

Recall and Comprehension Study of WASH UP! Billboards in Herat, Afghanistan December 2017

Introduction

The WASH UP! roadside billboards in Afghanistan were created in collaboration with World Vision. The billboards feature Zari, Zeerak, and Raya promoting healthy WASH behaviors in celebration of Global Handwashing Day, and are currently along the road in Herat, Afghanistan's third largest city. Each billboard contains the same messaging:

- “Our Hands, Our Future”¹
- “Let's wash our hands with soap and water to keep ourselves and our friends healthy and strong.”

The purpose of this study was to assess the reach, recall, appeal, and relevance of the WASH UP! roadside billboards in Herat. Based on respondents' feedback, recall and comprehension is high, the billboards are appealing and relevant, and respondents indicated that the billboard has raised their awareness for hygiene behaviors. Comprehension is highest when the image and message are directly linked.

Methodology

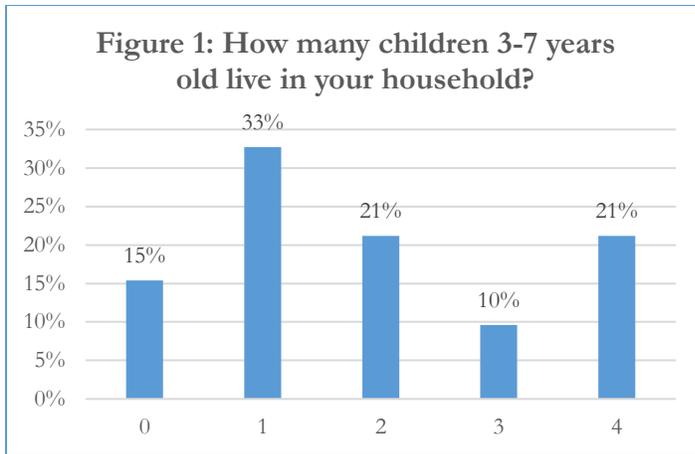
To assess recall and comprehension of the three billboards in Herat, enumerators stationed in areas adjacent to each billboard approached pedestrians with a request to participate in a research study. After a series of demographic questions, potential respondents were shown an image of the nearby billboard, with all text removed, and asked if they remembered seeing that billboard around the city (Annex 1). Of 120 possible respondents approached, 52 individuals remembered seeing the billboard around the city, and thus were qualified to continue with the survey. Those participants then responded to a series of questions focused on the billboard's messaging, its relevance, and related behavioral changes. Sesame Workshop designed the survey instrument, and World Vision's team in Afghanistan provided data collection, translation, and data entry.

Of those 52 respondents, 29% answered questions near Billboard A (Raya washing her hands), 40% answered questions near Billboard B (Raya drying her hands), and 31% answered questions near Billboard C (Zari and Zeerak).

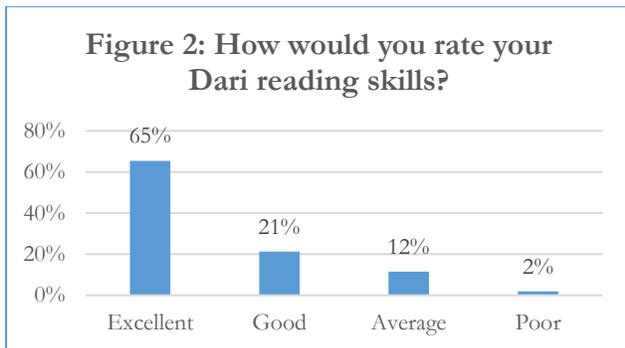
Men represented 60% of respondents and women represented 40% of respondents. The sample was young, with 77% of respondents under the age of 25 years. More than half of respondents were employed at least part-time.

Most respondents had at least one child between 3-7 years old living their household, and nearly one-third of respondents had at least three children 3-7 years old in their household (Figure 1).

¹ “Our Hands, our Future” is the 2018 theme for Global Handwashing Day.



Because of the importance of literacy to message comprehension, respondents were asked to rate their Dari reading skills. Most respondents rated their Dari reading ability high, with 65% reporting excellent Dari reading skills and only 2% reporting poor Dari reading skills. (Figure 2).



Findings

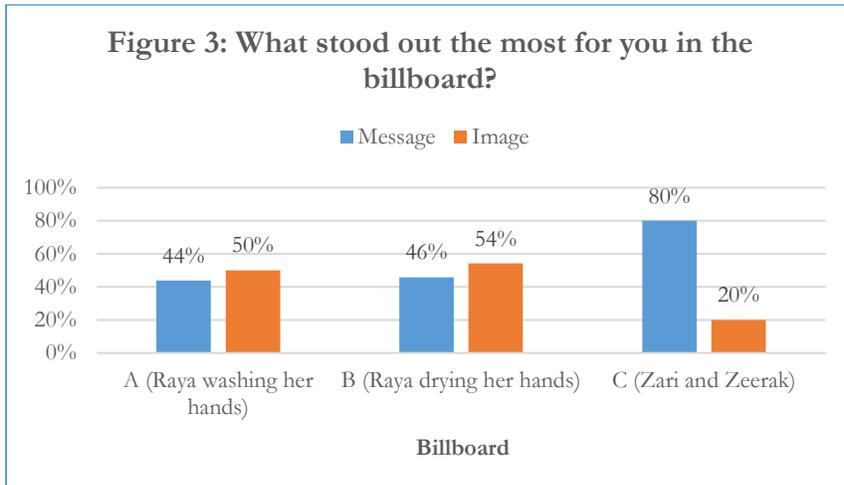
To start, participants responded to an open-ended question on what about the billboard stood out the most to them. 55% of respondents explained some aspect of the message stood out the most, and 43% indicated that the image stood out the most. Sample responses included:²

- Mostly the image and character
- The writing about water and hygiene
- Washing hands with soap
- The character was very interesting
- The image encourages us to tell others to observe hygiene not to throw waste in city
- Picture and message

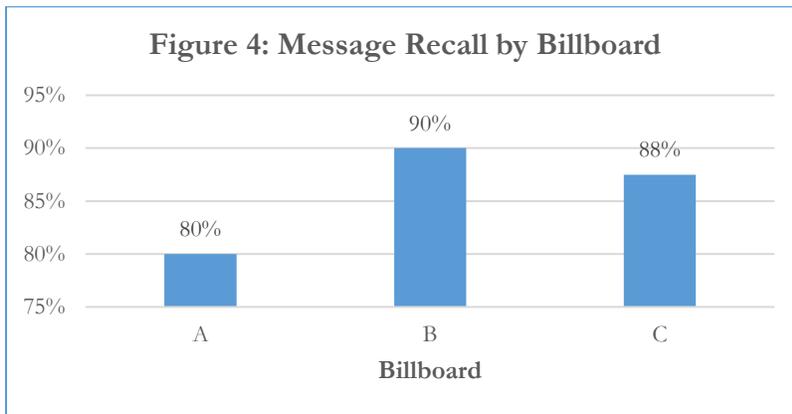
Breaking respondents' feedback down by billboard, data shows that the while the image of Raya stood out the most for Billboard A (*Raya washing her hands*) and Billboard B (*Raya drying her*

² When responses covered multiple categories, those responses were counted for all applicable categories.

hands) respondents, the message of Billboard C (*Zari and Zeerak*) stood out more for those respondents (Figure 3).



As a follow-up question, regardless of what stood out the most for them, respondents were asked if they remembered the message. Average recall was high, with 87% of all respondents indicating that they did remember the message. Figures were highest for Billboard B and lowest for Billboard A (Figure 4), though all were 80% or higher.



For those respondents who stated that they remembered the message, when asked to restate it by the enumerator to confirm recall, 44% of respondents repeated the message verbatim: “Our Hands, Our Future.” Of that group, Billboard B respondents represented 95% of “Our Hands, Our Future” responses. An additional 51% could recall that the message was related to hygiene. Sample responses included:

- Health and hygiene
- Our hygiene, our future
- Wash hands before and after eating
- We should wash our hands after eating and toilet
- Hygiene is part of faith
- Wash hands with soap and water

4% of respondents who indicated that they remembered the message did not answer when prompted to recall it.

When asked to share their thoughts on the messaging, 100% of respondents provided a positive response, primarily because of the focus on raising health awareness. Regarding relevance, 98% of respondents thought the messaging was relevant to them.

On how, if at all, the billboard has impacted the respondents' behavior, 89% responded yes. For those who provided more detailed responses, sample explanations included:

- I got the message that always before and after eating, I should wash.
- I talk more about hygiene to others.
- I was reminded that I should be paying attention to hygiene and ensure my family and children are brought up observing hygiene practices.
- The billboard message does not only impact me but other members of community, and raises their awareness.

The 6% of respondents who did not find the billboard or its messaging impactful, they explained:

- Because it's advertisement, and doesn't have any practicality. No impact. (Billboard C)
- Personally, not me, but I am sure it has impact on society. (Billboard C)

Most respondents found the billboard memorable, with 80% indicating that the billboard was very memorable and only 14% reporting that the billboard in question was not memorable. In addition, 98% of respondents believe that billboards are an effective method of sharing information.

Conclusion

Based on respondents' feedback, the WASH UP! roadside billboards in Herat are appealing and relevant. Respondents can recall and comprehend the messaging, whether that includes the specific slogan or providing a summary derived from either the messaging itself, the image, or both. Analysis of data on message recall suggests that message comprehension is highest when the billboard image and message are directly linked, as in the case of Billboard B. In both Billboard A and Billboard C, the image does not clearly link to the positive hygiene behaviors. For example, separate from the messaging, not all may assume that Raya is holding a bar of soap without greater context clues (soap suds, water) or that Zari and Zeerak are promoting good hygiene practices more broadly.

More research is required to better assess the link between comprehension and self-reported behavior change more broadly, though it is clear that billboards in this community provide a useful platform to disseminate behavior change messaging, and even more so when the images of Muppets are actively demonstrating positive hygiene behaviors in support of the accompanying hygiene messaging.

Annex 1: Billboard Identification and Format

BILLBOARD A



BILLBOARD B



BILLBOARD C

