

INTERNET VS. TELEPHONE DATA COLLECTION: DOES METHOD MATTER?

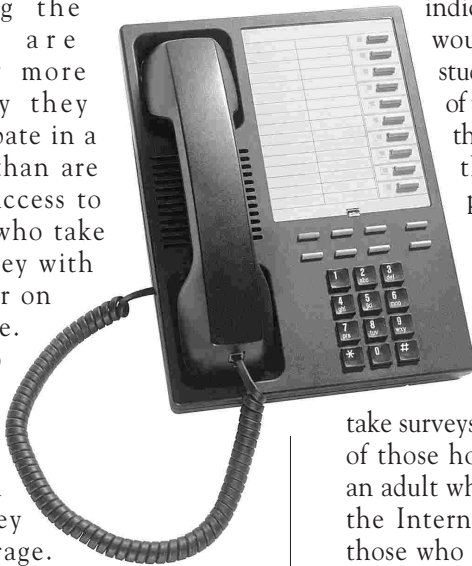
Summary of Key Findings

New research by Burke, Inc. indicates that people taking a survey using the Internet are significantly more likely to say they would participate in a future study than are people with access to the Internet who take the same survey with an interviewer on the telephone.

Taking a Web survey also takes a respondent less time than a phone survey does, on average.

The study found that a survey whose administration averaged 19.4 minutes over the phone took respondents, on average, just 12.5 minutes to complete on the Web.

Three-hundred eighty-six Web interviews and 500 telephone interviews were conducted for this Burke research and development project. Unlike previous efforts to validate the Web as an effective medium for conducting surveys, this study attempted to isolate differences in responses directly related to the survey method. People taking both the Web and telephone surveys were recruited over the phone using a random-digit dialing technique. Only those with access to the Internet were given an option to participate in the study, and individuals were randomly assigned to take the survey using the Web or over the telephone.



At the end of the interview, 33% of those completing the survey on the Web indicated that they definitely would participate in future studies. By contrast, just 18% of those taking the survey over the telephone indicated that they definitely would participate in the future.

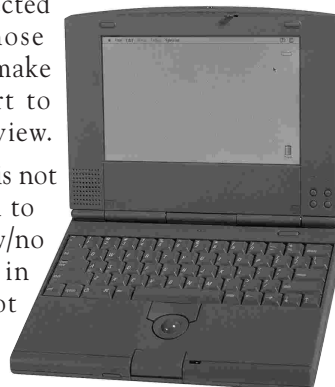
The study did not, however, prove the efficiency of recruiting respondents through random phone dialing to take surveys over the Web. Only 35% of those households contacted had an adult who had access to and used the Internet — and only 26% of those who initially agreed over the phone to complete the survey using the Web actually did so.

Other key findings from the study include the following:

- Despite the random assignment of respondents to cells, respondents who actually completed the survey over the Web tended to be more experienced Internet users than respondents who completed the survey over the phone. It must be assumed that any research on the Web is really done among a sub-sample of connected individuals — those willing and able to make the necessary effort to complete the interview.
- In most cases, there is not a compelling reason to include “don’t know/no response” options in Web surveys. If not given this “out,”

respondents do tend to answer the questions. There was no greater tendency for Web respondents to terminate the interview if they were not provided don’t know/no response options, and these respondents actually responded more positively to the survey experience than Web respondents given the don’t know/no response option.

- If provided a “don’t know/no response” option in a Web survey, significantly more respondents will take it than do so in phone surveys — particularly on sensitive issues. Web survey findings relating to social, political, or other sensitive issues can be “packaged” very differently depending upon whether or not a “don’t know” option is included.
- Depending on the type of scale used, responses to Web survey items can vary considerably from responses to phone survey items. In particular, when responses to survey items are completely verbally labeled, phone respondents are significantly more likely than Web respondents to use scale endpoints. Responses to traditional purchase-intent scales, which are often adjusted to forecast demand for new products, are among those that can be affected by survey method.
- Scale usage did not substantially differ between phone respondents and Web respondents when, instead of a completely verbally labeled scale, a numerical scale with verbal endpoints was used.



- With the careful scale selection, conjoint data collection over the Internet or over the phone will yield nearly identical results. Some have suggested that Web data can be “better” than phone data because the interactive nature of the web survey allows respondents to provide more considered responses. This research, however, showed no differences in the predictive ability of the two types of data.
- For customer satisfaction studies, findings relating to overall customer security and issue prioritization can be the same whether studies are conducted over the Web or over the phone. This opens up the possibility that studies could be transitioned from phone-based data collection to Web-based data collection — or that a combination of methods could be used.

This research and development effort is the first planned Burke study on using the Internet for marketing research. A future study will focus on instrumentation — how best to use the Web for data collection. Issues such as length, graphic design, number of questions per page, and scale options will be examined.

This Burke research fills a substantial void in the body of knowledge about Internet surveying. Most previous commercial work has been “side-by-side” studies for individual projects. While this can be useful, it is difficult to use such work to reach general conclusions. Also, previous efforts by commercial firms to make general conclusions have tended to confound the effects of sample differences (selection) with the effects of the method (measurement).

The survey was conducted from April 5, 1999, to May 9, 1999, during evening and weekend hours. Qualified respondents were at least 18 years old and had access to and used the Internet. An incentive of \$10 was offered to all participants.



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