

## CHAPTER 6

# Target Audience Analysis



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**Target audience analysis is a detailed, systematic examination of PSYOP intelligence to select target audiences that may be effective in accomplishing the PSYOP mission. Target audience analysis is the process by which potential target audiences are Identified and analyzed for power (their ability or capacity to perform effectively), for accessibility (by U.S. PSYOP media), and for susceptibility (the degree to which they may be manipulated).**

### Process

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The key in the target audience analysis process is identifying target audiences with power—ones whose changed behavior will affect the outcome of the supported commander's mission. The quality of empathy is vital to an effective target audience anal analysis. Empathy is putting oneself in the other person's shoes—the ability to understand other human beings, to know how they feel and how and when to talk to them. To achieve success, PSYOP personnel must have this quality above all others. Empathy is so basic it may underlie everything said about how to develop an effective PSYOP message.

The message, in whatever form it is packaged, is not subject to a set of rigid rules, such as, "Printed products will not be written above a seventh grade reading level," or "PSYOP must adhere to the rules of advertising." The goal of PSYOP is to motivate a desired behavior change. The test is whether the message will get the desired response. PSYOP personnel must gain the attention of the audience. They must get their meaning across and identify information necessary to understand the target audience's perception. They know what response they want to cause in the target audience (PSYOP objective) and something about how that is done. The specifics of this process include the integration of the results of target audience analysis, the appropriate theme, and proper communication strategy. These specifics require from PSYOP personnel the greatest possible empathy with the audience they are trying to reach.

## Target Audience Analysis Work Sheet

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Target audience analysts work in the target audience analysis section of the PDC. They use a tool called the TAAWS to conduct target audience analysis. (See Chapter 4, Figure 4-3, page 4-6.) The TAAWS consists of header data (blocks 1 through 4) and target audience analysis data (blocks 5 through 12). After the target audience analyst completes the TAAWS, the PDC chief or company commander compares the information on the TAAWS with any existing work sheets on the same target audience and ensures that all pertinent information has been considered. All previous TAAWSs on the same target audience should be segregated at this time.

### Header Data

Blocks 1 through 4 of the TAAWS contains the header data. This data includes the national objective, the supported unit's mission, the PSYOP mission, and the target audience. This data helps form a frame of reference for the analyst. All information placed on the TAAWS is linked to these blocks to ensure the target analyst is focused on the current campaign.

**National Objective.** The national objective comes from U.S. policy statements and documents that provide PSYOP guidance in and toward a country. These documents cover specific goals in military, political, economic, and psychological areas. Sources for U.S. objectives relevant to Army PSYOP include—

- Unified command military plans.
- USIA country memorandums.
- DOD and DOS policy statements.
- Other related command and PSYOP guidance.

**Supported Unit's Mission.** The supported unit's mission may come from the OPLAN or OPORD of the supported unit or from the commander or operations officer of the supported unit. The PSYOP planner must have a clear understanding of what the supported commander is expected to accomplish. Therefore, this block must be sufficiently detailed to explain the mission fully to PSYOP personnel supporting the mission.

**PSYOP Mission.** The PSYOP mission derives from the supported unit's mission and indicates actions to be accomplished by the PSYOP unit in the supported unit's area of interest. If supporting echelons above corps, the PSYOP mission might be directed by a higher headquarters or, for planning purposes, might be deduced from operational objectives. For example, in May 1945, the United States was at war with Japan. The U.S. national objective was to get the Japanese government to surrender unconditionally. The mission of the supported unit was to defeat the Japanese military. The PSYOP objective was to influence the Japanese military to surrender unconditionally.

**Target Audience.** The initial step in conducting PSYOP target audience analysis is the identification of target audiences. A target audience is a collection of people

who have common characteristics and vulnerabilities that may make them susceptible to the effects of a PSYOP program. A TAAWS is prepared for each target audience-PSYOP objective combination. If a great deal of information is available for target audiences, the target analyst may set up a workbook, making each section of the workbook equivalent to a section on the TAAWS. In this case, the TAAWS functions as an executive summary.

**Classifications of Target Audiences.** Audience analysis is a study of the total audience the message reaches. It may include people who were not a part of the intended target audience. Audiences may range from a broad general category, such as the Soviet people, to a specific category, such as a rifle company. Audiences also may be defined as specific groups based on income, nationality, geography, ethnicity, political preferences, religion, race, social class, economic level, caste, and other factors. Audiences are classified as shown below

- Apparent audiences are the audiences that appear to be the target of the message. They may or may not be the real, intended, or final targets of the message.
- Ultimate audiences are the real, intended, or final targets of the message.
- Intermediate audiences are used by the PSYOP planner to transmit his message to the ultimate audience. Intermediate audiences may or may not be part of the ultimate audience.
- Unintended audiences are audiences the planner had not intended to reach but the ones that received a message directed at another audience.

**Types of Target Audiences.** The three types of target audiences are groups, categories, and aggregates. When examining the available target audiences, the PSYOP planner must ensure that his selected audience is one that can help achieve the PSYOP mission.

Groups are collections of people bound together by common activities and goals. They are the preferred PSYOP target audiences. Within groups, there are two additional designations—primary and secondary. An example of a primary group is a family or a small military unit such as a squad or platoon that has endured severe hardships. A primary group is extremely protective of its members from outside interference. An example of a secondary group is a parliament-united in its goals of serving the electorate and country, but perhaps divergent in individual views for accomplishing its mission. Since it usually has a specific reason for existing, a group can be studied more precisely than other collections of people. More valid and definitive statements can be made concerning group conditions and attitudes. It is generally easier to persuade a secondary group than a primary one to behave in a desired manner because of the high level of cohesiveness in a primary group. One place to begin selecting possible target audiences is the BPS for the country in question.

Categories, the second most desirable type of target audience, are collections of people who share specific demographics such as race, sex, or age. These shared characteristics are usually not enough to cause category members to act in concert, thus limiting their effectiveness.

Aggregates are collections of people identified by a common geographic area. They are the least desirable type of target audience. Examples of aggregates are Europeans, Asians, Midwesterners, and Egyptians. People in these large groupings may have diverse values and little in common with each other. PSYOP personnel should analyze categories and aggregates to identify primary and secondary groups.

**Key Communicators.** Key communication are also a kind of target audience. They are individuals to whom members of a target audience turn for information, opinion, or interpretation of information. Key communicators are an intermediate target audience useful in conveying the PSYOP message to the ultimate target audience. They may not be physically collocated with the ultimate target audience, but their power enables them to generate the desired effect in the target area.

Interpersonal communication often employs one or more key communicators. Key communicator influence factors include credibility, appeal, and power and control. Credibility is the willingness of the target audience to accept what the communicator says as truth. Appeal is the combination of attractiveness (pleasing to the senses) and prestige (prominence) based upon success, renown, or wealth. Power and control is influence (ability to persuade) and access (ease and degree of contact.)

The relative importance of these influence factors will vary, but all of them must be present. Note that a prestigious person is not always a key communicator. He may occupy a position of authority and responsibility but uses someone else or others to communicate for him.

The two-step model of communication attempts to influence the key communicator. By properly targeting the key communicator (step 1), the PSYOP planner enlists the key communicator's support, which enhances communication with the ultimate target audience (step 2). The initial targets of the PSYOP planner may be key communicators or opinion formers who have the potential and capability to persuade the ultimate target audience.

Some of the sources of influence of key communicators in different cultures include age, birth, education, physical strength, political authority, religion, wealth, exceptional talent, and leadership in professional or social organizations.

At times, key communicators may not fully accept the PSYOP message. However, their acceptance is unimportant as long as they still carry the message. The following COAs—in order of desirability—may be applied to key communicators hostile toward U.S. PSYOP

- Use interpersonal persuasion to obtain their support.
- Reduce or eliminate their influence.
- Look for other key communicators.
- Alter the entire line of persuasion.

**Media.** Media can also serve as an intermediate target audience. U.S. military PSYOP do not target domestic media as intermediate target audiences. There are, however, practitioners of PSYOP who do. Terrorists, for example, know that the best way to put

their message before their intended audiences (governments) is to use graphic violence and the media's fascination with it as an attention-getting device. The camera itself is not the target of such campaigns—the camera crew, reporter, producer, and publisher are. They ensure the terrorists' message is transmitted.

U.S. military PSYOP personnel must operate within the Geneva Conventions, the Law of Land Warfare, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. To advise the supported commander on how not to become the target—or the tool—of these campaigns, PSYOP personnel must be aware that the employment of mass media by others is not so constrained.

### **Target Audience Analysis Data**

Blocks 5 through 12 of TAAWSs are used for recoding data obtained during the target audience analysis. These blocks correspond to the following steps of the analysis

- Set the PSYOP objective for the target audience being analyzed (block 5).
- List conditions affecting the target audience (block 6).
- List media that will provide accessibility to the target audience (block 11).
- Analyze vulnerabilities of the target audience (block 8).
- Determine the themes and symbols (block 9).
- Determine the susceptibility of the target audience (block 10).
- Determine the target audience effectiveness (block 7).
- List the impact indicators (block 12).

The target analyst gets the information needed to complete each of these steps from PSYOP products such as the BPSs, SPSs, and SPAS and from current intelligence and information requests. As information is gathered, the target analyst records it in the proper column of the TAAWS.

**PSYOP Objective.** PSYOP objective is the measurable response expected of a target audience as a result of PSYOP? It is based on specific and implied tasks derived from the PSYOP mission. It must accurately define the specific desired behavior response, which in turn must support the PSYOP objective. Target analysts may change the specific and implied tasks after conditions, vulnerabilities, susceptibility, and effectiveness of the target audience have been considered.

A PSYOP objective may be a single step or a series of intermediate steps designed to lead the target audience toward the desired behavior or attitude to accomplish the PSYOP mission. Should it be necessary to have a series of intermediate steps, each one must accurately define the specific behavior response desired. Target analysts must complete each intermediate step in logical order.

The desired behavior response must be identified in measurable terms. In establishing measurable activities for the target audience during a PSYOP program, present activity levels must be analyzed to determine if behavior changes can occur. Attitude changes are much more difficult to measure and frequently are overlooked when the results of a particular program are being determined. Furthermore, attitude changes cannot, in themselves, contribute directly to the military mission; behavior changes can.

PSYOP objectives are classified as cohesive or divisive. Cohesive objectives, whose successful achievement would strengthen or more closely unite the total society or a particular target group, encourage the individuals of the target audience to place the collective good above the individual good. Goodwill, encouragement, compliance, and cooperation are examples of cohesive objectives. Divisive objectives are designed to separate individuals from their group, a target group from other groups, or a target group from the society or to disorganize a group or society. Divisive objectives encourage the individuals in the target audience to place their self-interest above the interest of the group. Examples of divisive objectives are as follows:

- Discouragement.
- Defeatism.
- Apathy.
- Hostility.
- Noncooperation.
- Discord.
- Panic.
- Active and passive resistance.
- Surrender.
- Defection.
- Desertion.

**Conditions.** Conditions are any environmental situations over which the target audience has virtually no control but may have an effect on the target audience. These situations may be man-made, such as wars, taxes, and forced relocations, or natural, such as floods, earthquakes, or famines. Target audience analysts should list these conditions under the following categories:

- Economic.
- Political.
- Environmental.
- Social.
- Psychological.
- Communications.
- Military.

PSYOP personnel and the mass media usually provide information concerning these conditions. Target audience analysts should list conditions having both a positive and negative influence on the target audience to avoid creating a biased image of the target audience. They should consider each condition selected as it is perceived by the target audience. They should avoid ethnocentrism and, above all, be empathic.

**Audience Effectiveness.** Audience effectiveness is the actual ability of the target audience to carry out the behavior response indicated in the PSYOP objective. If

the target audience is susceptible to persuasion, the target analyst must assess the relative capability of the target audience to perform the desired behavior. The most important factors in making this determination are restrictions and influence. Restrictions are the physical, sociological, political, emotional, and economic constraints that keep the target audience from performing some action. For instance, Japanese culture considers surrender to an enemy dishonorable. For that reason, during World War II, it was extremely difficult for the Allies to convince Japanese soldiers to surrender. Even toward the end of the war when all hope for victory was gone and nothing could be gained by further resistance, the Japanese continued to resist surrender.

The target analyst must also consider the influence of the target audience. When assessing effectiveness, PSYOP personnel study the power structure of a country and the positions of target audiences within those structures. Who influences this target audience? Who is influenced by this target audience? Any circumstances that may alter the standard relationships between the target audience and other groups in the target area should also be determined.

**Vulnerabilities.** Vulnerabilities generally correspond to the conditions previously listed. For example, lack of food creates a vulnerability of hunger. Target audience analysts evaluate the four interrelated psychological factors—perception, motivation, stress, and attitudes—as they pertain to the target audience and determine what, if any, vulnerabilities exist because of the conditions listed.

Perception is the interpretation of sensory input from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching. Perception is also influenced by physiological capacities, frames of reference, learning, past experiences, and cultural and social environments. To be effective, PSYOP products must be perceived and interpreted by the audience as the PSYOP personnel intended. For example, during the Vietnamese conflict, the United States disseminated leaflets with an overprinted ace of spades (to be interpreted as an omen of death). This symbol was supposed to cause fear in Communist soldiers. However, the intended reaction never occurred because the ace of spades is not included in the Vietnamese deck of cards and is unfamiliar to that culture.

Motivation is the desire of all living organisms to survive and fulfill their potential in life. These desires operate both biologically and psychologically in humans and include safety and physical and emotional needs. Humans constantly renew themselves through rest and nourishment. Prolonged interference with these needs can make them vulnerable to special stresses.

Common needs exist despite wide individual and cultural differences in people. This common core includes a need for order, predictability, understanding, and security. Individuals also have feelings of adequacy and competency that help them adjust and cope with internal and external demands. Especially in times of severe stress and crisis, individuals have a need for a feeling of belonging. They also need the approval of others in their work and recreation to gain and retain a sense of adequacy and competence. Values, meaning, and hope assist in stimulating people, promoting achievement or causing defeat, and attaining or not attaining personal goals.

Motivation not only gives direction to actions but also activates behavior in pursuit of a goal. Individuals have behavior patterns that are centered on particular motivations and goals, some conscious and others subconscious. For example, biological needs, such as hunger and thirst, generally operate on an unconscious level as long as food and water are available. An individual becomes aware of them when the need interferes with bodily functions. Psychological needs, such as security, social approval, and self-esteem, may also operate on an unconscious level. Thus, soldiers may criticize their peers, join elite units, or volunteer for dangerous assignments for reasons not consciously recognized. Later they may justify their behavior. Frequently their justification differs from what actually caused them to act the way they did.

Social factors can aid or inhibit specific needs, making some goals more feasible than others. A society uses a system of values coupled with rewards and punishments to encourage specific behavior. Individuals and social groups share similar basic needs. Survival depends on the maintenance of orderly social relationships accomplished through custom and law. When group functions or organization is disrupted, as when a company commander is killed in battle, the group tries to reorganize to return the group to its normal operating mode. For example, the executive officer or next in authority assumes command. PSYOP personnel must recognize that the needs of groups and of society are important determinants of an individual's behavior. When an individual meets the needs of his group, he usually promotes his own welfare. The needs of a group or society may, however, conflict with the needs of an individual, which creates stress. This situation may occur when soldiers are forced to risk their lives for a cause in which they do not believe.

Stress is mental, emotional, or physical tension or strain. A person's life could be less stressful if his biological and psychological needs were automatically gratified, but many obstacles exist that interfere with the ability to reach a desired goal, and these obstacles place stress on an individual. PSYOP personnel must learn to recognize stress-causing factors or situations and exploit them to the fullest when planning and conducting PSYOP.

Attitudes are consistent, learned, emotionalized predispositions to respond in a particular way to a given object, person, or situation. Opinions and beliefs are closely related to attitudes, but they differ in that an opinion or belief refers to what one knows or assumes to be true, whereas an attitude is how a person feels about something. Since opinions have their basis in assumptions, it is easier to change a person's opinions and beliefs than his attitudes.

Attitudes affect behavior, especially when the attitudes are important to a person. Strong attitudes are not always a guarantee that an individual will behave accordingly, however, as he may possess other attitudes or beliefs that affect his behavior more strongly. For instance, a soldier may feel strongly about the immorality of war, but this attitude may not necessarily cause him to desert or defect to the enemy because his sense of loyalty will not let him accept the stigma of being a deserter or traitor.

**Themes and Symbols.** Themes and symbols support the PSYOP objective of the PSYOP program. When used in a PSYOP product, they address or “play on” the vulnerabilities and susceptibilities of the target audience. Some themes and symbols are universal, while other are target specific. When selecting themes and symbols, the target analyst must conduct a detailed analysis of the relevance of those themes and symbols to the target audience.

**Susceptibility.** Susceptibility is the degree to which the target audience can be influenced to respond in a manner that will help accomplish the PSYOP mission. Simply put, how well can a vulnerability be manipulated? For example, if a condition is a food shortage that creates a hunger, the last time a target audience ate a healthy meal might very well determine how susceptible the target audience is to this need. The degree of susceptibility will be rated not susceptible, moderately susceptible, or highly susceptible.

**Accessibility.** The availability of an audience for targeting by PSYOP is termed accessibility. Having PSYOP dissemination means within range of the target audience does not always guarantee that the audience can receive the PSYOP message or that military PSYOP can be used on that audience. For example, one rule of engagement may forbid U.S. military PSYOP from targeting allied forces well within range of a U.S. military PSYOP-operated radio transmitter. In this case, allied forces would be inaccessible to the United States.

**Impact Indicators.** Impact indicators are those changes or events that will help measure the effectiveness of the PSYOP efforts. Impact indicators are usually subjective, but when thoroughly analyzed, can provide reliable judgments. If possible, impact indicators are expressed as a percentage of increase or decrease in a specified activity. The target analyst places a small + or - in front of each indicator on the TAAWS to indicate whether it is a positive or negative impact indicator.

**Positive Impact Indicator.** A positive impact indicator correlates directly with the PSYOP effort. For example, if a PSYOP program is attempting to convince opponent forces to surrender, an increase in the number of opponent soldiers giving themselves up would be a positive indicator. PSYOP personnel would have to be aware, however, that the defectors might be surrendering because of factors other than the PSYOP program.

**Negative Impact Indicator.** A negative impact indicator is an event or a change opposite that desired by the PSYOP unit. One example might be fewer defectors despite a massive program to convince them of the benefits and advantages of defecting. PSYOP personnel would have to examine this case to determine why the program was having the opposite effect or if PSYOP had anything to do with it.

## Summary

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Target audience analysis is the process used to select target audiences that may be useful in accomplishing the PSYOP mission. The PSYOP analyst uses TAAWS to ensure a complete analysis of target audiences and for recording the resultant data.

After noting the national objective, supported unit's mission, PSYOP mission, and target audience on a TAAWS, the target analyst proceeds with the audience analysis. He examines PSYOP intelligence and evaluates the information on a TAAWS IAW the following steps:

- Set the PSYOP objective for the target audience selected.
- List conditions affecting the target audience.
- Determine the accessibility of the target audience.
- Analyze vulnerabilities of the target audience.
- Determine the susceptibility of the target audience.
- Determine the effectiveness of the target audience.
- Determine themes and symbols.
- List the impact indicators.

The TAAWS is the basis for PSYOP program planning. It also serves as a summary for selecting themes, symbols, actions, and media for future PSYOP programs.