



**WAGENINGEN**  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

## BC TOOLBOX

# Doing a consumer interview

This document includes guidelines for students (Bachelor Food Technology) to do a consumer interview and find out the consumer perspective on a certain food product. During the course in which the interview is a learning activity, students develop an innovative food product in which they have to take the consumer perspective into account. This document contains four sections:

1. Instructions for the first interview (on raw / existing food material)
2. Instructions for the second interview (on innovated / student-developed food material)
3. Tips for performing the interviews
4. Instructions for what to write about the interviews in the final report.

### Author(s)

Julia Diederer, Teacher Food Technology (BSc/MSc)

### Organization/department

Wageningen University

### Contact details

boundarycrossing@wur.nl

### Link to BC/place on taxonomy

Showcases, Learning materials - Boundaries – university/society; Learning mechanisms – Identification; Learning mechanisms – Coordination;

### User permissions

This work is licensed under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

### Version

Academic year 2019-2020

## Instructions and Interview Guide for the FIRST consumer interview: interview about the raw material

In this course you will perform two different consumer interviews: one before the start of pre-DIPP, about the raw material, and one at the end of the DIPP week, about the innovated food product. This document explains in detail the first consumer interview.

**Please, first carefully read the file "Tips for performing a consumer interview"**

### Consumer interview about raw material (before the start of pre-DIPP)

This interview is performed in the week before pre-DIPP, somewhere between June 9 and June 14. This interview is a semi-structured interview: There are fixed questions defined beforehand written down in the interview guide that is already provided to you (end of this document), but there is also room for asking follow-up questions or coming up with questions on the spot, depending on the respondent's answers.

**The research question:** For this first interview, you want to find out what associations / experiences consumers have with your raw material, how they perceive it and how they consume / process / use it. Keep your goal clearly in mind, so you can ask specific (follow-up) questions to the respondent to get an answer to this.

**Selecting respondents:** You perform this interview with **two different respondents**. Make sure that these respondents are not very familiar persons to you, so not your father, sister, best friend. Ask for example a neighbour, a friend of a friend, an aunt that you do not talk to very often, etc. Make sure the respondents are different in age, gender, etc. In selecting you might first ask whether they ever consume your raw material. If not, then it is better to find a different respondent.

**Make an appointment:** Make appointments of 40 minutes with each respondent (separately, of course). Make sure that there is some time in between the two interviews, so not both right after each other. You will not need the whole 40 minutes, 20 minutes is probably enough, but at least when something goes wrong, you have plenty of time. You can do this interview in person (keep note of the 1.5 m distance) or via skype for example. It is better if you can see the person by video (and they see you).

**Recording/making notes:** Ensure that you can record the interview, but also make short notes while interviewing, in case the recording was not working properly. You can even ask someone else to make notes during the interview. After each interview immediately work out the results, see "Tips when performing a consumer interview".

**Interview guide:** On the next page you find the interview guide for the raw material. Read this in advance and adapt / complete it where needed. All students in your group will base their interview on the same set of pre-defined questions, so you can easily share the results.

**Processing of the interviews:** During the first pre-DIPP day you will share the results of your interview with your group members. So make sure you have processed your results before the first day (before Monday June 15). One student in your group will write the section in the DIPP report about these interviews and how you have used these results to come up with an innovation.

**Questions:** Do you have any questions regarding the interviews? Please, post them on Brightspace in the discussion forum "pre-DIPP + DIPP" --> "Discussion forum | first consumer interview (on raw material)".

## Interview guide "Consumer interview for raw material"

---

**Instructions:** In black is the text that you can read out loud. Between <<theses arrows>> is text that you adapt to your situation. In red are instructions for the interviewer, so not to be read out loud.

Of course, if you and the participant both speak a different language (e.g. Dutch), you can do the interview in this language. Think of the translation before you start the interview.

Make yourself familiar with the interview questions before you start the interview. You can add more interview questions if you have any. Also, you can change the order, if you like, also during the interview, if that fits the situation.

---

### Now the interview starts:-----

Thank you for participating in this interview.

This interview is to find out what consumers feel about <<name your raw material>> and how they consume, process, and use it. I do this interview for a project that I am working on for my studies in Food Technology. In this project we will be making a product innovation on <<name your raw material>>.

First, I need to ask your permission for recording this interview. The recording will be deleted after the interview has been completed and the answers are worked-out. Do you agree that I record this interview?

If the participant does not want to be recorded, just mention that this is not a problem, but then you will need to make more notes, so explain the participant that taking these notes will take some time.

Secondly, I want to clarify to you that the answers will only be used for this research, and will be made anonymous so that it is not traceable to you.

I first have a few personal questions:

Question	Answers / notes
1. What is your age?	
2. What is your profession / main daily activity? (in case of a student: what is your study programme)	
3. What is your family/household situation?	
4. What is your role in their household food system (do you buy / cook the foods you eat yourself, or does somebody else buys / cooks this for you)?	
5. What is your highest education? (completed or currently taking)	

Now finally the real interview starts. So let's start with the first question!

After receiving the answer, ask follow-up questions. Show your interest, for example say "That is interesting, why do you think that". Remember your goal. Ask questions like Why? When? Can you give an example? What do you mean?

Question	Answers / notes
6. What is the first thing that pops-up in your mind when you think about <<name your raw material>>?	You can for example ask about a specific (childhood) memory related to this product.
7. Next to the real product, can you give an example of where are how you see this product in other medias (tv, magazine, etc)?	
8. How often do you buy <<name your raw material>>	Ask follow up questions on the buying process: where, when (certain season more than other?), do you specifically search for organic options? Do you look at the quality, how?
9. Can you name products in the supermarket in which <<name your raw material>> are in the ingredient list?	
10. What do you like best about <<name your raw material>>?	
11. Can you give examples of moments when you eat <<name your raw material>>?	
12. How do you eat <<name your raw material>>?	Also ask for specific places (do you bring it to work) or occasions.
13. How much of <<name your raw material>> do you normally consume in one serving / dish?	
14. Can you give examples of how you cook with <<name your raw material>>?	This is important: do people also use the product as an ingredient in a specific dish, mixed with other ingredients? This might be very helpful in finding innovations. So ask about the cooking procedure etc.
15. Do <<name your raw material>> have a certain image to you?	If the respondent does not understand you, you can give examples, such as boring, summer food, luxury, etc. A respondent can give several different answers, so ask for more.
16. Do you regard <<name your raw material>> to be healthy? Can you explain what makes this product healthy/unhealth?	
17. What are the characteristics of this product? When is this product of good quality?	Ask for colour, taste, mouthfeel, structure, softness, etc.
18. ... (you can add more questions if you like)	
19. ... (you can add more questions if you like)	
20. These were my questions. Do you still have any comments or thoughts that you would like to share with me	

We have come to the end of this interview. I want to thank you very much for participating in this research. Your answers will be very valuable for me and my group members to start working on our product innovation. I hope you found it as interesting as I did.

## Instructions and Interview Guide for the SECOND consumer interview: interview about the innovated food product

In this course you will perform two different consumer interviews: one before the start of pre-DIPP, about the raw material, and one at the end of the DIPP week, about the innovated food product. This document explains in detail the second consumer interviews.

**Please, carefully read again the file "Tips for performing a consumer interview"**

### Consumer interview about innovated food product (at the end of the DIPP week)

This interview is performed in the DIPP week, probably on Thursday or Friday.

This interview is a semi-structured interview: There are fixed questions defined beforehand written down in the interview guide that you have to make yourself (end of this document), but there is also room for asking follow-up questions or coming up with questions on the spot, depending on the respondent's answers.

**The research question:** For this second interview, you want to find out what consumers think of your innovated food product. Make sure you clearly define your research question(s) for this interview, this is your goal for the interview. Keep this goal in mind during the interviews, so you can ask specific (follow-up) questions to the respondent to get an answer to the research question(s).

Tip for defining the research questions: You can relate your research questions to the requirements in the House of Quality and also to the goal of your innovation (why do you want to make this innovation?)

**Selecting respondents:** You perform this interview with **two different respondents**. Make sure that these respondents are not very familiar persons to you, so not your father, sister, best friend. Ask for example a neighbour, a friend of a friend, an aunt that you do not talk to very often, etc. Make sure the respondents are different in age, gender, etc. The respondent does not need to be the same respondent as the first interview.

**Make an appointment:** Make appointments of 40 minutes with each respondent (separately, of course). Make sure that there is some time in between the two interviews, so not both right after each other. You will not need the whole 40 minutes, 20 minutes is probably enough, but at least when something goes wrong, you have plenty of time. You can do this interview in person (keep note of the 1.5 m distance) or via skype for example. It is better if you can see the person by video (and they see you).

**Recording/making notes:** Ensure that you can record the interview, but also make short notes while interviewing, in case the recording was not working properly. You can even ask someone else to make notes during the interview. After each interview immediately work out the results, see "Tips when performing a consumer interview".

**Tasting / showing the product:** If you see the respondent in person, and you have the innovated food product available, you are allowed to let the respondent taste the product, when you are sure this is safe! But: This is not needed!! If you cannot show the real product, make sure you can show several pictures. Show (pictures of) the product from different angles, for example also the inside (cut open).

**Interview guide:** On the next page you find the a general version of the interview guide for the innovated food product. Adapt / complete it for your innovated food product. Discuss the questions with

your group members, and maybe also your supervisor! All students in your group will base their interview on the same set of questions, so you can easily share the results.

**Processing of the interviews:** One student in your group will write the sections in the DIPP report about these interviews. More information in the document "What to place in the report for the interviews"

**Questions:** Do you have any questions regarding the interviews? Please, post them on Brightspace in the discussion forum "pre-DIPP + DIPP" --> "Discussion forum | DIPP (general)".

### Interview guide "Consumer interview for innovated food product"

---

**Instructions:** In black is the text that you can read out loud. Between <<theses arrows>> is text that you adapt to your situation. In red are instructions for the interviewer, so not to read out loud.

Of course, if you and the participant both speak a different language (e.g. Dutch), you can do the interview in this language. Think of the translation before you start the interview.

Make yourself familiar with the interview questions before you start the interview. You can add more interview questions if you have any. Also, you can change the order, if you like, also during the interview, if that fits the situation.

---

#### Now the interview starts:-----

Thank you for participating in this interview.

This interview is to find out what consumers feel about <<name your innovated food product here>> based on <<name your raw material>>. I do this interview for a project that I am working on for my studies in Food Technology. In this project we developed this innovated food product.

First, I need to ask your permission for recording this interview. The recording will be deleted after the interview has been completed and the answers are worked-out. Do you agree that I record this interview?

If the participant does not want to be recorded, just mention that this is not a problem, but then you will need to make more notes, so explain the participant that taking these notes will take some time.

Secondly, I want to clarify to you that the answers will only be used for this research and will be made anonymous so that it is not traceable to you.

I first have a few personal questions:

Question	Answers / notes
21. What is your age?	
22. What is your profession / main daily activity? (in case of a student: what is your study programme)	
23. What is your family/household situation?	
24. What is your role in their household food system (do you buy / cook the foods you eat yourself, or does somebody else buys / cooks this for you)?	
25. What is your highest education? (completed or currently taking)	

Now finally the real interview starts. So let's start with the first question!

After receiving the answer, ask follow-up questions. Show your interest, for example say "That is interesting, why do you think that". Remember your goal. Ask questions like Why? When? Can you give an example? What do you mean?

Question	Answers / notes
Add as many questions as you like. For inspiration you could look at the questions of the first interview. Make sure you ask <u>open questions</u> , so not a yes/no question. Also, with the questions you can give keyword / ideas for asking follow-up questions.	
1	
2	
3	
Etc..	
Etc..	These were my questions. Do you still have any comments or thoughts that you would like to share with me?

We have come to the end of this interview. I want to thank you very much for participating in this research. Your answers are very valuable for me and my group members to discuss how successful our innovated food product might become. I hope you found it as interesting as I did.

## Tips for performing a consumer interview for the course DIPP

This document is based on several documents used in courses of the study programme Business and Consumer Studies (BBC) and simplified for our situation in DIPP. For BBC doing consumer interviews is an important research methodology.

There are different forms of interviews, where the two extremes are a fully open interview (interviewer enters the interview fairly blank) and a fully structured interview (all questions are fixed beforehand).

Most interviews, however, are semi-structured. The interviewer has previously thought about topics, interview questions, a sequence, etc., but there is also room for asking follow-up questions or coming up with questions on the spot, depending on the respondent's answers. The tips below are about a semi-structured interview.

### Set-up interview guide

When you do a semi-structured interview, you write an interview guide in advance, which starts with a short introduction to the respondent. This usually contains the following points:

- **Thank** the respondent for participating, and briefly explain what the interview is about.  
Note: do not give too much information about the purpose of your interview, this can influence the respondent in his or her answers.
- **Request permission** for a recording and indicate that it will be deleted after the interview recordings have been processed.
- Make it explicit that the data will **only be used for this research** and that respondents' personal data will be made anonymous before it is shared with anyone within the research group or in publications.

Then put in your interview guide the **questions** that you have already thought up in advance to ask. These serve as a "guide" for the interviewer, hence the term "interview guide". Consider this also as a guide, and not as a fixed format that every interview must necessarily meet. After all, every interview is different. Always leave room for asking other questions, asking follow-up questions is very important!

### Drafting and asking interview questions

When drafting and asking the interview questions, consider the following points:

- It is an interview, so **use spoken language**.
- You may know the "professional language" from your research area, the respondent probably does not.
- Start your interview with a fairly "**simple**" **open question**. This way the respondent gets used to being interviewed, and both of you slowly get used to it.
- **Ask open questions**: you are looking for information you don't know yet; not a confirmation of one's own ideas. The "why" is very important: What do consumers find important in a product, and why? How do consumers prepare a particular product, and why? Etc. Good follow-up questioning is key for a good conversation.
- So avoid closed questions as much as possible, which invites a simple yes / no answer from the respondent.
- Questions should never guide towards **a particular answer**. So avoid a question that pushes the respondent towards a specific answer.
- Try to make it a **conversation**, in which you invite people to talk instead of a "question-answer game". It can help to ask now and then: "Can you tell something more about it?" or "Can you explain it further?".

- By **thinking** about the subject yourself and by **looking** for literature you can already find out about the subject. This can help formulate questions in advance.
- It can help to write down some **key words** per question that you may want to use for follow-up questions. This gives you some guidance in the conversation.
- See also the key words as guidelines, and only ask if the respondent does not already say something about it. You want to avoid asking guiding questions towards a specific answer.

At the end of your interview, consider whether you have received the answers with which you can answer your research questions. So make sure you now know what you wanted to know and that you are ready to enter the next phase of your research.

- When finalising your interview, always give the respondent the opportunity to make comments, make additions or ask questions. There may still be issues that you have not thought of before.

### Pilot interview: test your interview guide

It is often wise to test your interview guide once before you actually start interviewing your target group / respondents. This is a so-called **pilot interview**. That way you can practice once, but you can especially check whether the questions you have thought up in advance are clear to the respondent. And whether you actually get answers that are useful for answering your research questions. You can adjust the interview guide based on a pilot interview.

### Processing the results

Conducting interviews is a form of qualitative research, in which you try to get an idea of what people do or think, and why that is the case. So qualitative research is **not** about how many people do or find something, but what and why people do or find something. So you are not looking for respondents who all say the same thing, but different behaviours or opinions are very interesting. This gives you an idea of what is going on in the field of your subject. That way you also approach the writing of your results.

- Always start with a short sample description. Who were in your research, what were their characteristics (age, gender, level of education, etc.)? You can optionally display this in a table. **Important note:** Make the results anonymous, so give each respondent a number ("respondent 1")
- Then you describe the most important results. Try to write this down in an orderly manner. This can be done based on the structure of your interview guide, but often it works best based on the topics you discussed in the interview.
- Describe the results descriptively, it is **not** about how many people have said something. It is about what people have said. So describe the most important, most striking and interesting answers. Often this will be based on what most respondents have said, but answers from one or only a few respondents can be very interesting and relevant!
- In principle, you write the results in your own words, but sometimes it is difficult to explain what exactly a respondent has answered or intended. In that case you can use quotes. Make sure that you make it clear that it is a quote (for example use quotation marks), and that you refer to it correctly (for example mention the respondent number). For example: Respondent 1 said "Lentils are for me a memory from my childhood, where my grandmother used them in my favourite soup".

## What to place in the DIPP report for the consumer interviews?

In this course you performed two different consumer interviews: one before the start of pre-DIPP, about the raw material, and one at the end of the DIPP week, about the innovated food product. This document explains how to report on the consumer interviews.

**Please, carefully read again the file "Tips for performing a consumer interview". It gives information on what to do with the results.**

### For the first interview (on raw material)

#### **In the introduction**

You used the results of the first consumer interview for making the House of Quality and for worksheet 1 (to come up with an innovation). So, in your introduction you can very shortly describe how this consumer interview was performed, and which outcomes of the interview were striking and were used by you for defining the innovation. For example you can use the highlighted words in worksheet 1. When discussing the House of Quality you might also want to refer back to the consumer interview.

Note: In the introduction, you only talk about the innovation that you actually work(ed) on during DIPP. All other ideas for innovations are not reported, because not interesting for the reader.

#### **In the Appendix**

Place the Interview guide (not the whole document, only the guide) of the first consumer interview in the appendix.

Also give an overview of the results from these interviews. See "Tips when performing a consumer interview" for what to do with the results.

### For the second interview (on innovated food product)

#### **In the section "Materials and methods"**

Describe how the consumer interview was performed. Give enough details so someone else can judge how it is done, and whether it is done properly.

Example of details to give: how many people were interviewed by how many interviewers, how were they contacted (in general), how did the interview take place (online, face-to-face, by phone, by skype), for how long, what was the procedure, was an interview guide used, did all interviewers use the same questions, in which language, etc.

#### **In the section "results and discussion"**

Make a separate subheading for the consumer interview.

Give important and interesting results from the consumer interviews. Especially results related to the aim of the interview. Indicate what answers were given (=results) and what you have learned from this about your innovation (=discussion in relation to your aim). We are not interested in your opinion. We are interested in the opinion of the consumer.

See also "Tips when performing a consumer interview" how to report the results. Think of using interesting quotes (if there are any).

Note: Do not make a separate results section and a separate discussion section, keep all in one section. (This is also true for all other sections.) Report results in past tense.

**In the Appendix**

Place the Interview guide (not the whole document, only the guide) of the second consumer interview in the appendix.

Also give an overview of the results from these interviews. See "Tips when performing a consumer interview" for what to do with the results / how to report results.

**Short check-list at the end**

1. All results need to be anonymous, so names of respondents (and interviewers) are not allowed anywhere in the report.
2. Remove recordings
3. Make any document that contains names or respondents anonymous.

Doing a consumer interview

**Boundary crossing illustrations**

Guido Bootz ([guido@merkactivisten.nl](mailto:guido@merkactivisten.nl))

Merkactivisten ([www.merkactivisten.nl](http://www.merkactivisten.nl))

**Graphic design of documents**

Nicolette Tauecchio ([info@nicniq.nl](mailto:info@nicniq.nl))

Nicniq ([www.nicniq.nl](http://www.nicniq.nl))