

2017-2018 Qualitative Research about Passport Program Vision of the Future

Executive Summary

Prepared for:
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

Executive Summary

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) was commissioned by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to conduct qualitative research with Passport Program clients about the Passport Program vision for the future.

Background and Objectives

In 2016, Business Research Intelligence and Analytics (BRIA) developed the Passport Program vision for the future. The vision was vetted with internal partners, as well as Service Canada and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). The vision was also presented to the 5N Countries (Canada, USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand). Based on qualitative research, the vision identified a number of client-facing conceptual themes that will help shape the future vision for Program delivery. They are:

1. Native mobile app for passport renewal
2. Mobile passport (mobile passport)
3. Virtual passport

The last two themes align with CBSA's view of helping to deal with increasing volumes at airports and reduce waiting times for clients.

Transforming operations and building a successful business model for the future requires the client perspective. Understanding client needs, expectations and concerns for the future is crucial to the successful alignment of program delivery initiatives and sustained high levels of client satisfaction.

To obtain client input, IRCC commissioned qualitative public opinion research designed to assess the interest of clients in relation to adopting new service strategies and technologies, as well as to gain insight into attitudes, expectations, and concerns surrounding the above-mentioned forward-looking concepts.

The findings could inform the development of a feasibility and impact assessment of Passport Program initiatives related to the envisioned future state business model. In addition, the results will provide valuable information for the Passport Program Modernization Initiative (PPMI) and help refine BRIA's research on the passport holders' demographic profile of the future.

Methodology

To meet the research objectives, a set of 15 focus groups was conducted with Canadian passport holders between January 29th and 31st, 2018 in the following five locations: Halifax, Montreal (French), Toronto, Prince Albert, and Kelowna. French-speaking groups were conducted in Montreal in order to ensure feedback from Francophone Quebecers. In each location, three focus groups were conducted, one with members of each of the following target audiences:

- Passport holders aged 18-30
- Passport holders aged 31-57
- Passport holders aged 58-70.

Each group included a mix of participants by age (within the parameters identified above), gender, type of travel (i.e. business vs. personal), and frequency of travel outside of Canada (i.e., less than once a year, one to five times a year, and more than five times a year). Participants also had to use a smartphone, such as an iPhone, Android, Blackberry or Windows phone. Participants were recruited by telephone using an opt-in database, as well as through cold calling and lists pulled by postal codes. MRIA's Qualitative Research Registry was used.

Groups lasted 90 minutes and participants received an honorarium of \$100 in appreciation of their time. Ten participants were recruited for eight participants to show per focus group. Turnout was good with at least six participants in each group. All sessions were audio-video recorded.

In each focus group, participants were presented with three conceptual themes (scenarios) that form part of the future vision for Program delivery. Each scenario was presented to participants through a short, animated video designed to provide participants with a clear understanding of the concept. In advance of the three scenarios, participants were shown another short, animated video explaining the ePassport and how it works. This video ensured all participants had a common understanding of the ePassport and its features, in particular the electronic chip and how it can be read with Near Field Communications technology. Following the presentation of each scenario, participants completed a short questionnaire designed to get their individual impressions of it. This was followed by a discussion about the scenario as a group.

The moderators for this study were Alethea Woods and Philippe Azzie. Alethea moderated the groups in Prince Albert and Kelowna. Philippe moderated the groups in Toronto, Halifax, and the French language groups in Montreal. Both contributed to the final report.

This research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. As such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of members of the general public or members of the targeted audience segments.

Key Findings

Findings from this research suggest receptivity to the new concepts. Attitudes towards all three scenarios were much more likely to be positive than negative across all age groups and locations, and there was relatively widespread interest in the adoption of the new service strategies and technologies. Indeed, there were few noticeable differences across age groups and locations.

That being said, the extent and intensity of positive reactions decreased with each scenario. It was strongest and most widespread in relation to the passport renewal app, and weaker in extent and intensity in relation to the virtual passport. This is not surprising, given that each subsequent scenario (i.e. each one following the passport renewal app) represents a further advance into unfamiliar territory. While downloading apps on a smartphone is part of daily life, mobile and virtual passports represent uncharted territory in Canada. In short, the 'newer' or more unfamiliar the service, the lesser the extent and intensity of positive reactions. This was underscored by the number of participants suggesting that their adoption of the mobile or virtual passport would be based on a 'wait and see' attitude. In

other words, they would decide once they had a chance to see how each one performed once implemented).

Participants' receptivity to the scenarios suggests that they understand and support the overall purpose of the initiatives (i.e. facilitating passport renewal and travel). While participants asked questions and expressed concerns about these scenarios, they never called into question the overall objective of the initiatives. The main advantage associated with each scenario was convenience, a benefit clearly in line with the overall objective of the initiatives. In this regard it is worth noting that critical reaction to the virtual passport was often based, in part, on lack of clarity about the purpose of providing advanced information to travel authorities.

The importance participants assigned to convenience as the main benefit associated with each scenario was reflected in the virtually unanimous assumption that each service will be easy to use and the preoccupation that each one function properly. The latter concern was evident in routinely asked questions regarding possible technical problems, particularly regarding use of a mobile and virtual passport.

While it is evident that convenience is a primary consideration for participants, so are safeguards related to ensuring the security and privacy of information. Participants' reactions to each scenario were rarely, if ever, categorically positive or negative, but based rather on balancing its perceived convenience against potential drawbacks in terms of safety/security of information. Especially in the case of the virtual passport, concerns related to privacy of personal information, surveillance, and sharing of information weighed heavier in participants' overall assessments than increased convenience. Moreover, such concerns cannot be attributed to 'fear of new technology' among older participants, as negative reaction to the virtual passport was highest among millennials.

The in-group discussions suggest that the more information people have about each scenario, the greater the likelihood that concerns they have will be allayed. Consequently, reviewing the various questions and concerns raised by participants as indicators of the type of information passport holders may want before deciding whether or not to adopt any of the proposed scenarios would be advisable.

Additional Information

Contract value:

The contract value was \$95,195.72 (including applicable taxes).

Statement of Political Neutrality:

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