

Appendix B: Tire Retailer Interview Discussion Guide
Tire Fuel Efficiency Consumer Information Program
May 16, 2011

Each tire retailer will evaluate 3 potential rating scales, then look at them in comparison. Among 25 respondents, each rating scale will be evaluated among 15 different retailers. Please note, that each interview will present the rating scales in a random order to avoid bias.

Paperwork Reduction Act Burden Statement

A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a current valid OMB Control Number. The OMB Control Number for this information collection is 2127-XXXX. Public reporting for this collection of information is estimated to be approximately 30 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, completing and reviewing the collection of information. All responses to this collection of information are voluntary. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to: Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E., Washington, DC, 20590

Introduction

- Introduce, why I'm here
- This discussion should last around 25 minutes
- We will keep your responses private to the extent permitted by law and will not tie any of your responses back to you directly in reporting. We'd like to hear your personal opinions based on your experience as a retailer.

Tire replacement purchase process

- In your experience, what generally motivates customers to come to you looking for replacement tires?
 - Which do you see more often – emergency replacements or planned replacements?
- When do you first hear from the consumer? Walk-in? Call for information?
- Where, other than from you, do you notice consumers getting tire information?
 - Are they proactively seeking out tire information before coming to you?
 - What kind of information do they look for during the process?
 - Do they understand the information they are finding about tires?
 - How do they use this information?
 - In your experience, how much would you say consumers rely on you and your staff throughout the decision?
- How often do your customers request new replacement tires that are identical to the tires that are currently installed on their vehicle?
- Thinking about all the tire replacement orders you place in an average week...
 - What percentage of purchases are tires that are currently in stock?
 - What percentage of purchases are tires that are not in stock, but can be delivered for same day installation?
 - What percentage of orders are for tires that are not in stock and must be ordered for installation at a later date?
- What sources do you use when advising a customer on a tire replacement purchase?
 - What sources do you/would you recommend to consumers?

- In-store, what is the process that you go through to help a customer with a purchase?
 - What information do you make sure the customer is armed with before making a decision?
 - How do you communicate this information to consumers?
 - Do they compare different tires?
 - What do they look at when comparing tires?
 - How do they get this comparison information?
 - Do they see the tires before installation?
 - Do they see the actual tires that are installed on their vehicle or a display tire?
 - [IF DISPLAY] Does the display tire match the size and model of the tire that will be installed on their vehicle?
- Do customers generally consider only tires that match the size of the original tires on their vehicle, or do they consider multiple tire sizes that would fit their vehicle?
 - Do you recommend multiple tire sizes to your customers?
 - Do you ever make a customer aware that they can change the diameter of their tire, so long as the tire is designed to carry the weight of the vehicle?
 - [IF YES] How if at all does this impact their purchase process?
 - Do you ever make a customer aware that they can “plus-size” their tire & wheel combination, so long as the tire is designed to carry the weight of the vehicle?
 - [IF YES] How if at all does this impact their purchase process?
- How, if at all, does the purchase process change based on different motivations (i.e. emergency vs. planned replacement)?
- Thinking about any labels that you currently see on tires, which if any do you believe to be helpful? [PROBE: PAPER LABEL VS. OTHER TYPES OF LABELS]
 - Are there other sources of information or information displays that you find helpful?
 - Why are these helpful? What information do they include?
 - How, if at all, do you personally use the tire labels or manufacturer displays for information?
 - How, if at all, do customers use these labels or manufacturer displays for information?
 - Does any *one* manufacturer stand out as providing a label that is most helpful to the tire purchase decision?
 - What information do they provide that makes them stand out as helpful?
 - Does any *one* manufacturer stand out as providing helpful materials designed to be displayed near a tire?

Evaluate tire ratings [3 PER INTERVIEW, RATINGS CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX G]

- Do you currently use tire ratings when evaluating different tire replacement options?
 - Do you find that consumers look to these ratings during the process?
- **Mock up of Rating A:** Looking at this tire rating, what does it mean to you?
 - I'd like to show you another tire that was rated using the same system. Overall, in your own words how would you describe the differences between these two tires?
 - 3 star rating vs. a 4 star rating for fuel efficiency
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - 4 star rating vs. 5 star rating for wet traction
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?

- What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - 2 star vs. 4 star rating for tread wear
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - Looking at these labels, how might you communicate the ratings a customer?
 - How easy or hard is it to compare tires using this rating system? You vs. your customers?
 - How likely are you to use these ratings when recommending which tire a customer should purchase?
 - Based on this information, which tire, if any, would you recommend assuming the prices are equal? Why?
- **Mock up of Rating B:** Looking at this tire rating, what does it mean to you?
 - I'd like to show you another tire that was rated using the same system. Overall, in your own words how would you describe the differences between these two tires?
 - 50 vs. 58 fuel efficiency rating; 58 vs. 80 fuel efficiency rating
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - 72 vs. 90 wet traction rating; 72 vs. 73 wet traction rating
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - 64 vs. 61 tread wear rating ; 39 vs. 61 tread wear rating
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - Looking at these labels, how might you communicate the ratings a customer?
 - How large or small a difference between numbers would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
 - How easy or hard is it to compare tires using this rating system? You vs. your customers?
 - How likely are you to use these ratings when recommending which tire a customer should purchase?
 - Based on this information, which tire, if any, would you recommend assuming the prices are equal? Why?
- **Mock up of Rating C:** Looking at this tire rating, what does it mean to you?
 - I'd like to show you another tire that was rated using the same system. Overall, in your own words how would you describe the differences between these two tires?
 - B vs. C fuel efficiency rating
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - B vs. A wet traction rating

- What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - D vs. C tread wear rating
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - Looking at these labels, how might you communicate the ratings a customer?
 - How easy or hard is it to compare tires using this rating system? You vs. your customers?
 - How likely are you to use these ratings when recommending which tire a customer should purchase?
 - Based on this information, which tire, if any, would you recommend assuming the prices are equal? Why?
- **Mock up of Rating D:** Looking at this tire rating, what does it mean to you?
 - 5 vs. 4 fuel efficiency rating
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - A vs. AA wet traction rating
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - 580 vs. 560 tread wear rating; 320 vs. 560 tread wear rating
 - What do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - What, if anything, do you see as potential tradeoffs your customers may have to make when deciding between tires with these two ratings?
 - Looking at these labels, how might you communicate the ratings a customer?
 - For tread wear, how large or small a difference between numbers do you believe would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
 - How easy or hard is it to compare tires using this rating system? You vs. your customers?
 - Notice for this scale, each point is measured on a different scale. How does this impact how well you understand the ratings? Would having all the ratings on the same scale make it easier or harder to understand? Does it matter?
 - How likely are you to use these ratings when recommending which tire a customer should purchase?
 - Based on this information, which tire, if any, would you recommend assuming the prices are equal? Why?
- **Mock up of Rating E:** Are you familiar with the EnergyStar or SmartWay systems? Are you more familiar with one over the other?
 - In your own words, what does EnergyStar mean?
 - In your own words, what does SmartWay mean?
 - If a tire were to be marked with an EnergyStar label, what do you believe that would tell you about the tire?

- If a tire were to be marked with a SmartWay label, what do you believe that would tell you about the tire?
 - How helpful do you believe this type of rating would be for customers? For you as a retailer?
 - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a symbol like this?
 - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a symbol like this?
 - If a separate, tire-specific label (like EnergyStar or SmartWay) were created, how helpful do you believe that would be for customers? For you as a retailer?
 - If tires were to be rated using a system like this, how might you communicate this information to your customers?
 - How likely are you to use these ratings when recommending which tire a customer should purchase?
 - Based on this information, which tire, if any, would you recommend assuming the prices are equal? Why?
- **Mock up of Rating F:** People have suggested using other metrics to rate tires. How easy or hard would these be to discuss with your customers:[SHOW RATING F]
 - Dollars saved - Potential fuel savings for fuel efficiency as compared to a control tire
 - Would you use a measure like this when discussing potential tire options with your customers?
 - How useful would this be to your customers as they are trying to decide which tire to purchase?
 - The fuel savings range is based on a number of assumptions like the type of vehicle driven, average distance driven per year, and climate and road conditions. How, if at all, does this change your opinion on the usefulness of this measure?
 - Miles – the number of more or less miles you can drive on a tire before they wear as compared to a control tire
 - Would you use a measure like this when discussing potential tire options with your customers?
 - How useful would this be to your customers as they are trying to decide which tire to purchase?
 - The miles until replacement measure is based on assumptions like average distance drive, vehicle load, road conditions and a number of other measures. How, if at all, does this change your opinion on the usefulness of this measure?
 - Stopping distance – the number of more or less feet in stopping distance based on a wet traction rating as compared to a control tire
 - Would you use a measure like this when discussing potential tire options with your customers?
 - How useful would this be to your customers as they are trying to decide which tire to purchase?
 - This measure is based on assumptions like the handling characteristics of the vehicle, vehicle load and the force with which the brakes are applied. How, if at all, does this change your opinion on the usefulness of this measure?
 - Wet traction and tread wear could also be displayed as dollars saved based on potential savings based on the length of time between replacements for tread wear or potential savings in terms of a tire contributing to fewer crashes for wet traction.

- Would you use a measure like this when discussing potential tire options with your customers?
 - How useful would this be to your customers as they are trying to decide which tire to purchase?
 - Are there any other metrics that you use when discussing potential tires with customers?
 - If these metrics were included on one of the other ratings we looked at today, do you believe it would make the ratings easier or harder to understand, or would it have no impact?
- Let's take a look at some of the terminology used on the labels we just reviewed.
 - What, in your opinion does "durability" mean to your customers?
 - What language would you use when discussing these ratings - tread wear or durability?
 - What, in your opinion does "safety" mean to your customers?
 - What language would you use when discussing these ratings - wet traction or safety?
 - What, in your opinion does "fuel efficiency" mean to your customers?
 - What language would you use when discussing these ratings – rolling resistance or fuel efficiency?

With all these ratings systems, there is the potential to calculate an overall score based on these three measures. For example, [SHOW SAMPLE OVERALL SCORE].

- Looking at this label what do you believe to be the difference between these two ratings in terms of personal benefits for your customers?
 - Would you find an overall tire rating helpful or not helpful?
 - Are you more likely to use the individual ratings, the overall tire rating, or both when recommending which tire to purchase?
 - Which would you expect your customers to use?
 - How does the overall rating impact how easy or hard it is to decide which tire to purchase?
- This overall rating example was calculated as an average rating for each of the three measures – fuel efficiency, safety and durability.
 - Does this method of calculating an overall rating make sense to you?
 - Would you recommend that each measure receive equal weight when calculating this overall score, or is one factor more important or less important than others?
 - Knowing how this particular overall rating is calculated, how, if at all, does this change how useful or helpful this rating is to your purchase decision?
- There has been discussion as to whether to rate the fuel efficiency of replacement tires based on Rolling Resistance Force or Rolling Resistance Coefficient.
 - Are you familiar with these terms?
 - [IF YES] Do you personally have an opinion on which should be used?
 - How, if at all, would you explain this rating to your customers?
 - Do you believe one is easier to explain to consumers?
 - Do you believe one is easier for consumers to comprehend?
 - Do you find that consumers want to be able to compare tires across sizes when looking for replacement tires?
 - How many options might they consider?
 - Do you want to be able to compare tires across different sizes?

- How many options would you consider when helping a customer?
- If your customer owned a large SUV, like a Chevy Suburban *and* a smaller vehicle like a Honda civic and they came to you to purchase replacement tires. Do you think they would be ok if the fuel efficiency ratings for all the tires that fit the Chevy Suburban are all only in a 0-30 range, while the ratings for all the tires that fit the Honda Civic fall between 30 and 100? Or would they want all tires, no matter what the size, to fall between 0 and 100?
- Thinking again about the two ways tires could be measured – one measurement system allows you to compare the ratings for tires no matter what the size. Using the other measurement system, you would only be able to compare the ratings for tires within the same size.
 - Which, if any, measure do you think your customers would you prefer?

Evaluate different rating scales in comparison

- Thinking about how you interact with your customers, would you use these ratings?
 - What format would be most helpful to you, in your opinion?
- How well does each scale convey the characteristics of the tire?
- Which scale do you feel would be easiest for consumers to comprehend?
- Which scale do you feel would be easiest for you to explain to your customers?
- Which scale do you believe would help consumers identify the most fuel efficient tire? Why?
- Which scale do you believe would help consumers identify the safest tire? Why?
- Which scale do you believe would help consumers identify the most durable tire? Why?
- What additional information, if any, do you believe is necessary to include on these labels?
- Which scale do you personally prefer?

Evaluate communications channels (ties back to tire purchase information above)

- How, if at all, do you see consumers using this information?
 - Where would they look for it? Where do they *need* it?
 - Do you believe they would come to your store knowing this, or is it more likely that they would look to you for this information?
- Thinking about how you interact with your customers, what format would you need to see these ratings in to best communicate?
 - Paper label on tire?
 - Brochure?
 - Online database?
 - Poster?
 - Others?
- What are some other sources that should be used to communicate this information to consumers?

Thank and close.