

Developing rapid and effective communications testing: executive summary

Key findings

Factors most likely to increase likeability and engagement of communication pieces:

1. Focusing on **topics on which the FSA is considered a leader** (for example, food hygiene, food safety, food borne illnesses as opposed to emerging topics of interest such as novel foods or sustainability), so that the content is more likely to be trusted.
2. Providing **tailored/ targeted messaging to different audiences**, so that they feel relevant and important to people.
3. Ensuring an **engaging execution**, through the use of supporting visuals, images, music, colours so that the material is eye-catching and memorable.
4. Using **supporting information** such as signposting to further information, using case studies, or real-life scenarios.
5. Providing **clear messages** in plain English and avoiding the use of jargon/ acronyms which are not explained.
6. Providing a clear **call to action** and practical tips and advice on what to do.

Key considerations around outcomes:

1. The role of **branding and positioning of the FSA** is key (for example, clear referencing through name and logo), as an increase in awareness of the FSA leads to an increase in trust, which is a key factor driving engagement with messages.
2. More research is needed to understand the **most effective use of communications to build reputation as a trusted “voice”** in topics which are not currently associated with the FSA’s work (such as food sustainability).
3. The key factors in **building awareness and familiarity** are clarity of messaging, use of statistics and signposting, and the use of an expert (and trusted) voice, such as from senior staff within the FSA.
4. **Pre-existing familiarity with specific topics are the main drivers in shaping attitudes towards that issue.** For instance, when addressing topics which people are familiar with but which are often misunderstood (for example, date labels), it is good to ensure the information provided is as clear as possible, and comes across as relevant and memorable in order to effectively raise levels of concern. When designing pieces of communications around topics the public might not be familiar with (for example, novel food), it is important that content is clear, supported by statistics and uses easy-to-follow tips to aid engagement with the issue.
5. **Shifts in familiarity, awareness, attitudes, and behaviours widely depend on how much the public believe they know about the topic in the first place.** Communications on topics the public might think they are already familiar with may see drops in familiarity scores once they have seen the piece. This is a positive finding if coupled with an increase in “concern” as people have realised the information provided does not meet their preconceived ideas. Content on topics people don’t know much about initially are likely to achieve the highest increase in familiarity/ awareness, which needs to be coupled with intention to follow the advice provided to translate into a positive outcome. It is therefore important to understand people’s current beliefs around issues in order to address them via

communications.

6. **People's behaviours will be impacted by factors beyond levels of engagement with the content.** Stated likelihood to engage in behaviours is affected by factors other than the engagement scores for different pieces of content – for instance, an engaging piece of communication does not necessarily lead to a positive shift in intended behaviour. This is key to bear in mind when designing pieces of communications and setting up their objectives – clarity of understanding around the intended behaviour shift is critical. Initial data suggests that when designing pieces of communications aimed at shifting behaviours, it is key to avoid confusion and include a clear call to action, supported by practical tips where appropriate.