

***“A Comparison between
On Line and Live Focus Groups”***

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Focus Group: live vs. on line

**A topic of current importance
is the use of the Internet
to conduct marketing and
organizational
research studies,
both quantitative as well qualitative**

**(Greenbaum, 1998a; 1998b;
Symon & Cassell, 1998;
Symon, Cassell & Dickson, 2000)**

Focus Group: live vs. on line

But... conducting *focus groups* using Internet is considered critical:

Greenbaum (1998b), a well known expert, says:

“it’s absurd to imply that this work is comparable to the output of traditional, professionally implemented focus groups....

....Is a injustice by using the term ‘focus group’ to refer to qualitative sessions conducted over the Internet”.

Focus Group: live vs. on line

A few reasons, are:

- **group dynamics**
- **non-verbal inputs**
- **client involvement**
- **security**
- **attention to the topic**
- **exposure to external stimuli**
- **role and skill of the moderator**

Greenbaum (1998b) concludes:

“We should not try to transfer the excellent credibility of the traditional focus group methodology to the Internet version.... The first step should be to change the name to avoid confusion with the real thing”

Focus Group: live vs. on line

The main purpose of this research is to analyse if there is differences between *Focus Group*:

- *Live*
- *On Line.*

Hypothesis:

During a short meeting time conducted with members very implicated in the matter of discussion:

- 1. There won't be differences between Live and On Line Focus Groups in relation to the treated topics (Frequency and Utility of proposed solutions)**
- 2. There will be differences between Live and On Line Focus Groups in relation to group measures (Team Climate and Satisfaction)**

Focus Group: live vs. on line

Method

Sample: 20 groups of 6 members (n=120); half of them were randomly assigned to 'Live' condition and the other half to 'On Line' condition.

All individuals were MBA students and they were worried by the improvement of their schools.

Method

Measures:

Group measures:

- **Team Climate (Anderson y West, 1994). Scales: Task orientation; Innovation; Participation safety.**
- **Group Satisfaction**

Analysis of Discourse:

- **Treated Topics: Frecuency (analized by *Atlas TI Program*)**
- **Proposed Solutions: Utility (analized by three independent experts).**

Atlas TI Program: analysis example

The screenshot displays the Atlas TI software interface. The main window is titled "1. Grupos 09. ONLINE". The menu bar includes "File", "Documents", "Quotations", "Codes", "Memos", "Networks", "Views", "Extras", and "Help". The toolbar contains various icons for file operations and navigation. The status bar at the bottom shows "Loaded PT: P 1: 09. 1. ONLINE.txt, D:\Mis documentos\Departamento de Psicología Social\Grupos de discusión live - on line\Textos\2. ASCII\ ANSI 20:43".

The chat log on the left shows the following messages:

- 0057
- 0058 <psiorg29> Yo creo que un problema importante es el poco espacio que hay cuando hay exámenes
- 0059
- 0060
- 0061 <psiorg28> me gustaría destacar el problema de la masificación
- 0062
- 0063 <psiorg17> Los horarios son demasiado estrictos
- 0064
- 0065 <psiorg07> escasez de libros y test, si en una asignatura piden un comentario sobre un libro determinado
- 0066
- 0067
- 0068 <psiorg07> olvidate de encontrarlo disponible
- 0069
- 99
- 0070 <psiorg18> Para mí, una de las cosas peores es el poco tiempo que dura el horario de devolución y préstamo, y que además coincide con las horas de clase
- 0071
- 0072
- 0073
- 0074 <psiorg18> y por supuesto, la ocupación de los estudiantes de otras facultades de los puestos de lectura en época de exámenes
- 0075
- 0076
- 0077 <psiorg28> eso es lo que mas me molesta xq luego no tenemos sitio los de psicología
- 0078
- 0079
- 0080 <psiorg07> y qué me decís de los test? escasos y prestados muy poco tiempo
- 0081
- 0082
- 0083 <psiorg18> ahora ya por lo menos la parte de Castellano es sólo
- 0084

The topic map on the right shows a hierarchical structure of topics:

- Ocupación de sitio SUJETO 4
- Ocupación de sitio SUJETO 1
- Horarios SUJETO 3
- Ocupación de sitio SUJETO 3
- Ocupación de sitio
- Escasez de ejemplares SUJETO 1
- Ocupación de sitio

Atlas TI Program: output example

0 Ruido excesivo biblioteca



[1:136] <psiorg18> creo que lo de que ..



[1:194] <psiorg28> hay mucha gente <ps..



[1:2011] <psiorg28> me gustaría destaca..



[1:213] <psiorg18> yo creo que habría ..



[1:204] <psiorg18> y por supuesto, la ..



[1:200] <psiorg29> Yo creo que un prob..



[1:210] <psiorg07> no cor



[1:206] <psiorg18> eso, lo de [1:196] <psiorg29> Hay algunos libros ..



[1:202] <psiorg17> Los ho [1:196] <psiorg18> Para mí una de las ..



[1:205] <psiorg17> Yo creo que [1:194] <psiorg28> mayor [1:201] <psiorg07> y qué me decís de l..



SUJETO 4 SUJETO 2

Acceso a minusválidos

MODERAR

[1:209] <psiorg28> poner una guía que [1:185] <psiorg28> mas ejemplares de l..

Ocupación de sitio

SUJETO 3

SUJETO 1

mez de ejemplares

SUJETO 5

Focus Group: live vs. on line

Method

Procedure:

Each group met once during 40 minutes time; the members discuss specific issues in order to improve their organizations (Schools).

Two expert moderators randomly assigned.

They follow a stablished script, that was checked by external judges.

Two main subjets were proposed to discuss: one related to studies support, and other to logistic issues.

Focus Group: live vs. on line

Method

Factorial Design 2 X 2

TOPICS

Topic 1

Topic 2

**Focus
Groups**

On line

Live

Focus Group: live vs. on line

RESULTS: Group measures

		Mean	Std. Dev.	Cases
<i>Team Climate</i>				
Task Orientation	Live	5,09	0,68	58
	On line	4,74	0,76	60
Innovation	Live	5,66	0,72	58
	On line	5,26	0,78	60
Participation	Live	5,81	0,63	58
	On line	5,34	0,67	60
<i>Satisfaction</i>				
Satisfaction	Live	7,51	1,42	60
	On line	7,26	1,12	56

Focus Group: live vs. on line

RESULTS: Group measures

Team Climate

t

Task Orientation

2,643***

Innovation

2,950***

Participation

3,982***

Satisfaction

Satisfaction

1,077 n.s.

*** **a** < 0.01

** **a** < 0.05

* **a** < 0.10

RESULTS: Treated Topics

Mean of FREQUENCIES		Live n=10	On Line n=10
Topic 1	Subtopic 1.1	14	11
	Subtopic 1.2	9	6
Topic 2	Subtopic 2.1	22	18
	Subtopic 2.2	13	11
Topic 3		19	24
Topic 4		8	13
Topic 5		4	9
Topic 7	Subtopic 7.1	13	11
	Subtopic 7.2	19	23
Topic 8	Subtopic 8.1	19	14
	Subtopic 8.2	25	20
Topic 11	Subtopic 11.1	14	17
	Subtopic 11.2	18	12
	Subtopic 11.3	12	16
Topic 12		16	6
Topic 13		14	8
Topic 14		19	21
Topic 15	Subtopic 15.1	8	13
Topic 16	Subtopic 15.2	17	15
	Subtopic 16.1	4	9
	Subtopic 16.2	17	10
Topic 17		7	4

$$r_{xy} = ,67^{***}$$

*** $a < 0.01$

** $a < 0.05$

* $a < 0.10$

RESULTS:

Mean of utility

		Mean of utility
Topic 1	Subtopic 1.1	9
	Subtopic 1.2	9
Topic 2	Subtopic 2.1	6
	Subtopic 2.2	5
Topic 3		5
Topic 4		6
Topic 5		7
Topic 6		0
Topic 7	Subtopic7.1	3
	Subtopic7.2	9
Topic 8	Subtopic 8.1	9
	Subtopic 8.2	5
Topic 11	Subtopic11.1	4
	Subtopic11.2	8
	Subtopic11.3	2
Topic 12		4
Topic 13		6
Topic 14		9
Topic 15	Subtopic15.1	8
	Subtopic15.2	7
Topic 16	Subtopic16.1	4
	Subtopic16.2	4
Topic 17		7

RESULTS: Weight Scores

$$r_{xy} = ,85 ***$$

*** $\alpha < 0.01$

** $\alpha < 0.05$

* $\alpha < 0.10$

		Mean of utility	Live	On line
Topic 1	Subtopic 1.1	9	126	99
	Subtopic 1.2	9	81	54
Topic 2	Subtopic 2.1	6	132	108
	Subtopic 2.2	5	65	55
Topic 3		5	95	120
Topic 4		6	48	78
Topic 5		7	28	63
Topic 6		0	0	0
Topic 7	Subtopic7.1	3	39	33
	Subtopic7.2	9	171	207
Topic 8	Subtopic 8.1	9	171	126
	Subtopic 8.2	5	125	100
Topic 11	Subtopic 11.1	4	56	68
	Subtopic11.2	8	144	96
	Subtopic11.3	2	24	32
Topic 12		4	64	24
Topic 13		6	84	48
Topic 14		9	171	189
Topic 15	Subtopic 15.1	8	64	104
	Subtopic 15.2	7	119	105
Topic 16	Subtopic 16.1	4	16	36
	Subtopic 16.2	4	68	40
Topic 17		7	49	28
			1940	1813

Results

Hypothesis 1

there is not differences between Live and On Line Focus Groups in relation to the treated topics (Frequency and Utility of proposed solutions)

is confirmed

Hypothesis 2

There is differences between them in relation to group measures (Team Climate and Satisfaction)

is partially confirmed

Conclusions

Under certain conditions (short meeting time conducted with members very implicated in the matter of discussion), contrary to Greenbaum's (1998) proposals, the output of On Line Focus Group could be comparable to of Live (traditional implemented) Focus Group.

This happens in spite of group processes differ significantly

Focus Group: live vs. on line

References

Greenbaum, T.L. (1998a). *The handbook for focus group research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

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Symon, G., & Cassell, C. (1998). *Qualitative Methods and Analysis in Organizational Research: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.

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Focus Group: live vs. on line



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