

Online Focus Groups - Breakthrough after phase of latent potential?

Dirk Weller
T +49 221 42061-339 | dirk.weller@psychonomics.de
www.psychonomics.de

Februar 09

You Gov **Psychonomics**
What the world thinks

Agenda

1. Introduction: History of online-research at YouGovPsychonomics and international partners
2. Need for methodological evidence at YouGovPsychonomics
3. Goal and design of the study
4. Results
5. Conclusions and directions for future research



1

Introduction: History of online-research at YouGovPsychonomics and international Partners

Internet and qualitative research – a special ,couple‘

- If the ,medium is the message‘ – what is the message of Online Focus Groups?
- A typical dynamic of the internet medium can be called manic-depressive.
 - First, everybody thinks, that an innovation is a ,killer application‘
 - Then, everybody believes it is rather a stillborn child, that will never live.
- That happened to the internet (economy) as a hole – it happened to qualitative online research in particular.
 - When online focus groups came up around 99/2000, people started to call a classical focus group ,**offline** focus group‘ – as something very oldfashioned, running out soon.
 - After two projects in 2000, for a media and an insurance company, online focus groups for quite a while were not conducted again at psychonomics.
- But, as we can also see for the internet as a hole: many things come back a second time, and then they start to play a sustainable role in their field.

Different markets – different media evolution

- In the meantime, other markets had much stronger appeal to pursuit the new technological options.
- These were in particular markets with very high geographical expanse – and high technological standard at the same time.
- Prototypes of such markets are the US and Scandinavia.



Example for the US market: Polimetrix

- Polimetrix has started to conduct qualitative online research in 2005.
- By chance, there was the occasion to develop a speech based online tool for a large project, after a university research department had failed to develop such a software, that the project was relying on.
- Having two months for development, the so called ,Voxpop'-software turned out to be very practicable, a real world solution for research.
- Soon the number of conducted focus groups was stable on a high level:
 - 2005: 125
 - 2006: 100
 - 2007: 250
 - 2008: expected 200

Example for the US market: Polimetrix II

- Most memorable project: 80 focus groups on ‘Democracy in the USA’
 - The discussions focused on four aspects of the role of citizens in a democracy: political participation, exercising choice, becoming informed and public service.
 - "We put all of America in a virtual room to consider the future of citizenship," said James Fishkin, Director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, which conducted the poll in conjunction with YouGov America. "The results are thoughtful and balanced and deserve to be considered by policymakers everywhere." Sample results were featured on the "By the People national broadcast", airing in January on PBS.
 - Main result of the study are significant changes in opinions pre and after the groups.
 - The study reminds us of 136 focus groups conducted in Germany in the 50's to figure out how democracy-talented the German population was at that time.

Voxpop: Previous design

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Thursday, 02/14 at 10:00 AM - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The main content area is titled "VOX POPVLI" and features a central moderator icon labeled "dirk moderator" with a green arrow pointing to it. Surrounding the moderator are several participant icons: ines11, ingrid11, goran11, matthiasb11, sandra11, michaela11, miriam, ruth11, and maik11. A status bar below sandra11 indicates "Speaking(... 43 left.)".

Below the main area are three panels:

- Speakers Queue:** A list of participants with their status. Sandra11 is "Speaking", matthiasb11 is "Next", and ingrid11, maik11, and michaela11 are in the queue.
- Time Remaining:** A section with a blue header and a light blue background. It displays "... 43 left." and includes buttons for "Ask to Speak", "Mic Settings", "Audio Problem", "Help", and "Exit Discussion".
- Chat Window:** A text input area with a "Post" button. The chat history shows messages from michaela11, goran11, and maik11.

At the bottom of the interface is a "Playback Controls" section with a "pause/play" button, volume and seek sliders, and a progress indicator showing "62:22 of 75:30".

Example for the UK market: YouGov London

- In London methodological tests have been conducted in the second half of 2007.
 - Hypotheses was, that the British mentality does not match with voice chat that well, as people are less extravert. Therefore the classical chat with a highly developed tool was used.
 - Results were very encouraging for topics like traffic infrastructure.
 - Results were difficult for topics like supermarket brands – emotional, subtle psychological topics. The discussions remained tough and slow in that area.



Example for the Scandinavian market: YouGovZapera

- Tested the methodology and found a system to implement in autumn 2005.
- Conducted approximately 45 Qual Online during the first year (2006)
- Continued activity during 2007 and developed an own system – ZapQual
- ZapQual tested in the end of 2007, launched 1st of February 2008
- Qual online projects have been carried out in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Germany and in the following branches of trade:
 - IT/Tele
 - Media
 - FMCG food
 - FMCG non food
 - Finance
 - Medical
 - Tourism



Bulletin Board (moderators view)

Odellia matolja grupp 2 Sverige - Interview - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Arkiv Redigera Visa Favoriter Verktøy Hjälp

Adress <http://mail.klike.dk/ZaperaV3/site/interview/interviewrespond.aspx>

Google 7 blockerade

Odellia matolja grupp...

Project List Odellia matolja grupp 2 Sverige Manage Project Interview Show Respondant View Logout accowner

1 Inledning

1.1 [Hej! Mitt namn ä](#)
Respondent 2
Moderator 0
Observer 0

1.2 [Börja med att pr](#)
Respondent 3
Moderator 0
Observer 0

2 Förbruknings...

2.1 [Vilka oljor använ](#)
Respondent 2
Moderator 0
Observer 0

2.2 [Använder ni olika](#)
Respondent 3
Moderator 1
Observer 0

2.3 [Vilka oljor använ](#)
Respondent 2
Moderator 0
Observer 0

2.4 [Vilka oljor använ](#)
Respondent 0
Moderator 0

1.2

This assignment has been unposted. You are not allowed to interact with it anymore.

Börja med att presentera er med förnamn, ålder, familjesituation, vad ni sysslar med, var ni bor och vad ni gör på fritiden. Berätta gärna om er inställning till sundhet också, då det är matvaror vi skall prata om!

11 Leif [New] 07-nov-2007 23:33
Jag heter Leif och bor på Södermalm i stockholm har två utflugna barn och ett barnbarn. Till yrket är jag journalist men är nu inbegripen i ett litterärt projekt - en samtidisskildring av stockholm

10 Marzena [New] 07-nov-2007 19:19
Hej! Jag heter Marzena är 37 år och har tre barn och bor i en förort till Stockholm. Just nu är jag föräldraledig med min minsta son. Jag tycker om att laga mat och tänker på att den ska vara nyttig.

9 Britt [New] 07-nov-2007 12:02
Jag heter Britten är 51 år och lever singel. Jag jobbar i en f-klass med 6-7åringar. Jag bor i Södertälje och tränar lite smått på gym, går långpromenader samt seglar när säsongen tillåter. Jag tycker mat är viktigt och handlar gärna nyttigt. Grönsaker och frukt har jag mycket i min vardag.

8 Louise 06-nov-2007 21:03
Hej. Jag heter Louise och jag är sambo och har två pojkar som är 4 och 3 år. Vi har sedan några månader tillbaka en hund så vi kommer ut i friska luften en hel del. Jag har även tre st hästar som jag delar med min syster och en kompis. Jag arbetar sedan några månader tillbaks med ekonomi och administration så på dagen blir det en hel del stillasittande. Försöker tänka en del på hälsa och att äta sunt men det är inte alltid lätt att få till det i praktiken.

7 Ann-Louise 06-nov-2007 20:35
Hej
Jag heter Ann-louise, lever singel med 2 barn i tonåren (15,16 år). Jag jobbar som försäljningschef i dealjbranschen. På fritiden läser (Lyssnar) jag mestadels på deckare, går långa promenader. Tycker om att umgås med vänner och bekanta och då blir det oftast god mat. Jag försöker vara sund varje dag och vill verkligen att mina barn skall få lära sig om hälsa och välmående.

Respondents

Currently Logged On
None

Never Logged On
Bengt
Jenny
Britt
Kerstin
Gunnie
Inger
Vivica
Birgitta
Götha
Gunvor
Marianne
Lena
Anneli
Louise
Andres
Ingrid
Christer
Leif
Marzena
Ann-Louise

Logged In Last 4 Hours
None

Logged In Last 12 Hours
None

Logged In Over 12 Hours
None

Observers

Currently Logged On
None

Never Logged On
Ingeborg
Morten
Per

Logged In Last 4 Hours
None

<< Prev Next >>

Start 6 Internet Explorer 3 Microsoft Office P... 2 Clip Organizer Inbox - Microsoft Out... Vejledning dobbeltk... SV Sök text 08:26



Chat (moderators view)

Cision chatt grupp 1 - Interview - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Arkiv Redigera Visa Favoriter Verktyg Hjälp

Adress <http://mail.klike.dk/ZaperaW3/site/interview/interviewrespond.aspx>

Google Sök Favoriter 7 blockerade Stavning Skicka till Inställningar

Sök efter webben... Datorns status Spaces

Cision chatt grupp 1...

Project List Cision chatt grupp 1 Manage Project Interview Show Respondant View Logout accowner

1 **Inledning**

1.1 **Start**

Respondent 0
Moderator 0
Observer 0

1.2 **prisbild**

Respondent 0
Moderator 0
Observer 0

Chat Date : 19-nov-2007

[09:57:02] **Moderator Petra** : Mitt namn är Petra och det är jag som kommer att leda dagens diskussion. Vi kommer att prata om en ny bevakningstjänst från Cision. Syftet med diskussionen är att få era åsikter och attityder till den här nya produkten.

[09:58:31] **Moderator Petra** : Vilka är ni som kommit?

[09:58:50] **Margaretha** : Margaretha här!

[09:59:03] **Jenny** : Jenny är här

[10:00:21] **Moderator Petra** : Vi väntar en kort stund till sen börjar vi.

[10:01:15] **Håkan** : Håkan är här

[10:01:55] **Moderator Petra** : Innan vi börjar vill jag påpeka att det inte finns några rätt eller fel svar, utan att det är just era åsikter som är viktiga. Allt ni säger kommer självklart att behandlas anonymt. Ta fram produktbeskrivningen så att ni har den framme när vi diskuterar. Då sätter vi igång!

[10:02:16] **Moderator Petra** : Vad tänker ni på när jag säger mediebevakning? Vilka spontana associationer får ni?

[10:02:37] **Jenny** : ett verktyg som underlättar

[10:02:51] **Margaretha** : Kartläggning av vad som sägs och skrivs i media

[10:02:52] **Jonas** : Hej hej Jonas är inne

[10:03:00] **Håkan** : Pressklipp, analyser

[10:03:07] **Moderator Petra** : Välkommen Jonas

[10:03:20] **Anna** : Koll på omvärlden, och oss själva.

[10:03:30] **Jonas** : Mediebevakning: koll på ALLA medier

[10:03:48] **Moderator Petra** : Vilka känslor väcker det hos er? Vad är positivt respektive mindre positivt?

[10:04:37] **Jonas** : Jag kommer ifrån "Media" så för mig väcker det inga speciella känslor. Kan nog marknaden ganska väl.

[10:05:06] **Margaretha** : Övervägande positivt att ha koll på omvärldens reaktioner. Möjligen ett verktyg som vi överskattar då och då.

[10:05:13] **Håkan** : Positivt: Att ha koll på vad som sägs om företaget i medierna. Mindre positivt är förstås negativ publicitet

[10:05:23] **Anna** : kul om vi syns i media, lite ångest om vi inte syns.. Men vi lär oss mycket genom att titta på VAD de skriver om..

[10:05:32] **Moderator Petra** : Bra

[10:05:40] **Moderator Petra** : När använder ni er av mediebevakning?

[10:06:24] **Jenny** : Varje dag känns det som

[10:06:33] **Anna** : dagligen, men framförallt när vi gjort ett pressutspel..

[10:06:35] **Moderator Petra** : Hur använder ni er av mediebevakning?

[10:06:36] **Margaretha** : På flera olika sätt, först och främst för att se hur det vi gör mottas. Sprider den kunskapen i vår organisation

[10:06:47] **Håkan** : Dagligen, följer allt som sägs och skrivs om oss. Analyser varje kvartal. Mediebevakningen blir ofta underlag för aktiviteter

[10:07:09] **Jonas** : Dagligen, företrädesvis via mejl (tillsänt). Inte så mycket papperstidningar för min del (borde nog vara mer)

[10:07:12] **Moderator Petra** : Har ni förändrat er användning av mediebevakning under den senaste tiden?

[10:07:16] **Jenny** : Vi fördjupar oss inte. Läser vad som står

Respondents

Currently Logged On
None

Never Logged On
Jonas
Margaretha
Anna
Ulrika
Håkan
Jenny
Mattias
Kerstin
aw

Logged In Last 4 Hours
None

Logged In Last 12 Hours
None

Logged In Over 12 Hours
None

Observers

Currently Logged On
None

Never Logged On
Birgitta

Logged In Last 4 Hours
None

Logged In Last 12 Hours
None

Logged In Over 12 Hours
None

<< Prev Next >>

Start 6 Internet Explorer Microsoft Office P... 2 Clip Organizer Inbox - Microsoft Out... Vejledning dobbeltko... SV Sök text 08:28



2

Need for methodological evidence at YouGov Psychonomics

You
Gov **Psychonomics**

What the world thinks

YouGovPsychonomics qualitative online research – quo vadis?

- The questions rising after the merger of YouGovPsychonomics with the YouGov group were:
 - Does it make sense to engage in qualitative online research, after having an established qualitative offline research? Is it complementary for the German market?
 - Which methods and tools fit best for our aims, clients, topics?
- Pro's:
 - Building up a large online panel (Brand.Index), which is a very good recruiting opportunity for online groups
 - Having a high percentage of clients and projects with complex attendance products and also b2b-studies with experts as target groups, rather than FMCG-related projects.
- With this background, we decided that qualitative online research should have a chance to play an important role among our research products.



Recent Projects in Germany

- Psychological add concept test in health-care
 - An add concept had to be tested with specialized doctors in five European countries.
 - In-depth VoIP-Interviews of 60 minutes, one on one, were conducted using a conference software.
 - That allowed precise presentation of 3 seconds at first and several minutes at second.
 - Standardized questions were implemented and answered very efficiently.
 - The client was able to log in and listen to a sample of the interviews.
- The project team was positively surprised of the good possibility to get a psychological understanding of the actual unfolding of the add concept impact rather than just superficial opinions.



Recent Projects in Germany

- Psychological tourist destination potential analyses
 - Eight online bulletin board groups of 3 days with 15-20 participants
 - Nearly 40 questions, more than 40 pages of transcripts from each group
 - Lively and differentiated answers
 - Projective Collage exercise with country flags
- Strong advantage of this design was the efficient way to get high differentiation between different target groups according to life-style and status as well as regional background.



Orientation amongst the methodological options

- Still the question was:
 - What is the best software and medium for which research?
 - Is the effort worthwhile in the German market to implement audio channel in our groups, or do we get the same results with classical chats?
- That is when we decided to conduct a methodological experiment.
- Both of them being synchronic settings, we decided to compare the *classic chat versus the audio based chat*.
 - Comparing video chat is left for later research ...



3

Goal and design of the study

Research Question and Goal of the Study

- Do text chat or audio online focus groups produce better results concerning emotional issues?
- Do text chat or audio online focus groups produce better results concerning creativity issues?

Comparison of audio and text chat online focus groups by:

Objective Measures:

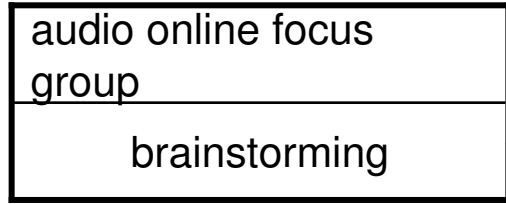
- What amount of communication is produced?
- What participation rates are realized?
- How much interaction can take place?
- How many ideas are generated?
- How much emotions can be detected and understood?
- Does the course of the conversation differ between the methods?
- Subjective Measures:
 - How do participants evaluate both methods?
 - Which method do they prefer?



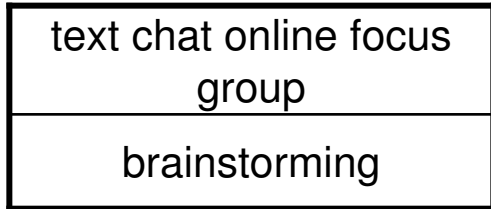
Study Design



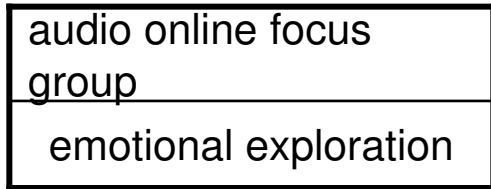
Group 1
7 participants



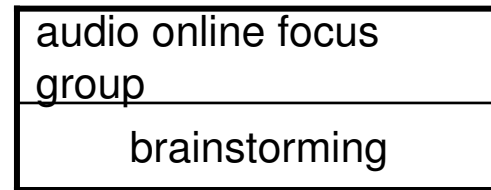
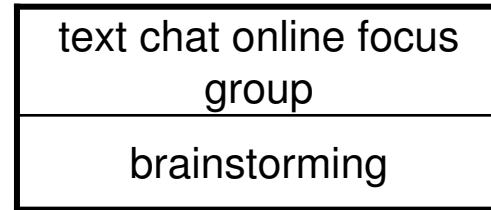
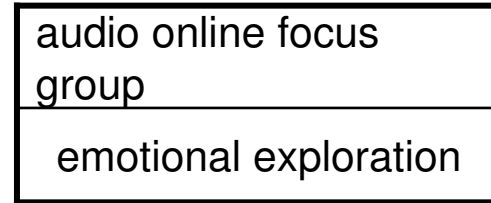
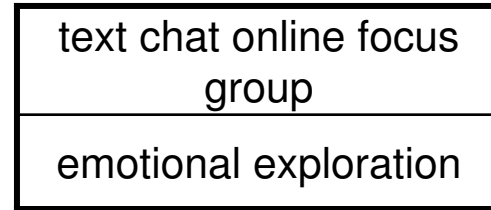
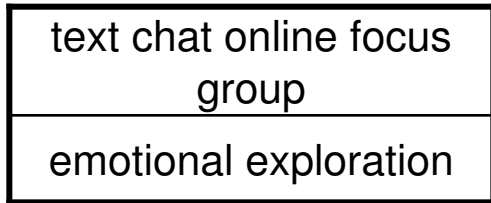
Group 2
8 participants



Group 3
6 participants



Group 4
7 participants



Topic structure and discussion guides

- The emotional issue dealt with the feelings you experience in pharmacies.
 - *„Please describe how you feel when you are in a pharmacy?“*
 - *„There are many different reasons to go to a pharmacy. Sometimes you go there, because you are ill, but sometimes you only want to refill your medicine chest. Do your emotions and feelings differ from occasion to occasion?“*
 - *“Are there special situations in pharmacies going along with specific emotions?“*
 - *“How do you want to feel ideally in a pharmacy?“*
 - *“Do you feel different buying your medication in an online pharmacy? How do you feel then?“*



Topic structure and discussion guides

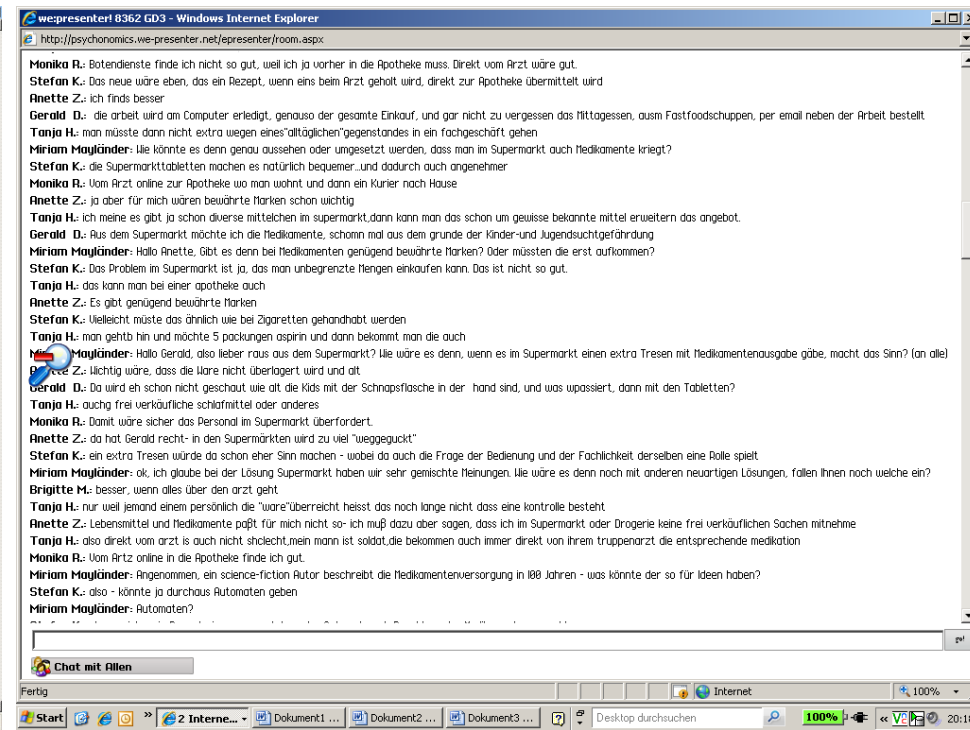
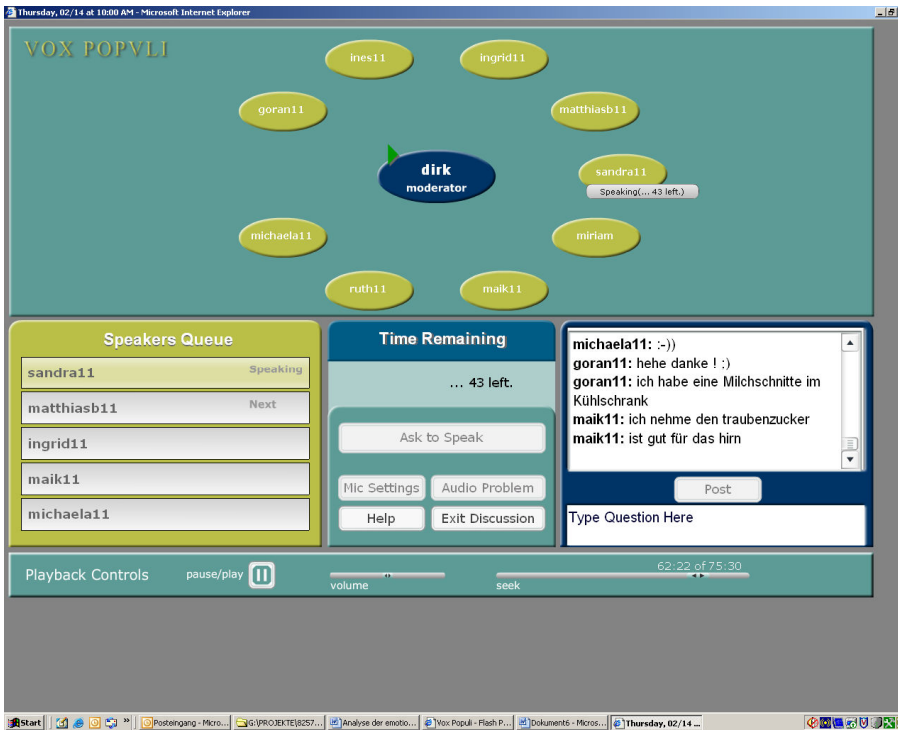
- The brainstorming exercise was to collect ideas how medication can be distributed in future.
 - *„What different ways of getting your medicine can you imagine?“*
 - *“What innovations in that field can you think of?“*
 - *„What would be the perfect way of getting medication concerning your demands and wishes? Please do not think of feasibility.“*
 - *„What other products should a pharmacy offer?“*
 - *„How must a pharmacy be furnished and equipped that you feel comfortable?“*



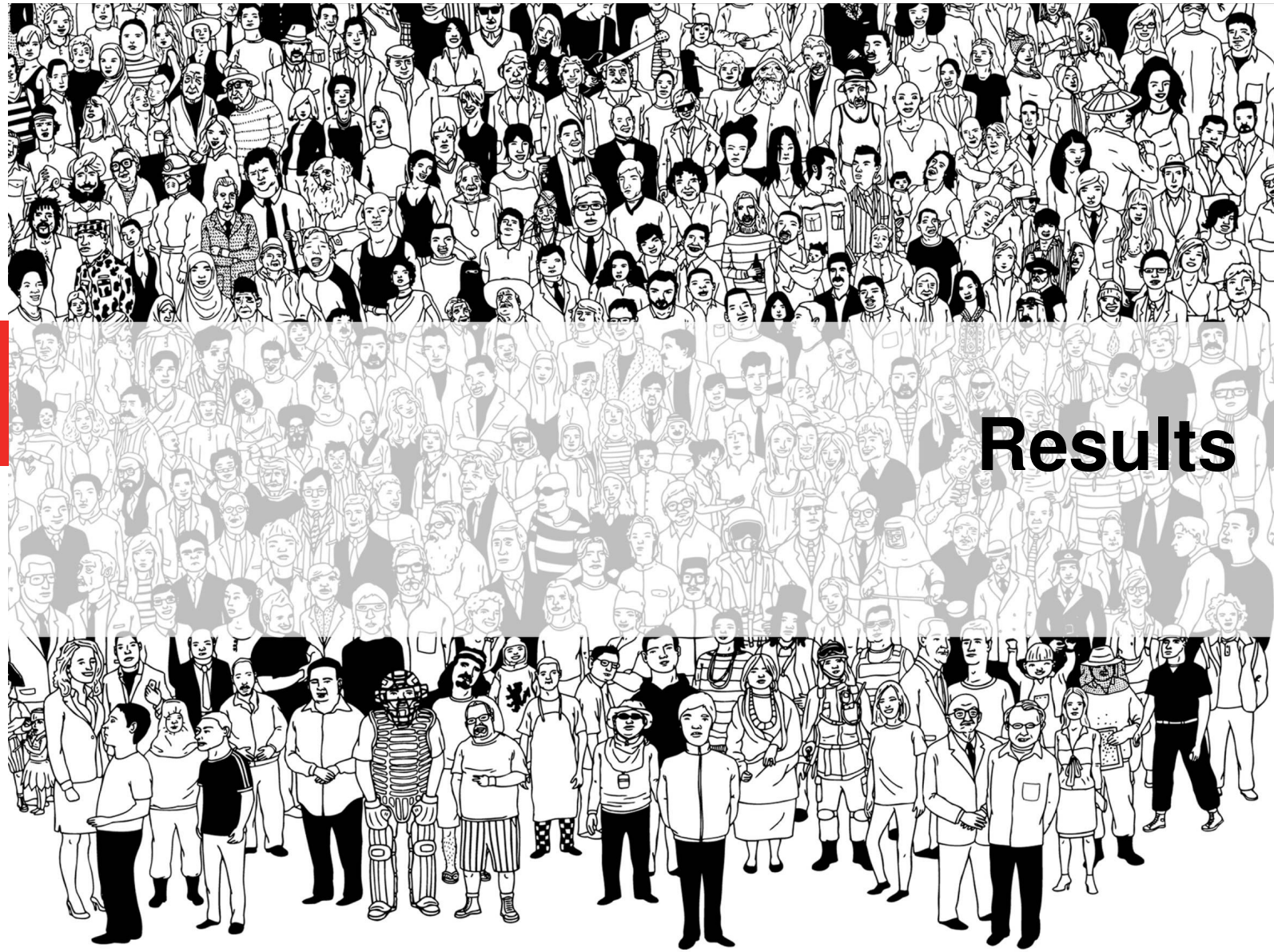
Software used

- The audio online focus group was accomplished by a speech based online tool:

- The text chat online focus group was carried out by a text based online tool:



4



Results

General inter-method validity

4 x 2 Online-Sessions
à 60 Minutes
6-8 participants

~

12 F2F In-depth-Ints
90-120 Minutes
2 F2F Focus Groups with 8
participants à 120 Minutes

- On the same topic, 3 weeks before psychonomics had conducted 2 classical, face to face focus groups and 12 two-hour in depth interviews.
- The general psychological mechanisms and motive patterns were quite similar and recognizable in the offline and online approach.
- The online generated additional details and nuances, what was to be expected as we discussed very specialized topic aspects here.
- The online approach in some points even turned out to generate less inhibited, more fluent interaction, after in the face to face contact the topic had turned out to be a little bit heavy and slow sometimes.

General Productiveness Text based vs. Voice based

	Average
Text based	
Number of words	3825,25
Number of contributions	306,25
Average length of contributions	12,65
Voice based	
Number of words – total	7584,25
Number of words – voice	6945,25
Number of words – chat	644
Number of contributions – total	229,75
Number of contributions – voice	121,75
Number of contributions – chat	108
Average length of contributions – total	37,49
Average length of contributions - voice	59,75
Average length of contributions - chat	6,61

- High activity in both methods
- No significant differences in participation rates, balanced participation in both methods compared to face2face.
- More words, less and longer contributions in voice based chat.



Very different dynamics

Voice based

- Very structured and 'peaceful' flow
- P. have time to think and talk
- P. can easily listen to others and follow
- P. refer to each other
- Contributions address several aspects each and include individual experiences / 'stories'
- Opinions are explained and exemplified
- P. sometimes have to wait before talking
- Very little misunderstandings, which can be solved easily
- Little chat window is used more or less depending on group, used as a back up or second level of communication, adding and enriching the process
- Deep, vital insights to group emotions
- Positive group feelings

Text based

- Very high frequency of very short contributions
- P. are challenged to follow the turbulent 'rapids'
- Referring to each other difficult, as the answer appears several lines below
- The context of a contribution has to be reconstructed by the reader
- Contributions are often abbreviated and containing mistakes, leading to misunderstandings
- Difficult to clarify misunderstandings in the rapid flow
- Disadvantage of slow typers – they are always late and short
- Positive, but stressful group feelings
- Many ideas and aspects, that stay more isolated



Fruitfulness of emotion-oriented exploration

- On seven levels of emotional expression, the methods have very different profiles.

	Voice	Text
Total	138	92,5
Standard deviation	6	16,5
Emotions ...		
... Negated	0,5	7,5
... Projected	2	1
... Admitted / agreed	4,5	6,5
... Implicitly expressed	79,5	38,5
... Labeled / Termed	13	21,5
... Described	28,5	17
... Expressed	10	0,5
Situation related	38,5	8,5

Different expressions of emotions

Voice based

- More emotional expressions in total
- More descriptions of emotional experiences
- Intense expression of emotions in the voice (e.g. one participant had a trembling voice, almost crying, when she described how frustrated she can get in a pharmacy)

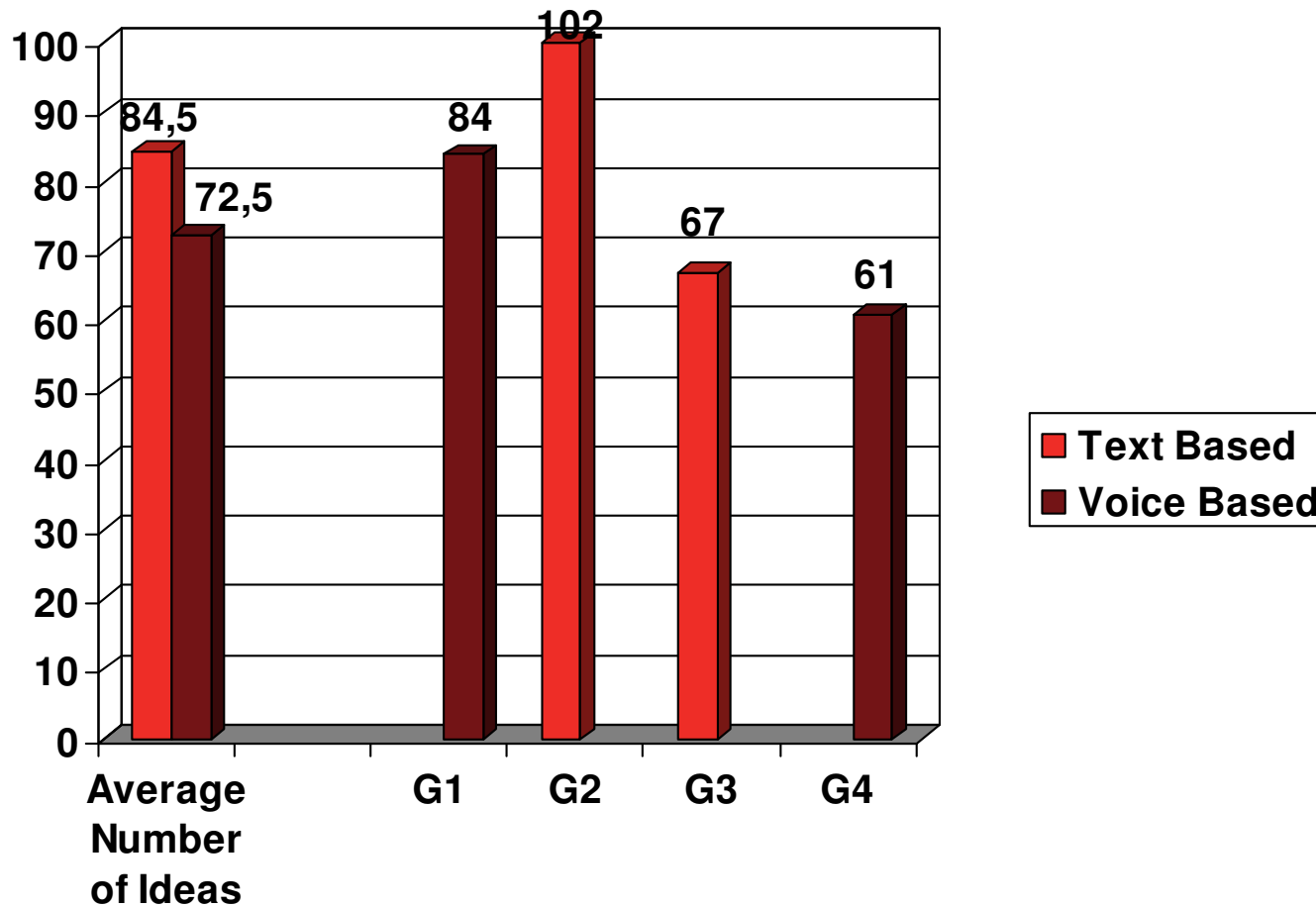
Text based

- P. don't describe, they rather 'drop' names of emotions
- In a hurry, emotions are often just named, neglected or admitted
- Some participants use emoticons, but sometimes it is not clear if ironic or not



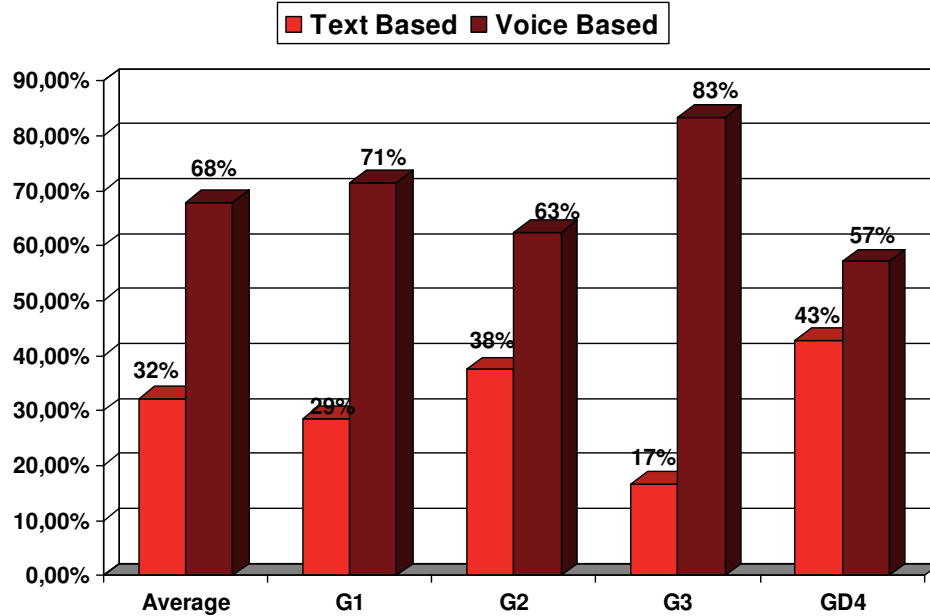
Fruitfulness of creativity-oriented exploration

- We find a very high potential of text based exploration in the field of creativity.



Likability of the method from the participants view

“Which of both methods did you like more?”



- In all four groups, more participants prefer the experience of the voice chat.
- Typical pattern: the voice chat had a more challenging technical environment with sometimes frustrating problems. The text chat was very easy technically, but it was very challenging to follow and participate the discussion.



Open answers to the tool likability/preference

Voice based

Pro (19 comments)

- *“You could emphasize more directly with the others.”*
- *“It felt good to listen to the others.”*
- *“It was new to me and it made me contact the others in a personal manner.”*
- *“Easier to follow.”*
- *“More easy to express my thoughts.”*
- *“It was more fun.”*
- *“I was more concentrated.”*

Con (5 comments)

- *“I had technical problems.”*
- *“Sometimes I had an echo that was annoying.”*
- *“The pleasure was interrupted by my bandwidth problems.”*



Text based

Pro (7 comments)

- *“Better, less technical issues.”*
- *“Easier for me as I have experience with such chats.”*
- *“I am not so inhibited, it is more anonymous.”*
- *“I can just write, don’t have to wait.”*
- *“Many opinions at the same time.”*

Con (9 comments)

- *“It was chaotic.”*
- *“I am not fast enough.”*
- *“The context was gone.”*
- *“Reading is more stressful.”*
- *“Difficulties with reading and writing at the same time.”*



And the moderators ... ?

What implicit message has the medium for the moderator?

- The moderators experiences mirror the participants experiences in many ways.
- The moderators had an intense social experience with ‘the round’ in the voice chat.
 - Banal as it seems, asking for living place and how the weather was there in the introduction round gives a feeling for the fascinating paradox of distance and immediacy, that strengthens the ‘we’-feeling.
 - From the perspective of the experienced offline-moderator, it is surprising how strong interpersonal evidence can be transported by the voice-channel in online focus groups.
 - On the other hand, as soon as technical problems come up (of course during our first group a major data transfer on the other side of the company interrupted everything...) the moderator feels completely helpless and realizes, how dependent he is.



And the moderators ... ?

- The text chat, on the other hand, seems technically much more down to earth and predictable.
 - Phenomenological seen, there is a strange impulse to become ironic and provocative in a text chat.
 - The reason may be: In the communication with the participants, it always feels very indirect, you don't really get in touch with the participants.





5

Conclusions and directions for future research

Conclusion

- The analyse indicates, that an additional channel, the audio channel, adds remarkable research potential to the medium of qualitative online research. It can be said that it makes a completely new research medium.
- That is in particular the case when an emotional topic has to be deeply understood and psychologically analyzed.
- On the other side, the results show that there is no general law saying ‘the more multi channel the better’. Creativity tasks have a tendency to generate more results in a text based chat.
- That suggests to carefully choose and, if necessary, combine different channel settings.
- An optimized design could be: starting with a voice chat about the general level of a topic, switching to a text chat to generate ideas, and then to switch back to the voice chat to analyse and probe on the generated ideas.



Directions for future research

- Further research has to scrutinize different combinations of setting parameters in qualitative online research.
- Very relevant parameters are:
 - Communication channels (text, voice, whiteboard, video, collage etc.)
 - Synchronic vs. Asynchronic
 - Target groups
 - Topics
 - Presented concepts and other multi media content
- Quality criteria for qualitative online research have to be discussed.



Kontakt

Für Rückfragen stehen wir Ihnen gerne zur Verfügung!



Dirk Weller
Senior Project Manager

T +49 221 42061-339
F +49 221 42061-100

dirk.weller@psychonomics.de



Holger Geissler
Member of Management Board

T +49 221 42061-0
F +49 221 42061-100

holger.geissler@psychonomics.de

YouGovPsychonomics AG
Berrenrather Straße 154-156
D-50937 Köln

www.psychonomics.de

