Recruiting SMS Survey Participants

Recruiting participants for SMS surveys doesn't have to be difficult. Check out these tips for effectively recruiting survey participants for your next study!

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Introduction

Recruiting survey participants can seem like a daunting task. Here at Instant Census, we have experience in panel recruitment and always offer to help our customers with recruiting survey participants. Our assistance in the process can be as hands on or as hands off as you require. We are equipped to handle survey participant recruitment from start to finish, or solely at specific times throughout the recruitment period.

We've seen several different recruiting methods work well for our clients who do not already have a panel on hand. Whether you're using social media, email marketing, or advertisements, we can help optimize your recruiting methods to achieve the best results

If you don't already have a survey participant panel on-hand and are not interested in purchasing a panel from a 3rd party sample provider, here are some panel recruitment methods we've seen work well for our customers.

Survey Phone Number Promotion

Often the easiest and most efficient form of survey participant recruitment, many Instant Census customers promote their survey phone number by asking participants to "text-in" to join their survey or study. Along with the survey phone number and text-in instructions, study details and preferred survey participant demographics are also shared in promotional messages to optimize recruiting efforts.

Survey phone number promotion can be done through a variety of mediums and we suggest employing as many mediums as possible throughout the recruiting process. If you are looking for specific participant demographics, it's good to ask screening questions immediately upon participant opt-in to weed out unqualified candidates. This strategy also makes it easy to obtain and record consent throughout the recruitment process.

What follows are our best recommendations on how to effectively recruit participants through survey phone number promotion using a variety of mediums and strategies.

1. Social Media

If appropriate for your survey or study, social media can be a powerful recruiting tool. Our customers have seen great results using Facebook and Twitter to recruit new survey participants by sharing survey phone numbers and opt-in instructions in posts.

Social media offers several advantages, the most valuable being the ability to reach large audiences in a short amount of time, post as many recruiting messages as you want at any time or day, and achieve all of this for little to no cost.

Twitter

Tweeting recruiting messages with the survey phone number, study details and text-in instructions is a great way to recruit a large audience in a short period of time. Depending on the type of study you're running, your tweets might look something like this:

> *Tell us what you think of tonight's GOP debate! Text "DEBATE" to 617 500 1323*

Or

> *Text "COFFEE" to 617 500 1323 to vote for the new coffee flavor you want in stores!*

Or

> *Mobile phone user? Text "MOBILE" to 617 500 1323 to give feedback on your wireless service.*

Twitter Cont'd

The downside of this method is messages are limited by Twitter's character limit. Text-in instructions and the survey phone number should always be included, but if this means you cannot include survey participant preferred demographics or study details, there are ways to get around this. By asking demographic questions before the start of the actual study, you can weed out unqualified candidates. Similarly, you can include messages regarding study details prior to getting into the start of your survey.
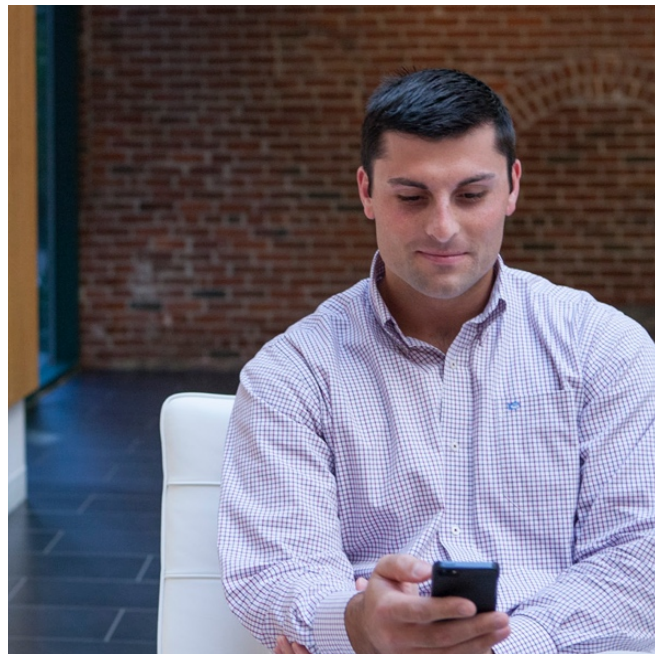
While demographic questions, in this case, suffice for the absence of demographic preferences in recruiting messages, we suggest most surveys begin with demographic questions. This helps ensure the best participants are included in panels and survey data won't be tainted by unqualified respondents.
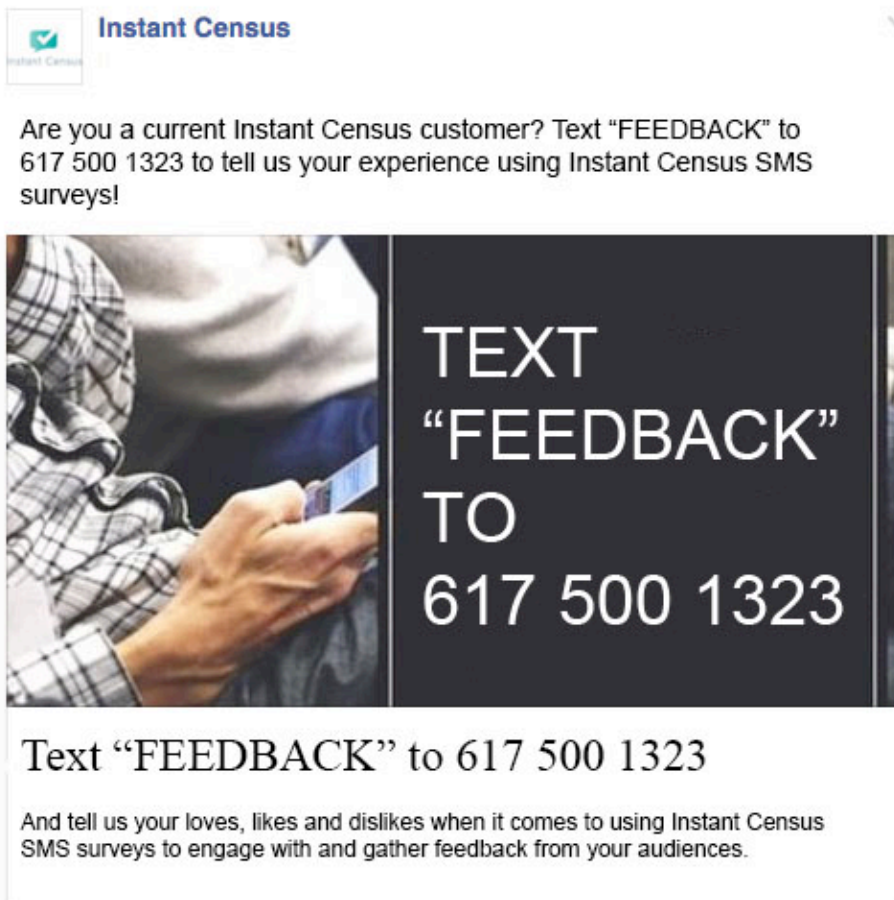
Facebook

Similar to Twitter, Facebook is another way to reach large audiences in a short period of time, for little to no cost. Crafting Facebook posts is a great strategy to recruit participants. Like tweets, posts should include the survey phone number, text-in instructions, participant demographic preferences, images, and study details. You should also plan to distribute your posts at optimal days/times for views/readership from your audiences.

In addition to Facebook posts, Facebook Event pages are another effective way to promote surveys and studies. By creating event pages that advertise necessary study/survey information and inviting your Facebook audiences to join, you can target messages more effectively than traditional posts allow.

Facebook Cont'd

Unlike Twitter, posts and information sections on event pages are not bound to a character limit. This gives more freedom in regards to the amount of information you can include in recruiting messages. However, you should be mindful to include the most important pieces of the recruiting message (text-in instructions and survey number) in the first 2 lines of the post.

If using Facebook posts, your message may look something like this:

Instagram

Using graphics and images to catch your audiences' attention is nothing new, which is why Instagram offers an effective and creative way to recruit participants. If your company or brand has a large Instagram following and the platform is an integral part of your Social Media strategy, you should consider posting recruiting images and messages to Instagram as a part of your recruiting process.

Like Facebook and Twitter, posts should include the survey phone number, text-in instructions, participant demographic preferences, images, and study details. Instagram posts also don't have a character limit, but you should include text-in instructions and the survey phone number in the first 2 lines for optimal exposure.

Your posts may look like the example used here:

Text "VACATION" to 617 500 1323 to tell us about your trip!

♥ 15 likes

Fabulousvacation Recently book a trip with Fabulousvacation? Text "VACATION" to 617 500 1323 to tell us about your vacation!
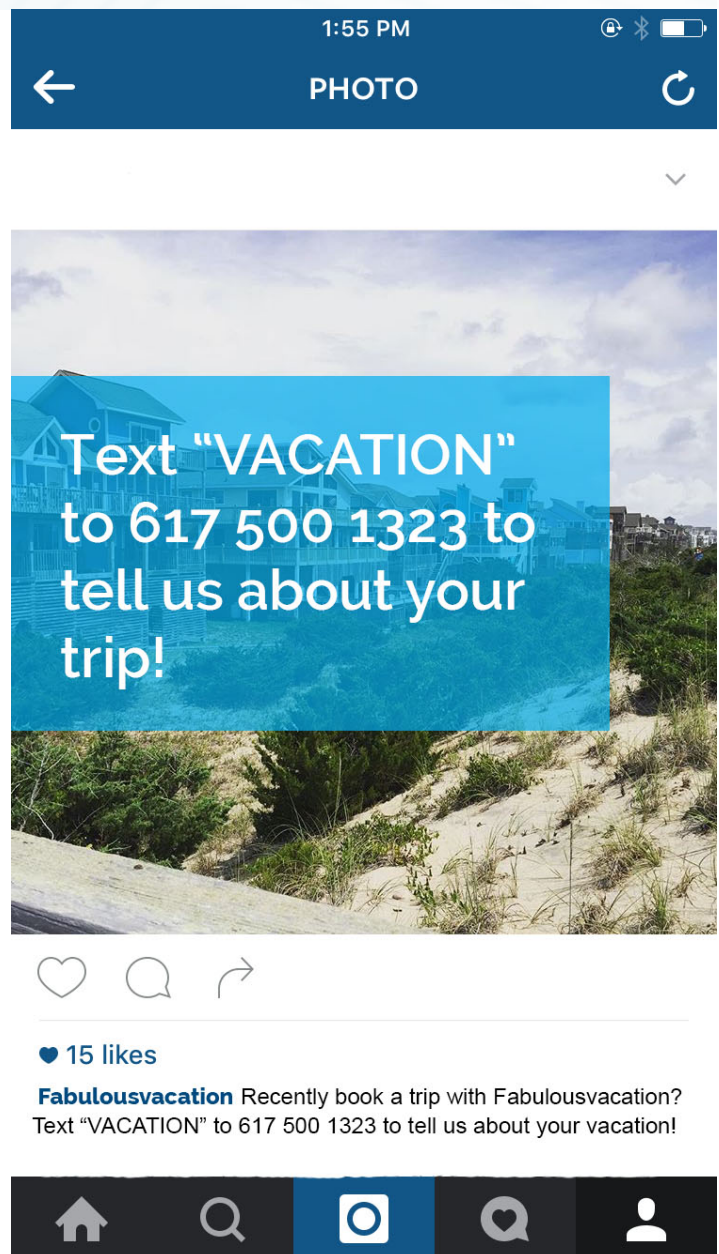
Multiple Platforms

While all these mediums can be used on their own, we suggest employing multiple platforms at once to achieve optimal results. It's also best to post recurring recruiting messages and ensure posts go out at certain days/times that are best for your audiences.

In the past, we've seen customers make event pages and post recruiting messages to Facebook, while simultaneously running Twitter campaigns. Utilizing multiple channels at once ensures you reach large enough audiences to satisfy desired sample sizes and may quicken the recruiting process.
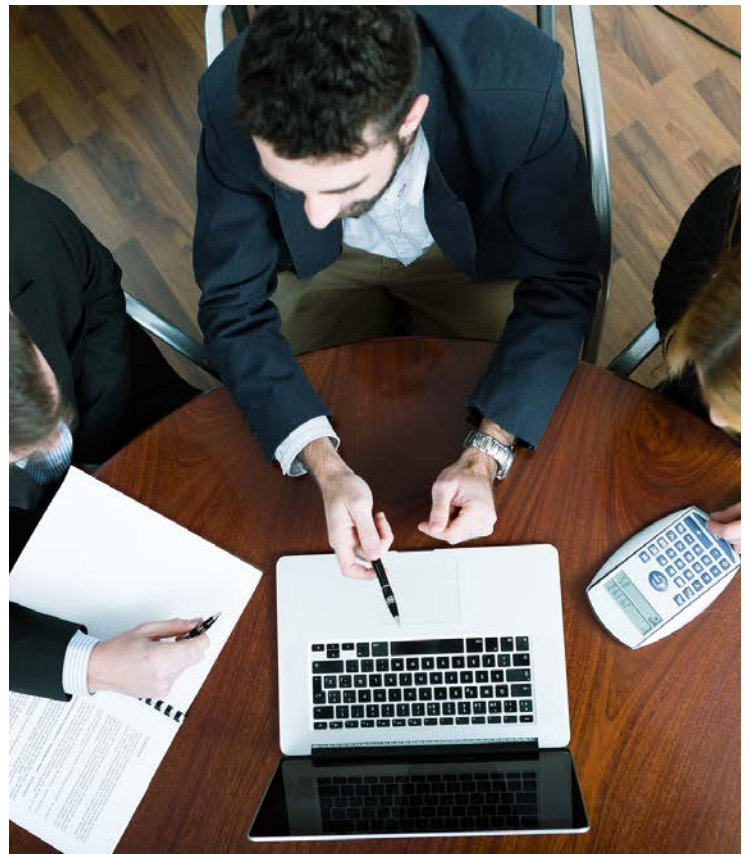

Reach even larger audiences by using multiple Social Media platforms at once to recruit survey participants.

2. Advertisements

Advertisements featuring survey phone numbers, opt-in instructions and study details are a great way to recruit participants if you don't have an established panel on-hand.

This method provides a good amount of flexibility in regards to what locations you want your survey phone number promoted. Whether you choose to advertise survey numbers and text-in instructions on public transit in certain cities, in specific locations your preferred audience would frequent, or digitally on certain websites, you can effectively target your recruiting messages in areas where your preferred survey participant demographics would be most prevalent.
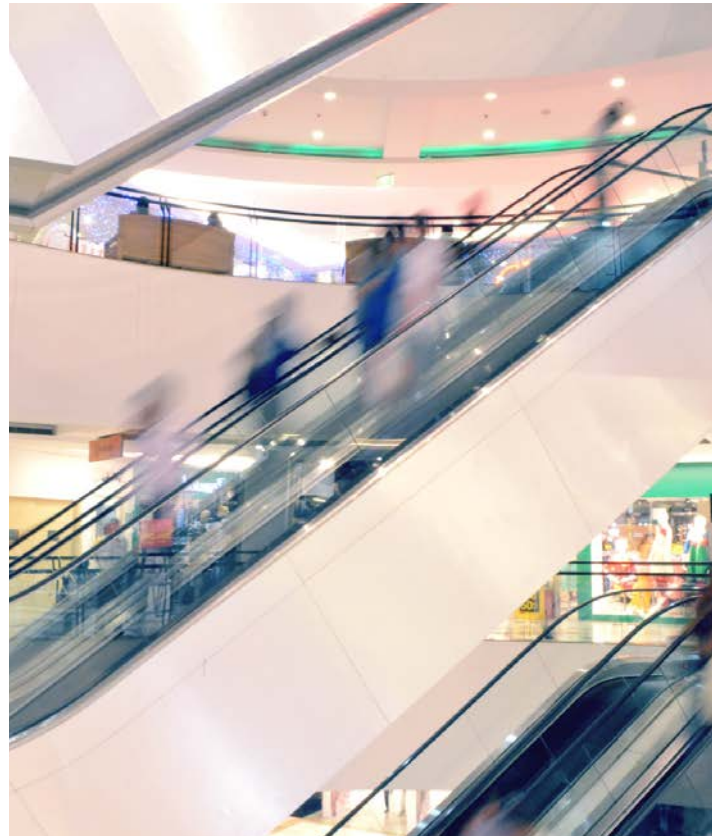
Promoting survey phone numbers in advertisements gives you more flexibility when targeting preferred audiences and demographics.

3. Events

Interested in running a live poll and displaying results in real-time during a conference or large event? Looking to solicit feedback from event attendees regarding their experience?

Instant Census customers have recruited conference and large event audiences into our surveys by publicizing survey phone numbers on visual presentations, event signage, and through speaker instruction. SMS surveys not only allow you to solicit important feedback from attendees, but also to engage with audiences and create an interactive experience.

Aside from soliciting feedback, our surveys have also been used for live voting at large events and conferences. Whether you're asking audiences to vote on topics relating to a particular speaker presentation, or on aspects of the event in general, you can gather and present results in real-time.

Promote survey phone numbers at events on visual presentations, event signage, and through speaker instruction.

Established Audiences

If you already have a panel or audience on-hand that you'd like to recruit from for an upcoming SMS survey, there are a variety of ways you can obtain consent to text from these established audiences.
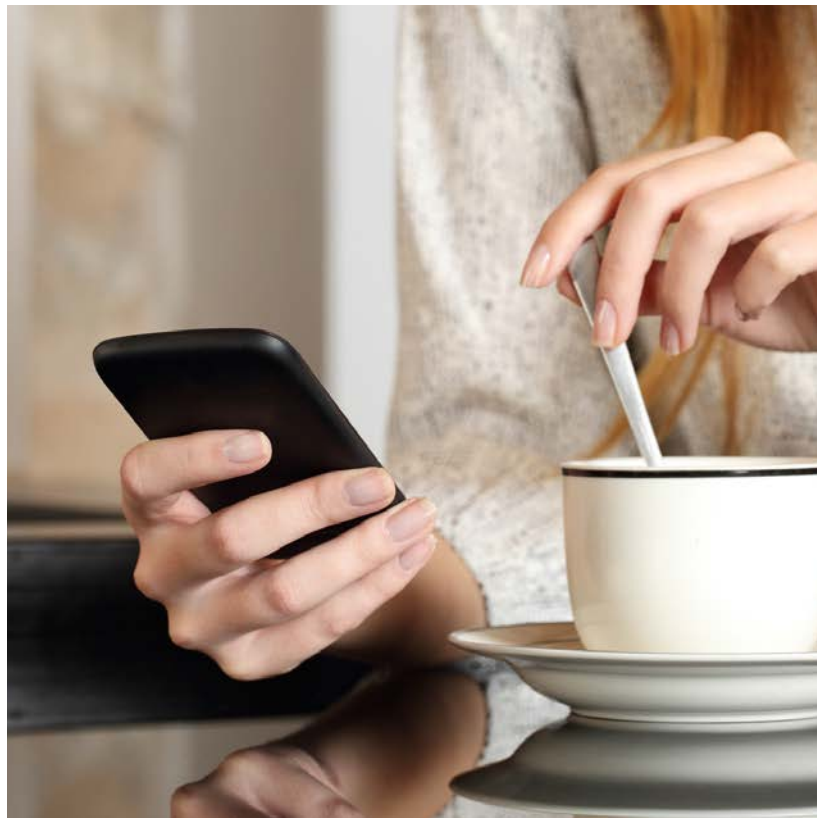
In the past, Instant Census customers have recruited from established phone, email, web-based, and mail survey panels; customer loyalty programs; or their own customer base in general. In some cases, depending if it was appropriate for the study, our customers have recruited from both established and outside audiences.

What follows are best practices for recruiting from established audiences as we've seen in our experience. While these recruiting methods can be done leading up to a scheduled SMS survey, they also can be done overtime to ensure you have a panel on-hand for when the need arises.

1. Phone Surveys

Phone surveys are a great medium to use for recruiting participants into SMS surveys. If you have an upcoming phone survey using an established panel, you can add a question to the end of the survey asking participants for consent for future SMS surveys. You could also run a phone survey specifically for the purpose of obtaining and recording consent

2. Email Marketing & Surveys

Some Instant Census customers have sent email marketing campaigns advertising survey phone numbers to established audiences, but results for this method can vary. The advantages of this medium are you can send multiple emails for little cost and optimize them to be sent at specific times of day for the highest open rates. However, you should ensure survey phone numbers and text-in instructions are mentioned in the email headline and first sentence of the email body text. These items should also be over-emphasized with larger fonts and active font colors.

You may also use email surveys for a recruitment method similar to phone surveys. By simply adding a question regarding consent to an email survey, you can obtain and record opt-ins.

3. Web Forms

If you're hosting an upcoming event and plan to have attendees sign-up through a web-form, including a question regarding consent to text is another great way to recruit your panel for SMS surveys. Similarly, if you're a business using web-forms for customer check-outs or service sign-ups, you can also include a consent to text check-box to recruit customers into SMS surveys or communications.

Including a question regarding consent to text in web forms is another great way to recruit for SMS surveys.

4. Mail Surveys

Similar to phone surveys, mail surveys are another opportunity to obtain and record consent for SMS surveys. While you could add a question to the end of a mail survey asking participants for consent for future SMS surveys, if you already have an SMS survey phone number, you can ask participants to text into the survey number. Keep in mind, this would most likely be the most time consuming and slowest form of recruitment.

Welcome Message

In July 2015, the FCC clarified U.S. regulations around automatic text messaging by releasing its TCPA (Telephone Consumer Protection Act) Omnibus Declaratory Ruling. Part of these new regulations cover the very specific opt-out language that needs to be communicated to your participants upon opting into SMS communications.

Instant Census customers don't have to worry about handling opt-out procedures in welcome message because we take care of it from start to finish. Our standard welcome message is automatically sent to all survey participants upon opting into our surveys and covers 2 of the following requirements outlined by the FCC:

1. Identifies who is sending the messages ("e.g. This is the ___ Survey Center")
2. Tells the respondent how to opt out ("Text STOP at any time to opt out.")
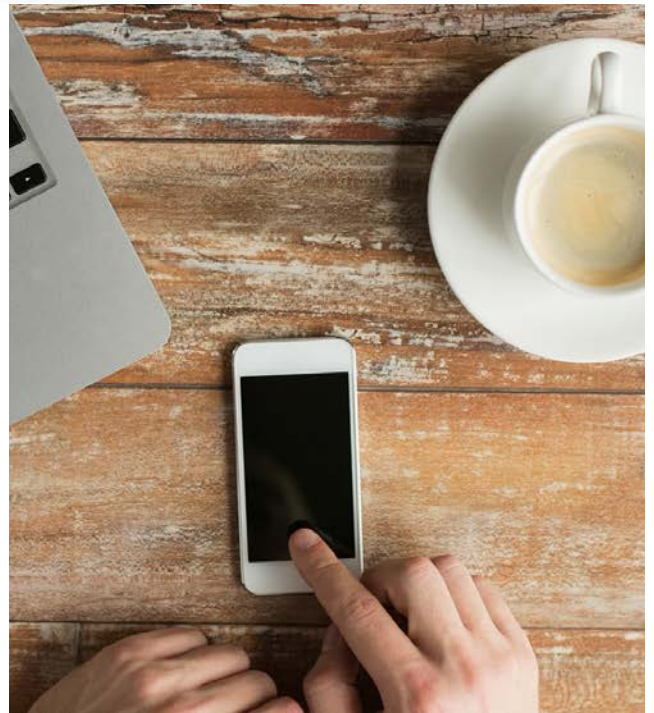
Welcome Message Cont'd

For respondents of our text message surveys, the welcome message will look like this:
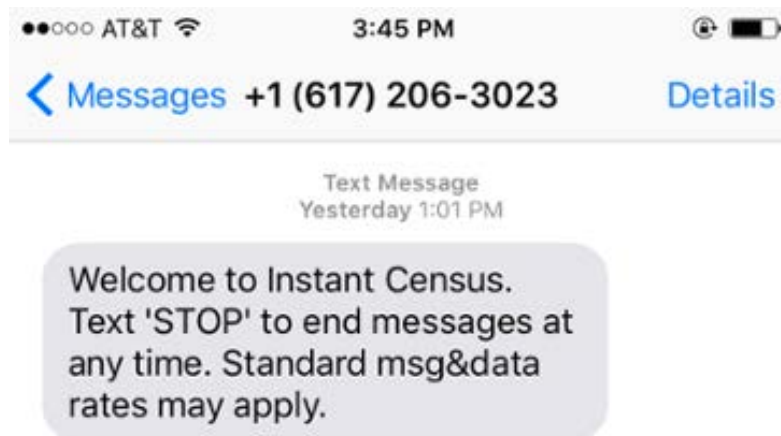
The first sentence of the welcome message is completely customizable. We encourage Instant Census users to include their business or study name in this sentence to give survey participants a sense of familiarity and improve response rates. For example, your first sentence may say:

> *"Welcome to The Center For Survey Research's First Year Student Study. Text 'STOP' to end messages at any time. Standard msg & data rates may apply."*

If you'd like to learn more about TCPA and FCC regulations around automated text messaging, visit:

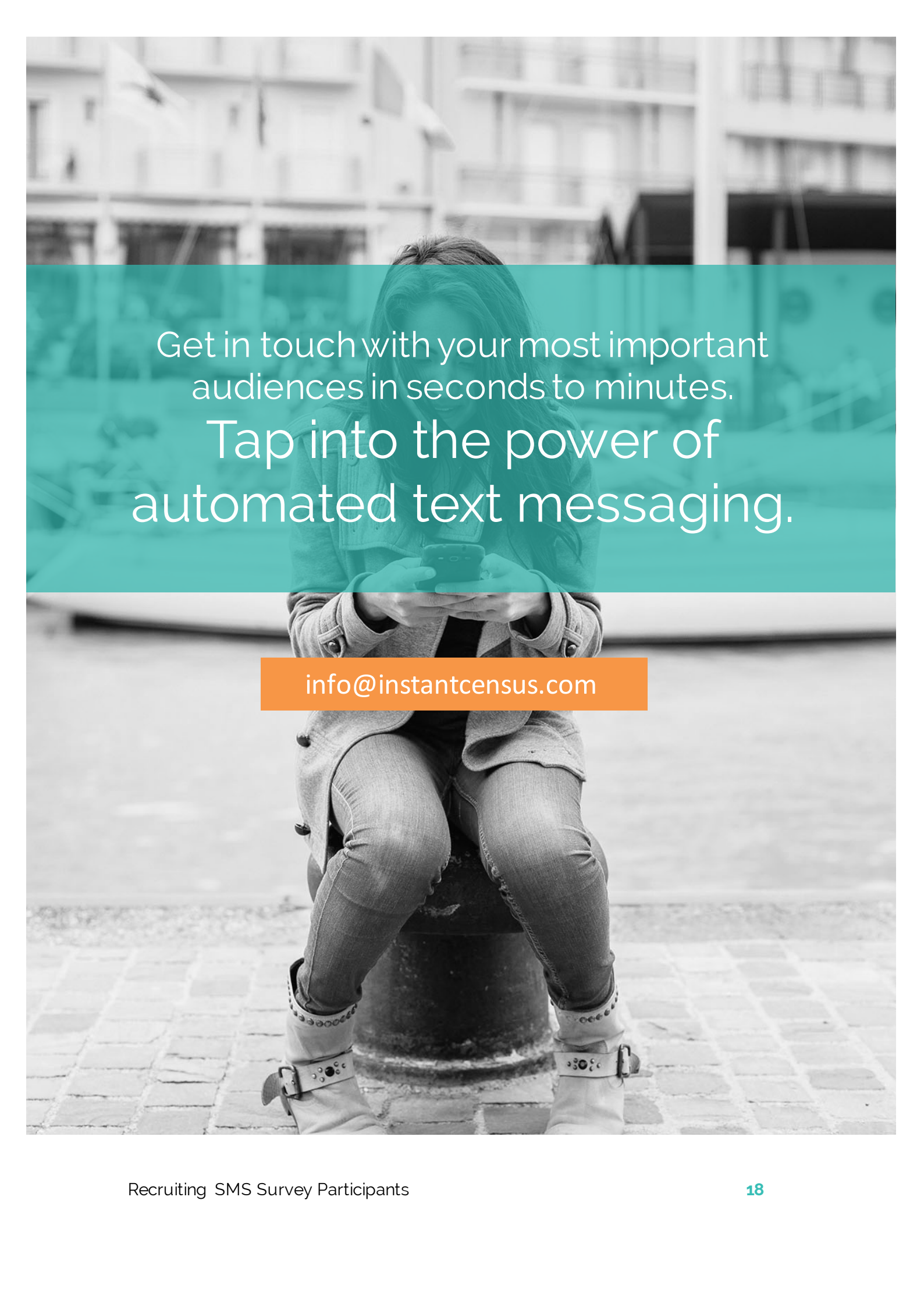http://pages.instantcensus.com/blog/text-message-survey-consent-rules-july-2015/

Takeaway

There's no reason to be discouraged by the task of recruiting audiences and panels for SMS surveys or communications. By employing the help of other survey technologies, email marketing, advertisements, and social media platforms, you can effectively reach and recruit audiences.

If you're still not sure recruiting is your forte, we're always here to help. We can handle recruiting efforts from start to finish, or just at specific times throughout the recruiting process. We are seasoned in writing recruiting messages, selecting the best recruiting medium for your preferred audience, and determining how long your recruiting process should be in order to achieve the best results. Whatever your need, we have a solution. Contact us today!

info@instantcensus.com

Get in touch with your most important
audiences in seconds to minutes.
Tap into the power of
automated text messaging.

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