Designing Effective Persuasive Communications

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But Especially

YOUNG MIN BAEK, ABD
Message Design

• Effective anti-smoking messages for adult cessation
  – Focus today: approach, not detailed findings
  – Goal: from objective features to intentions
Ties To Conference Themes

- Health benefits/ death appeals work (long term)
  - Variant: NY city Dept of Public Health ads
  - Tie long term to short term

- Cessation is tricky:
  - “quitting is hard” ads
  - Don’t stigmatize
  - Offer specific help

- Narrative & exemplars: engage

- Distractions: cues & visual incoherence

- No evidence of targeting: tailor & general OK
General Approach

- Existing messages
- Analysis into components
- Multiple messages
- Large samples
- Objective features – manipulation & design
- Efficient measures; tied to outcome of interest
- Enough theory w/o too many constraints
- Synthesis via analysis ➔ message design principles
Six Components

• Message Analysis
• Basic Theorizing
• Test of AS X Executional Features
• Unpacking arguments
• Predicting smoking cessation (intentions)
• The Full Monty: putting pieces back together
Message Analysis

Message_\textsubscript{j} → Extract → Argument_\textsubscript{j} → CTA

CTA

Argument_\textsubscript{j} → Rate=(AS)_\textsubscript{j} → Features

Features

f_{j1}, f_{j2}, f_{j3} ...
Analysis

• Infinite # of message characteristics
• Guided by ELM to belief change
  – Content: arguments
  – Executional features affecting
    • Ability
    • Motivation
• So *extract* arguments; *code* executional features
(#1) “Smoking” can “result” in “diseases” like “emphysema”, in which a smoker's “lungs” are full of “carbon”. “Those who” have “emphysema” often feel like they can't breathe. There is no scarier feeling. (AS= 1.82)

(#199)“People” have many varying “preferences” in types of “people” they enjoy spending time with. All “people” prefer non-smokers. (AS = -3.88)

- Procedures?
- Does it capture the argument?
Coding Executional Features

• **Message Sensation Value** *(Morgan et al)*
  – Attention-getting (= motivation)
  – 14 features

• **Information introduced (I^2)** *(Lang et al)*
  – Resource allocation; limited capacity; overload
  – I^2 visual (camera changes & 7 features)
  – I^2 audio (audio change & 4 features)
• MSV
  – number of cuts
  – # edits
  – special visual effect
  – slow motion
  – unusual color
  – intense image
  – sound saturation
  – background music
  – unusual sound
  – acted-out (vs. talking head)
  – unexpected format
  – surprise/twisted ending
  – Narrative
  – # of faces

• I² Visual: camera change
  – emotion change
  – new object
  – unrelated scenes
  – object change
  – Close-distant
  – perspective change
  – form change

• I² Audio: audio change
  – new sound
  – Form change
  – emotional sound
  – emotional valence change
So Message$_j$ becomes ...

- Argument strength (AS) (decomposed later)
- plus
- 27 executional features ($f_j$)
- Plus
- Interactions (AS) $X f_j$
Theory: Propositions

Features

$f_{j1}$
$f_{j2}$
$f_{j3}$

Motivation

And

Ability

Perceived Effectiveness

Cognitive Response

$(AS)_j$
Propositions

• ELM:
  – AS $\rightarrow$ cognitive response $\rightarrow$ effectiveness
  – Ability & motivation $\rightarrow$ elaboration
  – More elaboration $\rightarrow$ arg impact stronger

• Not ELM
  – MSV $\rightarrow$ attention (Morgan, et al)
  – $I^2$ $\rightarrow$ resource allocation policy (Lang et al)
Complex Effects of Features (MSV)

- MSV $\rightarrow$ attention $\rightarrow$ elaboration
  - But attention to irrelevant = distraction (Yang et al)
  - Disaggregation necessary
- For example, narrative
  - $\rightarrow$ engagement $\rightarrow$ elaboration
  - But if distracting $\rightarrow$ less elaboration
- Hence research question
- Main effects? Via production values?
Basic Test
Design & Procedures

- Knowledge Networks
- 60 smoking cessation PSAs; english; 30 sec
- National sample smokers, N=565; > 5 cigs/day
- 65% male; 80% Caucasian; mean age 50 yrs
- Each rate 4 random ads; mean # raters = 38
Predictive Tests: Ad Level

- Executional Features (Three Clusters)
- Argument Strength
- Executional Features (Individual fs)

- Perceived Ad Effectiveness
Robust Effects?

• Yes
  – Argument strength
  – Narrative

• What about ...
  – Visual discontinuity
  – Special effects; unexpected; sound changes
Argument: Texts ➔ Themes ➔ Ratings

Texts of Arguments ➔ Categorize ➔ Ten Themes

LIWC Dictionary ➔ Individual Differences ➔ (AS)
LIWC Supplement
Derived Themes

- Close people (e.g., grandchild, wife, family)
- Distant people (e.g., workers, waitress, people)
- SHS (e.g., secondhand smoking, secondhand smoke)
- Company (e.g., tobacco company, marketing, Camel)
- Lifestyle/Cosmetics (e.g., teeth, skin, cool, sex)
- Poison/chemicals (e.g., nicotine, urea, tar)
- Causation (e.g., cause, influence, hurt, drive)
- Death (e.g., death, die, kill)
- Disease/body (e.g., lung cancer, heart disease, hypertension)
- Cessation (quitting; strategy; difficulty)
Results: Themes & AS

- Enhance Strength
  - Close people
  - Death
  - Cessation
  - Disease/Body
    - Esp high educ

- Reduce Strength
  - Distant people
  - Lifestyle
  - Second hand smoke
    - Esp older men
Individual Differences & AS

- Vulnerable to disease from smoking ➔ (+) AS
- Later Stages of Change ➔ (++) AS
Conclusions

- Tailoring & mass: yes
- Targeting: no
- Core effective themes (adults)
  - Death
  - Disease
  - Close others
Perceived Effectiveness ➔ Intention

Random Assign
Four ads / person
Person i
  ad 1
  ad 2
  ad 3
  ad 4

Perceived Effectiveness Ratings
4 Ads X # raters

For each Ad
Aggregate ratings
Across Raters

For Each Person
Sum Aggregate Ratings
Across Ads Viewed

Intention
  To quit
  To reduce cigs
  To seek help
The Full Monty
Ties To Conference Themes

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