

# The procedure of focus group education essay

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In this chapter, the method adopted to respond to the research question is discussed. In the first section, a motivation for this study is provided, followed by methodological overview of this study. Next, the sampling method, rationale for the method selected and the criteria for selecting the research respondents are explained. Subsequently, a description on data sources and collection method is provided. This is followed by a description of the data analysis where the procedures used to analyse the data is provided. Finally, the qualitative issues of the study and ethical conduct as a researcher will be covered.

### **3. 1 Motivation of the study**

A brief overview of the motivation behind the study is provided in this section to enable the readers to understand the motivation for this research. This motivation behind this research was based on my personal experience. I am a Marketing and Finance student who has just completed my undergraduate studies. It came about when I was in my final semester in my undergraduate degree when the assignment was to develop marketing strategies and implementations for a local skincare company, Tanamera. The head of Tanamera, Mr. Faizal Ahmad Fadzil, gave us an insight of potential deceptive practices that might occur in Malaysia with regards to green skincare products. I then realise that greenwashing may have possibly set foot in Malaysia and consumers might not even know it yet. With that in mind, my motivation for this study began. I believe that this experience has motivated me to understand further how the concept and practices of greenwashing is going on in Malaysia, providing me a more holistic view with regards to greenwashing. I am fully aware of my own biasness towards the

study, and took a neutral role by not asking objective questions and did not assume that I understand the respondents to ensure the quality of the findings would not be compromised.

### **3. 2 Methodology Overview**

A qualitative research method was utilized in this study to address the research question: "What do the young and educated Malaysian consumers understand about the practices of greenwashing?" Qualitative research is used to yield the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations, and what their perspectives are on particular issues. This type of research also involves sample sizes that are small in scale and purposively selected on the basis of salient criteria. As the topic is fairly new in Malaysia, it is fair that the analysis conducted should allow open emergent concepts that may produce detailed description and patterns that associate with the meaning of the concepts explored (Snape & Spencer, 2003). In qualitative research there are many paradigms that have its own epistemological and ontological characteristics to ensure the quality of standards are distinguishable (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). A paradigm can be best defined as a set of beliefs that deals with a set of principles that will guide the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). The researcher takes the position that knowledge is socially constructed, and that there is a reality that can be agreed upon, although it may be imperfectly apprehended. The study is therefore located in the post-positivist paradigm (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Social constructionism is chosen for the theoretical perspective of this study as the researcher believes that the world we experience and the people we find ourselves to be are the product of social processes or the root

of experiences. It is from here that people develop structures of meaning, conventions, morals and discursive practices that principally constitute both our relationships and us (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). From a social constructionism perspective, it is evident that the research problem is strongly dependent on context and subject to underlying cultural assumptions influencing the understanding of practices of greenwashing. Furthermore, there is limited theoretical knowledge about the practices of greenwashing from consumers' perspective. Hence, this study is directed at theory discovery rather than theory testing as there is a need to generate in-depth and holistic knowledge. Another important point that should be emphasized is that most of the knowledge in greenwashing has been conducted in a Western context and little has been done on the Asian context. This results in limited insight into the effects of well-known cultural and contextual differences (Hofstede, 1993). As discussed in the literature review, a range of methods have been used in previous studies; however, the emphasis has been predominantly on experimental design, resulting in deep understanding of a limited range of constructs and limited attention to holistic conceptions of greenwashing. This report will address those shortcomings by developing a more holistic theory of greenwashing and its practices in Malaysia. There are a couple of stages where the researcher undertakes before initiating this research. First, the researcher conducts the study based on past literatures to get an understanding of the area studied. In this case, there are many researchers from different backgrounds gave various views of realities behind the concept of greenwashing. The researcher can also benefit from reviewing the past studies to further hone the selection of questions to be asked later to the respondents (Perry, Riege <https://assignbuster.com/the-procedure-of-focus-group-education-essay/>

& Brown, 1999). The second stage consists of data collection. In this research, focus groups are used to obtain the data. This is appropriate as it ensures that the researcher can obtain in-depth feedback regarding participants' attitudes, opinions, perceptions, motivations, and behaviours (Morgan, 1997). The collective experience of the group promotes personalized rich, detailed descriptions; furthermore, participants can enrich each other's responses towards the issues discussed. Additionally, it also allows the respondents to express their views in their own words, enabling researchers to gain an opportunity to discuss and gain insights in the understanding of greenwashing and its practices.

### **3.3 Site Selection and Sampling Method**

According to Patton (2002), qualitative research should have minimal intervention and allow it to take place in a natural world setting. As this study uses focus groups method as the approach, the discussions were to take place in a focus group discussion room. This may lead to some discomfort at the beginning as the participants, but this should not be an issue as they were introduced before the focus group to break the ice. It is important to note that with focus groups, the participants can be more cohesive as the moderator creates a sense of belonging among the participants, helping them feel safe to share information (Peters, 1993; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). It can also create the possibility for more spontaneous responses (Butler, 1996), and can provide a setting where the participants can discuss personal problems and provide possible solutions (Duggleby, 2005). Homogenous sampling was chosen for this study as the researcher only wants to recruit university students as its participants.

This is to ensure that the information obtained from the focus group are comparable between the subgroups (Patton, 2002). The unit of analysis for this study is the young and educated consumers in Malaysia (i. e. university students). In this study, the researcher did not want the participants to be prepared for the focus group, and hence did not select the participants based on their knowledge in greenwashing or any related concepts. Instead, the participants were told to just be present for the discussion. Three focus groups were conducted over a period of 2 months, one preliminary focus group and two subsequent groups. All the participants are between 20 to 25 years old who is currently studying or recently graduated from a large private tertiary education provider. A total of 14 respondents participated in the focus groups. The profile details of the focus groups are as shown in Table 1:

## **Focus groups**

### **Criteria**

#### **Group 1**

#### **Group 2**

#### **Group 3**

Age group	21 – 23	2021 – 25	Number of participants	7	3	4
Education	Degree	Postgraduate	Degree	Postgraduate	Degree	Postgraduate

### **Table 1: Profile of respondents**

From the focus groups, data saturation seems to be somewhat achieved. In this context of study, the purpose of data saturation is to ensure that no new information, themes and redundancy occur when gathering responses

(Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Furthermore, the area of study was restricted to Klang Valley due to time and financial constraints. The researcher (moderator) has tabulated a summary of the moderator's experiences in conducting the focus groups and highlights the major lessons in spotting the differences in three different groups in Table 2:

## **Recommended**

### **Group 1**

### **Group 2**

### **Group 3**

Focus group goal	To elicit interactive dialogue to gain group norms
/perspectives.	Difficult as the number of participants were large, and some are very dominant
Easy as the number of participants were small.	Easy as the number of participants were small.
Participants	1. Should not be related. 2. Should not participate more than once.
1. Not possible, most are related. 2. There is no holding back for most participants, so they speak freely.	1. Not possible, most are related. 2. There are limited participation in the discussion
1. Not possible, most are related. 2. There is no holding back for most participants, so they speak freely.	Length
1 – 2 hours	About 45 minutes
Less than 1 hour	About 45 minutes
Incentives	Gifts/Food/Money/None.
Food and Starbucks card	Food and Starbucks card
Room	" U" U-Shaped (Formal)
U-Shaped (Formal)	U-Shaped (Informal)
Moderator role	Depends on study goal
Depends on study goal	Depends on study goal
Depends on study goal	Depends on study goal

## **Table 2: Comparison of Focus Groups across 3 Focus Groups with Recommendations for Focus Groups (Adapted from Strickland, 1999)**

### **3. 4 Data Sources and Collection**

This study applied focus groups to collect data. There are many sources of focus group data, including actual text (i. e., what each of the participants stated during the focus group), audiotapes, videotapes and notes taken by the moderator (Kruger, 1994). All of these data can be analysed, yet they differ in the amount of time and accuracy it will take to complete the analysis. The data for this study would be analysing using a mixture of transcript-based analysis and tape-based analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). Transcripts of videotapes can be analysed alongside field notes constructed by the moderator (researcher), however, as there is limited time constraint, this mixture of analysis can help the researcher to focus on the research question and analyse the transcript based on that (Krueger, 1994). The focus groups took approximately between 45 minutes to 1 hour to complete. Prior to data collection, a moderator's guide was developed based on preliminary interviews and focus group to modify the approaches to ask questions. The guide provided some structure to the focus group but as the discussion goes, it was treated more like a conversation as each focus group were different, and many information is captured from the participant's comments, experiences and perceptions towards greenwashing. The data collection is analysed as group or group interaction data and these data are coded and present as emergent themes (Wilkinson, 2004). These themes can yield important and interesting information that can increase the richness of the data. The data is collected in three phases.



The first phase encompasses the collection of initial thoughts written on paper about what they initially thought of the definition of greenwashing. In the second phase, the focus group discussion is then conducted. Finally, in the last phase, the data are analysed and a summary of data was produced to properly reflect the respondents' discussion accurately.

### **3. 5 Procedure of Focus Group**

The participants were selected based on invitation by the researchers. Participants will be selected based on the following criteria: 25 years of age or below, from Asian cultures (e. g. non-Western), and degree qualified either recently or currently in progress to at least Stage II level. The participants were selected based on these criteria and upon willingness to participate, using a snowball approach (friend get friend). The potential respondents were contacted via word of mouth. Following, explanatory statement and consent forms were given to potential respondents before the focus group discussion takes place. Once the participants agreed to participate in the discussion, they would sign the consent forms and return it to the researcher. They would then enter the focus group discussion room located in the university. Lunch was provided before the focus group to break the ice and introduce them so that they get acquainted and would be more participative in the discussion. The discussion will generally proceed with some ice breaker questions. The participants in each focus group were given a piece of paper to jot down what they initially thought of the word "greenwashing". Then, they handed the papers to the researcher for safekeeping. Then, questions regarding greenwashing concepts and practices were asked.

### **3. 6 Data Analysis**

The discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Transcription was done within a week from the discussion so as not to lose authenticity. A thematic analysis approach is used to generate rich data and identify patterns within the data. The coding process is directed at identifying and describing conceptual categories, identifying and describing the nature of the relationships between them, and explaining the relationships and the overall conceptual framework. First, each focus group transcript was read several times to familiarize with the data, and the researcher took notes of ideas that come from these data. Subsequently, the process commences with open coding in order to break the data down into detailed fragments, and then proceed to selective and axial coding to identify and connect core categories manually (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Diagrams are drawn throughout the process to progressively display the process of theory construction. From these themes, a conceptual framework is developed to know what consumers understand greenwashing. Finally, after concluding data analysis, the findings are reported in the next chapter.

### **3. 7 Qualitative Issues**

Quality of the research will address Tracy's (2010) 8 'big tent' criteria:

Worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical practice, meaningful coherence. These criteria should be addressed as much as possible to ensure that the research has truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). This research would address interesting topics that questions the common sense

assumption made and challenge the pre-existing concept of greenwashing that hold strong in the West, making it a worthy topic. The researcher also aims to generate rich rigour through the data obtained from the focus group by ensuring that the researcher is constantly in line with the research question when writing up the findings. The researcher also tries to be as sincere as possible by maintaining a neutral view in the topic, especially coming from a Malaysian background. This is because the researcher has gotten into the depth of greenwashing while preparing questions for the participants and may present biasness towards some response from the participants; hence, the researcher tries the best to maintain neutrality during the discussion. Credibility can be further enhanced by reflecting multiple views in the report from the data collected as well providing rich description to the findings discussed in the next chapter. It is important to note that frequent debriefing sessions with the supervisors allows the researcher to be focused and aligned to the research questions aimed in this study. The researcher also tries to captivate the readers by presenting the report meaningfully evocative that the audience can comprehend and relate to. The study also aims to improve the possibility of extending knowledge of greenwashing and its practice; hence providing significant contribution in theory and practice of greenwashing. The issue of ethical conduct is discussed in the next subsection. Finally, the researcher tries to provide meaningful coherence to the readers when reading the report by articulately interconnecting the research question, literature reviews and the methods as well as the findings behind the study.

### **3. 8 Ethical Conduct**

The research project will observe good ethical practice, as described in the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee's (MUHREC) recommendations, attending to the issues of confidentiality, privacy, informed consent, voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw, respect, reciprocity and responsibility. Approval was granted based on the submission of necessary documents (i. e., objectives of the study, MUHREC forms, participants consent form, explanatory statement and the moderator's guide. Permission was granted to digitally record the focus groups and in accordance to the Monash University's guideline, the researcher is held responsible for retaining and storing transcripts and the recorded focus group discussion in a locked place for a period of five years. The researcher has also taken measures to ensure the study is conducted in a professional manner to ensure that the researcher does not trigger emotional distress and infringe on the personal areas of participants' lives. This is done so by refining the guide and its wordings to ensure that the participants see these questions as general and impersonal, although by nature, the topic is not distressing. The focus groups were held in a relaxed environment in the university (i. e. focus group discussion room) where no one can see them other than the technician who operates the recording equipment. As the research relies on participation from senior university students, the researcher de-identified the data with care and provided pseudonyms for any verbal or written reportage.

### **3. 9 Summary**

In this chapter, it is noted that a qualitative research method was used in this study. The study is located in the post-positivist paradigm (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Social constructionism is chosen for the theoretical perspective of this study as the researcher believes that the world we experience and the people we find ourselves to be are the product of social processes or the root of experiences. The researcher undertakes two stages before initiating this research: a study on past literatures, followed by data collection. Homogenous sampling was chosen for this study as the researcher only wants to recruit university students as its participants to ensure comparability between the subgroups. A moderator's guide was developed based on preliminary interviews and focus group to modify the approaches to ask questions. After data collection, the recordings were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Tracy's (2010) criteria for ensuring quality of qualitative research are managed through various strategies as discussed in Chapter 3. 7. Finally, care has been given to ensure that when conducting the research, the researcher does not cause distress to the participants when participating in the discussion.