An introduction to IFF and our proposed approach for the BR-MeX Pilot

Introduction

An introduction to IFF Research

Founded in 1965, we are one of the UK's leading market and social research companies.

We are a full-service agency with considerable experience in undertaking research on regulatory issues with employees and businesses. We have a long track record of delivering research for a wide range of public sector organisations. Our clients include:

Our project team can be contacted via IFF_BRMeX@iffresearch.com.

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A summary of our proposed approach

JULY

Scoping phase

To get a firmer understanding of key questions that might cause us to adopt our approach.

This is crucial in helping us design the pilot.

AUG

Cognitive testing

50 with business customers to test the B-MeX survey

10 with retailers to test the R-MeX survey.

To test with a range of participant types

SEP - OCT

Pilot exercise

Up to **1,400 CATI interviews** and an online element to test the B-MeX survey.

Up to **30 interviews** to test the R-MeX survey (a census approach).

NOV - DEC

Follow-up qual

30 follow-up qualitative depth interviews.

To test refined survey questions and explore any additional issues that might arise during the pilot.

JAN - FEB

Analysis and reporting

Presentation of key results and recommendations.

Final report to be published online.

Guidance documents for shadow runs of surveys in Spring 2024.

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Information we need from the scoping stage for B-MeX

As part of the scoping stage, we need to know the answers to the following questions as these will be key to the design of our research:

- Who should be eligible for the survey? What counts as 'contact' and what should be included?

- What is the size of the eligible population by wholesaler?

- What other types of information do these sample sources contain?

- How frequently are sample sources updated and how quickly can they be transferred?

- What level of statistical robustness is required? Is that needed at an overall level / by wholesaler / by service type?

- In what way, if at all, do these surveys need to align to other Ofwat data collection mechanisms (e.g., C-MeX) and why?

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Information we need from the scoping stage for R-MeX

As part of the scoping stage, we need to know the answers to the following questions as these will be key to the design of our research:

- What is MOSL trying to achieve as part of the redevelopment of the R-MeX survey?

- What can MOSL share about past experiences of running the R-MeX survey that would be useful to consider as part of the redevelopment of the R-MeX survey?

- Who will be administering the R-MeX survey going forward?

- Will MOSL we administering a full run of the R-MeX survey this year alongside the pilot?

We already have a good understanding of most of these questions now, having discussed with Sam at MOSL.

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Cognitive testing will involve us:

- running through the survey / questions 'as live' and observing the participant.

- establishing participants' 'top of mind' reactions to the surveys / questions, its 'flow', sequence, coherence, and relevance.

- running back through each question asking participants what their thought process was, and what they considered, when they answered it. **The purpose of this phase will be to explore participants' decision making and response processes and determine whether they have understood the survey questions**.

- us asking general questions about how well the survey / questions fitted with the information that the participant wanted to convey regarding their experience of contact and by asking if they have any suggestions on how the survey / questions could be improved.

- an exploration ways of encouraging participation in the pilot exercise (and future waves of the surveys). For those conducting the survey online, this will also cover views on the interface, how user-friendly they found this (capturing layout, font, colour, functionality etc.), the appropriateness of the interface for this audience, and the branding.

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Pilot fieldwork tests:

- **survey administration –** we will aim to pilot the surveys as closely as possible to how they will be administered when fully launched.

- **response rates to both surveys** – both at an overall and subgroup level, and by methodology (online vs. CATI) to determine the extent to which the survey has captured data from the diverse business population and to identify any key subgroup biases (e.g., by wholesaler / size of business / type of contact / type of query).

- **reliability of survey findings** – e.g., exploring item non-response, the proportion of don't know responses, any evidence of "positive acquiescence" vs. varied response patterns in business responses, and the role of the survey design on these.

- **experience of completing the survey** – by adding an extra module at the end of the survey to collect this information, and by analysing response patterns, completion times, the type of feedback given in open-ended questions; and whether the mode of completion impacts on response rate and data quality.

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Follow-up qualitative interviews will

- allow us to conduct a final test of the refined survey questions to ensure they are an improvement on those originally used and explore any additional issues that might arise during the pilot (e.g., high proportion of 'don't know' responses).

- We anticipate that this will likely involve us purposively sampling different types of businesses, according to their responses in the pilot, to allow us to explore these in further depth.

Interviewing at all stages will be competed by the project team / our specialist qualitative interviews / our telephone contact centre comprising of over 1,000 interviewers who are trained to the highest standards.

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Progress so far

So far, we have…

1) Sent all wholesalers an initial questionnaire to inform them of the sample information that we would ideally receive from them for **direct contacts** *(see slide 11 for a summary of their responses).*

2) Liaised with key contacts at MOSL to understand more about the bi-lateral transactions hub, what information it contains, and when / how they will be able to provide that information to us so we can contact who had **indirect contact.**

3) Had a meeting with MOSL to discuss plans for how **R-MeX** will be administered going forward and how it should be piloted as a result.

4) **Started to design our research materials** (i.e., survey questionnaires, cognitive topic guides, and recruitment screeners) to allow us to hit-the-ground running when we do receive sample direct contact sample from wholesalers and indirect contact sample from MOSL.

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Direct contact sample that wholesalers can provide

Organisation	Any unique customer ID	Business name	Business address	Firmographic information	Contact name	Contact job title	Contact phone number	Contact email address	Mode of contact	Date of contact	Type of contact	Reason for contact	Who customer spoke to	Outcome of contact	Direct contacts per month	Send IFF Sample (days)
Affinity Water	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	210	1.5
Anglian Water Services	Y	M	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	1143	5
Northumbrian Water	Y	M	Y	N	M	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	*Y*	N	285	1
Portsmouth Water	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	35	20
SES Water	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	30	Un
Severn Trent Water	Y	Y	Y	S	Y	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	*Y*	S	Un	5
South East Water	Y	Y	Y	S	Y	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	750	5
South Staffordshire Water	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	150	Un
South West Water	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	820	2
Southern Water	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	1000	0.5
Thames Water	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	260	Un
United Utilities	Y	S	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	*Y*	N	1400	2
Wessex Water	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Un	Un
Yorkshire Water	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	*Y*	N	3029	3

Key

Y	Yes but don't want to
Y	Yes
M	Mostly
S	Some
N	No
E	Cell empty
Un	Unspecified

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Sample needs to be delivered in two separate batches

We can use the **first batch** to give us an indication on the amount and type of sample available for each wholesaler (which help us to start develop our thinking in terms of pilot design i.e., method, number and profile of interviews achievable) and to allow us to recruit businesses to participate in cognitive interviews. We can't get these aspects of the project moving until we receive sample. Ideally the first batch would contain 3-4 months' worth of data to allow us to get a full picture of the sample available and how it might fluctuate over time. Hopefully requesting more than we need will also be more efficient than submitting multiple requests.

We need to take receipt of the first batch of sample as soon as possible to allow us to progress with our next steps to keep to timings.

We need to receive a **second batch** for us to use in the pilot itself. The sample that we use in the pilot needs to be as fresh as possible i.e., contain businesses who have made contact as close as possible to the timing of the pilot itself – to mitigate against issues of recall (and since we understand that B-MeX would ideally align with C-MeX which is administered on a monthly).

We need to take receipt of the second batch of sample in the middle of September as we are aiming to launch the pilot fieldwork at the end of September.

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Key things to discuss in this session

At this point, it would be good to address the following…

- What, if any, issues or concerns do you have in relation to being able to provide **direct contact** sample in the way that we have requested?

- What can be done to expedite this process (either from your sides or ours)?

- Can we establish an eligible population for the B-MeX survey by deciding **which direct and indirect contacts should be included or excluded** from the research?

- And do you have any additional thoughts or questions that have not been sufficiently covered that you would like to explore in further depth?

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Thanks for your time. Any other questions?