

**Melnyk Yuliia Mykolaivna,***Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor, Associate Professor  
of the Department of Marketing and MIA,  
Sumy State University (Sumy, Ukraine);***Fomenko Daria Vadymivna,***Marketer, LLC "TRIUMPH MEDIA GROUP" Ltd. (Sumy, Ukraine)*

### **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF FOCUS GROUP METHOD IN MARKETING SYSTEM**

*The article investigates the prospects of development of the focus groups method in the contemporary economy, discussed the theoretical background and features of the this method, identified the new properties and scope of implementation, justified the possibility of focus groups method using as a tool of indirect communication.*

Keywords: marketing, marketing research, method of focus group, focused interview, information, moderator.

**Problem statement.** Since the occurrence of the category of focused method interview its nature and ranges of application were slightly changed and expanded, requiring objective changes and its methodologies in the modern conditions of economy.

Focus group methods permit alternative ways of obtaining information from consumers without the common knee-jerk response to use a survey. Survey instruments tend to be looked at as scientific, particularly when they produce quantitative data, and so may be overused by those who lack confidence in other market research strategies.

But focus groups have a distinct advantage over some other types of market research: they are flexible by design, capitalize on decision-makers ability to talk to their customers and their knowledge of their brand, product, or services. A good moderator who prepares well for the focus group will act as proxy for the decision-makers.

**Analysis of the recent research and publications.** Theoretical foundations of the nature of organization, of management mechanism, the choice of implementation instruments and the psychological impact of the focus groups method as a qualitative method of marketing research devoted considerable segment of modern economic literature, particularly such works as author Belanovskij S.O. [1] Hirnyk A.M. [2], Hirnyk D.A. [2], Maslova S.V. [4], Melnikova O.T. [6], Merton R. [7], Fiske M. [7], Kendall P. [7], Karpischenko M. [8], Olefirenko O.M. [8], Ratinskii B. [9], Chekmisheva O.V. [10], Nilsen J. [12], Krueger R.A. [11] and many other representatives of economy, marketing, sociology and management schools. It is not surprising, after all, the diversity of the use of a method of focus groups can provide simultaneously achievement of several goals.

**The aim of the research** is to determine the prospects of the focus groups method going beyond its interpretation only as a qualitative method of marketing research. Range of tasks: to explore the theoretical background and uniqueness of the focus groups method; to identify new features and implementation scope; substantiate the possibility of using as indirect communication tool.

**Main material.** Focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting

where participants are free to talk with other group members. The first focus group was held in Ernest Dichter's house in a room he built above his garage. The first focus groups were created at the Bureau of Applied Social Research in the USA, by associate director, sociologist Robert K. Merton [7]. In the world of marketing, focus groups are seen as an important tool for acquiring feedback regarding new products, as well as various topics. In marketing, focus groups are usually used in the early stages of product or concept development, when organizations are trying to create an overall direction for marketing initiative. In particular, focus groups allow companies wishing to develop, package, name, or test market a new product, to discuss, view, and /or test the new product before it is made available to the public. This can provide valuable information about the potential market acceptance of the product [12].

A focus group is an interview, conducted by a trained moderator among a small group of respondents. The interview is conducted in an informal and natural way where respondents are free to give views from any aspect [1].

Participants are recruited on the basis of similar demographics, psychographics, buying attitudes, or behaviors.

Today, using audience response keypads to collect questionnaire answers is the new industry trend.

Thus, having regard to all the above mentioned, we are able to define the method of “focus groups”. This is qualitative method of data collection in the homogeneous (according to important researching attributes) groups, with a focus and moderator, and based on the principles of group dynamics [5]. The variety of existing techniques used during the focus group method are presented in Figure 1 [1; 4; 11].

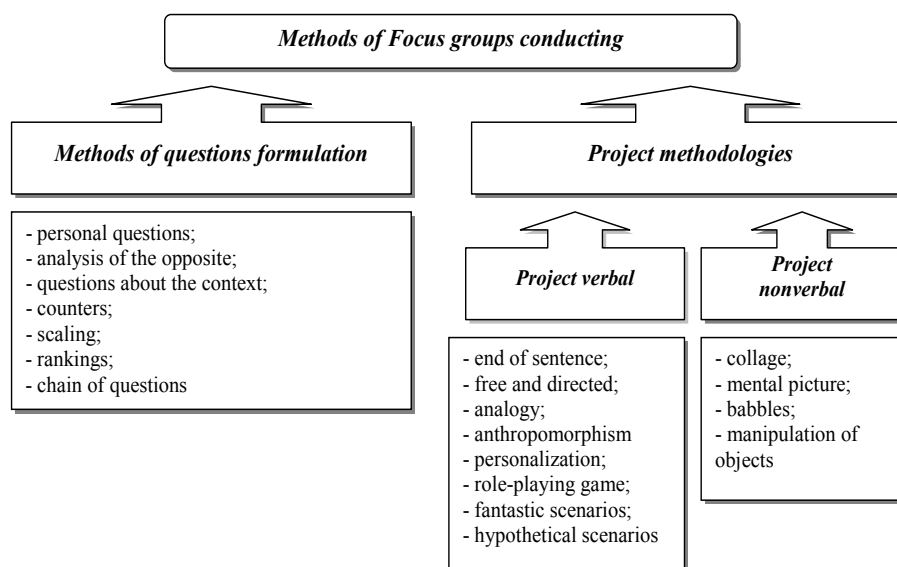


Figure 1 – Methods of Focus groups conducting

Historically, this method is essentially a group modification of deep personal interview, but now there are all reasons to consider it as an independent method, using the whole arsenal of methods and techniques of other qualitative methods (in particular, individual interviews

and creative methods ). We propose to consider the evolution of focus groups method applications (Figure 2) [3; 6; 7].

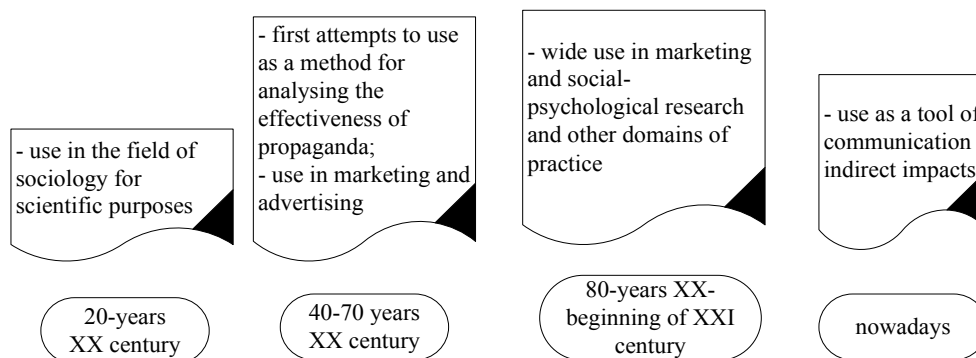


Figure 2 – The evolution of focus groups method applications, (formed with using of [3; 6; 7])

Also one of the perspective applications of the method focus group is its application in modern online interview [2; 9; 10]. To expand the use of the hypothesis focus groups as an instrument of communication and its impact on the participants, we consider a practical example. The main goal of the project, conducted LMS for the KP “Sumyzhytlo” (one of the points of which is focus group research) is to change the prejudice and disbelief public attitude towards municipal Enterprise. The image of the organization completely broken and it must be changed. It was decided that the changes should start with the younger generation people, because they are more vulnerable to new information.

From the results of the research received the information that most news people learn through rumors (so-called “word of mouth”), and then rumors grow into the news on social networks, newspapers, radio and television.

So you need to create such condition that requires respondents to remember information that client require, which they have received during the work focus groups, and they should be able to transfer it to their friends and family.

“Sumyzhytlo” is one of the enterprises of the city to which the population attitude is 100% hostile and dissatisfactory to its work (according to the results of marketing quantitative research by the method of each apartment survey conducted in April 2013). This situation needs special attention from marketers and PR employees. It was decided to invite them to solve this problem by using focus groups as a tool that can bring relevant information to the respondent and fix it for a long time [8].

This situation raises a number of complex issues. For example, why one should organize the focus group, processing the results, etc., if he / she can just spend a few press conferences, release an article in the newspaper, run image advertising campaign and more. The traditional tools of marketing communications are effective, but is there undeniable confidence that they can actually change people's attitude? They are used in the present, but because more anger, confusion and controversy.

In a focus group study there, so-called unwritten rule that when its conduct it is forbidden to campaign and convince respondents. Of course moderator can insert a few remarks about the organization functions and responsibilities (as it turned out from the research, population

cannot clearly delineate the boundaries of “Sumyzytlo” work), but this is not enough information for participant to remember and appearing the desire to share it with family and friends.

Attention should be paid to basics of physiology of human memory such as long-term memory. Because the task is fixing information in the memory of the respondents for a long time, so they can transfer it to others. A repeating will consolidate information in memory for a longer time. A higher degree of material processing requires for long time information fixing in memory. It is necessary to determine the value of information that respondents perceive and allow time for reflection, summarizing and its analysis.

Long-term memory is based on the observation, analysis, and judgment. Any judgment includes impressions and emotions. Strong emotions are like hot glue and left indelible traces in memory.

So according to the mentioned above we can conclude that it is necessary to construct the work in focus groups so as to cause respondents strong emotional excitement and then consolidate the necessary information in long-term memory (Figure 3).

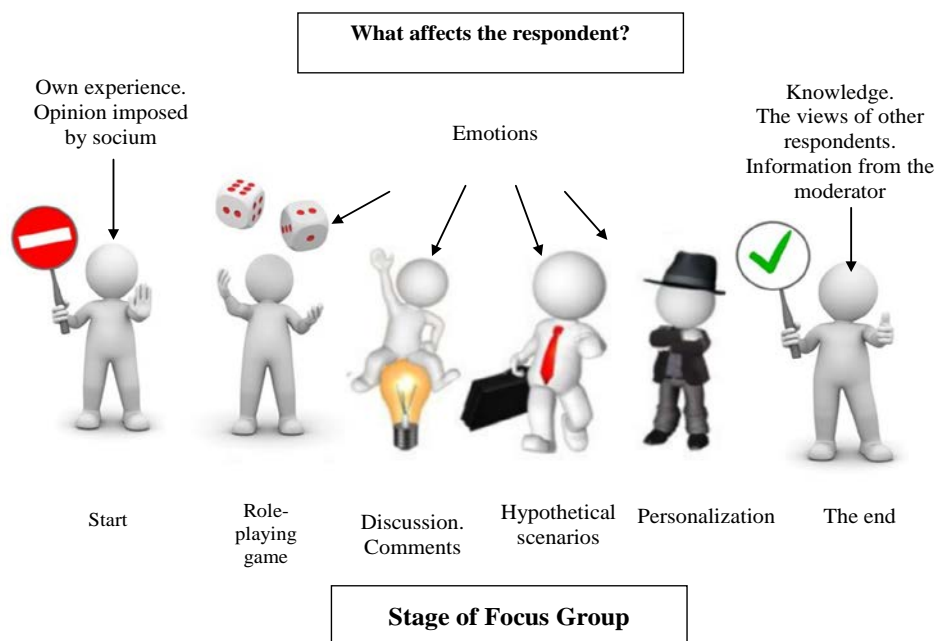


Figure 3 – Scheme of focus group impact techniques on the consciousness of the respondent

For this case used such situations as discussion, debate, rebuttal and techniques of personalization, role-play and hypothetical scenarios. It is important that each of the focus groups member are not just heard some information, but analyzed it and comprehend [9; 10].

From the beginning of the study, all participants were hostile about ME “Sumyzytlo”. In their statements were a lot of anger and frustration. However, when faced with the task to take on the role of the object of research, take the side of your opponent and try on its

function – they recognized that it is not as easy as it seems. That there are many barriers, pressure, limited budget and so on. With the help of “hypothetical scenarios” method where participants were tasked to solve the real situation with a real budget, respondents immediately found many excuses for KP “Sumyzhytlo”, for example that many functions is not always possible to perform fully and on time.

Also, respondents had the opportunity to propose projects to solve current situations such as distrust, destruction of property, debts. When they expressed their ideas, best wishes and intentions, in response to the they received criticism from others. This enabled them to understand that it is impossible to satisfy all, there is still someone who does not like this idea, interfere, and creates discomfort, and so on.

To assess the effectiveness of this tool there was asked to do a small survey of respondents of how they feel about the work of the investigated enterprise and about their attitude to the participation in focus groups. And then conduct a similar survey with similar questions already at the end of the study, and we got the answer about how many people we were able to persuade.

High efficiency was observed in research conducted by LMS. Respondents expressed their views after the work of focus group and almost 90% of respondents changed their opinion and said that not everything depends on the organization. Support, people understanding and willing to help are requires for efficient operation of municipal enterprises.

**Conclusions and perspectives for further studies.** We offer to look at the focus group – a qualitative method of marketing research as a specific tool of marketing communications. What can be used in situations where a certain organization or a product have a negative image and consumers were not much familiar with its functions and features. And then during the focus group using such techniques as personalization, role play and hypothetical scenarios that make the respondent feel the full seriousness of the situation and cause vivid emotions during work. Thus, this understanding will remain in the memory of the participant for a long period. And good emotions and memories is always a pleasure to share with your loved ones.

After analysis of the data, we concluded that the method of focus group research can be regarded as a specific tool of marketing communications. It is specific because of certain indications for use such as the need to improve the image of the company, informing consumers about the functions performed by the organization and rapid change of views on the enterprise from the point of view of consumers.

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**Ю.М. Мельник**, канд. екон. наук, доцент, доцент кафедри маркетингу та УІД, Сумський державний університет (м. Суми, Україна);

**Д.В. Фоменко**, маркетолог, ТОВ «ТРИУМФ МЕДІА ГРУП» (м. Суми, Україна)

### **Перспективи розвитку методу фокус-груп у системі маркетингу**

*Стаття присвячена дослідженню перспектив розвитку методу фокус-груп у сучасних умовах господарювання, розглянуто теоретичне підґрунтя та особливості методу фокус-груп, визначені нові властивості і сфери застосування, обґрунтовано можливість використання цього методу як непрямого комунікаційного інструменту.*

Ключові слова: маркетинг, маркетингові дослідження, метод фокус-груп, фокусоване інтерв'ю, інформація, модератор.

**Ю.Н. Мельник**, канд. екон. наук, доцент, доцент кафедри маркетингу та УІД, Сумський державний університет (г. Сумы, Украина);

**Д.В. Фоменко**, маркетолог, ООО «ТРИУМФ МЕДИА ГРУП» (г. Сумы, Украина)

### **Перспективы развития метода фокус-групп в системе маркетинга**

*Статья посвящена исследованию перспектив развития метода фокус-групп в современных условиях хозяйствования, рассмотрены теоретические основы и особенности метода фокус-групп, определены новые свойства и сферы применения, обоснована возможность использования такого метода в качестве косвенного коммуникационного инструмента.*

Ключевые слова: маркетинг, маркетинговые исследования, метод фокус-групп, фокусирующее интервью, информация, модератор.

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