

# Telephone versus Web-based Data Collection: Trade-offs and Decisions

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## **Abstract**

This paper is based on the premise that data collection methods need to be aligned with research objectives; no one methodology is the best approach for all research designs. The criterion for deciding on a method should be related directly to the research requirements. Consideration of secondary factors should influence the decision only after the primary objectives are satisfied. On occasion lower priority criteria, such as time in field, or a concern about professional survey takers, are used to decide which data collection approach to employ. These types of issues need to be addressed, but should not dominate the decision on data collection method for a study.

Taking an eclectic approach to data collection ensures the strengths and weaknesses of each approach will be evaluated in the context of the research objectives. For example, unaided awareness and preference studies are difficult to accomplish using a web-based approach, especially if the study is exploring multiple products or product types and needs to use probing questions. Conversely, while not impossible, it would be highly undesirable to attempt a conjoint study using telephone interviews. Conjoint studies are much better suited to a web-based approach.