

IVR surveys: A powerful and cost-effective tool for Market Research

**Opinion-8 -
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application of
software or
technology to
market, opinion
and social
research.**

A question that is exercising the minds of many market research agencies is how to gain feedback cost-effectively from people who do not have easy internet access. Currently these groups are being reached primarily by in-person telephone interviews or postal surveys, but these methods are highly resource-intensive. IVR (interactive voice response) surveys - also referred to as automated telephone interviews - are a simple and cost-effective alternative. They can be used for a broad range of applications including consultation exercises, employee studies, stakeholder feedback, customer satisfaction surveys, market research etc. This paper will look at the benefits, practicalities and costs of using IVR surveys for market research.

The limits of online surveying

The use of online surveys automatically limits the group of people who are likely or able to participate. Those with reading, writing or IT literacy difficulties and those with visual impairments are excluded. Demographic groups with less access to the internet are unlikely to respond. Employee research using online surveys will not cover those without internet access at work. These groups need therefore to be offered alternatives to online surveys. And paper-based or in-person interviews are costly and therefore not always an option.

Everyone has a phone

Giving people the option of responding immediately simply by calling a freephone number increases the chance that they will respond. It also means the survey can be completed anonymously even in a busy office. The assurance of anonymity and the fact that there is no way of tracing responses back to the individual, increases not only participation but honesty. In recent studies multilingual IVR surveys have been used very successfully in combination with online surveys for getting feedback from frontline staff.

How do IVR surveys work?

The target group (customer, employee, stakeholder, member or the general public) are offered a freephone number to call. Once they call this number, they will hear some pre-recorded information and questions to which they can respond either by using the numbers on their telephone keypad, or by speaking their answers. When they hang up, their feedback is stored on a secure web-server and is analysed and compiled instantly,

just as with online surveys. By logging on with a unique user name and password, you can then see the latest updated reports on feedback. Many organisations find that inviting spoken comments gives the most interesting picture of the customer experience, and this qualitative information can be categorised and measured by transcription and analysis of recorded comments. With some systems, such as Opinion-8 from Square Systems, clients can easily set up and amend their own surveys over the internet after attending a day's training.

Opinion-8 – an IVR tool with a track record in market research

Recently shortlisted for the Market Research Society 2007 Technology Effectiveness Award, Opinion-8 has a track record of being used for market research purposes by companies across the UK, Europe and the US. For a list of clients see www.opinion-8.com. The solution supports multilingual surveys and we can arrange for interviews to be recorded by native speakers. Opinion-8 is offered both as a hosted service and as an in house appliance for you to set up and manage your own surveys if you have larger survey volumes.

The system can be configured to do anything you would want from an IVR survey. Customer comments can easily be transcribed and categorised so that qualitative feedback can be measured and analysed. Questions can be branched, dependent on responses to previous questions. Implementing Opinion-8 is quick and simple. Survey questionnaires can be created online. The whole process from set-up to implementation of survey can be done in a few hours. Results are available to view in real time, and raw data can be downloaded as a CSV file or as an Excel spreadsheet. Charges are completely scalable depending on the number of responses.

For more information about using IVR automated telephone surveys for market research, visit www.opinion-8.co.uk or contact the author.

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