



Subproject : the effectivity of fear appeals in South African HIV/AIDS campaign texts

Pilot study and content analysis

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Part 1: Pilot study

Recapping previous reports

- Theoretical framework used: Kim Witte's Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM)
- Fear appeals are most effective when they contain both a high-threat and a high-efficacy component (Witte & Allen 2000)
 - Threat consists of two elements: perceived **severity** and perceived **susceptibility**
 - Efficacy consists of two elements: perceived **response efficacy** and perceived **self-efficacy**

How EPPM works

- If perceived threat is high enough to arouse fear AND perceived efficacy is sufficiently high, people will engage in **danger control** (cognitive process to control the danger by taking preventive action)
- If fear is aroused but perceived efficacy is low, people will engage in **fear control** (emotional process to control fear; e.g. denial, defensive avoidance or message/source derogation)

Gender and efficacy component

- High levels of sexual violence in South Africa
- Possible effect on females
 - Women/girls have little decision making power in sexual relationships in traditional communities
 - Recommended ABC behaviour (abstinence, being faithful, condom use) not possible for many females
 - Hypothesis: Low perceived self-efficacy towards HIV-preventive behaviour might cause fear appeals to backfire for female audience
- Possible effect on males:
 - Able to choose to perform recommended preventive behaviour
 - Hypothesis: Fear appeals can be successful strategy to change males' attitude, intentions and behaviour

Pilot study on fear and efficacy

- Survey questionnaire under teenage respondents aged 12-19
- Sent out: 430 questionnaires; received back 280 (response rate 65,1%)
- 132 males, 143 females (some missing values)
- Home language: 43 Afrikaans, 84 English, 145 African languages; representing all eleven official languages of South Africa
 - Crude measurement of African/Western orientation by variable of home language - sufficient for pilot study
 - Murray-Johnson warns against assigning cultural characteristics to people on the basis of demographics such as nationality – home language a more reliable indication

Content of survey questionnaire

- 40 statements on fear for negative consequences of HIV/AIDS infection
 - 5-point Likert type scale: not afraid - very afraid
 - Consequences grouped in physical, emotional, social (x3), economic, religious consequences
- 10 statements on perceived response efficacy of behaviours to prevent HIV infection
 - 5-point Likert type scale: not efficient - very efficient
- 10 statements on perceived self-efficacy: able to perform response
 - 5-point Likert type scale: not possible for me - I am sure I am able to do it

Cultural variables

- Focus on following variables:
 - gender
 - age
 - rural/urban area
 - African/Western orientation (based on home language)
 - Do different target subgroups fear the same consequences/hold the same opinion on response and self-efficacy?
 - What variables are the most important when focusing on specific subcultures in document design?
 - What are the implications of the results for segmentation of the target audience?
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Preliminary results (1): fear

- Levels of existing threat already very high in SA context of HIV/AIDS
 - For the 40 statements of fear for consequences of HIV/AIDS the highest average score on a 5-point Likert-type scale was 4,58; the lowest 2.47
 - 8 statements scored an average of 4 or higher; a full 28 were between 3 and 4 and only 4 statements scored lower than 3
 - It is unlikely that any health message could raise the perceived threat to higher levels. Witte, Meyer en Martell (2002) suggest if fear levels are sufficiently high, message should focus on efficacy components, not adding further threat information
 - Fundamental question: still a fear appeal if threat component is only implied? Difference with strategy of positive reinforcement followed in most South African campaigns?

Preliminary results (2): fear ranking (males)

- Biggest difference: Males placed statement *Not being able to have children one day* far higher than females (M06 F20). Possibly because of African orientation?
- Other differences $\gg 5$: Males more concerned about:
 - Losing good looks (M22 F33)
 - Not being able to marry one day (M15 F26)
 - Loss of job opportunities (M07 F17)
 - Not able to realise dreams (M10 F19)
 - Losing self-confidence (M20 F27)
 - Bringing shame on family (M08 F16)
 - Having to tell my boy/girlfriend (M24 F32)
- General observation: matters of honour, status in society and self-image

Preliminary results (3): fear ranking (females)

- Females: biggest differences with males
 - Psychological stress of going for HIV-test (F15 M25)
 - Being shunned by other people (F23 M31)
 - Being rejected by friends/peer group (F14 M21)
 - Not being able to pursue a career (F11 M18)
 - Not being able to afford life-prolonging medication (F08 M14)
 - Not able to support myself financially (F10 M16)
 - Disappointing parents/family (F07 M13)
 - God's judgement on me after death (F21 M26)
- General: other people's approval, financial hardship, morality/religious beliefs

Preliminary results (4): response efficacy

- No big differences in ranking order between males and females
- Anthropologist Jill Kruger (HIVAN) introducing video *Deadly Myths?* : years of HIV/AIDS campaigns have taught youths the socially desirable answers
- However, these are not imbedded in cultural and social beliefs and practices and are learned like stock phrases; not internalised

Preliminary results (5): self-efficacy

- Not expected outcome in ranking and level of perceived self-efficacy: females do not report significantly lower levels of self-efficacy than males
- Same caution applies as with response efficacy

Forthcoming analysis

- Multivariate analysis still to be done to look at differences by age, gender, language and geographical area
- Will give an indication whether any of the above variables carries sufficient weight to warrant segmentation of target group

Rationale

- Campaigns should target salient beliefs
- If beliefs are too divergent, they cannot be addressed in the same intervention
- Each duplication of interventions for subgroups significantly increases the costs of designing and producing the campaign
- Waste of scarce resources (funding, expertise) if no indication exists that segmentation is useful

Part 2: Content analysis

Fear appeals in existing campaign texts

- Negative attitude towards use of fear appeals from academics, copy writers and campaign directors in South Africa
- Content analysis to determine extent of use of components of fear appeals in existing South African HIV/AIDS persuasive texts
- Components of fear appeals taken from fear appeal theory; most notably Witte's Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM)

What is content analysis?

- Neuendorf (2002:10) provides the following definition of content analysis:
 - Content analysis is a **summarizing, quantitative analysis** of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the **types of variables** that may be measured or the **context** in which the messages are created or presented.

Research questions

- Are components of fear appeals used in South African HIV/AIDS texts, and if this is the case, which elements?
 - What is the relative occurrence of the four components severity, susceptibility, response efficacy and self-efficacy in these texts?
 - Which negative consequences are used to establish severity?
 - Through which persuasive strategies is a perception of susceptibility created?
 - Which response(s) are advocated or recommended?
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Research questions (continued)

- Through which strategies is a perception of self-efficacy created?
- What form is preferred by writers of these texts to establish the components of fear appeals: verbal, visual or both?
- Are elements of fear appeals differentiated for specific groups (e.g. with respect to gender or other cultural aspects)? If yes, which elements?
- Do the elements chosen by the writers of these texts correspond with the beliefs or needs of the target group as becomes evident from the results of the survey questionnaire?

Corpus examined (1)

- Full range of **S'camtoPRINT**
- Full range of **thethaNathi**
- In respect of the following persuasive parts of each of these publications:
 - Editorial
 - Main article
 - Advice column
 - Advertisements with persuasive content towards behaviour change

Corpus examined (2)

- Brochures, billboards, posters, stickers and a variety of small print media of persuasive nature
- Collected from 2001-2003
- Difficulties with sampling frame: no comprehensive list available
 - Mostly undated (old stock at some depots)
 - Lots of organisations producing educational texts: NGO's, local, provincial and national level, pharmaceutical and other companies (even Pick & Pay)
- Confined to texts on national level: loveLife, Beyond Awareness 1/2, Khomanani, SoulCity

Methodology

- Coding scheme for identifying components of fear appeals
- General information on text type and campaign
- Section on each of four components/variables that constitute a fear appeal:
 - Severity
 - Susceptibility
 - Response efficacy
 - Self-efficacy
- Catalogueing verbal/visual content, length, language characteristics, persuasive strategy

Manual coding

- Corpus not digitalised
- Not possible to search for key words and terminology; threat and efficacy components can consist of thousands of different explicit, cued or implicit consequences, responses and boosting of perceived self-efficacy
- Manual coding by two independent coders
- Coding scheme and form at testing stage
- Coding allows for quantitative analysis of data

To be continued...

- Hypotheses will be tested by manipulating an HIV/AIDS persuasive text with regard to the presence or absence of a fear appeal as independent variable
- The appreciation for the text, the persuasive effect and the fear control versus danger control mode of respondents after reading the manipulated text will be measured (between-subjects design; post-test only; experimental group versus control group)
- The respondents will be selected by stratified sampling from different cultural/ethnic groups in South Africa to determine whether any observed effects are correlated to respondents' cultural affiliation
- Respondents will be randomly assigned to experimental or control version

Objective of research

- Development of empirically tested guidelines for the use/nonuse of fear appeals in South African HIV/AIDS persuasive messages
- Indications of the need for segmentation of the audience in these messages