

Why do Internet users choose the offline mode? Evidence from the recruitment of a mixed mode panel in Germany

ESRA 2015, Session “Mixing modes and mode effects”

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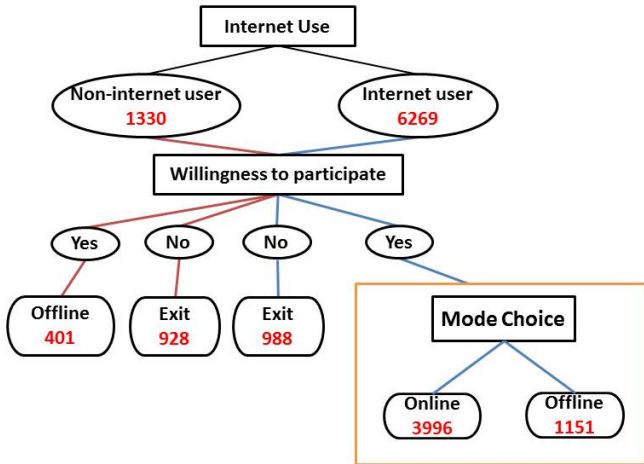
Empirical Puzzle

- Recruitment in the mixed mode GESIS panel: Mode choice between paper and web for internet users
- 23% of internet users choose offline (paper) mode
- **General Question: Why do respondents choose offline or online mode?**

General relevance of investigating selection into online mode

- Understand respondent behavior in surveys
- Improve survey design
 - Is there a mode-specific non-response error in unimode probability panels?
 - Basis for the development of tailoring measures (push2web)
- Methodological contribution:
 - Estimation of mode effects (Schouten et al. 2013),
 - mode selection biases (Pforr et al. 2015),
 - and mode selections weights

- Mixed Mode Access Panel (web & paper)
- GESIS Panel recruitment interview F2F
- Representative sample of individuals drawn from German register
- German speaking population between 18-70
- Field period: 8 June – 1 December 2013
- Net Participation: 7599
- Response Rate 35.5 % (AAPOR RR1)
- Mode assignment: Non-internet users were automatically assigned the offline mode, the others had a soft choice.



- Survey request can be modelled as a rational decision by respondents (Alwin 1991, Schnell 1997, Philipson 1997, Singer 2011).
- Individual utility calculation is influenced by ability and motivation/preferences.
- Assuming that internet users are willing to use the internet for surveys infers that all respondents with ability have also preference for online mode.
- Theory would expect that ability restricts motivation (similar to satisficing theory (Krosnick et al. 1996)).

Hypothesis 1: Main Effect Ability

Respondents with a higher ability to use the internet are more likely to choose the online mode.

- The more experienced a respondent is with using the internet, the more likely s/he is to choose the online mode.
- Respondents with prior experience with online surveys are more likely to choose the online mode.

Hypothesis 2: Main Effect Motivation

Respondents with a higher motivation to use the internet are more likely to choose the online mode.

- The higher a respondent's personal affinity towards technology is the more likely s/he is to choose the online mode.

Hypothesis 3: Interaction Effect Ability \times Motivation

The effect of ability is moderated by the effect of motivation.

- When technique affinity is low, the ability to use the internet should become less relevant for the decision to choose the online mode.

Control variables

- Education
- Age
- Income
- Gender
- Migration background (born in Germany)
- Social trust

Empirics

Ability to use the internet

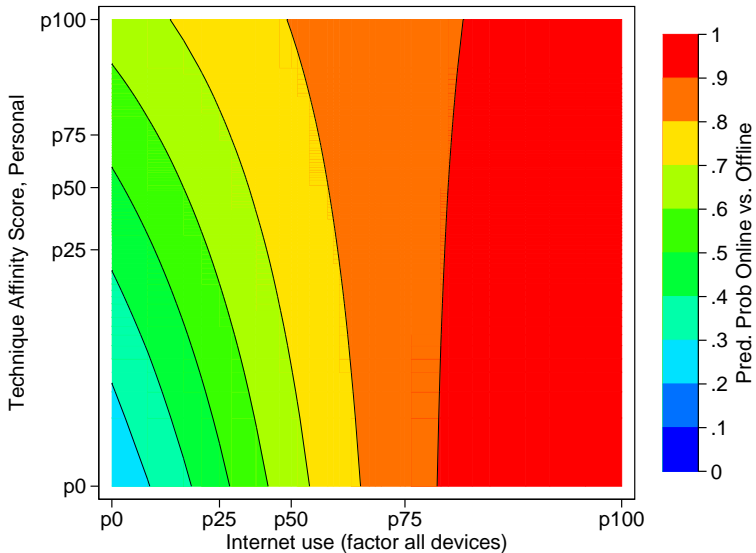
- PCA of frequency of use of desktop computer, smart phone and tablet.

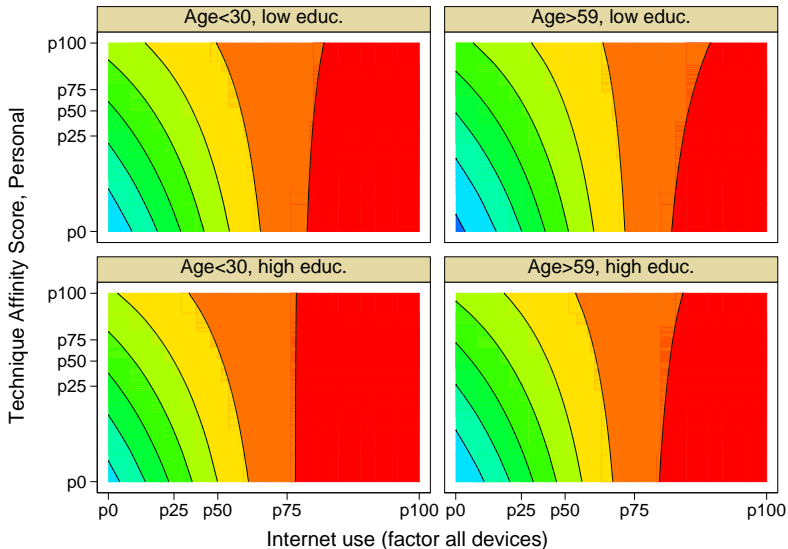
Affinity towards technology

- Item-Battery measuring affinity towards technology (German General Survey)
- Principal Component Analysis
- Three factors: Personal affinity, general attitude toward the internet, consequences for society
- Personal affinity toward technology as measure of preference

- Dependent variable of interest: Mode choice of internet users (online vs. offline)
- Nested logit model considers selection into the mode choice question
 - Non-internet users
 - IU: No participation in further surveys
 - IU: Mode choice: online
 - IU: Mode choice: offline

Results





Conclusion

- Respondents choose the mode that is easier for them.
- Probability to choose online mode ...
 - ... increases with ability, e.g. internet experience.
 - ... increases with motivation, e.g. the personal affinity towards technology when ability is low.
 - ... is higher among highly educated.
- Technique affinity is related to a characteristic of the online mode \Rightarrow Nonresponse Error
- Demographic characteristics are not sufficient to explain selection into modes \Rightarrow implications for weighting and assessment of mode effects

Thank you very much for your attention!

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