

White Paper



Successful In-Home Usage Tests

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Successful In-Home Usage Tests (IHUTs)

In-Home Usage Tests, or IHUTs, are an effective market research tool for gathering feedback about new products in the environment customers use them – their home. While an effective research tool, IHUTs present a unique set of data collection challenges. Over 24 years, SSI has developed deep experience conducting IHUTs on a broad spectrum of products from food and beverage to health and beauty to pet food. We have found a number of components that can help make any IHUT a success.

1. Manage the Recruit

Understanding that circumstances may keep respondents from completing the follow-up research will help you manage the project. Recruiting the right number of respondents to reach your desired goal is extremely important for the success of any IHUT survey. Over-recruiting is costly. Beyond the time and energy required to contact and qualify potential respondents, there are costs associated with each recruit—the product, shipping, and incentives. Over-recruiting on IHUTs can create a negative experience for respondents who test a product, but are unable to provide their feedback when the project has been completed. Under-recruiting, on the other hand, risks failing to complete the desired sample and further risks under-representing desired population sub-groups.

Predicting how likely a respondent is to provide feedback after receiving the product (or the re-contact rate) helps manage the recruit process. Re-contact rates are a function of several different factors including product type, timing, respondent demographic characteristics, and incentives. On average, over 70% of our respondents complete the IHUT and provide their feedback on the product. There are two important timelines for predicting the re-contact rate for a particular study: 1) the amount of time between when the respondent is recruited (recruit) and when the respondent is expected to provide feedback (evaluation) and 2) the length of time the respondents have access to the evaluation survey.

Re-contact rates tend to decrease as the amount of time between the recruit and evaluation increases (figure 1). We've seen re-contact rates as high as 80-85% when the evaluation survey follows within 2-3 days of the recruit. Re-contact rates have also been as low as 45-50% when the time between the recruit and evaluation increases to 1-2 weeks.

The re-contact rate tends to increase as the amount of time the evaluation is in field increases. We've seen re-contact rates as low as 45-50% when the evaluation is only in field for 2-3 days. Re-contact rates have also been as high as 80-85% when the evaluation is in field for more than 5 days.

Because SSI is knowledgeable about our re-contact rates, we are able to determine the right number of recruits needed to achieve the desired number of completed evaluation surveys.

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Figure 1:

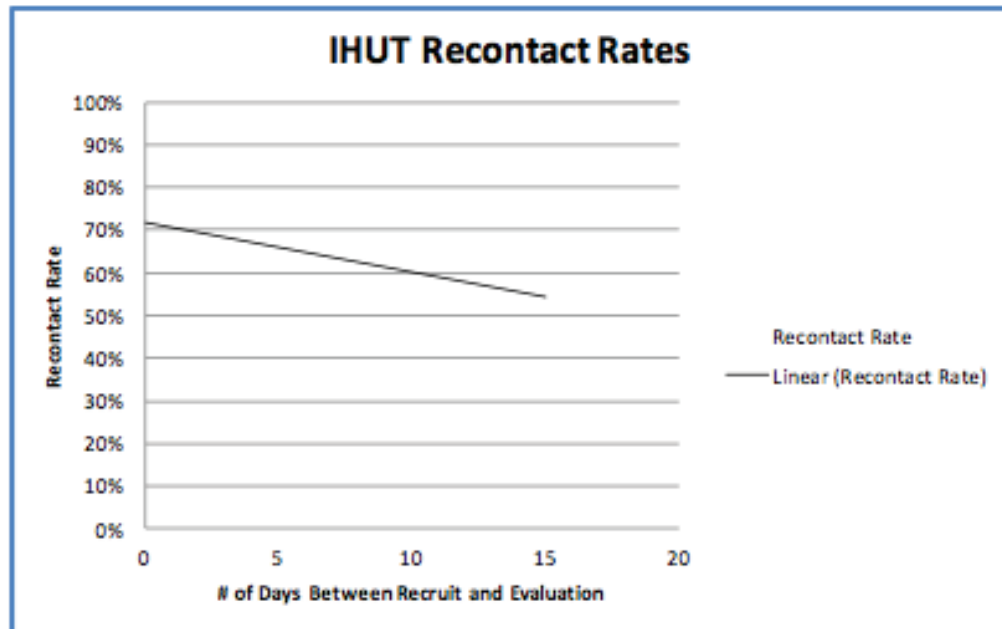
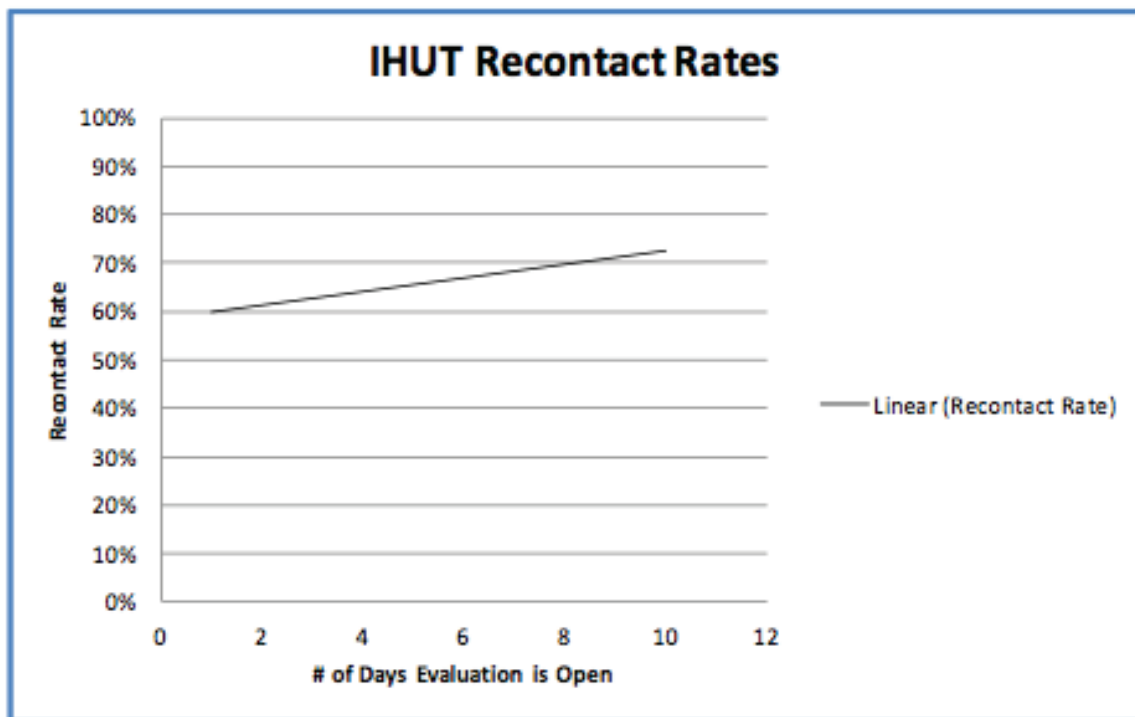


Figure 2:



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2. Validate the Address

Mitigating shipping issues can significantly increase the success of any IHUT. When SSI programs and hosts a project, we can validate every address provided by the respondents in the IHUT. Addresses are checked using an address validation tool, are compared with the respondent's profile and validated using a Google's mapping technology. Address verification takes place while the recruit is in field so respondents with invalid addresses can be removed and replaced quickly. This ensures that addresses are real and accurate, and that the products will reach the intended participants.

3. Set the Incentive

Incentives play a very important role in IHUTs. Providing the right incentive keeps respondents engaged. Increasing the incentive for respondents who complete the evaluation survey can reduce costs by keeping re-contact rates high. The right incentive means fewer respondents need to be recruited to achieve the desired number of completed evaluations. Increased incentives are especially helpful for IHUTs with multiple evaluation surveys.