How Should We Label Our Magnets?

Joshua Gutwill

October 1998

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
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**Goal:** Determine the best way to label our magnets so that visitors understand what they are.

### Interview 1 — Straight Cow Magnets

**Methods:**
- Age > 5
- 3 Cow magnets — straight, cylindrical magnets. One with red & white colors, one with colors plus N & S, one with colors plus North & South
- Grab the first person who crosses a line. If in a group, take person on side nearest interviewer.
- Ask the person to hold the magnet and then ask questions.

**Synopsis of Results:**
- The most successful label was Red and White colors at the tips with the letters “N” and “S” written on the tips.

**Questions & Results:**

1. Suppose this object were part of an exhibit. What do you think the object is?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Labeling</th>
<th>Number of Vs</th>
<th>Magnet/compass/magnetic</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colors only</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color + N/S</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color + North/South</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
<td><strong>70%</strong></td>
<td><strong>30%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview 2 — Cow Magnets inside a spinner

Methods:
• Age > 5
• 2 Cow magnets, each in a spinner. One with colors plus N & S, one with colors plus North & South.
• Grab the first person who crosses a line. If in a group, take person on side nearest interviewer.
• Ask the person to hold the magnet and then ask questions.

Synopsis of Results:
• No difference between the two types of labels.

Questions & Results:

1. Suppose this object were part of an exhibit. What do you think the object is?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Labeling</th>
<th>Number of Vs</th>
<th>Magnet/compass/magnetic</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Color + N/S</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color + North/South</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>