

Market Research in a Mobile Age: Have the Rules Changed?

In a word: No.

The fundamentals still apply—customers still communicate their thoughts, perceptions and expectations—we just have many more observation touch points and better ways to analyze them. Using these sources, market researchers can observe and understand customers in a variety of situations in which brands, products and ideas compete for prominence in the customers' minds.

Researchers historically have proven real-life scenarios produce the truest results. Think about Jane Goodall observing our primate relatives. In our modern mobile jungle, with limited time and limited resources, how do we observe our audiences and then identify and adapt products to understand the reactions of our human audiences?

How do we adapt the fundamentals in order to observe and interact with the audiences in their natural spaces—using stimulus that is appropriate to wherever they are—jungle, home, gym, office, mobile device (it's a place, isn't it?), Facebook, coffee shop, pub, concert, warehouse store, car...?

Adapting the Fundamentals for the Mobile Age

1. Get into the habitat. Tap into a platform customers are already using. Don't take the gorillas out of the mist and expect them to react as if they were still there.
2. Observe. Don't ask gorillas in the mist to explain what they might do. Watch them.

Hansa researchers successfully use online chat functionality to engage with focus groups of college students. It's a natural, easy platform for college-age humans.

Humans have evolved beyond reasoning out every choice in advance of acting. Humans struggle, for instance, to envision standing

in the aisle of the supermarket choosing among brands or products. But we do it every day. Watch—don't assume.

3. Treat humans like humans. We're social. We're fickle. We're intrigued by shiny objects. Emotions influence our decisions—we just don't realize it. We're humans after all—not gorillas in the mist.

At Hansa, we've had great results creating research to capture the complexity of both the head and heart responses of human nature. Contrary to some research findings, we really don't all purchase solely on price. Or we'd all happily drive used Kias.

Talk to us in our natural groups, keep us intrigued and push us a million different ways about emotions, feelings and aspirations. We don't generally need to delve into the decision-making part of our brains, so show us pictures; make us get creative. We're humans after all. Even CEOs are human.

Consider these deeper touch points to tap into head and heart reactions:

- **Crowd-sourcing.** Develop ideas or concepts with a targeted group of humans; host a modern-day "charrette" or "salon" that gives a group

the opportunity to come to creative consensus.

- **Co-creation activities.** Consumers engage with brands more than ever before; let them be the designers.
- **Go shopping!** Shop-along with customers—or just observe them in their natural habitats. "You said you always drink craft beers—but you just put a case of Bud Light in your cart—why?"
- **Day in the life mobile updates.** Use time-of-day mobile surveys to explore what people are doing throughout a typical day or week. Text updates and photo images throughout the day give researchers a sense of the habitat and content.

With all of this said, we can't miss the forest for the trees. Or the jungle. The fundamentals still apply—customers must communicate their thoughts, perceptions and expectations to us.

- Focus groups work for the proper group with the right stimuli in the right context. The right context for some will be online focus groups, web camera meeting by mobile phone, or group IM chat.

- One-on-one interviews might be the only way to talk to the C-suite. But can we talk to the CEO or CTO by web camera?
Can we use thought-provoking stimuli to push executives to talk more about how they make decisions?
- Online surveys still work to gain broad insight. But can we... Add a mobile component for mobile device users?
Use advanced analytics to give customers more real-life choice scenarios?
Provide bulletin boards for the FaceBookers to develop ideas together?

With a little more thought about how we observe and analyze our fellow primates' decision-making, we can develop new, targeted ways to communicate with customers in the mobile age.

Hansa provides a full range of qualitative and quantitative research services. Our experienced research and consulting team, including PhD-level statisticians, uses innovative, data-driven methodologies tailored to our clients' research needs.

We pride ourselves on our ability to truly understand the voice of the customer and translate that voice into winning strategies for brand development, marketing communications, customer relationship enhancement, and product/service innovation.