

Market Research: C.A.T.I (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing)

Author: barcode_

What is CATI?	1
Ins and Outs	1
Refusals.....	2
Scheduler Programmers	2
More on Refusals	2

What is CATI?

CATI is a research tool used in market research. The system allows for interviewers to enter data into the computer via another interface or the default CATI one. CATI usually works on a manual dialing system from my experience, and has a scheduler to give the person cases. Essentially a live person will call you and manually enter in the result of your call (answering machine, busy, etc.). The course of action the firm will take is then based on these status codes. Such as, if the number is disconnected they may query 411 or try back at another time, since it may be a temporary disconnect. If a number is busy, the CATI scheduler may give the number back to another person, in say 15 minutes to try again. The same is then true with a ring, but nobody picks up, answering machine, and so on, and so forth. Just as assumed if the subject finishes an interview they are kicked out of the system for analysis and never called again. Also, most CATI identify subjects with case numbers so analysts aren't given personal info. But most of the times the surveys include data like age/race/salary inside the interview. Most people who are nice enough to cough up an interview will answer this type questions since trust is established anyways.

Ins and Outs

Now there are programmers available who make the delays needed in the scheduler. From what I have seen, it just depends on the firm. A busy line can get handed to another person in 10 minutes or maybe 25 minutes. Also, depending on the research criteria, some households are ineligible, but it all just depends on the actual study. A good way to reverse a telemarketer not to call you would be to fake a disconnected telephone number, or a number which has been changed to XXX-XXX-XXXX, so they'd call another number or query 411. As for the 'do not call' list, even some very reputable firms don't have this luxury, and not such a 'global list' exists. The entire purpose of this list was intended for solicitations and market research/survey/interviews, so that

they didn't fall under solicitations. The loophole exists in that the company may have tried to contact you via a letter to tell you that you've been selected to participate. The only bad thing about the lead letters are that most of the recipients don't receive them or they are thrown away by a child in house or lost in mail. The entire point is that market research doesn't classify under the same laws as people who try to sell you something. So usually they are permitted to call back, according to the law, even if you just hang-up or say not interested or put on the 'don't call list'.

Refusals

Another note on RDD (random digit dial) studies is that firms that use war-dialing type devices are actually breaking the law by mass dialing, and such, as far as I could tell. Also, not to mention that telephone numbers change every day. So the linked address has a low probability of actually being that particular number. Now, on the case of people refusing the interview, CATI has options on what type of refusal. It can be a refusal by another person in the household (not the study participant) or the study participant. Also these refusals can be rated from mild, medium, and hot just like your hot sauce :D. The actual names of these type change per study, and firm, based on what is entered by the scheduler programmers.

Scheduler Programmers

The scheduler programmers control just about everything in CATI from the screens read, to the options and status codes that are presented. This actual system is web based and runs on a NT/2K system where admins/supervisors can access information through the web, such as cases that were called today and their status codes and such. The actual CATI program is a DOS-based program that can be linked to other interfaces and such to do the interviews for whichever clients. It just depends on the programmer's discretions and the client's wants. Also CATI can be used to pipe information to another interface just depending on the clients needs on final formatted data if they want it a special way.

More on Refusals

Usually it takes less refusals by the study participant than say their brother/sister/cousin/uncle/friends, since the participant may want to do it but the others just aren't letting you talk to them. But, within the bounds of the Federal Privacy act, a quick way to get them to quit calling is to pretend to take down the interviewer's name and the company they are calling from. Not who they are calling on 'behalf' of. Then say, "Look. If you call me again I'm getting legal representation and will file a lawsuit." No research firm, no matter how honorable/respectable, wants to even get into legal matters, so they will just basically take you out of their call database, (call list as some would say), rather than go to court. If you check the laws, I

think there is a time period that you are allowed, and the company can be sued. This is about the only tried and true way of getting them not to call you back. Cursing and saying your busy only delays these calls and is not advised. Bogus answers like, "call back next year," will probably get you called back at the end of the week. Also, another universal ineligibility is to talk to them and find out who they want to talk to, and then say they are institutionalized or are incapable of doing it. Here's the end of the insight into the CATI system and inner workings of market research firm(s).

barcode_