

Focus Group Discussion Guide: Consumer Segments

I. Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent Process

Thank you for agreeing to participate. We are very interested to hear your valuable opinions on the purchase and decision making process for various product categories that we all consume everyday.

- ♦ Good.....! I am <NAME OF THE MODERATOR> and I represent <NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION>. This is my colleague <NAME OF NOTE TAKER> who's going to help me by taking notes on our discussions today. Our organization works for strengthening consumer voice by way of generating awareness and by working with the stakeholders to promote development of consumer friendly products and policies.
- ♦ The purpose of this study is to learn who makes the purchase related decisions such as which brand to buy, which pack size and variant to buy, where to buy, when to buy, how much to buy, how much to spend, key attributes to consider when buying and other important purchase considerations.
- ♦ The information you provide will help us to develop awareness generation programmes for consumers like you, and will help us to work with the manufacturers and policy makers to promote consumer friendly products and policies.
- ♦ The information you provide us will be treated as completely confidential. No names will be associated with anything that gets discussed in the focus group today. We will only use the information gathered through this group for learning about the purchase and consumption process.
- ♦ We would like to tape the focus groups so that we can make sure to capture the thoughts, opinions, and ideas we hear from the group. As explained, no names will be attached to the focus groups and the tapes/recordings will be used only for analysis when we go back and want to remember about what was discussed.
- ♦ You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the discussion at anytime.
- ♦ If you have any questions now or after you have completed the questionnaire, you can always contact a study team member like me, or you can call <INSERT PROJECT DIRECTOR'S NAME> on <INSERT MOBILE NUMBER> if you have any further questions related to this project.
- ♦ Please complete the page given to you and sign below to show you agree to participate in this focus group.

II. Materials and supplies for focus groups

- ♦ Consent forms (one copy for participants, one copy for the team)
- ♦ Name tents
- ♦ Pads & Pencils for each participant
- ♦ Focus Group Discussion Guide for Facilitator
- ♦ 1 or 2 recording devices
- ♦ Batteries & extra tapes for recording device
- ♦ Flip chart, permanent markers of 3-4 colours, white-board markers
- ♦ Notebook for note-taking
- ♦ Refreshments

III. Introduction & Warm-up:

1. Welcome & ground rules

Ask the group if anyone has participated in a focus group before. Explain that focus groups are being used more and more in consumer and social research.

- ♦ Focus group will last about one hour.
- ♦ Feel free to sit anywhere from where you can see everyone and everyone can see you.
- ♦ Show where is the bathroom and the exit.
- ♦ We'll provide refreshments in between.
- ♦ Please switch off your cell phones, or put them on silent if you don't want to switch off.

2. Participation

- ♦ Everyone should participate.
- ♦ There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested to hear your opinions or views. We're not trying to achieve consensus, we're gathering information – your views, opinions and feelings.
- ♦ Please speak one at a time. If you want to make a point, please wait for the speaker before you to complete.
- ♦ Please speak loud enough for us to record the proceedings of this group. When I go back I may not remember everything that will be discussed today – this recording will help me to remember what was discussed for analysis and report writing.
- ♦ Stay with the group and please don't have side conversations.
- ♦ Everyone's views are equally important and valuable to us. Please do not mock or ridicule anyone. As I said there are no right or wrong answers – so respect each other's views and comments.
- ♦ If you are involved in manufacturing, advertising, distributing or retailing products used in our day to day lives we would like to excuse you at this time. We'll talk to you separately.

3. Turn on Tape Recorder: RECORD DATE, PLACE, CONSUMER SEGMENT (ADULT MALES/FEMALES/MALE TEENS/FEMALE TEENS) INVITED FOR DISCUSSION, NAME OF MODERATOR, NOT TAKER AND ANY OTHER ORGANIZER.

4. Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.

5. Introductions

- ♦ Go around group: Tell us your name, what you do for living and who all are in your family.

Discussion begins, make sure to give people time to think before answering the questions and don't move too quickly. Use the probes to make sure that all issues are addressed, but move on when you feel you are starting to hear repetitive information.

IV. Discussions

1. Product Categories

I am now going to write down on this chart some product categories that we use on a daily basis.

Please remind me to add more categories if I am missing out on some important categories.

MODERATOR: WRITE DOWN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES ON THE FLIP CHART AND ASK THE GROUP TO ADD MORE:

- ♦ **Food & beverages:** Water, tea, coffee, rice, atta, rava/besan/maida, pulses, edible oil, sugar, eggs, meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, milk, dairy products, bread/bakery, namkeen (snacks), biscuits, chocolate, milk additives (Bournvita, Complan, Horlicks), noodles, pasta, breakfast cereals, salt, spices, sauces/ketchups, jams, pickles, sweets, ice-creams, soft-drinks, juices/syrups/ dilutants etc.
- ♦ **Toiletries & cleaning products:** Soap, toothpaste, shampoo, detergents, whiteners/blues, fabric conditioners, utensil cleaner, floor cleaner, bathroom cleaner, mosquito repellants, deodorizers/freshners, shoe polish, etc.
- ♦ **Personal products:** Face cream, fairness products, moisturizers, bleaches, hair removers, shaving cream, safety razor, after shave lotion, body deos, sanitary pads, cosmetics (face powder, foundation, lipstick, nail polish), hair colour/dyes, etc.
- ♦ **Health products:** Fever, headache, cough and cold medicines, rubs/balms, antiseptic creams/creams for cuts/burns/disinfectants, vitamins, growth supplements, etc.
- ♦ **Kitchen appliances:** Mixer/grinders, cooking stove, utensils, storage jars, cutlery, crockery, glassware, PET/plastic containers, LPG/piped gas, water purifiers, etc.
- ♦ **Electrical and electronic goods:** TV, fridge, fans, air-coolers, air-conditioners, inverters, bulbs, tube-lights, electrical switches, fittings, wires etc.

MODERATOR: ASK THE GROUP TO ADD MORE. Please add if you think I am missing a major category of products that we all use on day to day basis.

2. Purchase Process:

MODERATOR: AGAINST EACH PRODUCT CATEGORY WRITE AS THE RESPONDENTS DISCUSS AND RESPOND TO FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Okay, I'm now going to ask you a few questions with regards to each product category. To begin with I want to know:

- a. What type of products do you use: Packaged or loose? Branded or unbranded?
- b. Who decides which type or brand to buy? Which packsize to buy? From where to buy? How often to buy?
- c. Who actually buys the product? PROBE FOR PURCHASE BY HOUSEHOLD HEAD, HOUSEWIFE, CHILDREN OR SOMEONE ELSE. Are there any products that you buy specifically for yourself?
- d. Which attributes do you consider when deciding about the products to buy? When I say attributes, I mean things like brand image, quality, price, pack size, ingredients etc. WRITE DOWN THE ATTRIBUTES AGAINST EACH CATEGORY.
- e. PROBE, IF SAFETY NOT MENTIONED SPONTANEOUSLY AS AN ATTRIBUTE: Any other attribute? How important is safety of the product to you? What is your understanding of “safety” of a product – how would you describe it?
- f. How important is it as an attribute when deciding about the product purchase? Why? Why not?
- g. What is your understanding of the sustainability of a product? Is environmental or “eco-friendliness” important, and/or social issues in production (e.g. workers getting fair

- wages and safe conditions, women and children's rights as workers) – how would you describe it?
- h. How important is sustainability as an attribute when deciding about the product purchase? Why? Why not?

3. Safety Perception:

Okay, I'm now going to ask you to list products in each product category that you consider as UNSAFE. Let's begin with the first product category.

MODERATOR: BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST PRODUCT CATEGORY, ASK THE RESPONDENTS TO IDENTIFY PRODUCTS THAT THEY CONSIDER AS UNSAFE. UNDERLINE OR CIRCLE THOSE PRODUCTS, GOING FROM THE FIRST TO THE LAST PRODUCT CATEGORY. ONCE COMPLETED, ASK FOR EACH PRODUCT CIRCLED OR UNDERLINED.....

- a. Tell me why you consider this product unsafe? PROBE SPECIFICALLY FOR REASONS/PERCEPTIONS. ASK EACH RESPONDENT FOR HIS/HER REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THE PRODUCTS UNSAFE.
- b. What problems/safety issues are you likely to face if you use this unsafe product?
- c. What is your source of information about the safety of this product? How often do you seek information on product safety from this source?
- d. When buying this product which brands do you consider as safe? Why? Do you look for any safety certifications/hallmarks when buying this product? Any other information that you look for on the product pack? Do you ask anyone for safety information? Who do you ask – fellow consumers you know, shopkeeper, anyone else?
- e. Do you ever consider product ratings published by consumer product testing organizations? Are you aware of any? PROBE FOR NAME OF PRODUCT TESTING/RATING ORGANIZATION. Have you ever considered such product ratings when buying a product? Which product(s)? How has it helped you?

ASK THE ABOVE QUESTIONS FOR EACH PRODUCT IDENTIFIED AS UNSAFE IN DIFFERENT PRODUCT CATEGORIES.

4. Unsafe Product Experience:

- a. Have you ever experienced unsafe products/brands? Which product/brand? What safety issue did you face?
- b. Did you register any complaint/grievance with any authority? Which authority? What was the outcome of your complaint?
- c. How do you know ensure that you choose safe products?

5. Sustainability Perception:

Okay, I'm now going to ask you to mark products in each product category that you consider as NOT sustainable (MODERATOR: OR USE TERMS THAT THE RESPONDENT HAS PREVIOUSLY USED IN QUESTIONS 2 g AND h). Let's begin with the first product category.

MODERATOR: BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST PRODUCT CATEGORY, ASK THE RESPONDENTS TO IDENTIFY PRODUCTS THAT THEY DON'T CONSIDER AS SUSTAINABLE/ECO-FRIENDLY. UNDERLINE OR CIRCLE THOSE PRODUCTS (USE A DIFFERENT COLOUR PEN), GOING FROM THE FIRST TO THE LAST PRODUCT CATEGORY. ONCE COMPLETED, ASK FOR EACH PRODUCT CIRCLED OR UNDERLINED.....

- a. Tell me why you consider this product NOT sustainable or eco-friendly? PROBE SPECIFICALLY FOR REASONS/PERCEPTIONS. ASK EACH RESPONDENT FOR HIS/HER REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THE PRODUCT NOT SUSTAINABLE/ECO FRIENDLY – CONSIDER FOCUSING ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES FIRST, THEN 'SOCIAL' ISSUES, OR TOGETHER, DEPENDING ON THE RESPONDENTS' INITIAL ANSWERS/PRIORITIES.
- b. What environmental (and/or social) problems/hazards do you foresee with the use of this product?
- c. What is your source of information about the environmental (and/or social) issues associated with this product? How often do you seek information on eco-friendly products from this source?
- d. When buying this product which brands do you consider as NOT eco-friendly/socially fair? Why? Do you look for any eco-friendly certifications when buying this product? Any other information that you look for on the product pack or label? Do you ask anyone for information on eco-friendliness or social fairness of this product? Who do you ask – fellow consumers you know, shopkeeper, anyone else?
- e. Do you ever consider reports or ratings published by environmental agencies or other charities/organisations? Are you aware of any? PROBE FOR NAME OF ANY AGENCY. Have you ever considered such reports/ratings when buying a product? Which product(s)? How has it helped you?

ASK THE ABOVE QUESTIONS FOR EACH PRODUCT IDENTIFIED AS UNSUSTAINABLE IN DIFFERENT PRODUCT CATEGORIES.

6. Unsustainable Product Experience:
 - d. Have you ever experienced unsustainable products/brands? Which product/brand? What issue did you face?
 - e. Did you register any complaint/grievance with any authority? Which authority? What was the outcome of your complaint?
 - f. Would you prefer to buy/use a product that has a more positive effect on the environment, or on the people involved in making the product? How would you ensure that you choose sustainable products?
 - g. Would you be willing to pay more for a product that has been certified as eco-friendly or socially fairer in the manner it's raw material is procured, processed, packed, stored, used and disposed? Why? Why not?

7. Consumer Rights and Grievances:
 - a. Are you aware of institutions/offices responsible to approach in case you experience any unsafe product/brand?
 - b. Are you aware of process/mechanism for communicating grievances against unsafe product/brand?
 - c. Are you aware of consumers' right to demand safe products?
 - d. Would you exercise your right if you need to? Why? Why not?

8. Conclusion:
 - a. That concludes our focus group. Would you like to share anything important that I may have missed out asking – any point or experience related to purchase and use of safe products.
 - b. Do you have any suggestions for sharing with us on how to raise awareness about use of safe products and consumer rights to demand safe products?

Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us.