

Focus Groups - Pros and Cons ^[1]

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A focus group survey is a survey method wherein the respondents from the target population are typically put in a single group and interviewed in an interactive manner. The participants in a focus group are given the opportunity to freely talk about and discuss their ideas and opinions towards the object of the survey.

The term “focus group” was created by Ernest Dichter ^[3], a famous market expert and psychologist. Robert K. Merton ^[4], a sociologist and the associate director of the Bureau of Applied Social Research headed the first focus groups in the United States. When used as a survey method ^[5], the focus group approach presents various pros, strengths and benefits, as well as cons, weaknesses and drawbacks.

Advantages of Focus Group Survey

One of the advantages of a focus group survey is that it is effective for a group of respondents that comprise of young children, people who use English as a second language and people with lower literacy levels. Another advantage of this type of survey is that respondents can answer and build on each other’s responses, improving the richness of data being gathered.

Disadvantages of Focus Group Survey

A major disadvantage of a focus group survey is that the survey results may not fully represent the opinion of the larger target population. In addition, the facilitator must be well-trained to handle any situation that may arise from the focus group interaction.

Types of Focus Group Survey

1. Single and Two-way

First, there is the single, one-way or traditional focus group wherein all the respondents are placed in just one focus group to interactively discuss the object of the survey. This typical focus group is composed of 6 to 12 members. On the other hand, the two-way focus group involves two focus groups – one focus group discussing the object, and the other focus group observing and discussing the interactions of the members of the first focus group.

2. Dual Moderator, Dueling Moderator, and Respondent Moderator

The dual moderator focus group involves two moderators – one moderator monitoring the smooth progression of the focus group session, and another moderator observing if all the questions in the survey are asked during the discussion. In contrast, the dueling moderator focus group includes two moderators who purposely get on opposing sides regarding the object. For example, one moderator is saying that the product is effective, whereas the other moderator is arguing that it is ineffective. On the other hand, one of the respondents temporarily becomes the moderator of the focus group in respondent moderator type.

3. Teleconference and Online

Focus groups can be conducted either in a telephone network or in an online or Web network. Free online video providers such as Skype [6] can be used in this subtype of focus group survey.

Kilde URL: <https://staging.explorable.com/focus-groups?gid=1576>

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[1] <https://staging.explorable.com/focus-groups>

[2] <https://staging.explorable.com/users/sarah>

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Dichter

[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_K._Merton

[5] <https://staging.explorable.com/survey-research-design>

[6] <http://www.skype.com/>