



digital

Behavioural and Survey Data

A match made in insight heaven

On July 21st, 2010, Facebook reached the significant milestone of 500 million active users. If the social networking site was a country, it would be the third largest in the world by population after China and India and have nearly 200 million more 'citizens' than the United States. Less well-publicized was another impressive statistic: the revelation that more than 30 billion pieces of content, including web links, news stories, blog posts, notes and photo albums were shared among users each month.



This is a huge amount of content which, when put together with data flow from other sources, is presenting an exciting challenge and great opportunity for the market research industry.

The challenge comes from what futurist Alvin Toffler called 'information overload', but which is perhaps more accurately described by academic and writer Clay Shirky, as the potential for 'filter failure'. Using Facebook as an example, on average, users generate 90 pieces of information each month. Meanwhile, the amount of content generated by the 1.5 billion people online who aren't on Facebook is unquantifiable.

To put this into context, it would take an individual literally thousands of years to read the amount of information generated online in just one day.

People's digital behaviour can increasingly be measured in greater detail, with market research providing an insight into understanding that behaviour and what it actually means in terms of real business opportunities. The main test for the industry is: how to manage these data, how to use the data effectively and how to combine the data with other information to add value.



The opportunity for the market research industry comes with understanding one source of data through the use of another, thus creating a match made in insight heaven. For example, marrying behavioural and survey data can bring real value in explaining real usage patterns, advertising exposure, site visits, navigation paths, purchase journeys or consumer generated media creation. Contrast this with web analytics which is limited to providing a wealth of information about how many browsers have pointed themselves at specific websites and for how long.

Although research into digital online behaviour is a relatively new area, the market research industry is well-versed in how to use data, whatever the source, in combination with their core business – surveys - to generate and deliver actionable business insights. Information can be segmented or de-constructed to give it qualitative depth – all of which result in even more data. We already have a way to transform this voluminous data through

processing, categorisation, aggregation and expertise.

We also have the skills to design research survey solutions that explain behavioural data. These solutions cover behaviours of attitudinally similar groups, the reasons for specific (and observed) actions, target market purchase processes and patterns and even the opportunity to create unique and new segmentations.

As with any good match, behavioural and survey data analysis needs a lot of work, but the results can be highly rewarding.



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