

customer THINK

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Mobility and Customer Feedback: An Ideal Match

In the office, on buses, at grocery stores, in parks: Wherever you go, it seems there's always the gentle sound of tap, tap, tapping that comes with mobile-device use. Some just check email, but many are accessing work applications, social media sites, news feeds, online games and much more.

Most important for this discussion, some of these users are zipping through surveys they might not have taken online. As mobile devices continue to proliferate, they're becoming a vital channel for collecting actionable insights.

Some might argue the rise of mobile as a channel mirrors the introduction of online surveys. However, the mobile channel has its own distinctive benefits and challenges.

A Natural Transition

According to a [2011 Nielsen study](#), 62% of mobile adults aged 25-34 own smartphones, making it even easier for them to complete online surveys anywhere, anytime. TeleGeography predicts that the reach of mobile devices will continue to rise, with global wireless subscribers forecasted to [surpass seven billion](#) by the end of 2014.

While a mobile device can be used to access the same type of information found via a desktop or tablet, usage patterns and habits are often quite different. People tend to keep emails shorter, for example, or check their social media connections more frequently. They get work done while standing in a grocery store line, which can translate to making decisions faster and more efficiently.

Similarly, if done correctly, mobility makes a difference to those taking customer surveys. Many appreciate the convenience that comes with mobility, but they also find the user experience better and more streamlined. And those asking the questions are able to get closer to the truth.

When this fondness for on-the-go technology is matched with customer engagement, response rates can flourish. Here are some advantages to the pairing:

- **Technology:** The touch screen on mobile devices fits well with survey interfaces, since users are familiar with how to get through information quickly. Also, the technology may allow survey creators to track via GPS the geographical location of the respondent— with

their full knowledge and approval —at survey completion for trend-based analysis. Another advantage is that mobile devices facilitate the creation of a trigger. For example, a mobile user walking by a specific store might see a survey about that retailer pop up instantly.

- **Time:** Surveys can be done during user "downtime," such as while running errands or waiting for a meeting to start. If the interface allows the customer to save answers until later and are optimized for mobile devices, users will be drawn to it and more likely to interact the next time. In general, user enthusiasm will be high, since those who feel they're getting more done on a device won't see the company interaction as overly interruptive to their workdays.
- **Perception:** Length of survey and time needed for completion are perceived as shorter than on a desktop, perhaps because of its ability to fill "empty" time that would otherwise be used to check email or social media.
- **Availability:** Mobile devices are ubiquitous, even in emerging markets, so this customer channel will be available to most people. This will allow companies to engage with key demographics that were previously difficult or impossible to access, such as young people, busy businesspeople and people in markets such as India, China and Latin America.
- **Comfort:** Unlike some types of in-person questionnaires where respondents are handed an unfamiliar notebook computer or other device to record their answers, those that use mobile devices utilize technology that's familiar to the user. Their learning curve is low, which tends to make the response rate high.

In general, using mobile for customer engagement yields insights from a holistic perspective, which allows the customer voice to come through clearer and sharper than ever.



Meeting the Challenges

Despite many benefits to mobility, there are some instances where online might trump mobile devices.

For example, if a survey contains open questions where respondents are asked to write textual answers, they're less likely to tap out a long, thoughtful reply. More likely, they'll gravitate toward a survey that contains questions answerable through several options—such as multi-choice, ranking, rating, and sliding scale—although mobile can allow for some open question capability.

Another consideration is the look of the survey. For instance, large grid questions don't fit on a small screen and would have to be split into a series of individual questions on a mobile device. This can be challenging, since it might lead to repetitive questions, which tend to frustrate respondents. Survey designers should thus try to limit the use of these grids on mobile devices.

Perhaps most notably, multimedia can pose some issues when it comes to survey creation. Screen size sometimes becomes an issue for including video and photos in a survey question, and iPhones don't support Flash, so surveys that use that functionality will likely see low response rates.

Other factors to watch when dealing with mobile include sample bias and differences in response due to channel. But overall, the biggest risk would be that completion rates tumble because the user experience hasn't been created specifically for mobile.

As long as customer engagement tools can be optimized for mobile devices, there's a mine of opportunity in using this channel. The advantages are numerous, and embracing mobile as a must-have customer channel can allow companies to harness the channel's particular benefits and stay ahead of the market as mobile keeps expanding.

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