

DC 132
Handout 2

PRETESTING AND EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

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- Unless communication planners test their ideas, visuals or storyline with their audience, there is no assurance that the communication material that they have so painstakingly produced will work. Pretesting is a cost-effective means to prevent large, expensive disasters.
- *Pretesting* refers to measuring the reaction of a group of individuals to a communication or set of communications prior to widespread diffusion. Its purpose is to determine systematically which of several alternative versions of a communication will be most effective or to identify elements of a single communication that could be changed to make it more effective (Bertrand, 1978).
- Posters, flipcharts, flashcards, pamphlets, handbooks, radio spots, radio dramas, video tapes are some of the materials that can be pretested.

Designing a pretest

- Pretests can range from very sophisticated procedures requiring complex study designs to very simple procedures that can be implemented with a few respondents. Simple pretests carried out among a small sample of the target audience can provide useful, valid information for improving communication materials.
- The only way to predict audience reaction to a material is to test it among actual members of the target group and it is preferable to have some type of feedback from them than to depend entirely on the impression of the office staff.

What the pretest should measure

Pretests are specifically designed to provide information on one or more of the following components of effectiveness:

1. *Attraction*

Is the message interesting enough to attract and hold the attention of the target audience? Do people like it? If more than one message is tested, which of several messages attracts the most attention/is best liked?

2. *Comprehension*

Is the message clearly understood? If more than one, which of the several alternatives is best understood?

3. *Acceptability*

Does the message contain anything that is offensive or distasteful by local standards? Does it contain anything that people perceive to be false? Does it contain any annoying elements that would become irritating after repeated exposure to the message? If more than one message, which of the several alternatives is least likely to be unacceptable?

4. *Self-involvement*

Is the message perceived to be directed to the individuals in the target audience? Do they feel the message is for themselves or is it for others? If more than one message, which of several alternatives is perceived to be best directed to the target audience?

5. *Persuasion*

Is the message able to convince the target audience to undertake the desired behavior?

- Also consider the *specific objectives* of the communication in deciding what questions to include in your pretest.

What kinds of communications can be pretested?

The range of activities that can be pretested:

- 1) Concepts and logos
- 2) Elaboration of concepts
- 3) Layout evaluation
- 4) Fully finished materials
- 5) Materials and methods

Where should the pretest be carried out?

1. *In-house review* - refers to the practice of obtaining the opinions and reactions of experienced, respected colleagues at various stages in the production process.

In an in-house review, the communication designer could obtain feedback on three key topics:

- *Content*

- a) Does this material (spot, poster, etc.) convey the intended message? (Best revealed by letting one's co-workers to guess the objective of the communication rather than informing them from the start.)
- b) Does this communication convey any secondary, unintended message that might have a negative effect (something that might offend the intelligence, integrity or pride of the intended audience)?

- *Strategy*

- a) Is this the best approach to get the idea across?

- b) Would the message be more effective if an entirely different theme were used?
- c) Should the appeal be more emotional or less?
- *Artistic elements*
 - a) Is the artwork appropriate for the intended audience?
 - b) Does the artwork catch attention and excite curiosity about the contents?
 - c) Is the artwork easily understood?

Setting of the pretest

1. *Naturalistic* - refers to a situation where the person is exposed to the communication as part of his normal routine.

2. *Arranged* - refers to any situation where the respondents agree beforehand to watch, listen to, or read the communications being pretested.

Developing pretest instruments and procedures

In designing a pretest for specific communication material, it helps if one outlines the main features of the pretest by using this guide:

- 1. Variables to be measured
- 2. Type of exposure to communication
- 3. Recommended sample
- 4. Pretest instrument
- 5. Estimated length of each interview
- 6. Description

Designing a pretest instrument

A core set of questions which will measure the indicators of effectiveness -- comprehension, attraction, acceptability, and self-involvement -- can serve as a guide in developing interview schedules or questionnaires to pretest specific materials. You can use the following models or modify them to fit the needs of your program.

- 1. Please tell me in your own words what message is conveyed by the _____ (specify if poster, plug, etc.).

- 2. Does the _____ say anything which you don't believe to be true?
 - _____ 1. Yes
 - _____ 2. No
 - _____ 3. Don't Know
- 2a. If yes, what? _____
- 3. Is there anything in the _____ that might bother or offend the people who live in this community?

- _____ 1. Yes
- _____ 2. No
- _____ 3. Don't Know

3a. If yes, what? _____

4. (IF THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE PICTURE) Do the people you see in the drawing remind you of your friends or are these people different from your friends?
- _____ 1. Like respondent's friends
 - _____ 2. Different from respondents' friend
 - _____ 3. Don't know

4a. If different, in what way are they different?

5. For whom is the _____ intended?
- _____ 1. Someone like myself
 - _____ 2. Other people (specify) _____

6. Is there anything in particular that you like about this _____ ?
- _____ 1. Yes
 - _____ 2. No
 - _____ 3. Don't Know

6a. If yes, what? _____

7. Is there anything in particular that you dislike about this _____?
- _____ 1. Yes
 - _____ 2. No
 - _____ 3. Don't Know

7a. If yes, what? _____

8. In comparison to other _____ you have seen/heard these days, would you rate this _____ to be:
- _____ 1. Excellent
 - _____ 2. Good
 - _____ 3. Fair
 - _____ 4. Poor
 - _____ 5. Don't know

9. What do you think could be done to make this a better _____?

Comparative Questions

10. Please take a second look at (listen again to) these _____ this time altogether. Of these two (three, four) _____, which do you like best?
- _____ 1. Poster (Radio spot) 1
 - _____ 2. Poster (Radio spot) 2

- _____ 3. Poster (Radio spot) 3
- _____ 4. Poster (Radio spot) 4
- _____ 5. Don't know

10a. Why? _____

Background characteristics

- 11. Age (years) _____
- 12. Sex: _____ Male _____ Female
- 13. Number of years spent schooling _____ years
- 14. Tenure status:
 - _____ 1. Owner-operator
 - _____ 2. Amortizing owner
 - _____ 3. Leasee
 - _____ 4. Tenant
 - _____ 5. Hired laborer
- 15. Farm size: _____ ha or _____ quantity of seeds

PRETESTING POSTERS

- It is important to present alternative versions of the same message
- As posters are a visual medium, their effectiveness is closely related to their nonverbal impact. If several alternatives are presented, most respondents will have a decided preference for one over the others, even if they cannot easily explain why this is so.

1. **Variables to be measured**
attraction, comprehension, acceptability, and self involvement
2. **Type of exposure to communication**
Arranged
3. **Recommended sample**
25 to 50 respondents
4. **Pretest instrument**
Individual interview
5. **Estimated length of each interview**
15 minutes
6. **Description**

The purpose of the pretest is to determine which of several posters should be used in a given campaign or program. The interviewer selects the potential respondent, explains the study and solicits the person's collaboration. He then shows the respondent the first poster and asks questions 1 through 9, shows him the second poster and repeats the questions, then finishes the interview with comparison between the posters and background data on the respondents.

7. **The Questionnaire**

Respondent/s Name _____ Address (barangay/town) _____
Date of Interview _____
Interviewer _____ Poster No. _____

1. First, I would like to show you this drawing (picture, photograph).
Please tell me what this looks like to you.

2. Now, I would like to show you the whole poster. In your own words, what
is the message of this poster?

3. Do you think this poster is asking you to do anything in particular?

- _____ 1. Yes
- _____ 2. No
- _____ 3. Don't know

3a. If yes, what? _____

4. Does this poster say anything that you don't believe to be true?

- _____ 1. Yes
- _____ 2. No
- _____ 3. Don't know

4a. If yes, what? _____

5. (IF THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE PICTURE) Do the people you see in this
drawing remind you of your friends or are these people different from
your friends?

- _____ 1. Like my friends
- _____ 2. Different from my friends
- _____ 3. Don't know

6a. If different, in what way are they different?

7. Is there anything in particular that you like about this poster?

- _____ 1. Yes
- _____ 2. No
- _____ 3. Don't know

7a. If yes, what? _____

8. Is there anything in particular that you dislike about this poster?

- _____ 1. Yes

- _____ 2. No
- _____ 3. Don't know

8a. If yes, what? _____

9. What do you think could be done to make this a better poster?

PRETESTING RADIO SPOTS

1. **Variables to be measured**
Attraction, comprehension, acceptability, self-involvement
2. **Type of exposure to communication**
Arranged
3. **Recommended sample**
25 to 50 respondents
4. **Pretest instrument**
Individual interview
5. **Estimated length of each interview**
15 minutes
6. **Description**

- Pretest is intended to determine which of two or three spots should be used in a given communication program.

- Record the messages in advance on a small tape recorder that the interviewer carries in the field. The interviewer selects the potential respondent, explains the study and enlists the person's collaboration. Once the person agrees to participate, the interviewer explains that he is going to play two messages on the tape recorder and then talk to the respondent about each one afterwards. He proceeds to play the first message, then asks the respondent items 1 through 9; then he plays the second message and asks the same questions. After this, the interviewer plays both messages again to determine which of the two the respondent prefers.

PRETESTING PAMPHLETS

- Since a pamphlet is made up of a number of separate parts --title, cover design, art work, text for each subtopic -- it is preferable to test these component parts individually rather than the overall pamphlet.

- You can also pretest the pamphlet as a whole in a naturalistic setting. In this approach, the interviewer approaches the respondent in his home and explains the purpose of the study. He then leaves a copy of the pamphlet and arranges to return at a later date to discuss the pamphlet with the respondent. It is during the interviewer's second visit that he asks a series of questions with regard to the pamphlet.

- In addition to the recommended questions that measure attraction, acceptability, and self-involvement, a set of multiple-choice questions are

devised to test respondent's recall of the content of the pamphlet. After the interview, responses are scored, where 1 is given for each correct response and 0 for an incorrect answer. The proportion of correct responses in each item indicates the degree of comprehensibility of the pamphlet's content. Where the percentage of incorrect replies to certain items is high, it implies that the particular sub-topic or section of the pamphlet needs improvement.

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