



## **Product Testing**

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Product testing is usually conducted against one of three business objectives:

1. Productivity – To determine whether consumers react similarly to the current available product and a new formulation that can be made less expensively.
2. Quality Improvement – To determine if product improvements result in more favorable consumer reactions vs. the current offering.
3. Benchmarking – To determine how a current or new product compares to competition.

There are essentially three types of product testing research designs and the design is chosen against the action standard/business decision moving forward.

### **MONADIC TESTING**

As implied in the name, each person only tries one product and the measurements typically cover overall evaluative measures, followed by specific diagnostics. These include:

- Overall liking
- Purchase intent
- Value for the money
- Uniqueness vs. category
- Overall liking of specific characteristics of the product
- Direction ratings, also known as JAR (JUST ABOUT RIGHT measurements), to determine perceptions of quantities, strength of flavor, etc. An example would be sweetness - was it much too sweet, a little too sweet, just about the right level of sweetness, or not quite sweet enough, or not at all sweet enough.

A monadic test such as this is usually used for new products or line extensions. A current offering should be included as a control/benchmark.

### **PROTOMONADIC TESTING**

A protomonadic design calls for two products to be tested by each person. The products are tested one at a time, with a monadic measurement only on the product tried first. After the second product is tried, preference is measured, both on an overall basis and for specific attributes.

This test design has historically been the "gold standard" for testing product changes and for competitive testing. The reason for this is that the protomonadic design provides both a strict single product measurement (monadic) and preference ratings. Most researchers agree that when a change is made to a product, you must measure preference to obtain the likely alienation the change may cause among the current franchise. At the same time, the monadic evaluations provide guidance for further improvement to the winning product, or to better understand deficiencies in the losing product.

## **SEQUENTIAL MONADIC TESTING**

This name implies two things, first, that there's more than one product (usually two for a Home Use Test [HUT], but often three or more in a mall test); and second, that a respondent is tasting (or using) one at a time, with an evaluation after each about that specific product.

A sequential monadic test includes the same measurements as the monadic test (see above) for each product. An overall preference question is usually included at the end of the survey. The key difference between a sequential monadic and a protomonadic test is that in the sequential monadic test, respondents provide a full set of ratings for each product tested; in a protomonadic test, respondents only fully rate the first product they taste or use.

The key benefit of sequential monadic over protomonadic is lower cost. A two-product sequential monadic test would require only half the sample of a protomonadic or monadic test. However, some feel that only the first product tested can be fairly evaluated and rated since the respondent already knows the questions they will be asked about the second product they test. Therefore, some will argue the respondent is sensitized to certain dimensions of the product which could change the way they evaluate it. Although rotating order can help to minimize order bias by spreading it equally among all products tested, it will not eliminate the bias.

Ultimately, the test you use is determined by the business objectives, available budget, and the importance of the decision being made (read: what is the risk of making the wrong decision?). Here at RTi, we are well versed in all product testing methods and our seasoned professionals will work with you to select the right research design.