

SSI POV: Online

Online Video Testing

SSI has tracked the impact of questionnaire length on fatigue and data quality across several years and found the effects of increasing length have remained consistent over time:

- **Online is the perfect vehicle for video testing, but choices made in planning and fielding can make all the difference in the quality of the data.**
- **SSI recommends best practices and preferred file formats.**

Factors to Keep in Mind When Testing a Video

Online has become a popular mode of video testing over the last decade as it is the perfect vehicle to test visual stimuli. For logistical reasons, traditional quantitative video studies were done in select markets only. Online gives us the opportunity to gather opinions across an entire country or across several countries.

However, there are several important factors that need to be taken into consideration when testing a video online, each of which has the potential to impact the result of the data.

Make Sure the Participant Can Watch

It sounds simple enough. We need to confirm that the participant has indeed watched the video we are testing. However, confirming that the video has played completely is extremely important because the response will be used to terminate participants from the survey. A straightforward “Were you able to clearly see the entire video?” with “yes/no” answer choices is a good approach. We can also follow up with a multi-punch question listing options like “the video skipped,” “the video froze,” “was cut off” etc. and making a “none of the above” response necessary for the participant to continue.

If norms exist for an online video test with a specific video terminate, the parallel testing would need to be done to understand the impact of making changes to this question. A similar question needs to be designed for the sound if there is indeed sound present in the video.

Show a Test-Only Video

Unfortunately, there is almost no way to avoid lengthy screeners in video studies. We need to make sure a participant has been able to watch the video and we cannot always show the video early in the questionnaire. One recommendation we can make is to show an early “test-only” video at the front of the survey. If our participant can successfully view this, the chances of them terminating after the main video is reduced. When testing two different videos, the video/sound quality questions should come after each.

When participants are terminated late in the study due to video quality, we should communicate to them that we are working to correct such technical issues for future testing.

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View the Video before Launching the Study

It is important all videos are viewed on the popular browsers (Explorer, Firefox and Safari) before launch. If there are any skips, freezes, or sound blips in the source video the project will produce poor data. It is also important that the source videos are as consistent as possible. If one video is darker than another, it may influence participants' opinion of the material.

Consider the Potential Risks

Online may not be the best method to test sensitive videos, as there is a chance the video could get stolen. There are several different types of software that would allow a participant to record their computer screens. Companies scramble to stay ahead of the technology, but at the end of the day anyone can put a digital camcorder to their monitor in the privacy of their home. For this reason we should always consider the potential risk of online testing relative to the secrecy and popularity of the source material. SSI's team will work with you to minimize this type of activity with speed bumps and customization.

Survey Design Considerations for Single Video Testing

Participants only receive one video when taking a survey. (They may be shown the same video more than once if there is a probing component of the questionnaire.) This method avoids biasing the "post" measure with additional stimuli, allowing comparison across tests and the creation of a norm. The norm is the average of the scores on a key "post" measure for each video tested. Future rounds of testing can then be compared to a specific video or to the overall norm. When testing the videos in isolation like this, it is very important that each video has a comparable sample.

Survey Design Considerations for Multiple Video Testing

If the goal is to know which video among a limited universe to choose, then a forced choice type test is a consideration. After each video, probing questions can be asked. Videos in the first position have a distinct advantage over the others being tested, because the later videos will be directly compared to the previous ones. This can be resolved by randomization. Showing multiple videos in a single test makes the current round of testing difficult to compare to additional rounds. A video shown in isolation has a distinct advantage and usually achieves a higher score than the same one tested in a group of videos.

Participants may have trouble recalling specific videos shown earlier in a study. Videos shown early and late have an advantage in recall, which again highlights the importance of randomization. A forced choice design is not the best approach when comparing unique choices to a group of similar choices as the unique choice has a distinct advantage.

Video Reel Testing

A video reel is similar to a two or three minute commercial segment when watching television. It pairs several commercials together and recall of a particular commercial is measured in addition to other probing questions. It's important that the questionnaire prior to the video exposure hides the topic of the survey, essentially asking questions across industries so that participants are not prone to look for and remember a specific commercial. During a multi-cell test, the same reel will be used for comparison—with only the commercial being tested changing.

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SSI's Video Specifications

Preferred Video Format

.flv—this allows us to easily integrate the video into Flash which is the preferred method. This is a Flash related file.

.wmv, .avi, .mov, and .mpg are usable, but do require the need to convert them into a different file type in order to work with them in Flash which will be the standard video output. This will increase delivery time, implementation and testing. We can use a .SWF file, but are unable to customize or make changes as this is a non-editable file format.

360px x 240px. [px = pixels] If necessary we can resize down, but receiving a video with smaller dimension and trying to make it larger will impact video quality and clarity.