MarketVision RESEARCH

INTERPRETING INDEX SCORES

When we look at data, we often want to see how things are falling out both in total and by subgroups. The starting point is often looking at the percents for each group. Index scores, which show how a group skews relative to the total sample, are often used to simplify data comparison. However, they can be misleading and should be interpreted with caution.

To calculate an index score, simply divide the subgroup % by the total % and multiply by 100.

In the below example, an index score of ~100 indicates the subgroup is similar to Total. Moderate Users under-index on being open to Product X, while Heavy Users over-index. Note that in both cases, a minority is open to Product X.

Percents

	TOTAL	MODERATE USERS	HEAVY USERS
% Gen Z	25%	23%	29%
% Female	50%	51%	50%
% Open to New Product X	9%	3%	18%

Index Scores

	MODERATE USERS	HEAVY USERS
Gen Z	92	116 ← ((29%/25%)*100))
Female	102	100
Open to New Product X	33	200

Index scores help us quickly see how subgroup responses differ from the total.

If index scores make comparisons easier, why do we suggest using them with caution?

01 It can be harder to explain what constitutes a 'meaningful difference' between index scores (e.g. 92 vs. 116) than to simply show a difference between raw percentages (23% vs. 29%).

02 An index score of 200 may suggest Heavy Users are highly open to Product X, but actual percentages provide better context – showing that while openness may skew higher, it could still represent a minority.

While they offer a simple way to compare data, index scores can also over-simplify - masking the real story we want to tell with our data.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

When analyzing index scores, consider the underlying data that created them, and not just the index scores in isolation.