

Paper 196-31

Application of Experimental Design in Consumer Direct-Mail Solicitations

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ABSTRACT

We will look at how to design experiments using SAS[®]/QC. Examples will come from experiments testing consumer preference for direct mail credit card offers. Discussion will focus on designs of experiments using PROC OPTEX, sample size requirements, and response surface models using PROC LOGISTIC and PROC GENMOD. We will discuss what to do with design results, focusing on simulation and optimization.

INTRODUCTION

Experimental Design is the well defined plan for data collection, analysis and interpretation. The process will help answer your questions about hypotheses you have about how different factors influence a response (or dependent) variable. We often begin the design session by asking the question, "What do you want to know?"

In this paper, we will review the following topics:

- Single Factor: "Test VS Control" Designs
- Design of Multi-Factor Tests
- Sample Size Requirements
- Response Surface Plots
- Extending results to Profitability

Applications will come from examples in direct mail solicitations of credit card offers. The hypothetical design used in this paper tries to answers questions about consumer response sensitivities to various components of credit card offers.

SINGLE FACTOR: "TEST VS. CONTROL" DESIGN

Historical use of experimental design in the credit card industry has been the analysis of single factor designs with 2 levels of variation. The advantages of the design is that the test is easy to implement and easy to evaluate. The disadvantages are that the design provides too narrow a view of the universe. Test VS Control designs offer no understanding of interactions among factors. Including many of these tests in a single mailing have p-values that are too low and the need for adjustment is rarely made (1999, Westfall, P., Tobias, R., Rom, R., Wolfinger, R, and Hochberg, Y.). In summary, "Test vs. Control" or "Champion/Challenger" designs are often wasteful of resources and provide little understanding of what effects the desired response.

An excellent quote from J. Stuart Hunter on one factor tests:

"The statistical design of experiments had its origins in the work of Sir Ronald Fisher... Fisher showed that, by combining the settings of several factors simultaneously in special arrays (experimental designs), it was possible to glean information on the separate effects of the several factors. Experiments in which one factor at a time was varied were shown to be wasteful and misleading."

DESIGN OF MULTI-FACTOR TESTS

The design methodology we will be focusing on is called "Response Surface Methods". The methodology has been successfully used since the mid 1950's in various disciplines including engineering, physics and psychology. Historical references are included at the end of the paper.

Response surface methods are designed to evaluate how certain FACTORS (or independent variables) affect a RESPONSE (dependent variable) outcome. The design factors are left in original numerical scale so that the statistically significant functional relationship, derived from a regression model, between factors and response can used to solve for local minimums or maximums.

In this paper, we will use the term "response" to refer to any "dependent variable" that we wish to predict. In some examples, it will be a response rate, but it can be any variable type (nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio).

EXAMPLE OF MULTI-FACTOR DESIGN

We are interested in learning more about consumer price sensitivity to various components of a credit card offer for new accounts. The factors we are interested in exploring are:

- Introductory Rate (**INTRO**) that is applied to Balance Transfers.
- **DURATION**: How long the INTRO rate is good for.
- **GOTO** Rate: APR after INTRO period expires and the rate for purchases.
- Annual **FEE**
- **COLOR** of Envelope. An advertising agency wants to test if a RED envelope will increase response over a White envelope.

In order to measure the effects of the above factors on response rate we need to add variability to each of the factors. Here are the dimensions of the factor levels for each factor that we wish to explore:

INTRO	DURATION	GOTO	FEE	COLOR
0%	6 months	Prime+3.99	\$0	RED
1.99%	9 months	Prime+4.99	\$15	WHITE
2.99%	12 months	Prime+5.99	\$45	

If we look at the number of possible design points from the above table we see that there are 162 possible combinations of offers we can test.

$$3*3*3*3*2 = 162$$

This maybe to prohibitive if we wish to minimize test mailings to a small number of mailed offers and mail quantity. We can reduce the number of required test points if we focus on the functional form of the model we will build after test results are received. If we limit the model to all main effects, all 2-way interactions, and square terms for non-nominal variables, we can determine how many regression parameters we will need to solve.

	Number of Regression Effect Coefficients
Intercept	1
Main Effects	5
2-way Interactions	10 $\text{Main_Effects} * (\text{Main_Effects} - 1) / 2$
Square Terms	4
TOTAL	20

In order to measure experimental error we will also need to add 10 additional design points. The total design space can now be limited to 30 points. So we now need to come up with 30 out of 162 possible design points. Wow, how many ways of choosing 30 out of 162? How do we know one design is better than another? We need an optimization method to pick better designs.

WE NEED PROC OPTEX

SAS/QC has a number of experimental design building tools. PROC OPTEX will optimize designs based on the factors specified, levels of factors and model statement. We have specified all of this, so let's see how to use PROC OPTEX.

To make PROC OPTEX even simpler, let's set up some user defined inputs. Set-up code:

```
***** set up *****;
%let title   = SUGI31 TEST DESIGN;
%let var     = intro duration goto fee color;           ❶
%let class   = color                                   ❷
%let factors = intro=3 duration=3 goto=3 fee=3 color=2;  ❸
%let levels  = intro      nvals=(0 1.99 2.99)          ❹
                duration  nvals=(6 9 12)
                goto      nvals=(3.99 4.99 5.99)
                fee       nvals=(0 15 45)
                color     cvals=('RED' 'WHITE')
                ;
%let model   = intro|duration|goto|fee|color@2         ❺
                intro*intro duration*duration goto*goto fee*fee
                ;
*****;
```

Some comments about above set up code:

1. We list all variables used in the model in line ❶.
2. We list out any CLASS variables (nominal variables) in line ❷. Make sure to add this variable in line ❶.
3. Line ❸ lists all variables and specifies how many levels are required for each factor.
4. Line ❹ lists levels for each factor. Numeric factors get listed with a NVALS statement and character variables get a CVALS specification.
5. Line ❺ adds the model statement following the same specification used in GENMOD, LOGISTIC, and GLM.

Let's continue with the code. The rest of the code is driven off of the set-up section. First, let SAS generate the design data set with all 162 possible combinations of offers. This can be done with a DATA step or using PROC PLAN.

```
PROC PLAN ORDERED seed=940522;
  FACTORS &factors
        /NOPRINT;
  OUTPUT OUT=ENUM
        &levels
  ;
Run;
```

LOG Output confirms the 162 design points:

NOTE: The data set WORK.ENUM has 162 observations and 5 variables.

The DATA created from the run is called ENUM. We can modify this data set if there are prohibitive design points in the model. Evaluate each prohibitive point constraint. Don't eliminate points just because the user feels that certain combinations will never be rolled out. This is just a test to measure relationships between factors and response.

Now we get to the PROC OPTEX which will select design points based on an optimization strategy. In this code we selected what is termed D-Optimality. The procedure iterates over many point combinations looking to maximize the determinant of the matrix (X'X).

```

PROC OPTEX DATA=ENUM SEED=112358;
  CLASS &class;
  MODEL &model;
  GENERATE ITER=1000
          criterion=D
          ;
  OUTPUT OUT=DSGN1;
  title &title;
run;

```

The ITER=1000 option is probably over-kill, but the run on a PC is fast. Selected output is shown here. We are requesting to output the best design which is numbered "1" in the output.

The OPTEX Procedure

Design Number	D-Efficiency	A-Efficiency	G-Efficiency	Average Prediction Standard Error
1	53.1822	25.8988	82.6242	0.8372
2	53.1668	25.6013	82.8199	0.8377
3	53.1400	22.9415	79.3966	0.8554
4	53.0766	25.7855	79.5299	0.8370
5	53.0461	26.2382	80.8134	0.8363
6	53.0376	24.6737	81.2857	0.8471
7	53.0229	25.9422	81.1176	0.8368
8	53.0165	25.6451	80.7522	0.8372
9	53.0018	25.6496	79.7641	0.8402
10	52.9932	26.3599	81.9653	0.8346
<i>rows 11-999 were omitted</i>				
1000	50.1626	21.8998	74.4684	0.8934

We can now print out the design points:

```

proc sort data=dsgn1;
  by &var;

```

```

PROC PRINT DATA=DSGN1;
run;

```

Output:

Obs	intro	duration	goto	fee	color
1	0.00	6	3.99	0	WHITE
2	0.00	6	3.99	45	RED
3	0.00	6	5.99	0	RED
4	0.00	6	5.99	45	WHITE
5	0.00	9	3.99	45	RED
6	0.00	9	4.99	15	WHITE
7	0.00	9	5.99	0	RED
8	0.00	12	3.99	0	RED
9	0.00	12	3.99	45	WHITE
10	0.00	12	5.99	0	WHITE
11	0.00	12	5.99	45	RED
12	0.00	12	5.99	45	WHITE
13	1.99	6	3.99	15	RED
14	1.99	6	4.99	45	WHITE
15	1.99	6	5.99	0	WHITE
16	1.99	9	5.99	45	RED
17	1.99	12	3.99	0	WHITE
18	1.99	12	5.99	15	RED
19	2.99	6	3.99	0	WHITE
20	2.99	6	3.99	45	WHITE
21	2.99	6	4.99	0	RED
22	2.99	6	5.99	15	WHITE
23	2.99	6	5.99	45	RED
24	2.99	9	3.99	0	RED
25	2.99	12	3.99	15	WHITE
26	2.99	12	3.99	45	RED
27	2.99	12	4.99	0	WHITE
28	2.99	12	4.99	45	RED
29	2.99	12	5.99	0	RED
30	2.99	12	5.99	45	WHITE

Let's see a design point summary:

```
proc tabulate
  data=dsgn1 noseps;
  class &var;
  table &var all
    ,
    n='Design Points'
    *f=comma15.
    /rts=10;
run;
```

	Design Points
intro	
0	12
1.99	6
2.99	12
duration	
6	12
9	5
12	13
goto	
3.99	12
4.99	5
5.99	13
fee	
0	12
15	5
45	13
color	
RED	15
WHITE	15
All	30

Note that center points get fewer design points than extremes. Since the confidence intervals are widest at the extremes of the design more points are added at extremes to minimize the confidence interval of estimation the further one gets away from the center (mean). Also note that if no square terms are added to the model statement then no center points are included in the design (2 points define a line).

SAMPLE SIZE REQUIREMENTS

If this was an engineering design, the sample size is the 30 test points. In this case, we wish to look at response rate to these offers and build a logistic regression model after test results arrive to evaluate the test. We have to estimate the mail quantity required for each design point.

We can use some of the sample size estimation procedures used for testing proportions in Test vs. Control designs. The use of PROC POWER with TWOSAMPLEFREQ and MULTIREG (note no LOGISTIC in PROC POWER) can be used to generate some estimates of sample size for each design point. To save space in this contributed paper, this code is not included. A sample size of 12,000 per design point was chosen. The next section looks at hypothetical results.

RESPONSE SURFACE PLOTS

Results (hypothetical) come in for the mailing and we decide to model response rate using PROC LOGISTIC using the model specified in the design set up. We could also have used PROC GENMOD.

For this hypothetical example, we will use stepwise selection. With real examples, use stepwise with caution since coefficient p-values will not be correct (2001, Harrell, F. E., pages 56-60)..

Results of TEST:

Design Point	intro	duration	Goto	fee	color	quantity	Respond
1	0	6	3.99	0	WHITE	12,000	22
2	0	6	3.99	45	RED	12,000	18
3	0	6	5.99	0	RED	12,000	24
4	0	6	5.99	45	WHITE	12,000	36
5	0	9	3.99	45	RED	12,000	48
6	0	9	4.99	15	WHITE	12,000	108
7	0	9	5.99	0	RED	12,000	114
8	0	12	3.99	0	RED	12,000	174
9	0	12	3.99	45	WHITE	12,000	72
10	0	12	5.99	0	WHITE	12,000	144
11	0	12	5.99	45	RED	12,000	70
12	0	12	5.99	45	WHITE	12,000	67
13	1.99	6	3.99	15	RED	12,000	60
14	1.99	6	4.99	45	WHITE	12,000	24
15	1.99	6	5.99	0	WHITE	12,000	21
16	1.99	9	5.99	45	RED	12,000	25
17	1.99	12	3.99	0	WHITE	12,000	84
18	1.99	12	5.99	15	RED	12,000	72
19	2.99	6	3.99	0	WHITE	12,000	28
20	2.99	6	3.99	45	WHITE	12,000	18
21	2.99	6	4.99	0	RED	12,000	16
22	2.99	6	5.99	15	WHITE	12,000	21
23	2.99	6	5.99	45	RED	12,000	18
24	2.99	9	3.99	0	RED	12,000	22
25	2.99	12	3.99	15	WHITE	12,000	36
26	2.99	12	3.99	45	RED	12,000	43
27	2.99	12	4.99	0	WHITE	12,000	72
28	2.99	12	4.99	45	RED	12,000	42
29	2.99	12	5.99	0	RED	12,000	60
30	2.99	12	5.99	45	WHITE	12,000	36

PROC LOGISTIC CODE:

```
proc logistic data=test descending;
  class color;
  model respond/quantity =
    intro|duration|goto|fee|color@2
    intro*intro duration*duration goto*goto fee*fee
    /sle=.05 sls=.05 selection=stepwise;
run;
```

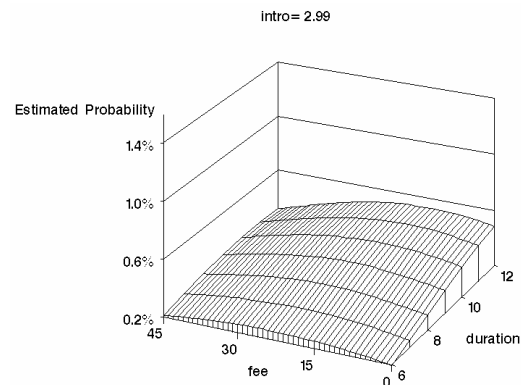
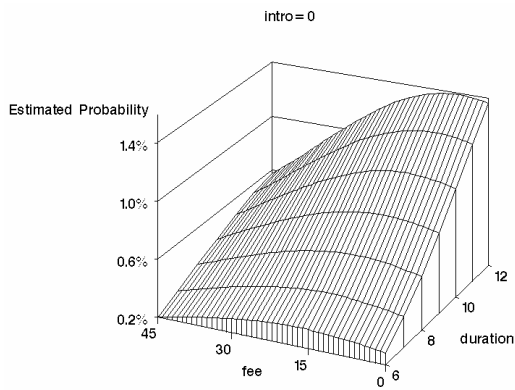
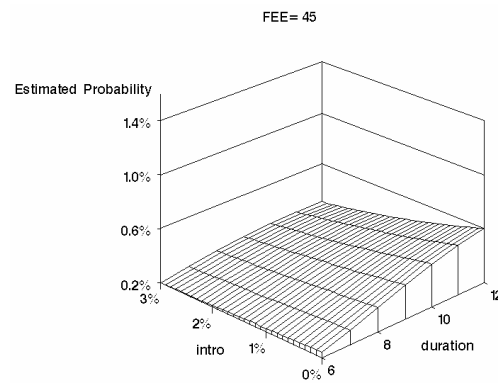
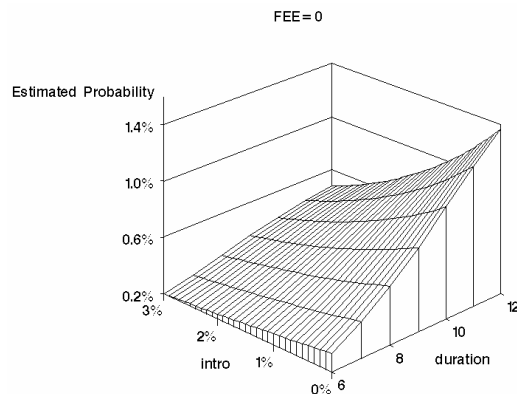
Selected output from the LOGISTIC run:

Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates

Parameter	DF	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
Intercept	1	-8.8506	0.6529	183.7708	<.0001
intro	1	-0.0252	0.0875	0.0829	0.7734
duration	1	0.6275	0.1444	18.8814	<.0001
intro*duration	1	-0.0287	0.00808	12.6353	0.0004
fee	1	0.0308	0.00901	11.6605	0.0006
intro*fee	1	0.00283	0.000952	8.8321	0.0030
duration*fee	1	-0.00202	0.000526	14.8228	0.0001
duration*duration	1	-0.0206	0.00767	7.1792	0.0074
fee*fee	1	-0.00057	0.000150	14.4006	0.0001

Note that for stepwise model in PROC LOGISTIC a non significant main effect will be retained if the interaction terms involving the main effect are significant. Looking at main effects; high intro reduces response, and high duration increases response. The GOTO effect and COLOR were not a significant factor in predicting response rates. It is hard to tell what is going on with the fee term. To further investigate and to report results, let's set up some surface plots. We will vary 2 terms and hold the third term constant and plot response rate as the Z axis. This code is not included, to save space in the final paper. Generated response surface plots are shown here:

Response Surface Plots



EXTENDING RESULTS TO PROFITABILITY

Response rates make sense. Consumers want the best offer for little or no price. The question that we have to ask is what offers will be profitable for the corporation? We can extend the surface plot to a NPV plot. This may not be trivial since it requires models for time series components of NPV. Generally the models are also of a regression form, using factors and time components to predict performance of accounts. With an NPV estimation derived from experimental design data we can utilize PROC LP to make optimal decisions on what price to offer different populations. These complexities are left to the reader and/or a subsequent paper or book.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Include a Replicate Point.** This will test if randomization was done correctly. If the replicate point shows statistically different response results one would question whether randomization was done correctly.
- **Removal of Design Points.** One can remove design points from the design if they are not feasible. This should be done after PROC PLAN and before PROC OPTEX. However, don't be too quick to remove points. Remember that this is a test and not a roll-out. Do not leave this procedure to the business user since removal of design points may invalidate the test by causing collinear relationships among factors.
- **How to Treat Segmentation covariates.** There are a number of ways of treating segmentation or population groups:
 - i. Treat as a factor in the design.
 - ii. Model as a covariate in the analysis
 - iii. Replicate design in all segments.
- **Do not add confounding conditions.** For example, mailing better responders (based on a response estimate) using 1st class and mailing lower responding names using 3rd class will confound test results. If your "Business as usual" decision is to cut mail base by response score cut-offs, then use the same cut-off strategy for each design point.

CONCLUSION

Experimental Design is simple with the power of SAS. You have to spend time focusing on what is the goal of the investigation. Once the factors, levels and constraints are specified a PROC OPTEX will set up the design. Run a response surface analysis using PROC LOGISTIC or PROC GENMOD or PROC GLM on the results and consider using the experimental design to feed the data for a profitability simulation and optimization.

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