

Assess Your Audience's Psychographics

Brief: After conducting your own psychographic data collection, and considering all the known factors, a profile of the intended audience can be created, allowing you to speak in a manner that is understood by the intended audience.

Learning Objective: Identify options for gathering audience psychographic information.

Key Terms:

- **Likert item:** A statement or question that the respondent is asked to evaluate according to any kind of subjective or objective criteria.

Gather and Interpret Psychographic Information

Audience analysis involves both gathering information and interpreting that information. After researching available demographic sources, collecting psychographic information about your audience's dominant values, beliefs, attitudes, and needs helps create a total profile of the intended audience, allowing you to speak in a manner that is understood by the intended audience.

Methods for Gathering Information

Direct Observation

Direct observation allows you to get to know the members of your audience personally. You are making observations of audience members through your own senses such as hearing, sight, and perhaps even smell. You can employ this method in a classroom or small group situation through conversations with others and by listening to what they say.

Interviews

An interview is a conversation with a purpose. It involves an interviewer asking prepared questions to obtain information. Usually you want to prepare a list of questions in advance and move from more general to specific questions.

For audience analysis, it can be helpful to interview a small, representative group from your audience. Generally, you will be using the four different types of questions that follow:

Open-ended questions: An open-ended question requires the respondent to reply with more than just a yes or no answer. Questions that ask who, what, where, when, why, and how are generally good open-ended questions.

Closed questions: A closed question requires the respondent to reply with a specific answer from among a set of choices.

Follow-up questions: After a respondent answers a question, you can ask further questions, referred to as follow-up questions, to get clarification or more information.

Mirror questions: Mirror questions are used to probe for more information about something a respondent just said, without pushing the respondent in any particular direction.

Avoid leading questions. A leading question is one that virtually guarantees that the interviewee will reply with a desired answer. For example, "Wouldn't you prefer X?" indicates what you want the interviewee to prefer X. Your aim is find out what the interviewee really thinks.

Questionnaires

The basic questionnaire is a survey consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Questionnaires have advantages over other types of surveys in that they are cheap, do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data. For example, you might have a question with easy multiple choice answers such as:

What is your marital status?

- a) Single
- b) Married
- c) Divorced

Likert-Type Testing of Attitudes and Opinions

A Likert item is simply a statement or question that the respondent is asked to evaluate according to any kind of subjective or objective criteria; generally the level of agreement or disagreement is measured. Often five ordered response levels are used.

The format of the typical five-level Likert is:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree



When using a questionnaire or using rating scales it is wise to try them out on a small sample of your audience before you administer them to a large group. You can use the small sample to make sure that everyone understands the meaning of the questions and that you are getting useful information. You can collect the data directly or you can use computer-assisted web based surveys or interviewing questionnaires.

From Concept to Action

Based on a speech topic you're considering, create three open-ended interview questions, three multiple choice questionnaire questions, and three Likert-type questions. Ask a couple of representatives from your audience (students in your class or similar to the students in your class) to answer all three types of questions. Analyze the results. Did any one type of question get you the best result? Did you get helpful results from two or more types of questions? How can you use the information you gathered to develop an audience-centered speech?

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"Survey Opinion Research Voting Fill Vote Hand." Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/photos/survey-opinion-research-voting-fill-1594962>. Accessed 15 April 2019. [CC0]

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"Solicit information." Lumen Learning. <https://lumen.instructure.com/courses/218897/pages/linkedtext54195>. Accessed 15 April 2019. [CC BY-SA 3.0]

"The Importance of Audience Analysis." Lumen Learning. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-communications/chapter/the-importance-of-audience-analysis>. Accessed 15 April 2019. [CC BY-SA 4.0]