

# Real-time research

When mobile devices are used in real-time research, immediate, instinctive responses can be collated, achieving more truthful insight as examples from Oscars® night to the Danish elections prove



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**M**arket research's job is to find out what people really think or how they behave, and sometimes how they think they would behave in certain situations. Companies want to know the truth in order to make important business decisions. Therefore, it is vital we question the methods used to get the best version of the truth.

There is a growing assumption that the shorter the time spent answering a question, the truer it is. If you reduce or remove the

opportunity to ponder, then you might get a more instinctive response that is closer to the truth.

It is proposed that research methods that require instant feedback or generate instinctive, emotional responses are more accurate in getting to the truth. One method of getting this type of insight is real-time mobile research – it takes advantage of the fact that the researcher can reach the respondent wherever they are, and get a quick, instant response to any question. It is also possible to be 'with' the respondent at the point they are deciding which beer to buy, or which channel to watch.

Real-time mobile research removes the delay between an event, an activity or consumption and the time it is recorded by the respondent. It intrinsically encourages a quick, instinctive response. This article presents a number of case studies where real-time mobile research has been used to get closer to the truth.

## TOUCHPOINTS – ACTIVE DIARIES AND PASSIVE METERS

The UK's IPA's TouchPoints is a powerful data set for media buyers and brands showing which types of media are consumed

by different members of the UK population throughout the course of a week. In 2011, it commissioned us to produce a mobile app to collect the data, with the market research managed by Ipsos.

Respondents were required to complete a mobile diary for every 30 minute period of the day for one week. The mobile diary only takes a couple of minutes each time, but since respondents are completing it around 30 times a day, it is natural that people want to get through it as fast as possible. Therefore, the responses are fast and likely to be based on instinct.

The app also records the time each diary is completed, so assumptions about accuracy can be made based on the length of time between when the diary is completed and the timeslot it refers to. For instance, if someone completes all their diary entries at the end of the day, we cannot help but assume their information is less accurate than those who record their entries throughout the day.

Respondents could set their own reminders during the day. In addition, we used notifications within the iPhone, so that numbered badges appeared on the app icon if the respondent was falling behind.

In conclusion, both the respondents and the end clients had a high level of satisfaction

with the e-diary: 89% of respondents said they would be happy to take part in the study again, the IPA's client base is growing and they demand an increasing range of data. This project was successful both in keeping the respondents engaged, and in providing additional data to the client without any increased effort from the respondents.

Without real-time data collection there would be no way to collect this data accurately. Many traditional consumption diary studies ask respondents to record their behaviour throughout the day. However, in practice this requires them to have access to an online or paper diary all day long. The beauty of the smartphone diary is that people naturally carry it around with them all day and use it at regular intervals, so we surmise the interval between the timeslot and completion should be smaller with the mobile app and therefore the data more accurate.

It is hard not to question whether respondents will look for shortcuts in order to complete the diary even faster – however this project had an additional data collection method.

Alongside the mobile diary, respondents were also asked to download a passive tracking app. This app is a perfect example of absolute truth, as it records what is on

the front screen of the phone whenever the phone is on. It is recorded silently in the background so the respondent barely notices it is there. There is no question about the accuracy of the data. This data can be compared with the active diary to understand how accurate the respondent's manual recording is. Initial findings suggest these are pretty close, so we can assume a good level of truth telling in the active diary.

Figure 1 compares the data collected for mobile internet use from both the active diary and the passive meter. The active diary asks users to describe the activities for each 30-minute period, but the passive meter will measure the actual number of minutes and seconds used. This is one reason for the significant difference between the data over lunchtime. The difference at the end of the day is interesting. We can surmise that people went to sleep a little later than they recorded in the diary!

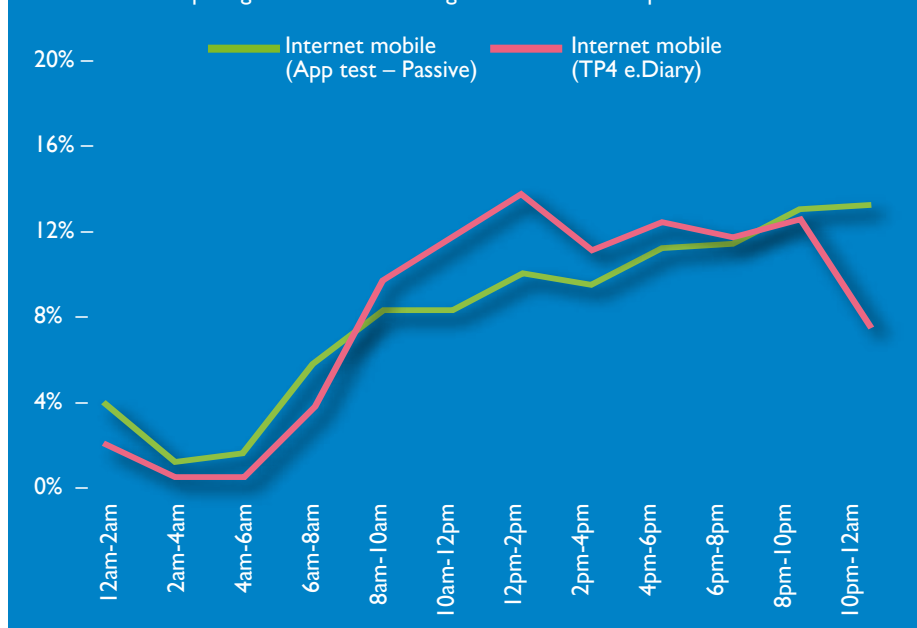
In this case study, we have used mobile research to gather information in two ways, passive and active. There are active and passive data sets from this study that match each other, such as time spent social networking on your phone, or location. There are also ones that can't be measured by both methods such as time spent watching TV or reading the newspaper. As a result, the mobile has brought a level of truth that could not have been reached through another method.

## USING FACIAL RESPONSE TO RECORD AD REACTIONS

Millward Brown was keen to understand what could be measured through tracking facial expressions in response to a video. We built an application that simultaneously plays a video and films the respondent's face. The respondent then answers a set of quick questions about the video they watched and the brand that was displayed. Millward Brown employed interviewers to run the research across two locations in India with a range of respondents.

The respondents' recordings were assessed by Affectiva which has proprietary software which interprets facial reactions such as smiles and frowns. It was able to present the aggregated facial reactions alongside the video itself, while displaying the scores for the standard ad recall questions.

FIGURE 1: Comparing mobile internet usage across active and passive data collection



## INTERACTING WITH LIVE TV

ABC (the American Broadcasting Company) wanted to interact with participants watching the Oscars® in order to collect feedback about the event and to identify whether the application had any impact on viewers' enjoyment of the event.

Ipsos, as its research company, commissioned Lumi Mobile to create an app to manage this. The Appcast app used a combination of live chat, polls, trivia, quizzes and competitions to engage the participants. The respondents found the experience of using the app addictive. They commented enthusiastically on the red carpet arrivals, the performances, the winners and so on, as the events unfolded on screen. ABC was able to host the discussion, posing questions within the live mobile chat. Plus it could push out quick mini-polls such as 'who will win best actor?' or 'who is the best dressed?' and publish the results collected instantly. It also used these features to test the effectiveness of the advertisements in the breaks, and a dial test was used during the video montage.

This is a great example of instant honest research. People commented in the moment, their emotions influenced their reactions, plus the activity within the app moved so quickly they had to be quick to keep up. Everybody had an opinion they wanted to voice.

In a post-event questionnaire, Ipsos found 88% of participants said the application made watching the Oscars® more enjoyable, and 92% said it would make them more likely to watch live TV events. The qualitative data from the verbatims during the event, and the quantitative data from the mini-polls made the most of the instant emotional reactions. The mini polls have to be answered quickly or they disappear, and the comments within the live chat came thick and fast, leaving little time for pondering and opinion-forming.

This meant the researchers could easily see which parts of the video elicited which facial reactions and compare these to the opinions collected about each ad. Watching a video,

## DANISH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

This case study used a similar app to the Oscars® event, but its purpose was quite different. The Votecast app was distributed to respondents who were planning to watch a live TV debate between candidates for the Danish Parliamentary Elections.

On this occasion, extensive use was made of the dial test feature during the debates. The speech writers were able to view the instant reactions to the speeches, and could actually make changes in real time.

This is a perfect example of how mobile research can not only get closer

to the truth, but react to it and influence respondents immediately. Any political debate is held with the purpose of appealing to the electorate, and historically researchers would have to conduct interviews or surveys after the event to understand their impact and effectiveness.

However, by making use of the device that a vast number of people already have in their hand while watching TV, it was possible to obtain instant reactions and improve the efficacy of their message in real time.

recording the reactions and then immediately answering questions produced a very strong set of data which is intrinsically instinctive.

Most would agree that the respondent facial reactions are undoubtedly true. However, the next question for the researcher is how a smile or a frown affects the subsequent behaviour of the respondent to the product advertised. The learning here is that using the mobile for fieldwork elicited data that was not easily captured before. As with any data, the truth lies in the interpretation.

### IN SUMMARY

The case studies all demonstrate how real time mobile research can bring researchers closer to the truth:

- By removing the reliance on memory.
- By asking questions while emotions are running high.
- By adding a sense of urgency so that respondents are encouraged to respond instantly and instinctively rather than taking their time.
- By using familiar tasks that encourage quick completion, rather than deep thought.
- By asking for opinions or descriptions of events as they are happening.
- By recording the actual emotional response through facial reactions.


So are we closer to the truth if we use mobile research? Looking at the evidence, I can't help asking whether measuring in real time versus post-event is getting you closer to the truth about a user's reaction

or opinion, or whether it is measuring something new and different. Perhaps there are many versions of the truth:

- The truth based on what you are experiencing right here, and right now.
- The truth you remember after the event.
- That version you create once you have spoken to other people, got their opinions, given it some thought.
- The version you would like to be true.
- The evidence of measurable data i.e. passive tracking.

Mobile research can be used to replace traditional forms of research such as pen and paper, CAPI or some online questionnaires as it can create cost savings, improve processes and it is more accessible. However these improvements do not necessarily bring you closer to the truth.

Examples like the case studies mentioned in this article however can bring a new truth. Whether it is closer to the truth depends on which version of the truth you are after. It certainly brings a new level of immediacy and emotional response that was not available before. I propose that to get to the truth, you need to come at it from several directions and mobile research is definitely an important one. Can it and should it replace the traditional methods? That is harder to argue, as what has been shown is that mobile research is actually measuring different things to the traditional methods, so it comes down to – which version of the truth do you want?

 more on researching the implicit memory at [www.warc.com](http://www.warc.com)