



Qualitative Research Report

Brittany Harano, Delaney Petersen, Maddie Raney, and Claire Taetz



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Executive Summary

In order to gain consumer insight into the In-N-Out brand the group five members conducted qualitative research through four, one-on-one interviews. The interviewees were carefully selected by the researchers because of their demographic and expertise they offer within the quick service industry. Each interview was conducted using many approaches to question types including but not limited to projective and probing techniques. The objectives were to further understand general consumer feeling toward the brand, opinions on limited menu and menu expansion, as well as providing a delivery service option. After the information was compiled and discussed we generally found that the traditional values and themes in addition to the In-N-Out experiences have consistently brought customers in the door or through the drive-through. The recommendations based on the qualitative research done include: adding one vegetarian menu option while keeping traditionality and the consideration of using a third party application as a mean of delivery. Finally, we recommend that In-N-Out stick to their mission by continuing the use of the classic diner-like red and white branding that is all so familiar and nostalgic.

Introduction

In-N-Out Burger is an American fast food chain that was founded in 1948. It has locations in California and Southwestern United States and prides itself in a simplified menu and a homey, California vibe. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fast Food Industry's revenue as a whole has declined 16% in 2020 (IBISWorld). In-N-Out has been financially hit as well, especially considering it does not offer delivery services such as Uber Eats, GrubHub, and DoorDash. In-N-Out's main competition, Whataburger, also offers delivery through both an app and through outside services. Our research objectives include:

- To identify consumer opinions of In-N-Out's continuation of the tradition in products, options, and marketing to see if tradition is detrimental while potential threats from COVID-19 are at play.
- Assess overall brand personality, motivations of consumers, and perceptions of customer service and menu size
- To learn if target consumers would utilize a delivery option, which In-N-Out does not currently offer

Methodology and Participant Descriptions

Our group conducted in-depth interviews to gather qualitative data. The methods used in gathering this information about In-N-Out allowed us to understand the individual perspectives of our interviewees. We implemented a semistructured interview in which we prepared three topics. The similar baseline questions to be asked across all participants include: brand personality, delivery options, and menu. The interview process began with general questions about fast food and transitioned into probing and projective techniques in order to receive real, in-depth answers from participants. With this approach, each interviewer had freedom to ask questions on a whim and gather more data specific to the unique perspective. Our questions reflected each of Patton's 6 types of questions in order to gather deeper insight with our open-ended questions.

Our team selected four participants based on the demographics of our brand, In-N-Out. For this reason, we selected four males, ages 18-44, who currently live in areas where In-N-Out restaurants are located.

Participant #1 is a twenty year old male from California, who is currently attending TCU's business school.

Participant #2 is a twenty-three year old male also from California, more specifically San Diego. Participant

#3 is a twenty-one year old male from California also currently attending the TCU school of business.

Lastly, participant #4 is a nineteen year old male from Northeast Texas. These are the experts of our



customer base, as they fit the audience In-N-Out most reaches. We were able to gain valuable information from our active customers to influence our future decisions.

Key Findings & Recommendations

When individually interviewing the study participants, we found that all participants expect In-N-Out to uphold tradition in values, menu size, and brand designs. The participants also mentioned that In-N-Out gives off the Californian aesthetic while keeping the 50s style it prides itself on. However, one participant said that if the company extended the visual aesthetic into an auditory aesthetic with 50s music, he would be reluctant to sit in the restaurant. When choosing In-N-Out, the participants value the small menu, as extensive menus are overwhelming. All participants enjoy ordering the same food combination every visit. They all expect In-N-Out to uphold quality in the restaurant's food, design, and customer service, yet keeping the quick service that makes it fast food. Tradition works. However, there is always room for improvement to increase new customers, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

After listening to the audio recordings of each participant and interviewer, a few ideas come to mind when thinking about enhancing the overall quality of the In-N-Out experience. Our team recommends that In-N-Out keeps the menu as is, except with one exception. In-N-Out should consider adding a vegetarian burger if the burger can taste like the original. Three out of four participants in our study agreed to try a veggie burger. However, they will only consider ordering it consistently if it tastes like the original,

as the three are following health trends. If In-N-Out packaged the burger the same and made it taste like the original, this would allow the company to reach a broader demographic. Not to mention, California is known for starting health kicks for the nation, and it would be no surprise if a Californian-themed restaurant offered a vegetarian offer. If a customer is vegan, the customer could order the veggie burger and add or take off toppings that don't follow the vegan lifestyle.

In-N-Out should keep the atmosphere and design consistent as well. When thinking about celebrities in regard to the restaurant, participants chose celebrities that are known for being down to earth, friendly, appreciative, and appealing to all ages. These values should always be reflected in the In-N-Out staff, as the customers either uphold these values or expect In-N-Out to maintain them. Mid-market, sensible, classic car brands and types were used to describe In-N-Out. Most customers at In-N-Out value quality over price, knowing that they can get a cheap burger anywhere, but a burger like In-N-Out only at In-N-Out. Quality should never be sacrificed for price. Otherwise, the customer would go to extremely cheap and fast burger places like McDonald's.

The participants all drive-thru In-N-Out, but three out of the four prefer to sit down when with a group of people. However, participant #2 mentioned that In-N-Outs seem to have strange drive-thrus where it is difficult to maneuver a car. With a similar opinion from our team, we recommend that In-N-Out fixes existing drive-thrus and builds with this in mind in the future. Three out of the four participants prefer a

delivery option with today's trends after COVID and convenience for a college student or a business professional. Long hours at school or work means less time to drive. If In-N-Out incorporated a delivery option, while keeping iconic brand packaging, In-N-Out could expect to see a rise in sales. However, this would take away from the In-N-Out experience where quality customer service is upheld at the drive-thru window or restaurant counter.

Lastly, it would be an excellent opportunity for In-N-Out to uphold its brand consistency, tradition, aesthetic, and nostalgia by selling merchandise in the store. This idea would need to be researched more with more participants, but we think this could be a unique tactic to enhance the In-N-Out experience and generate more profit for the company. The company sells a limited merchandise selection on its website, but an in-person buying option would strengthen its image.

Appendix

Consent Form

Research Section 035

Interview Consent Form for Participants

By signing this form you are stating that you agree to the following conditions regarding your interview with Research Section 035 Group Five. The interview may be conducted by either Delany Peterson, Clair Taetz, Brittany Harano, or Maddie Raney. **Please read through the conditions carefully.**

- I. I agree to be interviewed and questioned by one of the group members on the topic of the quick service food industry.
- II. I agree with letting the research group use my responses and given information for citation and quotation in our research project.
- III. I consent to the zoom call to be recorded for later use and reference.
- IV. I agree that your participation in this interview is voluntary.
- V. I hold the right to not answer any questions that make me uncomfortable.
- VI. I understand that my name will not be used in the final research product.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interview Guide

Introduction

Introduce yourself and a broad objective of why you are conducting the interview.

Purpose of Interview: We are aware that In-n-Out Burger is a popular burger chain in the Western U.S. We are interested in hearing your perception of the brand, both positive and negative. It will be appreciated if we could spend some time together to discuss this issue.

Interview Begins

Brand Personality

How often do you find yourself eating fast food?

What do you look for in a fast food restaurant?

With what frequency do you dine at In-n-Out?

How would you describe In-n-Out's vibe?

Delivery Options

What helps you determine the convenience of a fast food restaurant?

Do you prefer delivery, drive through, sit-down.. ?

During the height of COVID-19, did you order food to be delivered?

What delivery service do you prefer?

Menu

Would you say you are the type of person to often try new foods?

How health conscious would you say you are in terms of meals?

If there is a vegetarian option on a fast food menu, would you be more inclined to order that?

When a quick service restaurant has seasonal items, do you usually try them or stick to the usual?



Projective Techniques and Probing Questions

Projective

What Celebrities are most likely to go to In-N-Out, what would they be ordering?

If In-N-Out were an animal what animal would it be?

In-N-Out is more... than Whataburger?

What kind of car does the average In-N-Out customer have?

Describe In-n-Out in 3 words.

If you were to walk into an In-n-Out, what would you see?

What topics of conversation would you overhear while standing in line?

What does an In-N-Out smell like when you first walk in?

Probing

What do you normally order when you go to In-N-Out?

Do you go pick where to get food based on new menu items?

Do larger menus make you feel overwhelmed?

Why do you feel the way you do about a veggie option?

For what occasions would you dine at In-n-Out?

Do you decide where to eat based on proximity?



Links

Interviews

Delany and Participant #1

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1f9ylsuC9e8Gdm_1xIOQxVTMSJqF6qi7a?usp=sharing

Claire and participant #2

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RI2viGzjiFfOGNbCw6-lp9anlyJpxNlj/view>

Brittany and Participant #3

<https://tcu.box.com/s/9y246ta5kzc3ehpt413fz9pfevwczdv>

Maddie and Participant #4

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zbv6xtXv2BucQemgf0qsfk000m5WwElj/view?usp=sharing>

Signed Consent Forms

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZPUqGfwuPWaa5_YRxB4_vrI7s75wM9og?usp=sharing