



Five new reasons to consider Online Qualitative Research

2009 marked a turning point for online qualitative research with its re-birth as a dynamic and rich consumer engagement tool



Online developers, quick to seize upon the advantages of conducting qualitative research in an asynchronous way, have kick-started the evolution of a new generation of bulletin board platforms.

From the old days of online focus groups, today's online qualitative research has been re-born as a methodology offering a real USP. Respondents now have the freedom to undertake research at their own convenience without the time constraints and pressures of traditional research methodologies.

The results translate into a strong, tangible benefit for research stakeholders, in the form of richer granularity in the research output and, ultimately, greater depths of insight.

The reason for this is simple: the more time respondents are given to respond to questions, the better and more detailed answers we receive in return.

Research budgets need to work harder and demonstrate increased ROI, so it is perhaps surprising that online qualitative research has struggled for recognition compared to traditional qualitative measures. I would like to encourage you to view online qualitative research in a new, and hopefully inspirational, light.



Here are five fresh and compelling reasons why online qualitative research should figure in our future research portfolios.

1

It will engage mass market consumers

Online research has been viewed as a tool suitable only for early adopters and the tech savvy. Increasing numbers of consumers are “tweeting”, “poking”, “skyping” and “blogging”. Now, more than ever, the opinions and needs of the ‘mass market’ need to be understood and correctly interpreted.

The challenge is to engage customers to imagine use cases for technological solutions they may not yet believe in or fully understand. Online qualitative research enables us to take respondents on a journey with us; by spreading the research over several days, or even a few weeks, we can build online diaries of their lives, document

their use cases of existing technology, and gradually introduce them to new concepts and ideas to explore and review. This benefit is something that respondents spontaneously acknowledge and appreciate:

“I like how the research was done by peeling the topic layer by layer, so that in-depth feedback on each detail can be discussed.”

Smartphone intender, UK

2

It will achieve client stakeholder immersion

In the current climate of volcanic eruptions and frozen travel budgets, immersing client stakeholders in research projects has become incredibly challenging. Online qualitative research has always provided the ability for

stakeholder observation of discussion sessions, but all too often this is hampered by time constraints and poor user experience (UX).

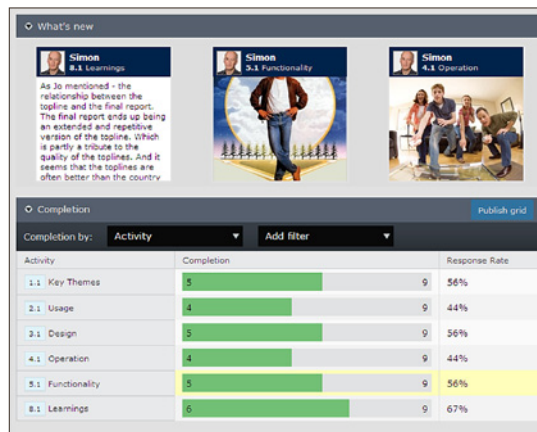
At GfK, we have worked hard to understand how best to increase stakeholder immersion and achieve this through the production of in-field newsletter updates and a constant search for innovative software partners.

Revelation, GfK’s online qualitative software partner, provides a highly intuitive and engaging interface, which enables stakeholders to download transcripts filtered on keyword, segment, activity or participant at the click of a button.

3 It is still driven by highly skilled, qualitative researchers

Many research companies place the software at the forefront of their offering. However, online qualitative research has two essential components; the software platform and the online qualitative researcher. Both must work together to make the methodology successful. After several years experience with different techniques and questionnaire approaches, GfK can truly offer a tried and trusted approach to designing research for online platforms. Our discussion guides contain a range of activities and tasks specifically designed to elicit both emotional and functional responses to a wide range of topic areas. By making tasks fun to complete you really can achieve online group interaction.

The same goes for analysis; we are all trained in techniques to help us manage and digest the large amount of output from online discussions, enabling our clients to focus on the most critical insights and not get swamped by the research output.



4 It encourages creativity through harnessing the multimedia capability of the web

One of the most engaging qualities of online qualitative research is that it is visually stimulating. By enabling the easy uploading of user generated multimedia content we paint vivid pictures of customers' lives, needs and expectations. Mobile phone platforms that enable users to take part in online discussions and instantly upload multimedia content on-the-go will be one of the most important benefits of online qualitative research in the next few years. Just take a look at some of the output from a recent study we conducted into the benefits of location based applications. Consumers took pictures on their iPhones of a location they had found that day

using a location based application. Possible extensions to these capabilities are huge – online mood boards and video blogs are just some of the new possibilities GfK will be testing out this year.

5 It is much more than just bulletin boards

Online qualitative research spans the full scope of web 2.0, from online blogs and diaries through to online communities. The versatile Revelation platform that GfK currently uses allows us to tailor our approach to fit the specific needs of each project. This ranges from an online diary platform for generating use cases for new mobile services, a community area for product triallists and even as a creative pre-task tool prior to face to face groups.

The versatility of online qualitative research is its strength....it's much, much more than just bulletin boards...

"First of all thank you very much for the opportunity provided to me by making me a part of such a wonderful community. I really enjoyed each of the questions and the comments from all the participants."
Smartphone user, India

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