

How wearables might answer behavioral questions today's Market Researchers might not even think to ask

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When you ask market researchers what technology has had the most dramatic impact on data collection methodologies in the past ten years, most (if not quite all) will be quick to answer "the smartphone". Perhaps no category of device since the Internet-connected computer has changed the way that consumers live their lives as much as our beloved iPhones and Androids. The smartphone era has drastically shifted the way consumers shop, communicate, and entertain themselves; this shift presented incredible new ways to collect behavioral and attitudinal insights never possible through traditional methodologies. A researcher in 2015 has at his disposal an array of tools that would read almost like science fiction to a researcher from 2005; mobile surveys, geofencing, and go-anywhere digital qualitative discussions would all seem like tools from the future to someone looking ahead just ten years ago. If the smartphone has changed so much about our world and the market research industry in the past 10 years, one might ask themselves what technology will become the next evolutionary leap in the coming 10 years, and how will that impact

the way we think about and conduct research in the future?

Just as the smartphone revolutionized our world, many tech companies are betting big on the next evolution in our digital lives: wearables. Leading trend research firms like **Gartner** and **Juniper Research** expect this new market segment to grow rapidly over the next few years as consumers embrace the new devices. These wearable technological marvels, devices like the Apple Watch, Microsoft™ Band, NikeFuel, and FitBit, give consumers a simple way to passively collect troves of personal data about their physical activity throughout the day. Some of the more advanced devices allow the user to make phone calls, send text messages, and even hail an Uber — just by raising their wrist and touching the screen.

So what new opportunities will these wearables present to the market research industry, and how can we best prepare ourselves to take advantage of these exciting new tools to better understand consumer behavior?

Observing passive data: Putting respondent feedback into real-world context

When you stop and consider the way we collect digital research today, we actually don't know much about the context of our consumers as they fill in our online forms or participate in our online qualitative discussions. We might know the time of day they completed the survey, or perhaps what kind of PC or smartphone they were on when they answered the questions, but for any other contextual insights into their experience we must rely on that consumer's self-reported behaviors and their recollection of events and attitudes throughout their day.

How beneficial might it be if we had a glimpse into our respondent's actual human context while they are participating in our research? What if we could capture data about the respondent's daily experiences and use this data to better understand patterns and trends in consumer behavior? What if this data didn't require any significant input from the respondent, and was generated passively and transmitted easily to us as a new level of metadata for research?

This is where wearables and their massive troves of passively-collected activity data might shine new light on actual consumer behaviors. By getting past consumer recall and instead relying on wearables to track minute actions and events throughout the day, we as researchers may unveil a more complete picture of our respondents.

Envision a scenario where we worked with our research respondents to incentivize them to share their wearable's activity data for the previous 7 days and upload that information after they complete a survey. Using technology that exists today, we could develop an application to capture personal timelines that included physical activity (number of steps walked/ran per day, exercise routines and frequency, percentage of time spent sitting/standing), environmental data (local weather for a particular respondent), and approximate geolocation (perhaps having the respondent identify the address of their work and home on a map).

For a survey to gauge the effectiveness of a new advertising campaign, what if we find a correlation between the concept rating scores and how physically active the consumer had been that day? Or perhaps we might uncover that consumers are slightly more positive towards a new online shopping concept if their average commute to/from work took longer than average? Could we find that certain messaging works better when consumers have had a "low stress" day versus a "high stress" day?

With this data we can now extract new layers of segmentation data, looking for patterns or trends that might influence survey responses or highlight previously unseen trends. What if this new layer of data tells us things about our respondent's actual human contexts that we never considered before? Once we begin gathering data that puts the consumer in a real-life context, what if we find strong predictors of marketing message receptivity are derived from the precise daily activity of our panelists? For advertisers, this kind of behavioral context might radically change the way they target certain audiences or deliver certain marketing messages.

Gathering new active data: "microfeedback" from wearables

When researchers think about the impact of wearables, they most often consider the aforementioned "passive" aspect of data collection; however, the ability of these devices to collect active data from respondents might prove to be just as powerful a research tool.

Take, for example, a simple rating app designed for the Apple Watch, that enables focused "microfeedback" survey data on in-home usage of a new prototype athletic shoe. A research firm might recruit a panel of respondents to download the app to their devices and respond to push surveys directly on the watch face. Perhaps once per day, or at certain times of day, the user could provide simple ratings back to the researcher on the current "feel" of the shoe. The user's wrist will

vibrate to notify them of a new question and one touch later they've registered their feedback. Simple trigger logic based on consistently low ratings might generate a phone call to the respondent for a quick interview on why the prototype shoe is failing to meet expectations.

Recently, a client challenged us to prototype a real-time behavioral trigger that can gather in-the-moment feedback regarding coffee drinking at home. We were able to leverage off-the-shelf technology to prove you can send a survey to a respondent's phone every time they brewed a new cup of coffee at home. We developed a method to trigger a mobile survey using a "smart plug" WiFi adapter; the adapter fired off a command to launch a new survey each time the coffee machine was turned on by the user, and this technology could be retrofitted in less than 15 minutes to any common household appliance. While this particular project never made it out of our labs, it showed the promise that activity-based data collection has in store for our collecting insights closer to the point of actual usage.

Our Wearable-enabled Future

Some may brush off the wearables trend as a "fad", or argue that the data has fleeting relevance to market research — the truth is, no one can predict the future and they may very well be correct. However, should the wearable trend continue, it is of little doubt that brands and advertisers will see wearables as another screen on which to market to their customers, and we should prepare ourselves as an industry to understand the impact wearables have on the consumer experience. Others might argue this massive trove of passive data is best left for the "data scientists" in some other discipline who are working to crack the code on big data. That's a somewhat scary proposition, as it means we relinquish control of some potentially valuable consumer insight to other entities that may one day be able to explain or predict components of consumer behavior better than our own industry.

My hope for the market research industry is that we embrace the potential of wearables and how they might reshape our understanding of actual consumer behavior. We mustn't let this potentially powerful new medium pass us by; we must work together, as technology providers and researchers, to understand how best to integrate this new generation of digital tools into our toolkit.

Kommentare (0)

Keine Kommentare gefunden!



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