

Point-of-Sale Strategic Concept Testing – Focus Groups with Current Adult Smokers

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Research Objective: Conduct focus groups with current smokers to understand their cigarette purchasing behavior and past quit experience (Section II); assess reactions to multiple strategic concepts (Section III); identify comparative strengths and opportunities among concepts (Section IV); and understand how current smokers consume information in the point-of-sale environment (Section V).

NOTES TO REVIEWER:

Question probes are *italicized*. These are suggestions for the interviewer to follow, and will be used or modified as deemed relevant and necessary in the natural flow of discussion.

Moderator instructions are highlighted in yellow.

Materials are highlighted in blue.

SECTION I: Introduction & Warm-Up (5 minutes)

[Moderator introduces self and reviews ground rules with the participant]

- Thank you for coming here today. Your participation is very important.
- My name is _____, and I'm part of an independent research company. This means that I didn't create anything you see today, and I have no opinions about what you're going to see. I'm here to listen to you and what you have to tell me.
- The purpose of today's focus group is to get your thoughts and reactions to some ideas for advertisements related to smoking and the quit process.
- Your thoughts are very important to us, and your time today is appreciated.
- We will have about 90 minutes for our discussion.

As we begin, I want to review a few ground rules for our discussion.

- Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
- I want to give you my full attention and not have to take a lot of notes, so I'd like to audio record our session today if that's okay with you. I will be speaking with people across the country for this project, and it will be impossible for me to remember everything. The audio files will be transcribed, but any information that could identify you will be removed from the transcripts. At the end of our discussion, I have to write a report and will refer to the recordings and transcripts when writing the report. Additional project staff may hear the audio recordings at a later date. Neither I nor anyone else involved with the project will share personal information with any third party without your permission unless it is required by law. Is it okay if I begin the audio recording now?

- **IF APPLICABLE:** You have probably noticed the video camera in the room too. It's here so that other members of the research team who couldn't be here today can learn from you as well. Is it okay if I begin the video recording now?
- **IF APPLICABLE:** You have probably noticed the video camera in the room too. It's streaming our session, but it is not recording. This allows other members of the research team who couldn't be here today learn from you as well.
- Behind me is a one-way mirror. Some of the people working on this project are observing this discussion so that they can hear your opinions directly from you and take notes so that your opinions are accurately captured. However, your identity and anything you personally say here will remain private to the fullest extent allowed by law. Your name, address, and phone number will not be given to anyone and no one will contact you regarding this study after this discussion is over.
- If you need to go the restroom during the discussion, please feel free to do so.
- Please turn your cell phone off or to silent mode.
- Most importantly, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. We want to know your opinions and what you think about the things we will be discussing. The goal of our discussion is not to come to a consensus, and we especially want to hear from you if you have an opinion that is different from others in the room.
- Just a reminder, we are not selling anything, and I do not work for the people who are sponsoring this research, so don't hold back from giving me your honest opinions. We do ask that you keep whatever is said here confidential, since people might share personal thoughts.
- You don't have to answer every question, but I do want to hear from everyone, so I might call on you at some point.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

Okay, great. First, let's get to know each other more. I'm going to have everyone go around and introduce themselves. I'd like everyone to share your first name and something you enjoy doing when you have free time. Then I'm curious if you ever notice ads in convenience stores and if any stick out in your mind. I'll go first.

[Moderator shares and then has each participant introduce him/herself.]

SECTION II: Cigarette Purchasing Behavior and Quitting (20 Minutes)

[NOTE: The purpose of this section is to better understand what type of cognitive and emotional encouragement could be provided in the point of sale environment to motivate future quit attempts. This section will provide an understanding of the in store purchase behavior and quit behavior that our target engages in. Participants will first be asked warm-up questions and then will be led into a discussion on previous quit attempts.]

[MATERIALS: COLORED INDEX CARDS]

Now that we know each other more, I'd like to get started by talking a little bit about cigarette purchasing. Before you arrived today, you all indicated that you smoke cigarettes. I'd like to learn a little bit more about your personal experiences with tobacco. Remember, this information is confidential and will not leave this room so please be as honest as possible.

I'm now going to say a few statements about purchasing habits, and I want you to tell me how well they describe you. You have some red, yellow, and green INDEX CARDS in front of you. After I read each statement, I'd like you to hold up the red card if the statement doesn't describe you at all, the yellow card if it somewhat describes you, and the green card if it sounds a lot like you. Any questions? Okay, let's get started.

[Moderator: As participants hold up their cards, call out counts for observers and audio recording. For example, "Okay, I see two reds, two yellows, and two greens."]

- A. When I buy cigarettes, it's a purchase I planned before I got in the store.
- B. When I walk into a store that sells cigarettes, I buy cigarettes.
- C. I only go buy cigarettes when I have a craving in a particular moment.
- D. When I buy cigarettes, I don't make a plan I just get them.

Okay, great. Let's talk a little more about those ideas.

1. What usually motivates your cigarette purchase?
 - a. *When do you decide how much you are going to purchase?*
 - b. *Where do you buy cigarettes?* **[Moderator: If participant mentions purchasing online, be sure to remind the group that today's discussion will focus on in-store purchases]**
2. Are there things in the store that make you want to buy cigarettes?
3. Thinking about the different stores you buy cigarettes in, what else do you typically buy when purchasing cigarettes? How long do you typically spend in the store?
4. When you go in a store, what things do you see, hear, or smell that make you want to purchase cigarettes?

Great, that information is definitely useful. Everyone here also indicated earlier that they have tried to quit smoking before. Next, I'd like to have a discussion on your experiences with quitting smoking cigarettes.

5. What comes to mind when you think about your most recent quit attempt? Will you tell me a little bit about that experience?

[Moderator: The purpose of the following probes is to encourage more detail and texture around the past quit attempt conversation. Use as needed to cover ALL content.]

- a. How long ago was the quit attempt you're referring to?
- b. For how long did you go without smoking?
- c. What steps led to your decision to quit?

- d. What were the reasons for your most recent attempt? Did these reasons change over time? If so, how?
 - e. What resources, if any, did you use while quitting?
 - f. What type of support did you receive? [Moderator: Please probe on emotional support as well as products and services]
 - From whom/what?
 - What are some things people said to you while you were quitting that you found supportive?
 1. Are there examples of things people intended to be supportive that didn't help or were even just annoying?
 - What type of support helped the most?
 - What resources would have been useful?
 6. What was the most difficult part of the quit process? What made that difficult?
 7. Did you change the way you purchased cigarettes before you started the quit attempt? How so?
 8. Tell me about what it was like going to a store that sells cigarettes while you were trying to quit smoking.
 - a. *What thoughts went through your head?*
 - b. *Did you experience any challenges with anything in particular? What were they?*
 - c. *Are there things that could have helped you in the store? What are some examples?*
 9. What happened that made you start smoking again?
 - a. How did you feel when you started smoking again? What made you feel like that? [Probe on both physical and emotional feelings]
 - b. After that quit attempt, did you change the way you purchase cigarettes? How so?
 - c. Have you thought about quitting again? How long did it take for you to think about trying to quit again?
 - d. What would help motivate you to quit again?
 - Is there anything different that would motivate you to try again compared to what motivated you to try in the first place?
 - e. What might keep you from trying to quit again?
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SECTION III: Strategic Concepts (50 min.)

[MATERIALS: STIMULI, PARTICIPANT RATING WORKSHEETS]

I mentioned in the beginning of the session that we are working on ideas for advertisements related to smoking and the quit process. Next, I'm going to share some initial ideas and get your reactions to them. These are ideas that may lead to in-store advertising but are not ads themselves. Please keep in mind that the ideas I'm going to show you today are not fully developed. It costs a lot of money to create ads, and the feedback you provide will help make the ideas better before the advertising agency gets too far along in the development process.

For each one, I'll show you the idea and you will fill out a short worksheet on your own. **[Moderator: Walk through worksheet.]** After everyone has completed their worksheet, we will discuss the idea as a group.

Again, there are no wrong answers; I am interested in what you think. Be honest; if you don't like an idea you will not hurt my feelings. Remember, at this point I just want your thoughts on the ideas and not how we have them displayed on the board—the next step after these focus groups is to figure out how we want to get across the ads visually or in ways you typically see or hear ads.

[The moderator will introduce each concept and allow a couple of minutes for participants to complete the rating worksheet. While participants read the concept, the concept will also be read aloud. After all participants have completed the rating sheet, the moderator will lead discussion on each idea. RANDOMIZE ORDER OF CONCEPTS—SEE STRATEGIC CONCEPT STIMULI.]

Ok, now let's talk about this idea.

1. Initial Reactions	What are your initial reactions and thoughts on this idea? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did it make you feel?</i> Note to moderator: Probe on responses to worksheet questions 2 & 3
2. Main Message	What is the main message this idea is trying to convey? Why do you say that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the main message want you to do? • What did you like? Dislike? • Is any part of the idea that is confusing at all? • Is there any part of the idea that doesn't work for you? Note to moderator: From this point on please discuss the "main message" of the concept for the rest of this section vs. all of the language in the concept
3. Relatable	Who do you think this idea is trying to reach? Why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel it is directed to someone like you? Why/ why not? How relatable is this idea to you?
4. Think Differently	How does this make you think about what it means to quit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does that compare to the way you thought about quitting before?
5. Believable/ Compelling	Do you believe what this idea is trying to say? Why/why not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What, if anything, would you change or add to make it more believable?</i> To what extent is the main idea compelling? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What, if anything, would you change or add to make this idea more compelling?</i>
6. Grab attention/ memorable	If you saw this message while in the store that you purchase cigarettes, what would your reaction be? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is there somewhere within the store that this idea would most likely grab your attention?</i> • <i>How easy would it be for you to ignore this message?</i> • <i>Do you think this idea would stick with you? After you left the store, what would you remember?</i>

7. Intentions	<p>What would you do after seeing this message? Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does this idea help motivate you to make another quit attempt? Tell me more about that.</i> • <i>How might this idea influence what you bought in the store?</i> • <i>How might this idea change you after you leave the store?</i>
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[The moderator will introduce the next concept and run through Section III again for each concept. The Moderator will budget approximately 10 minutes for each of the concepts.]

SECTION IV: Comparison (10 minutes)

[MATERIALS: RANKING WORKSHEET]

Before we wrap up, I'd like you to think about all of the ideas we have discussed today. You completed the rating sheets for each idea individually, but now I want you to think about all of them and which ones you liked the most and which you liked the least. Even if you liked all of them – or didn't like any of them – try to answer the questions as best you can. This last sheet asks you to rank the ideas we talked about from most motivational to least motivational – #1 is the idea most likely to motivate you to make another quit attempt and the last one is the one least likely to motivate you to make another quit attempt.

[NOTE TO MODERATOR: Keep this discussion focused on comparisons, not repetition of the content already shared—especially for questions about what they liked or didn't like about the idea.]

[Moderator will display up to five strategic concepts around the room and allow a couple of minutes for participants to complete comparison sheet.]

Great, looks like everyone's done completing the sheet. Now let's discuss what people thought.

1. Earlier we talked about how these ideas make you think about what it means to quit. Which of these ideas makes a quit attempt seem most manageable?
2. Which idea did you find most motivating? Why?
3. Which idea did you find least motivating? Why?
4. Which idea would you be most likely to mention to a friend after seeing it in the store? Why?
5. Which idea would be most likely to grab your attention in the store? Why?
6. Which idea are you most likely to forget? Why?

SECTION V: Tobacco Prevention in the Point-of-Sale Environment (5 minutes)

Great! Now before we go I have a couple quick general questions. We talked about different ideas that might help motivate smokers to quit. As I mentioned before, these ideas could be developed into ads to place in convenience stores. With that in mind, I have just a few more questions for you.

1. Think about the last time you went to a convenience store. What did you notice when you approached or walked into the store?
 - What kinds of things catch your attention when you go into a convenience store?
 - Going back to the beginning of our conversation, how often do you notice advertisements in convenience stores?
 - What do you think would make you notice them more?
2. So, once the ideas we talked about today have been developed into ads, where in the store would you expect to see those ads?
 - Where would be the best place to put those kinds of ads?
3. Who do you think would make ads like these?
 - Does it matter who these messages are from? (e.g., Government, FDA, nonprofit, etc.) Why/why not?
4. Who should the main character be/from whose point of view should ads like this come from ? (*If necessary read: e.g., current smoker, former smoker, government, medical professional, friend, etc.*)
 - Whose perspective do you think would be most convincing? Why?
 - Whose perspective should this **not** come from? Why?

SECTION VI: Closing

[Thank participants]

Thank you very much for participating in this focus group. I have enjoyed getting to know you, and appreciate your time and great feedback. Is there anything that you would like to share that you didn't have the chance to share yet?