line market research replaced telephone interviewing as the principal means of collecting consumer data, it is foreseeable that smart phones could do the same.

The benefits of collecting data by mobile phone are many. Consumers are able to undertake surveys when commuting, or waiting for a meeting for example. This data collection method allows for interviewing people more than once. Panel data of this nature, as used in the measurement of TV ratings, allows the researcher to undertake more sophisticated analysis than is the case for the more common approach of interviewing a respondent once only.

Undertaking panel research is extremely complex, and requires a large amount of management to ensure the sample remains valid and reliable. The biggest barrier to the use of this method, however, is the response rate achieved. The principal reasons for respondents not completing their surveys on time is that they often simply forget to do this task or it is not convenient for them to do when working at a computer. It is not uncommon, therefore, to find respondents filling out their surveys days after required, thereby potentially compromising the integrity of the data collected.

The advent of data collection via mobile phones now allows marketers to be in touch with consumers like never before. Top-line results are available within hours, not days. This methodology allows for the fielding of small studies on an issue of immediate importance, for example. Or to address those questions which have not in the past warranted a full-scale project to be undertaken. Day-after-recall advertising measures, recent product consumption, daily purchase patterns and specific media consumption are results available to the marketer whenever and over any geographic area.

Advertising has allowed marketers to communicate to consumers. Mobile phone research will allow marketers to also listen to their consumers at the press of a button.

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