

How to Conduct a Focus Group?

~Groups are a common experience~

I. What is Focus Group?

1. Definitions

- (1) A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. (Wikipedia)
 - (2) A focus group isn't just getting a bunch of people together to talk. A focus group is a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures. It is a way to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, product, or service. Participants are selected because they have a certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group.
 - (2) Also names: Focus groups interviews (焦點團體訪談法)
Focused interviews (焦點訪談法、集中訪談)
Group depth interview (團體深度訪談法)
 - (3) Group：一群有共同興趣的互動個體
Depth：涉及尋求比一般人際關係層次可得之更深入資訊
Interview：隱含一個中介者（moderator）的出現，其運用團體為一種工具，以獲取資料。
Focus：表示此訪談被限制於少數議題上
 - (4) Focus group: (1) people who (2) possess certain characteristics and (3) provide qualitative data (4) in a focused discussion (5) to help understand the topic of interest.
 - (5)The intent of focus groups is not to infer but to understand, not to generalize but to determine the range, not to make statements about the population but to provide insights about how people in the groups perceive a situation.
- #### 2. Advantages of focus groups include:
- (1) Self disclosure in a comfortable setting: Allow interviewers to study people in a more natural setting than a one to one interview. Good for getting rich data in participants' own words and developing deeper insights. People are able to build on one another's responses and come up with ideas they might not have thought of in a 1-on-1 interview.
 - (2) Highly validity: Focus groups have a high apparent validity - since the idea is easy to understand, the results are believable. Participants can act as checks and balances on one another - identifying factual errors or extreme views.
 - (3) Gaining access to various cultural and social groups: Good for obtaining data from children and/or people with low levels of literacy.

(4) Low in cost compare to one to one interview: One can get results relatively quickly, and it can increase the sample size of a report by talking with several people at once.

3. Limitations of focus groups include:

- (1) Hard to control: The researcher has less control over a group than a one-on-one interview, and thus time can be lost on issues irrelevant to the topic. The responses of each participant are not independent. A few dominant focus group members can skew the session.
- (2) Highly trained researchers: Focus groups require a skilled and experienced moderators and observers to avoid “observer dependency”, namely the results obtained are influenced by the researcher, raising questions of validity. The design of the focus group study (e.g. respondent selection, the questions asked, how they are phrased, how they are posed, in what setting, by whom, and so on) affects the answers obtained from respondents.
- (3) Data analysis is not easy: The data which results from a focus group requires skill and experience to analyze. The data are tough to analyze because the talking is in reaction to the comments of other group members.
- (4) Participants are not easy to be gathered: Groups are quite variable and can be tough to get together.
- (5) The problem of generalizability: The number of members of a focus group is not large enough to be a representative sample of a population and the members often share some kind of similarity; thus, the data obtained from the groups is not necessarily representative of the whole population.

II. When do we need to do it?

1. The purpose of a focus group is to listen and gather information.

2. The uses of focus group

- ▶ Decision making, Product or program development, Customer satisfaction, Planning and goal setting, Needs Assessment, Quality improvement, Understanding employee concerns, Policy making and testing
- ▶ Research tool : 獲得一項有興趣主題的一般背景資料、要產生可用量化方法檢驗及進一步研究的研究假設、刺激新想法和有創意的概念、調查新方案的潛在性問題、要瞭解有興趣之主體的印象為何、瞭解受訪者如何談論所關心的議題、協助設計可被用於量化研究之調查工具或其他研究工具、解釋先前所或得之量化結果
- ▶ Exploration & Confirmation

III. How to do it?

1. Define problem: determining the purpose, make a statement of the problem.

界定問題時需清楚地陳述想要的是什麼樣的資料，及應該從誰那裡獲得資料，清楚地界定研究問題，可以使中介者提出適合及特別的訪談問題，並界定人口群。
2. Define a sampling frame:
 - ▶ Define population of interest: Make a operational definition of population

和調查研究法一樣重要的是要界定抽樣架構 (sampling frame)，即列出研究者認為可以代表大多數要研究的母群體 (population) 的人名 (家戶、組織)，也就是母群體的操作型定義 (operational definition)。但在焦點團體法中，要外推至焦點團體成員外的人口群是不合適的，因此抽樣架構只需接近要研究的母群體即可，然而確認抽樣架構的重要性不如調查研究法。
 - ▶ Identifying information-rich participants: Those from which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. Who has the greatest amount of insight on this topic?
 - ▶ Think about the final report: What type of people do you want to be able to say something about?
3. Design an interview guide, developing a questioning route
 - (1) Questioning route is a sequence of questions in complete sentences. Topic guide is like an outline with a lost of topics or issues to be pursued in the focus group.
 - (2) We prefer the questioning route because:
 - ▶ It fosters consistency in questioning, and as a result improves analysis.
 - ▶ It forces the moderator or research team to think about the words and phrases to be used ahead of time, and it helps the sponsor more clear understand what will occur in the focus group.
 - (2) Time limitation

The questions should be answered within 2 hours.
 - (3) General to Specific, More to less important, Sequenced, Easy beginning.
 - (4) Good questions:

Sound conversational, use words the participants would use when talking about the issue, are easy to say, clear, usually short, usually open-ended, one-dimensional, include well-thought-out direction
 - (5) The process of developing a questioning rout
 - Step 1. Brainstorming
 - Step 2. Phrasing the questions
 - Step 3. Sequencing the questions
 - Step 4. Estimating time for questions
 - Step 5. Getting feedback from others
 - Step 6. Testing the questions

(6) Change questions when:

- ▶ it clearly doesn't work.
 - (a) there is silence and participants look baffled
 - (b) participants tell you that they don't understand the question
 - (c) participants talk but aren't answering the question
- ▶ saturation has clearly occurred and the responses are of limited use.
- ▶ prepare "core questions" for different types of groups to keep consistency.

(7) 問題的結構性

4. Get moderators and observers

5. Recruit participants

(1) Who should be invited?

- ▶ The purpose drives the study
- ▶ Includes everything you currently know about your target
- ▶ The budget influences the degree of specification

(2) The characteristics of participants

- ▶ Be able and willing to provide information.
- ▶ Can represent the population
- ▶ Homogeneity: for analysis purposes and for comfortable sharing (ex. occupation, past experiences, age, gender, family characteristics)
- ▶ Sufficient variation: for contrasting opinions

(3) Determine how many groups to conduct:

- ▶ Start from three or four. Stop when you reached saturation.
- ▶ **Saturation** is a term used to describe the point when you have heard the range of ideas and aren't getting new information.
- ▶ If you want to compare and contrast how certain types of people talk about an issue, you must separate these people into different groups. Ex: different levels, different genders, etc.
- ▶ Seldom conduct more than 30 groups on a topic, even for national studies.
- ▶ Size: 6 to 12 persons in one group, depend on the complexity of the topic
- ▶ Seek out and visit with several people who have the characteristics of your target audience. Who should be invited?

(4) Recruitment

- ▶ Sampling: Convenient sampling under certain criteria (purposive sampling, snowballing), randomly select from your pool.
- ▶ Strategies for finding participants:
 - the list (usually lists provide more names than needed), piggyback focus group (附屬式於其他活動), on location, nominations, screening and selection

services, random telephone screening, ads or announcements in newspapers and bulletin boards.

- ▶ Beware of bias: picked by memory, picked because they expressed concern about the topic, picked because they are clones (複製品) of the supervisor doing the selection, who are out of the mainstream.

(5) Getting people to attend focus group

- ▶ Initial contact: mail, telephone, face to face.
- ▶ Incentives: money, meal, gift, etc.
- ▶ Place: more convenient, clean, familiar

6. Conduct the focus group

(1) Pilot

(2)

7. Analyze and explain the data

8. Write a report

IV. Tools we need...