

"Modal Differences in Reputation Ratings: A Comparison of Online and Phone Responses."

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Planners, market researchers and academics are increasing their use of the Internet for data collection. Costs are, in most cases, lower; and it generally takes less time. When the population to be sampled consists of subpopulations that are well-represented on the Internet, the risk of bias is acceptable. When the research question deals with middle and upper income consumers, the likelihood of a beta error in marketing decisions is acceptable. However, when the research question focuses on subpopulations that lag greatly in Internet usage, or when the market of interest is lower income, the use of alternative data collection modes is recommended.

This research describes a comparison of over 2500 phone interviews and 4000 Internet interviews conducted in January 2003 with consumers across the U.S. Customers of 116 convenience stores were invited to participate in a customer satisfaction survey about their experiences at that particular store. Respondents were given the choice of response mode – an interactive touch-tone voice recorded mode or a web-based mode. Respondents were asked to rate the reputation of the specific store, as well as of the chain to which the store belonged. The analysis includes a comparison of response modes across scale use and effect size. It also includes a comparison of response modes across demographic variables. Finally, the analysis presents a comparison of response modes and reputation ratings.

Recommendations are made for choice of response mode for various types of research questions, and proportions of web to phone respondents are suggested for 99%, 95% and 90% confidence levels.