



“ Wine Opinions ”

Focus Groups in the Age of Social Distancing

Focus Groups (Like Everything Else) Are Moving Online

Mandated "social distancing" protocols have put in-person focus groups on hold indefinitely, and foreshadow their obsolescence.

Since our founding in 2005, we have conducted many in-person focus groups in major markets across the U.S. But in recent years - through a process resembling Darwinian "natural selection" - we have developed an online discussion group alternative to in-person groups which offers compelling advantages.

Foremost among the advantages is the breadth, depth, and quality of participants we are able to provide.

No focus group facility can match our ability to recruit participants who fully meet the exacting qualifications of purchase and usage of wine types, price segments, or brand preferences set by our clients.

We recruit not only from our 20,000+ member national panel of high frequency wine drinkers, but also by directly sourcing target audience participants through social media channels.

Our discussion groups combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies, yielding insights that surpass anything in-person groups can provide.

The table below shows the steps and flow of a Wine Opinions discussion group:

Discussion Group Flow Chart

Online "Issues and Screening" Survey



Participant Selection/Discussion Guide Creation



3-Day Online Interactive Discussion



Quantitative and Qualitative Reporting

Each step of discussion group methodology is detailed in the sections that follow.

Step 1 - Issues and Screening Survey

Discussion group learning objectives and project deliverables are set through collaboration with our clients. These guide the content of the Issues and Screening survey and the development of the discussion topics.

When the target audience demographics and participant qualifications are determined, the survey is launched to the entire Wine Opinions consumer panel (and oversamples, if appropriate).

The brief (usually 10-question) survey serves two purposes:

- Provide quantitative "snapshots" of opinions on key client issues gathered from a large, representative target audience
- Screen respondents to select the 8 - 10 who best match client criteria for participation

Step 2 - Online Discussion

Following participant selection, and aided by the results of the Issues and Screening survey, the discussion guide is created with a focus on topics most relevant to the learning objectives.

Participants are tasked with commenting on each discussion topic (as many as 10) and engaging in an ongoing conversation on the topics with other participants and the discussion moderator.

The discussion runs for three days, allowing participants to "dip in and out" of the conversation according to their schedules. This multi-day approach encourages a thoughtful, interactive dialogue.

The group is moderated in real time by the Wine Opinions Director of Qualitative Research, who manages the conversations and stimulates the discussion.

Functional Elements

- 3-day format facilitates multiple time zones and participant schedules
- Every comment on a topic generates a group email, updating the discussion
- Client monitoring is enabled
- Participants respond to probes from the moderator, client, and each other
- Graphics, videos, and links may be embedded in discussion topics
- Reporting includes verbatim discussion transcripts

Step 3 - Analysis and Reporting

Discussion group results are analyzed and reported by each discussion topic and learning objective.

Participant quotes representative of key insights are highlighted in the report. Participant opinions or sentiment on graphic or multi-media materials, including advertising, key messages, and social media accounts or campaigns are separately reported.

Reporting includes Wine Opinions analysis and graphic presentation of quantitative results from the Issues and Screening survey.

Participant demographics and their related qualifications are presented in table format. A complete transcript of the three-day discussion is also included.

Trade Groups and Tasting Options

Online Tastings

Consumer discussion groups can include at-home tastings accomplished individually by group participants prior to a two-day online discussion.

Participants are sent tasting kits with masked samples. The kits may include between 1 - 6 samples of client and/or competitor wines.

Participants taste on their own and complete an evaluation form online prior to the beginning of the group discussion.

Reporting includes analysis and a summary of the tasting evaluations, along with insights from the discussion topics.

Trade Discussion Groups

Online discussion groups for members of the U.S. wine trade employ the same methodology and follow the same steps and flow as consumer groups.

Participant recruiting relies principally on the Wine Opinions national trade panel of more than 5,000 members, representing all tiers of the trade. Direct recruiting of trade members by tier and company is employed to meet very specific client target audiences.

Trade discussion group reporting includes company name and title of participants.