The Role of Web Interviews as Part of a National Travel Survey

Purpose — The paper is analysing the effect of adding a web survey to a traditional telephone-based national travel survey by asking the respondents to check in on the web and answer the questions there (Computer Assisted Web Interview, CAWI). If they are not participating by web they are as usual called by telephone (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview, CATI).

Design/methodology/approach — Multivariate regression analyses are used to analyse the difference in response rates by the two media and to analyse if respondents’ answering by the two media have different travel patterns.

Findings — The analyses show that web interviews are saving money, even though a more intensive post-processing is necessary. The analyses seem to show that the CAWI is resulting in a more careful answering which results in more trips reported. A CAWI is increasing the participation of children in the survey and of highly educated. And it is offering a higher flexibility to answer after a couple of days off. The CATI is on the other hand more useful for the elderly. In addition, the CATI survey proved to be more useful for busy people and people not willing to participate in a survey at all. Young people and people with low resources who are difficult to reach by telephone are neither met on the web. Most of the differences in the response shares can be compensated by a weighting procedure. However, not all seems to be possible to compensate for. An effort to increase the number participating in the CAWI survey might increase the quality of the survey in general.

Originality/value of paper — In many countries authorities are considering how to reduce the cost of their national travel surveys. The value of the paper is to show that a combination of a CAWI and a CATI could be a good solution. Furthermore, it shows that the mixed mode could improve a CATI and therefore be the reason in itself to change methodology.

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