



CLTs in pandemic times

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IMR

Institute for Marketing Research

How Covid is redefining our market research methods

I M R

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Localized in Frankfurt - operating all over the world



Frankfurt/Main

March 2021

IMR
Institute for Marketing
Research

An der Hauptwache 11
60313 Frankfurt am Main

A team of 2 managing directors
and 14 project managers &
moderators.

- ✓ Full & Field service
- ✓ B2B & B2C
- ✓ National & international

Focus Groups

Phone Interviews

Video Interviews

Home Use Test

Central Location Testing

Mysteryshopping

Online Surveys

Facility rental



Impact on market research



Out of the blue

- In February 2020 a sudden pandemic that - meanwhile - we all know very well under the name COVID-19 spread out over the world
- Countries were starting to take actions against it
- One of the measures was - and still is - reducing contacts and shut down public life

Market research needs to adapt

- The pandemic and resulting political, scientific and social consequences have a major impact on market research
- From one day to another, conducting in-person studies including focus groups, IDIs and of course CLTs (some times also called hall tests or in-Studio tests) happen to be impossible

Modern solutions, usual goal

- The core task of market research remains: being able to identify behaviour patterns and recognize needs
- In times of the pandemic, it was therefore important to respond as quickly, flexibly and creatively as possible to client requests in order to continue to conduct studies



CLTs at IMR

One of our
core
competences

Moving IDIs and focus groups online wasn't the issue

- Things were starting to move to online methods very quickly
- Doing IDIs and focus groups online was not a totally new story and tools were already in the market
- Within a few weeks and - of course - a few technical learnings, that part was at least solved to some extent

You can't do product tests online - or can you?

- Within IMR, CLT studies play an important role
- We conduct around 5 of them every month and - in very busy times - it can be up to 10 central location testings
- The industry is working on solutions to artificially transport smells and tastes online but - I believe we agree - that this will still take a while and if it will ever be a real replacement is hard to say
- We had the idea that if we can do focus groups online why shouldn't it be possible to conduct CLT sessions online

What makes it particularly challenging

Meaningful tools and tech-savvy market researchers

- In order to continue to reach participants of all ages and provide interviews with both healthy and ill participants, the main need is for **meaningful tools** and **top logistics**



State-of-the-art technology and the latest cameras to detect all the emotions that you have to take into account.



Ease of use, **maximum user-friendliness**, so you can continue to interview participants of all ages and health conditions.



Top logistics and an excellent overview to instruct a maximum number of participants in various locations and ship products if necessary.

Turning a HUT into a fully controlled remote CLT

- We thought to ourselves, actually a remote CLT is nothing more than a HUT that you observe via cameras and more strictly control and schedule
- There are of course a few things to keep an eye on and what makes an uncontrolled HUT to a fully controlled remote CLT

Preparation is key

Recruitment process & product preparation

- In general, the recruitment process does not change, it is recruited in the same way as before except: Participants must certify in writing that they are healthy and symptom-free from Covid and have not had contact with anyone who has had Covid or symptoms for the past 14 days.
- A fixed time for participating on a specific date and time will be agreed on with the respondents
- As with on-site studies, a decision must also be made whether to distribute debranded or branded products to participants - If necessary, the products must be debranded

Putting together a package for each participant

The effort required to perform a CLT remotely is enormous. You have to create a package for each participant (we have up to $n=1600$), which includes all documents, products and materials for a successful test and distribute these packages on time and at perfect conditions.

A package usually consists of:

- ✓ Instructions how to store the products correctly and how to use them
- ✓ Instructions about the platform which is used and contact data for help
- ✓ The test product or products according to the outline of the study plus cups/plates/gloves or whatever is needed
- ✓ A palate cleanser e.g. white bread, unsalted cookies or similar
- ✓ A bottle of water for neutralisation
- ✓ Anything else that may be important for the session

Preparation is key

Packages are handed over under strict hygiene measures

- The packages are either shipped (cooled or non-cooled) or picked up by the participants themselves
- When participants pick up their packages at the facility, strict Covid hygiene measures will be followed:
 - ✓ Healthy staff and healthy participants only
 - ✓ Wearing medical masks
 - ✓ Disinfected hands
 - ✓ Rooms are ventilated
 - ✓ Keep distance
 - ✓ Keep contact to a minimum and keep pickup as short as possible

Observing participants via survey link or via Zoom (or the like)

- Sometimes clients provide their own platforms through which you can both complete the survey and be observed via video function. In this case, the participant would only be sent 1 link + log in data (like participant ID and password)
- Sometimes you have to send 1 link for the survey and 1 link for the observation (which can e.g. also be done via Zoom with video function). In this case participants would get 2 links + log in data

Conducting the CLTs

Conducting the CLTs as online sessions

- At the day and time of the session the respondents dial into the session together (5 to up to 12 respondents at one time)
- This can be done either via the survey platform directly or e.g. via Zoom, Teams or similar

Our hosts monitor and assist throughout the entire sessions

- A host - similar to normal CLTs - is introducing the study, explains the procedure how to test the products and other important parts to keep the test structure identical throughout
- The host will remain online throughout the survey period, monitoring participants and intervening should assistance be needed - just as he would on-site
- For instance if the product should be kept cool the host will say “Please now take the product out the fridge and open it.” or “Pour it into the cup up to the fill line.”
- Depending on the study, participants test the products before, during or after the online survey.
- This procedure can be repeated as often as needed until all products are tested.

It is also possible that the host can look at certain results while the survey moves on in order to check all answers or checking the results if a certain product was rated particular bad or good.

Advantages and disadvantages



- Products that should be tested in a controlled environment at a hall can be tested even if in-person contacts are not appropriate
- There is no room/space limitation so a large number of tests can be conducted in a short time frame
- A broader spread of recruiting is feasible e.g. including rural areas to some extent
- HUT methods can be combined with CLT style in a mixed mode



- Product tests that need equipment for testing e.g. coffee tests that need a machine or usability tests with a limited number of available products are not reasonable feasible
- The logistic part can be a real effort and creates of course additional cost
- Testing cooled or frozen products are creating an even higher logistic effort



CLTs at IMR

Success stories

Examples from 2020 and 2021

We did a lot of remote CLTs both last year and this year. Many of them with very many participants and spread all over Germany.

Recent examples from 2 clients

- ✓ N=1.600 Interviews testing a new Cola soft drink for Coca Cola
Completed within 15 days
- ✓ N=1.200 Interviews testing a new Orange soft Drink for Coca Cola
Completed within 12 days
- ✓ N=400 Interviews testing Cookies for Mondelez
Completed in 8 days
- ✓ N=180 Interviews testing Cereal bars for Mondelez
Completed in 4 days