

Fading Sensations

Joyce Ma

December 2005

THIS IS NOT A DEFINITIVE FINAL REPORT

FORMATIVE evaluation studies like this one often:

- **are conducted quickly**, which may mean
 - small sample sizes
 - expedited analyses
 - brief reports

- **look at an earlier version** of the exhibit/program, which may mean
 - a focus on problems and solutions, rather than successes
 - a change in form or title of the final exhibit/program

Mind – Formative Evaluation Fading Sensations

Joyce Ma
December 2005

PURPOSE

This evaluation determines

- How many visitors stop and read Fading Sensations in its current location
- Do the visitors who stop try the activities suggested? Why or why not?

Figure 1. Fading Sensation Exhibit



METHOD

- An evaluator sat 15 feet, out of sight from Fading Sensations, which was near the entrance of the Mind in Progress section. See Figure 1.
- She counted every visitor, 3-years old and above who stepped over an imaginary line across the entryway, and noted if the person looked at the exhibit, and whether or not s/he stopped.
- The evaluator also interviewed every person who stopped in front of Fading Sensations. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

DATA COLLECTED

- We collected data from 10:55am – 12:45pm on Thursday, December 8, 2005 and from 10:45am – 3:30pm on Sunday, December 11, 2005.
- Observations
 - N = 652
- Interviews
 - N=9
 - Demographics

| Age Group | Count (out of 9) |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Child | 2 |
| Teen | 1 |
| Adult | 6 |

| Gender | Count (out of 9) |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| Female | 3 |
| Male | 6 |

| Group Type | Count (out of 9) |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Individual adult | 3 |
| Individual child | 1 |
| Multigenerational | 3 |
| Adult peer group | 2 |

RESULTS

Observation

| Date | People who passed by | People who passed by and looked | People who passed by, looked, and stopped |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Thursday, Dec 8 | 291 | 19 (7% people who pass by) | 5 (2% people who pass by) |
| Sunday, Dec 11 | 361 | 41 (11% people who pass by) | 4 (1% people who pass by) |
| Total | 652 | 60 (9% people who pass by) | 9 (1% people who pass by) |

Interview

(In the following, quotes from visitors who did not try an activity are in grey.)

- All the visitors who stopped in front of Fading Sensations read the sign. About half (4/9) read a part, and 5/9 read the entire sign.
- Half (4/9) of the visitors read something surprising to them. More specifically, they found the following surprising:
 - Visitor2: The response of the nervous system -stopping feeling the stimuli.
 - Visitor4: We get used to the constant stimuli.
 - Visitor5: It really made me think. I never thought about changing things and noticing the sensation (switches his watch as I am writing).
 - Visitor8: It did feel a little weird, when I switched the things in my pocket.
- Furthermore, these visitors claimed that they found out something new at the exhibit:
 - Visitor1: I didn't know it was because of your nervous system.
 - Visitor3: The examples. I like the car one.
 - Visitor4: That constant stimuli.
 - Visitor8: I didn't know any of this.
- About half (4/9) visitors tried one of the activities that the exhibit suggested. Three people tried switching their watch to their other wrist, while one visitor moved things into her other pocket.
- The other 5/9 who did *not* try any of the activities, chose not to do so because:
 - They didn't have a watch (2 visitors)
 - Visitor2: But [I have] before, like changing the watch. Because I have tried it before and I don't have a watch.
 - Visitor6: Don't have a watch.

- They were already familiar with the phenomenon (2 visitors)
 - Visitor2: But [I have] before, like changing the watch. Because I have tried it before and I don't have a watch.
 - Visitor9: I just read the title and when I need to remind something, I change my watch. I use this specific thing all the time. So I know how it works.
- They did it in their minds and didn't feel a need to do it physically (1 visitor)
 - Visitor7: I thought about it. I did it in my mind. (E: Is there any reason why you didn't try it outside of your mind?) No.
- They did not have an answer to our interview question (1 visitor)
 - Visitor1: The watch one.
- We asked visitors what they thought the point of the suggested activities was. Visitors thought the activities were about:
 - Nerves and stimuli (3 visitors)
 - Visitor1: That you have nerves.
 - Visitor2: Being aware of the fact that we can be fooled by our nerves.
 - Visitor4: To make you conscious that even things you have on your body are creating stimuli.
 - Getting used to something (2 visitors)
 - Visitor3: How in our common life, there are physical signals we are not used to realize but they are always there.
 - Visitor5: Just that as your body gets more used to sensations, it tends to block them out. You become more attuned to your environment if something changes.
 - Feeling something differently (2 visitors)
 - Visitor1: That it feels different.
 - Visitor6: I guess changes of sensations.
 - Unclear (3 visitors)
 - Visitor7: I have no idea.
 - Visitor8: So that I can find out for myself.
 - Visitor9: It's like learning to experience.
- To gauge how familiar this type of experience was for people, we asked visitors to give an example of when they had become so accustomed to something that they forgot about it. This information may also provide us with additional examples of the phenomenon drawn from visitors' own lives.
 - A physical sensation (5 visitors)
 - Visitor1: Yes, I don't know...well like when you're wearing a pair of sunglasses and then you start looking for your sunglasses and realize that they're on your face. Or sometimes when I'm wearing my contact lens, I'll try to push my glasses up on my nose and they're not even there.

Visitor3: With the glasses. You are wearing your glasses and then you look for them but it is on your head.

Visitor4: My contacts, I don't know I have them in.

Visitor7: Like wearing a watch and forgetting it's there.

Visitor9: Like after a long day of walking when you finally take off your shoes, you feel relief you didn't even think about.

– An action (2 visitors)

Visitor2: Something similar..oh yeah. If I turn off the light in a room when I am leaving the house, sometimes I forget that I turned out the light because it is so automatic.

Visitor5: I imagine so. (thinks) That's tough. That's really tough.... I know! Blinking your eyes, that's one.

– A person (1 visitor)

Visitor6: Of course. Yeah, my wife (laughs and punches me lightly on the shoulder).

– Cannot think of an example (1 visitor)

Visitor8: Not really.

SUMMARY

- A very small percentage (9%) of the visitors who passed by Fading Sensations glanced at the exhibit, and even less (1%) stopped. The exhibit's low attraction power may be due to its current location on the floor. It is placed in a transitional space, near the entrance to the Mind collection and on the left wall next to PlayLab. Fading Sensations is also close to Animal Cam, which is showing dynamic footage that is more likely to draw people's attention than a static sign. Relocating Fading Sensations to a more prominent place close to the entrance but solidly within the Mind collection and slightly away from Animal Cam may help more people see the exhibit. Furthermore, as a sign, Fading Sensation can easily be overlooked; a desk like the current feedback table may encourage more visitors to stop and try the activities.
- When visitors did stop, about half (4/9) tried an activity. Three out of the 4 visitors who tried an activity had found something surprising and new in what they read, and a few of the visitors who did not try an activity explained that they've done something similar before and didn't need to try it again. These findings suggest that some visitors are not trying the activities at Fading Sensations because the phenomenon is already familiar to them. The number of interviews was small, though.
- Furthermore, a few visitors explained that they did not try the activity because they did not have a watch. Although Fading Sensations suggest another activity to try (e.g. switching a wallet to another pocket), visitors may not see the other suggestion in the text or may, similarly, not have a wallet. The other option may need to be made more prominent, and the text may suggest additional activities to try.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Debbie Kim for collecting the data for this study.

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant number 0307927. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.



APPENDIX A***Observations***

Observe individuals.

1. Tally - Pass by
2. Tally – Pass by and looked
3. Tally – Pass by and looked and stopped

Questions

1. Did you get a chance to read the sign [point]? YES NO
 - a. How much of it?
2. Was there anything surprising about what you read? YES NO
 - a. [If YES] What was surprising?
3. Was there anything you read that was new to you? YES NO
 - a. [If YES] Can you tell me what was new to you?
4. Are you trying some of the activities it described? YES NO
 - a. [if NO] That's totally okay. Can you tell me if there was any particular reason why you decided to not try the activities?
 - b. [if YES] Which one?
5. In your opinion, what do you think is the point of the activities the signs suggest? What do the activities try to show?
6. Have you ever had an experience where you became so used to something that you forgot about it completely? Can you describe that experience?