

Critical need for consumer data



By [Grant Fraser](#)

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The biggest trend right now is the search for trends. The search for the next consumer gap, the holy grail of advertising, the key consumer touch points, the next apps etc, is a continuous, voracious process that is never ending. The biggest trend has always been change and the trick is to at least keep pace with the rate of change. To be ahead of the changes is almost impossible as most trends are already happening when they are commented on.

Trend reports are being published on a daily basis and the reason for this is that the digital age, in particular, has allowed commentators and strategists access to far greater volumes of data and statistics that can be analysed and interpreted into new insights. To keep up with these reports one needs to jump on the spinning wheel like the poor Guinea pig. But even he has to jump off to catch his breath.

The good news is that the digital era has also heralded the era of quick, instant lines of communication between marketers and consumers. A growing trend globally, and developing well in Africa, is the use of online research panels and communities. All the trends that are starting to negate the effectiveness of classic face to face research are being countered by the advantages of online research.

Negative Trends	Digital Counter Trends
Most respondents have to be convinced to participate in F2F Research	Panel members are engaged and therefore willing and able to participate.
Limited Access to people in walled, security complexes.	Always-on consumers are highly accessible.
Phenomenon of personal 'time poverty' limits quality time for F2F interviews.	Technology allows consumer to dictate the time of engagement
Increasing cost of pounding the streets searching for respondents.	Post the initial recruitment the cost of access is minimal.
Difficult to re-engage for follow up interviews.	Re-contacts with respondents are a click away.
Extended length of time to complete a research project in the field.	A well profiled panel can be engaged within hours with results within days.
Neuroscience says the delay between the consumer's activity and the time of the research leads to half-truths at best.	Digital access engages the respondent far closer to the "in the moment" occurrence and hence far more accurate insights are gained.
Limited research budgets are limiting marketing departments from covering all the bases needed for proper consumer engagement.	Online is far more cost effective allowing more research for each Rand available in the budget.

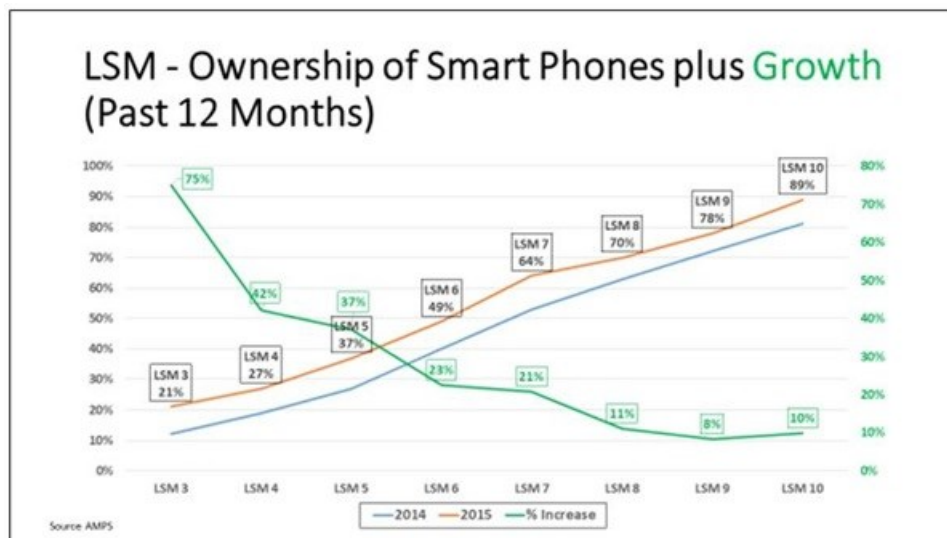
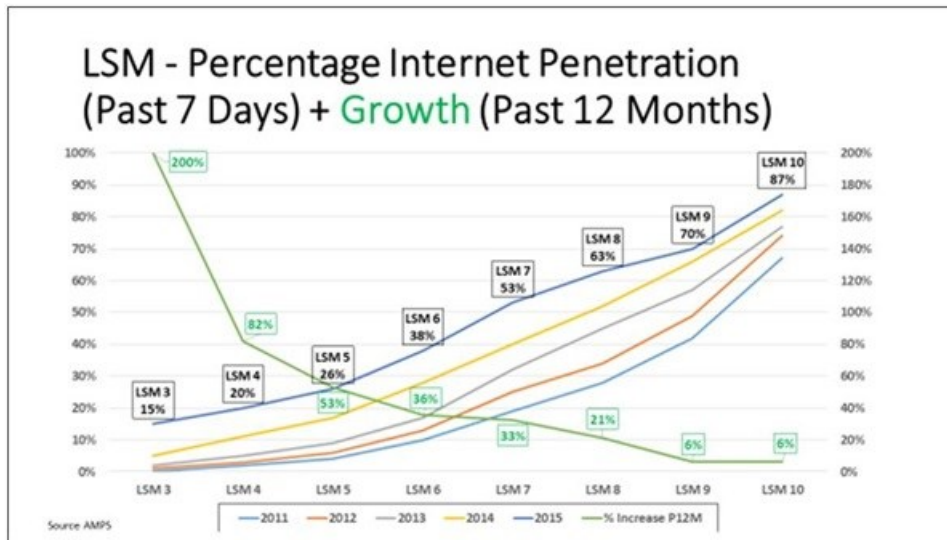
Marketers now have the ability to use online panels and communities to stay in touch with their target markets on a far more regular basis thereby quickly identifying and interrogating changes in behaviour and attitude to ensure they keep up with new emerging trends in real time.

Factors underpinning the trend toward more online research:

- 1 Greater user friendly technology allows access and interaction across all mobile formats.
- 2 Ability to identify the device and deliver a survey in a user-friendly format.

- 3 Cheaper smartphones, more tablets, more laptops give access to many more respondents.
- 4 Continually improving mass access to broadband and the internet.
- 5 Expense of face to face fieldwork.
- 6 Difficulty in guaranteeing the reliability and validation of fieldwork activities.

The following two slides on the trend in increasing internet access and smartphone ownership underscore the fact that online research is now a main stream research activity, and will be the key source of identifying new trends now and in the future.



ABOUT GRANT FRASER

Grant has enjoyed a 30 year career starting in the marketing world with companies like Shell, Unilever, Royal Beechnut (Nabisco) and Premier Milling (Kraft). He then crossed the fence into the world of media and advertising with The MediaShop, built, with partners, Full Circle Media which was absorbed into the Dentsu Aegis Network (DAN).

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