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Community Circles

**Innovation in Online Research
18 June 2020**

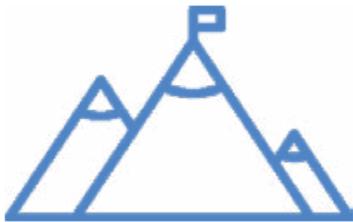# Follow up – Tips and Findings

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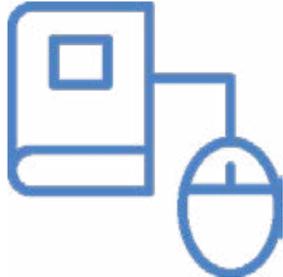
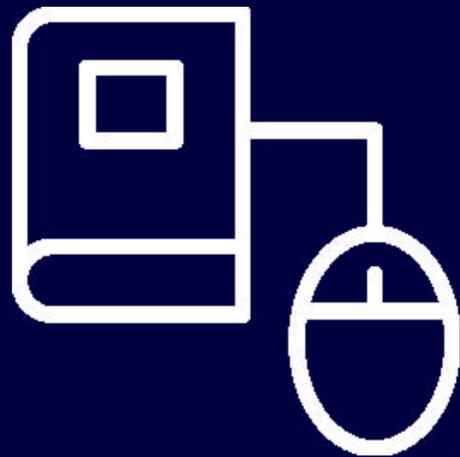**1. New developments in the world of Online Research**

2. What are the challenges?

3. Moving back into F2F

4. What the sector has done to ensure business continuity

New developments in the world of Online Research

On the qualitative side, most of the innovation has been facilitated by platforms allowing researchers to innovate;

In the quantitative area, there has been an acceleration of CATI based browsers and better integration with dialers and third-party systems;

Since the start pandemic, there has been an acceleration of social media and text analytics whilst some of the more traditional offline methodologies are decreasing;

In the Asia Pacific region, both clients and agencies are looking to explore mobile-first surveys and social media listening, as well as exploring online groups and communities for the first time;

In India, where there is a huge amount of F2F research, the community has rapidly adapted to explore the virtual world but always with an eye for the future: but what about complicated and ideation tasks?

In online qual, one of the benefits is that the general population has found and conquered online platforms such as Zoom and Skype, so there are now increased opportunities to get true x-sections;

Whilst many are becoming used to working this way, there is still an issue with socio-economic status and professions: manual workers are not communicating in this way as much;

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Ideation and brainstorming where you usually require a larger group of people has been a bigger and more challenging task;

Thinking of the long-term and adapting to new ways of working not only for a few weeks, but for the next months;

Navigating participants and making sure they are motivated and engaged online has also been a challenge;

There are fewer opportunities to improvise and do things on the fly, so the heavy planning that is required can sometimes take away the creativity;

As researchers we also have to start thinking about using other tools beyond qual platforms, perhaps taking inspiration from UX researchers and designers;
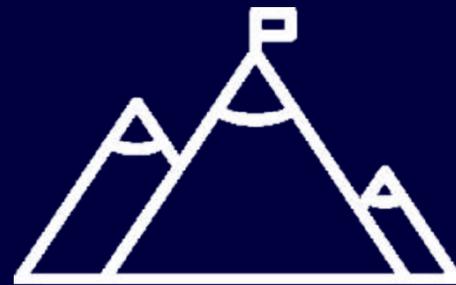
What are the challenges?

Engaging with the senses: looking at movement and sound has been difficult in the online environment;

The fatigue issue: this happens not only to participants but also to moderators as there is a saturation of online content and activities;

We always have to keep in mind the level of technological development; for example, in Africa, the penetration of smartphones is high but the internet penetration and quality of it are low;

We have to continue to educate our clients: some are still very traditional and may not want to do online, so we have to think of creative ways around this;

Engaging the client in an online qual environment has been a challenge: there is not as much observation and they miss the sense and feel of the feedback compared to F2F;

Moving back into F2F

As agencies around the world can open their facilities, we also see adaptation: instead of 8 people in the group, you can only accommodate 4, and introduce glass barriers;

Even if some clients would like to go back to F2F in autumn, there is still a lot of uncertainty on whether that will be possible;

Smaller groups may mean the costs for the client has to increase, but it ultimately allows each of those respondents to have their voice heard, allowing for greater granularity and depth of opinion;

As we see people in groups wearing masks, how can we as researchers pick up queues and understanding?
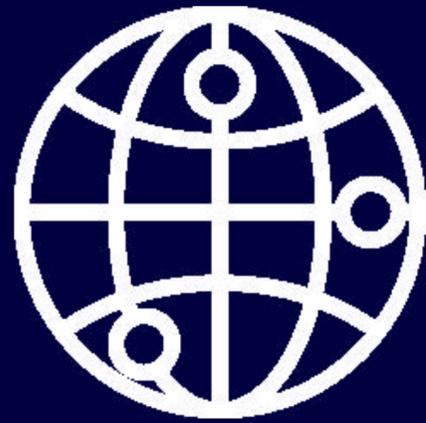
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What the sector has done to ensure business continuity

The expansion of data integration as people are using more and more different systems;

One of the biggest impacts has been the changes to working practices at agencies, and the community has had to adapt to that quickly: can we move towards a more contactless future?

Bringing in new talent to the sector has been challenging to do virtually, but the community has found creative ways to overcome this such as new training mechanisms and interview methods;

As the digital has been deployed more, barriers to entry may fall, so the sector has still highlighted the importance of standards and accreditation mechanisms;

Whilst platforms and technologies have facilitated the work of researchers, there is still a focus on data quality: good technology alone won't make you a better researcher, it will only expose your skills and competence and allow for high quality;

To ensure business continuity, we also need to facilitate affordable training and accreditation mechanisms despite the digital challenges;

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