



Instrument ESSENTIALS for Materials and Instrument Testing

TOPIC

The aim of materials/instrument testing is to ensure that key messages are being communicated clearly to all populations of interest. Education level, language spoken, and cultural cues may differ across audiences, yet it is important for educational materials and data collection instruments to be understood in the same way by everyone.

This is accomplished by testing the clarity, appeal, “stickiness” and comprehension of materials/instruments with potential users/viewers.

TERMINOLOGY

- × **Cognitive Interviewing:** a method for testing the clarity/understandability of data collection instruments that consists of having participants think aloud as they try to answer questions OR have them respond to probes posed by the tester about the instrument (e.g., what do you think that question was asking?).
- × **Culturally relevant or appropriate:** whether a material (or element of) is understood or interpreted by all audiences in the same way. For some cultures, an image, design element, metaphor or reference may signal something completely different, even offensive. So, it’s important to test not only the meaning, but the appeal of the design, slogan, etc.
- × **Design:** refers to the overall look of the material, including fonts, colors, images and layout.
- × **Format:** refers to the type of material, e.g., fact sheet, report, brochure, presentation, video, etc.
- × **Layout:** refers to how the images and text are arranged in the material. The orientation may be vertical or horizontal in terms of how the eye should move across the page. Content is arranged in one or more columns with white space in between.
- × **Stickiness:** the degree to which an idea or message “sticks” in the mind of the audience – how memorable it is.

USES OF EVALUATION

Observations are used to:

- a. Understand how audiences engage with the material
- b. Ensure the material/instrument is understood in the way it’s intended
- c. Ensure all audiences understand the material/instrument in the same manner

Measures

- Observe how audiences respond to video clips, posters, flyers, etc.
- Track eye movements, website navigation, number/types of clicks, time spent, user experience
- Observe audience reactions (look for confusion, hesitancy, smiles, laughter)
- Assess appeal, interest
- Assess cultural relevancy

Focus Groups are used to:

- a. Ensure the material/instrument is understood in the way it's intended
- b. Ensure all audiences understand the material/instrument in the same manner

Measures

- Assess comprehension
- Assess appeal
- Assess cultural relevancy
- Assess “stickiness” (how memorable)

User/Audience Surveys or Interviews are used to:

- a. Ensure the material/instrument is understood in the way it's intended
- b. Ensure all audiences understand the material/instrument in the same manner

Measures

- Assess comprehension – Are key messages being clearly communicated?
- Assess appeal – Do the materials appeal to this audience visually, content-wise, format, length, layout?
- Assess cultural relevancy – Is there anything about the content or appearance that doesn't work with this population? Is there anything that comes across as offensive or patronizing?
- Is this the best way to frame/present the issue?

Back translation is used to:

- a. Ensure the translation carries the same meaning as the original version

Measure

- Does the translation have the same meaning as the original English version?