

Listening to Public Radio Listeners

An Audience-defined Audience Analysis

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Goals

- To learn about the ways members of Northwest Public Radio talk about the quality of life in the Pacific Northwest
- To use that knowledge to guide decisions about programming

Assumptions

- Listeners to public radio have a strong sense of ownership of their local stations as well as the national programming
- The best way to make decisions about programming is to address listener-defined interests and needs
- Focus group interviews are subject to problems, including a lack of quantifiability, domination of the conversation by vocal members, and selective interpretation by the study leaders

Guidelines for the study

- Listeners would define and prioritize the issues
- The process would be visible to all the participants as well as the larger public radio audience
- The process would give listeners the chance to express their ideas fully
- The process would preserve the language with which listeners speak about the issues
- Listeners, not researchers, would define the structure of their subjective interpretations
- The research process would be enjoyable for participants

Phase 1

- Starting late December, 2007, an IRB-approved open-ended survey was posted on the Northwest Public Radio Web site, and was promoted on the air
- Listeners were asked to write their answers to the following questions:
 - What makes Quality of Life good in the PNW?
 - What threatens this quality of life
 - What are the big issues in your state?
 - What other problems are facing your state or province?
 - What trends do you see that might lower the quality of life in your community?

Phase 1

- 40 subjects filled out surveys within one week
 - The answers were detailed, nuanced, and diverse
- 40 verbatim statements from the population of statements created by listeners were deliberately sampled by the researcher

	Positive	Negative
Environmental Development	5	5
Environmental Resources	5	5
Social/people	5	5
Social/resources	5	5

Phase 2

- Using a flash based program (<http://www.hackert.biz/flashq/home/>), participants rank-ordered the 40 statements, first into agree/disagree/neutral piles

5/40

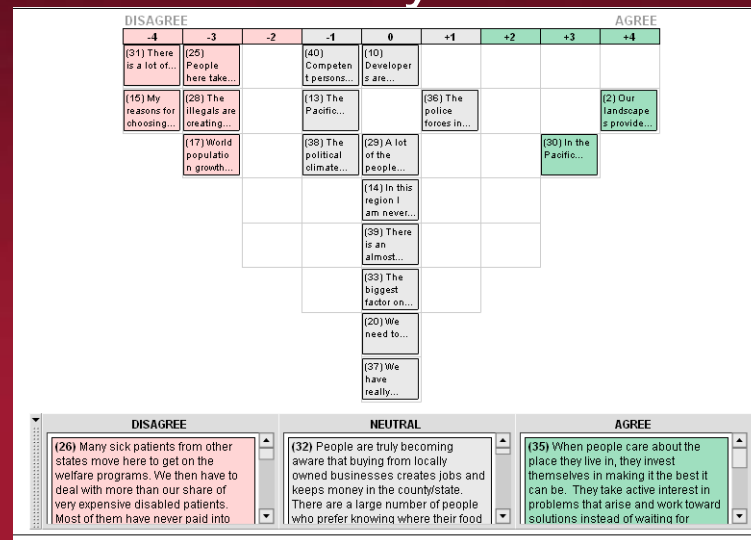
DISAGREE (#1)	NEUTRAL (#2)	AGREE (#3)
(7) We are a fast-growing region with little infrastructure in place to accommodate this growth.	(3) As global climate change occurs, the Northwest will be one of the best places on the planet to live. (18) Our blasé attitude toward global warming is a problem.	(12) Our environmental assets provide a higher quality of day-to-day life experiences than many in the rest of the country have available.

Additional statements shown above the interface:

- (24) Northwest people aren't intrusive, but they care about the well being of their neighbor.

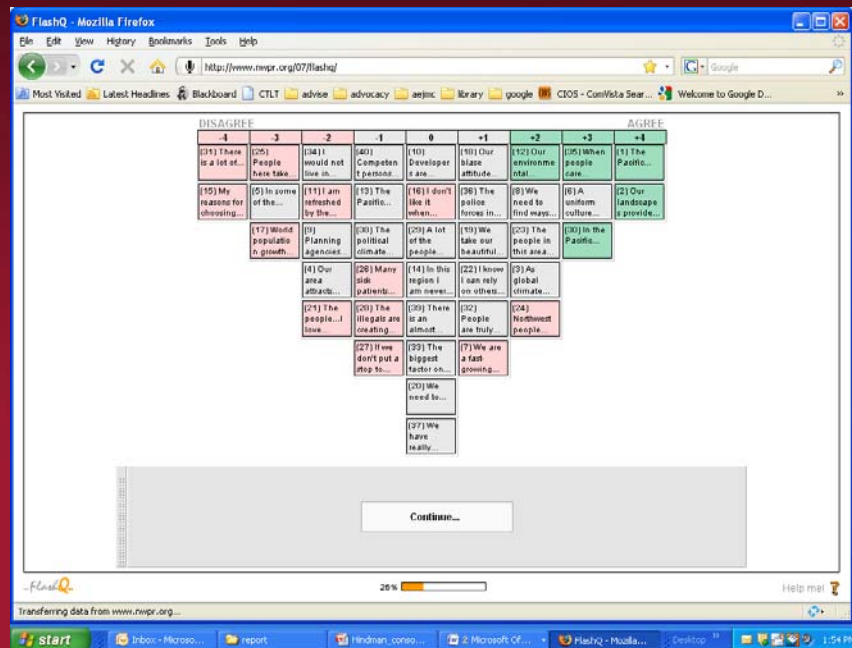
Phase 2

- Participants then sorted the statements into categories to represent finer degrees of agreement, disagreement, and neutrality



Phase 2

- Once completed, the participant was invited to change the position of any statement



Phase 2

- Participants were invited to explain why they placed the statements in the strongest disagree and strongest agree columns, and to answer some background questions

The screenshot shows a web-based survey interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with various icons and text. Below this, the survey is divided into two main sections: 'Agree (+4)' and 'Disagree (-4)'. Each section contains two rows of statements, each with a corresponding input field for a response. The 'Agree' section includes statements (14) and (21), while the 'Disagree' section includes statements (1) and (24). The interface is clean and uses a light color scheme.

Statement	Response Field
(14) In this region I am never too far away from the natural...	love the outdoors and live here so I can enjoy it fully. This statement says it all.
(21) The people I love them, I love arts, music, and enjoyed by...	People are important to me as well
(1) The Pacific Northwest has the largest blonde genetic country in lower 48 states...	
(24) Northwest people aren't cultured, but they sure do love the well being...	

Analysis

- Data from the 28 completed online statement sorts were analyzed, with subjects comprising the columns, or “variables” and statements representing the rows, or “sample”
- Centroid factor analysis and judgmental rotation was used to find the best fit to the data
- Three factors were extracted
- Factor loadings were used to create a factor array representing a weighted average sort for each factor

Profiles of listener orientations

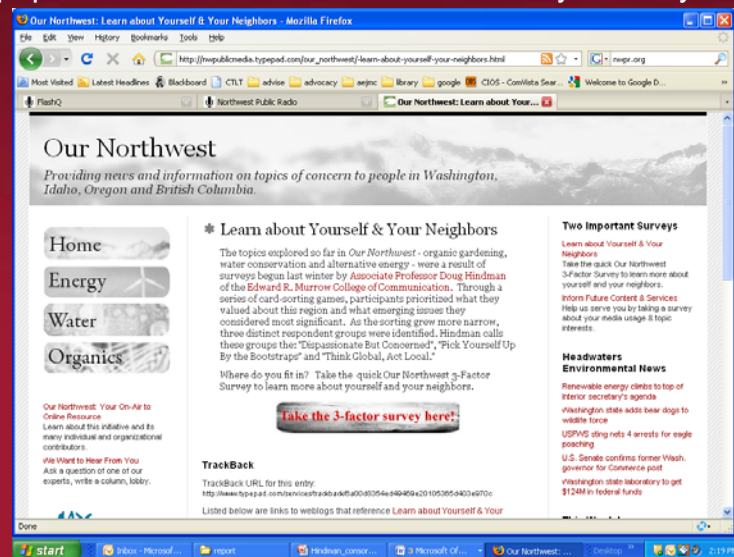
- The “Dispassionate but Concerned” held unsentimental and level-headed concerns for the challenges facing the Pacific Northwest’s limited natural resources. Members rejected individual-level explanations for problems such as illegal immigrants and nonlocal landowners.
- The “Pick Yourself Up by your Bootstraps Rugged Individualists” viewed people as the most important natural resources in the Pacific Northwest. They viewed community involvement, person-to-person connections and support, and individual responsibility as keys to good living.
- The “Think the PNW is Special? It is Not!” group emphasized the universal nature of problems facing the Pacific Northwest while rejecting the notion of a unique Pacific Northwest culture. Its members acknowledged challenges posed by illegal immigration, grid-locked cities, and irresponsible local governments.

Follow-up

- The listener profiles were circulated among the NWPR staff in charge of the “Our Northwest” grant
- Through discussion, the staff determined that the “Impassioned but Concerned” group was most likely to appreciate content generated as a result of the grant
- The “Our Northwest” Web and on-air content was informed by the understanding of listener interests and priorities developed through this project

Follow-up

- Web page visitors are invited to take a quick survey to determine where they fit into the listener profiles, and are invited to help further define the factors at http://nwpublicmedia.typepad.com/our_northwest/learn-about-yourself-your-neighbors.html



Conclusions

- Public radio listeners want to have an impact on programming
- Research methods that preserve public radio listener issues, priorities, and words are crucial
- Listening to public radio listeners encourages engagement with the public radio station, and encourages station responsiveness to listener agendas

Acknowledgements

- Corporation for Public Broadcasting Public Media Innovation Fund grant
 - Dennis Haarsager, NWPR: PI
 - Gens Johnson/Mary Hawkins, NWPR: Our Northwest project directors
 - Jason Marsh, NWPR: Web master
 - Sarah McDaniel, NWPR: Member Coordinator
- Christian Hackert: Flash-Q developer
- Stephanie Burns, Kent State University: Flash-Q debugger