

Research for Marketing Decisions

Vaibhav Chawla

Department of Management Studies

Indian Institute of Technology Madras

Week - 03

Lecture - 15

Exploratory Research Techniques: Focus Group Discussion Videos

So this is on the screen there is a professor Richard who is very very experienced in conducting focus groups. So we will look at how he moderates the focus groups and we will also try to see what is the broader question he has for this focus group. He is actually trying to look at he is trying to look at the experience of customers when they fly the customer experience in and in the at the airport and during flying and they are trying to look at what are the conveniences and inconveniences so airline industry is a sponsor of this particular focus group and we will look at how the focus group can be used to do the exploratory study and get to some points that could be used for further research.

So, it is a topic where open ended sort of conversation is required. So, let us look at this. And we've invited a number of people who have traveled by airplane over the past few years to join us for a discussion. And we're going to be talking about experiences and inconveniences they faced in their airline travel over the past few years. This is a video to show some of the aspects of moderating in a focus group.

But many things have occurred before the actual beginning of the focus group. You've tried to identify the relevant participants. You've recruited the participants to come. You've arranged for the logistics. You've developed the questions.

All of these things take place before the focus group. But now the moment is nigh. In a few minutes, people will be coming and joining us in the group. And you see several scenes, you pick some of the important parts that take place in the focus group. what to do when people arrive at the focus group, how a moderator handles people who talk at great length if you want them to stop, or how people may not talk very much and you want to encourage them to say more.

We'll be demonstrating some of the ways of using questions in a focus group and how to close a focus group. All of these things are experiences that take place in a focus group, and we're glad that you're able to join us. Now in this video, it could be used in a variety of ways. You may want to watch it in its entirety. From beginning food, everything looks satisfactory.

We've arrived early and checked out the room. The table, the chairs, the flip chart, the food, everything looks satisfactory. Now we're in the process of setting up the recording equipment. We have a tape recorder and a remote microphone. The microphone goes in the middle of the table with the cord off to the side.

And the tape recorder goes to the back. The lunches are put on the table behind so that people can pick them up when they arrive. We have name tents that we've prepared in advance and we place those who may be more talkative or have more domineering personalities close to the moderator. Those who are quieter are put directly across. Once we've done all this, we do a quick sound check of the equipment by walking around the table and talking in a normal tone of voice to be sure that the microphone and tape recorder are working adequately.

The room is set up and now we're ready for people to join us. In just a moment they will arrive. Notice how people are welcomed into the focus group. We've got some food over here on the side. A welcome and introduction to the topic.

some background on the topic, ground rules for the focus group, and the opening question. Well, good afternoon, and welcome to our session. My name is Dick Krueger, and I'm with the Happy Traveler Research Agency. And we're pleased you could all join us today for our focus group. We've invited you to join our discussion on airline travel.

Today, we're going to be talking about experiences that you've had in traveling by airplane. Experiences within the last few years, we've been talking about things that worked well for you, changing the architecture. Well, let's see what Adam thought so well. This study is being done at the request of the airline industry. You may know people who have a variety of experiences.

The airline industry is regularly trying to improve the quality of their service. And so at the end of our study, we're going to be sharing information back with them. Also, if you're interested, we'll have a copy of the report available to you as well. Let us know if that's something that you're interested in. You were selected because you were among a

group of people who have traveled fairly often over the past few years, and we're glad you're here for our group.

So, again, my name is Dick Krueger of the Happy Traveling Research Agency, and my colleague is Marianne Casey, and she'll be taking notes and helping to record the conversation. We're going to be tape recording today. We have a microphone in the middle of the room. And we tape record so we don't miss any of the comments. Oftentimes people say things so well, we're not able to write them down quickly enough, and the tape recorder helps us capture those.

There's just a couple ground rules that might help us. If you have a cell phone, we'd appreciate if you'd turn it off or turn it on the quiet mode. If you do need to respond to it, please step out, but then come back in as soon as possible. We have more questions. There's some chocolate over there at the side table, so help yourself to that whenever you feel a need for those things.

There are no wrong answers today in our conversation. Many people have different experiences with their life travel. And so do you think the combination of your thoughts and ideas and experiences are different from what others have to say? My job is to drive the conversation and keep us on time and be sure that we finish at the end of our allotted two hours today. And so along the way, I may interrupt.

I may push us along a little bit faster. That's so that we can finish our conversation on time. Now, let's take a moment. Also, by the way, we're going to be on a personal basis. We have pain pants with our personal... So...

you know the topic right so the business issue is in this case that the airline industry wants to improve the experiences of customers that is the business issue right now wants to improve the experiences of customers now to identify what is important to customers when they fly because You want to the business issue is you want to improve the what should be done to improve the experiences of customers when they fly. Now there can be thousands of things. So the focus group is conducted to know what matters so that once you identify various ideas or what matters to customers, then you can move probably if you want to conduct to the next quantitative phase. So it is used to identify various things that matter to customers when they travel.

Right now they don't have any idea what matters to customers when they fly that is why this is an exploratory technique and in a group setting like it is like a informal chit chat

group chat on a particular topic. So that you know the things about different things that matter when they fly comes out. But if it is on a sensitive topic This is not a good technique because people would not speak up. So right till now we have seen the setting of the room, how they welcome, the ground rules, lunch and everything, the refreshments are provided and when these people are recruited they are also given certain payment to participate.

But one has to see that these people who are recruited, they would not have participated in other focus groups. And you have to screen those candidates. Are they the right kind of candidates? Who would provide? In this case, who have traveled enough to be participating in this kind of focus group?

Let's take a moment and go around the table and find out who you are and Would you tell us your name, and then also tell us where you've traveled to by airplane in the last year? And would you name some of the cities that you've traveled to, would you say? This allows participants a chance to reflect and think, and a chance to express their thoughts. Okay, well, let's get started with the questions in our focus group.

The first one, and we're not going to go around the table, and anyone can answer this who chooses. Tell me this. What do you like about airline travel? what he is saying is you have an open question which is broad in nature just to break ice and make everybody feel comfortable then you start to the main questions you have a he has an outline with him where questions are written and he is one by one asking these questions there is no particular order but he wants to cover up these questions for a two hour focus group maximum ten questions and after he asks each question he's pausing for five seconds in order for giving time for everybody to think and reflect and then speak.

And in research, it is very important to be a very good listener. So moderator, the task is to listen more and talk less and to keep the discussion on the topic. I like that it gets me between two places relatively quickly. When moderating a focus group, you'll find that some people talk too much, ramble on about a topic, and you'll need to have a strategy for how to deal with this. Here's an example of what you do when a person talks too much and how the moderator redirects the question to another participant.

All right. Well, let's talk about inconveniences in your experiences with airline travel. You may have encountered an inconvenience. may have been in the last year or a little bit before. Would you tell me about an inconvenience you've had?

Well, let me tell you. It's always around baggage. And it seems to me that there's always something that happens with my baggage when I travel. I was coming back from Bangkok. I was meant to get my baggage in L.A., to take it through immigration.

when i got there couldn't find it anywhere it just wasn't there and i stood there and stood there and stood there and i went behind the counter to the counter and they said well you know It's just not there, and it'll turn up eventually, and maybe it'll turn up in Minneapolis. But it's just been one long string of things after another. I mean, the baggage is always too large to fit in the overhead bin. But it's even worse when you're traveling by train, because when you're traveling by train, you have to get the baggage up from the platform, and then you have to haul it into the coach, and then you're pulling it all the way down the coach.

Yeah, that can be a problem. Let's hear from some others in the group. Francis, how about you? He tried various techniques, right? But she did not listen, so he had to very politely move to somebody else.

Sometimes participants do not talk very much in a focus group. One of the strategies that moderators can use is to look at those individuals and at times call on them and invite their comments. Here's an example about works. Mary, we haven't heard from you on this one. What are the things that you don't like about airline travel?

Mostly two things. Luggage and children. Tell me about each of those. Tell me about luggage and tell me about children. the idea is slowly and slowly you need to make them you know not talk to you but

talk with each other and have a conversation so from you know answering to the moderator you have to move to the group and you know talk to the group so slowly slowly the group will move towards you know facing each other and answering answering by looking at each other sometimes one of the things that happens in a focus group is there are key moments when people start to own the group or feel like they are a group and in a discussion here's an example When these things occur, moderators often encourage these and allow people to talk across the table to each other, right? You know, I want to say something else about language. And it relates to when you're late. You never know if you've asked me.

And sometimes it's not your fault. You've checked it. You know what you're supposed to do. and then they mess it up, and then you get there, you don't have... So I carry out a lot

of things in my... I carry on because I just have to assume it won't be good. I never check anything.

I always carry on. I never check anything. Because you just can't play out enough. One of the techniques that moderators use is to ask participants to play a role. This is particularly effective when you're trying to get people to discuss and talk about a complex idea.

that is best described by actually acting it out or playing a role. Let's see how it works. Let's talk about inconveniences, things that have happened to you along the way. Jim, I had one of the major inconveniences, traumas of my life when I learned that I was going to go to an ambulance. So, in role playing they are saying that do you have, did you have any inconvenience or great inconvenience?

So, somebody would say I had this inconvenience. So, she would say other participants. So, let us say he is the passenger who had faced this inconvenience and you are the airline staff. So, how would you take care of the situation? So, role playing

uh in a way is giving an idea that how the customer expects that the complaint would have been addressed so this is an insight how inconveniences can be addressed so again one more addition to the data which will be provided to the airline so this is i've just come off northwest uh flight 43 from minneapolis and i don't hit my wall with me and i i think i had my wall when i got on the aircraft Did you tell anyone where you were? I just realized now when I walked off the plane. What plane were you on? 43 from Minneapolis.

Well, let me be on the phone. I'm going to call the gate. I'm going to go on the plane. Do you know what seat you're in? Yes, I was in 19A.

19A. Let me call. I'll get down to the gate agent. We'll have him check 19A. Meanwhile, why don't you make sure you...

Uh, the code or whatever. Oh, good idea, good idea. And then we'll see if we can get a call, and we'll see what we can do, because time is up yet. Yeah, it's got all my money, all my credit cards, and I haven't had anything with me, so I really need some help. Hang on, we're going to take care of it.

We'll get you through this. This is quiet. And thank you, thank you. Often after the role-playing is finished, we ask other participants to come, uh, same to him, and probably not

to waste their time on it. Okay, what we'd like to do is talk about some inconveniences that people have in airline travel.

I've got some cards here, and I'd like to have each of you take a card and a pen, and I'd like you to write down on this card three inconveniences that people have when they travel by airline. One of the strategies for getting information from participants is to use a list. pass out a card, they write down several things, and then the moderator takes that and makes a larger list of a flip chart. All right, Ken, I think you're finished. Let's start with you.

What are the three things you have? I have being light and listening connections. Once the larger list is made and everyone can see the items, often a second question is asked. for the participants to tell which are the most important or the most significant of all of those that are on the list. Well, it looks like most of our comments, we have a number of them that have talked about late to missing connections.

Let's talk a little bit more about that for a moment. The moderator may then choose to mark or circle those items on the flip chart. This technique is particularly helpful when you're trying to identify a larger number of items and then to quickly identify from that larger number which ones are the most relevant to each participant. All right, what I'd like to do is spend a few moments talking about inconveniences. And I have here in front of me, and I'd like to pass around a list of possible inconveniences that you may have experienced in the last two years.

And what I'd like you to do is just take a moment and check off how often have you experienced these inconveniences in the past year so just put a check mark down by rarely or never sometimes often or almost always in this case we have just a few questions and we ask participants to rate their degree of interest or agreement so likewise there will be you know more whatever number of questions are there will be discussed and in the end everybody will be given an opportunity to summarize There will be a last question to help the participants you know summarize their experience or and then the focus group will close. So, this was one of the focus groups there are for identifying the for the issue that the airline wanted to improve the experience of the passengers, there are others where the uh new a new product prototype has been developed and they want to see how people whether people accept or not accept or want certain changes to a new product prototype so this is for looking at the product what do you what do you think how many view rewards

there are two different tops, two different forks are there. How many of you worked at the flip-top? Raise your hand. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. What do you like about the flip-top? It's for the first century. I find it very easy to flip-top with the forward and forward.

So this is another example when you have a when you are testing new different product prototypes or ideas and so on. So you can take it to the focus group and do it. Yeah, he is a expert in focus group. So here the questions will also be shown in addition to the topic. My name is Dick Griffin, and I work here at the University of Minnesota, and I'm helping you study to deal with healthy living and healthy eating habits.

With me is Mary Ann Jayden, and she's going to be taking notes as we go through our conversation today. You've been invited because you have some insights about healthy families. And that's going to be our topic today. What is a healthy family to you?

What are the activities that are involved in a healthy family? And how is it different from other families? So if you look at the if you look at the topic is what are the activities that healthy families do how they are different from other families so they want more ideas about what people think about a healthy family what they do what they not do how they are different from normal families so that could be very very useful for you know companies that are into healthy foods because they would have to show such families and make people believe So the idea is if you do not conduct such research and show a family healthy, try to show a healthy family which according to you would be a healthy family but it might not be as per the customers.

So here you are asking customers that what do you, as per you, how does a healthy family appear in terms of what they do, how they are different from other families. So after getting insights, Any branded healthy food or unbranded healthy food company can use these behaviors or activities or understanding of a healthy family and use them in their advertisements. A healthy family with their food. So if you look at these questions, these are the questions of the moderator.

The moderator is going to ask these questions. Just read these questions. So he will be asking the members visualize a family you know whose members are normal weight and healthy. You need not name that family. Just visualize a family that you know that might be your friends or family or extended family that are normal weight and healthy.

And then he will start asking questions. When you think of this family, what is the first thing you think of that sets them apart? He will ask this to everybody. Next one is, now let's be more specific. Tell us about this family and food.

What does this family do related to food? After this is over, now tell us about this family and their level of physical activity. Would you say that they are physically more active than other families? The next question is, think about this family. What it does for entertainment, social activities, hobbies?

They are identifying the lifestyle for healthy families. What do you think prompts this family to do things differently? So every focus group has an objective. The objective here was to know what people think about the behaviors, the activity, the lifestyle of a healthy family. So this was the question for which this focus group was done.

One need to have the objective or a question of this focus group research. Then one has to conduct this focus group research so as to get answers or insights about that particular question so think about what this family does for entertainment social activities hobbies what do you think prompts this family to do things differently which means motivation how do you think these lifestyle choices got started and so on triggers of you know healthy lifestyle think about the things we have discussed the idea in the focus group and in the in-depth interview is to go deeper into the customer's mind to know their motivations, to know their attitudes, their beliefs, their feelings regarding a particular behavior, which is very difficult to get from a survey. You have to use the focus group and interview as a tunnel into the customer's mind so that you can understand what is happening, how customer is thinking about

a particular product or a service can you say that focus group is the best way to obtain psychographic data again there is no single best way so depends upon the question depends upon the focus group can give initial insights so these are some these are certain set of questions that the moderator would ask healthy healthy living and healthy eating habits with me is marianne and she's going to be taking notes as we go through our conversation today now let's do one thing so let's say the pizza industry in india they have a business issue they are saying that we know that pizza is consumed occasionally by the indian audience when they go out or whenever they order they order not every day they are not eating as a daily food but they are eating on certain occasions and this is worrisome because they want to make it as a regular food so they want you to conduct the focus group and the objective is they want to get more ideas into The pizza eating

experience, they want to first have more information about what is the pizza eating experience for the customers. So your objective, let's say, if the objective is given to you, the objective of pizza industry hires you for conducting focus group.

This is the bigger problem that they have. They are worried that people have still not accepted pizza as something that can be eaten on a regular basis. Just like we eat roti, dal, chawal and everything. We eat pizza on occasions. So they want first to get information on

What is a pizza eating experience for customers? There could be more questions. But one of the focus group question is. What is a pizza eating experience for customers? Now for this you have to conduct a focus group.

To get answer to this question. You have to prepare a moderator outline. Start preparing that. So let's say you are going to conduct that focus group of what is a pizza eating experience for customers. You have to give, you have to develop questions and discuss them with the pizza, with the customers.

What will be, who will be customers? The one who eat pizza regularly or more than average customers. Now before you write the moderator outline, I can show you one example. Research was done by Sony for Hollywood. Hollywood films were beginning to do well in India and so they were thinking of India as a good market for Hollywood films.

So they conducted a focus group, Sony. So they hired a particular market research agency which conducted such focus group in Russia and Ukraine as well. So the question was they were looking at India is you know very rapidly growing economy and the Hollywood films are also getting accepted and there is a market for Hollywood films. So they wanted to explore the emerging markets in terms of their movie going experience. And these were the

These were the topics of different focus groups. So they had conducted 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 focus group and one for each particular topic. How does movie going fit into Indian life? And their questions for that focus groups are given. How do group members spend their time?

What are the bids and barriers to go to the cinema? How does it compete with other leisure options? How do they consume cinema via descriptions of typical visit? So this was the first focus group. Then another focus group, the cinema experience.

So likewise there were many focus groups conducted to get insights into the movie industry. taste and movie going experience of people and their you know liking or their ideas about the Hollywood movies so these were the so one bigger question was there and it was broken into many broad many many focus group questions so now you have to write a moderator outline for the issue in pizza industry has given to you is that we are worried that pizza is still not accepted as a regular meal in an average Indian lifestyle so there could be more questions but for one of the question one they want to understand the pizza eating experience and they are conducting focus group so the objective is they want to understand the pizza eating experience of an average Indian that is the focus group topic given to you now develop the questions Write the moderator outline and develop the questions. Start doing it right away.

And in the moderator outline, please also write that how you will welcome the participants what will be the introduction and then what will be the series of questions how with what questions you will start broad so initially the questions have to be soft questions which could make the group comfortable and then begin to the you know more deeper questions so that insights into a pizza eating experience could be obtained Now before we end, we can watch this particular video of how not to do and how to do focus group. Hi guys, welcome and thank you for joining us for our focus group session today. Um, where do we start off?

Well, I can't seem to find my interview sheet, so I guess we're just going to wing it today. We will be discussing comfort fit heels. What are your opinions on it? These ones are more comfortable than the ones I usually wear. Oh my god, they're so painful and they're so ugly.

Did you pick this group? What is a boy doing there? Let me tell you what I think, alright? Heels are just a man's invention to torture us women. You know what we need to do?

We need to sit back, take our heels, throw them away, and just sit back and let us women do our jobs. Well then, thank you for your valid opinions. Well, most of you at least. And we're done for today. Hi, everyone.

My name is Amanda, and I just wanted to welcome you to our focus group today. Today, we'll be discussing our feelings, opinions, and ideas on this new flavor of chips. What did you guys think about it? Honestly, I thought they were too salty. They needed some more flavor.

I hated those. I thought they were a little salty, too, and I don't like the packaging. Well, about the packaging, we are... Oh my gosh, these are the greatest ships I've ever had. They're phenomenal. I mean, look at the packaging.

It feels so silky smooth. I mean, you want to feel it? Try the packaging. I think you'll agree with me. Yes or yes?

Okay, well, so judging by your comments, it seems like you all really like this ship. See, the idea is that, uh... One is that they did not have enough discussion. One, it goes for two hours and it is... The second thing is that you know, everybody could have their own opinion about taste and packaging and something. There is nothing wrong and right.

There could be three customers who might not like a particular flavor. The other one could like it. One has to probe more. Probing questions could be asked by moderator about... You know, digging deeper into why somebody likes the flavor, others don't.

You can ask, mm-hmm, can you explain? So different sort of probing could be used. Or, mm-hmm, can you? So you could actually use different tones. Or even you can just keep silent and keep staring at the person so that they talk more about it.

Sometime the probing can be encouraging. Oh, very good. Can you explain more about that? It's very interesting. Can you explain more about that?

It could be neutral. Okay. Can you explain more? So, cannot, should not be discouraging. Right.

So, so that's it for today.