THE LCM GUIDE

A guide to low-cost messaging & testing

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Vijana Corps

Raising Voices

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INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

FUWAVITA
FURAHA YA WANAWAKE WAJASIRIAMALI VIZIWI TANZANIA

INEND
INITIATIVE FOR EQUALITY AND NON DISCRIMINATION
"Dignified Lives"

LENGGO
LOCAL EMPOWERMENT FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

TAP ELDERLY WOMEN'S WISDOM FOR YOUTH

In addition, Busara would like to acknowledge the inspiration and influence provided by the Public Interest Research Centre (PIRC) and their highly effective Testing Comms Guidebook. You can find the link to this guidebook in our Resources section.

Contents

SECTION 1

About this guide

This is a resource to help you and your organization test your communications.

What is this guide?

This guide will take you through the basics of testing. Specifically:

1. It will help you understand the purpose and needs of testing and how testing can improve your communications design.

2. It will take you through a step-by-step process of what you need to decide from designing communications to testing materials. We will also help you choose which testing method is most suitable for your needs.

3. Finally, it will help you make sense of your results and guide you on what to do after testing.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for organizations with little to no experience with testing

Civil society organizations (CSOs) like yours often work with limited funds, time, and resources. There's also a misperception that testing is expensive. We'd like to show you that this isn't always the case. This guide presents some simple ways to test your messaging and campaigns to identify how to best achieve your desired results - all while preserving your resources.

How can I use this guide?

To get the most out of this guide, it's best to read it from start to finish. Each stage is a building block toward testing. It also helps if you already have a campaign in mind for testing. This will help transform the guidebook from a mere reading companion to a compass in your testing journey.

Section 2 is all about why testing is important. Use it to understand why testing can take your campaigns a level up and ultimately save you time and money.

From Section 3 onwards, we start getting more applied. Use Section 3 to understand first how to craft your messaging campaign – especially using behavioral principles – before even thinking of testing. Even if you have already designed your campaign, flip through Section 3 to see how to improve your current framings and approach.

From there, we will walk you step by step on each element in the flow of testing, from which method is suitable to how to use it. Go through this section when you are ready to test your materials. We will include examples to ground your understanding throughout each phase.

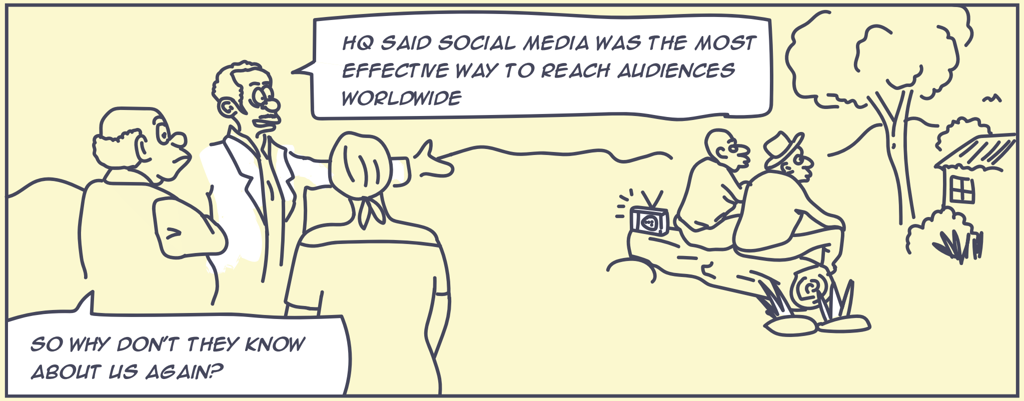
Are there other resources?
Yes. At the end of this guide, we will provide you with online resources to assist you in testing. We also offer a link to this guidebook's microsite, an interactive platform that will provide more testing information.

SECTION 2

Understanding testing

What is testing?

Testing is a series of investigations that evaluate your assumptions on why something might or might not work. In CSO messaging, testing measures your priority audience's reaction and helps determine whether they will find your message understandable, believable, and appealing.



Why should I test?

You should test to see if your messaging and programming will perform as well as you think it will. Though you may sometimes work quickly to create a message and get it out to your audience thinking that you have a great campaign idea that can meaningfully shift your audience's minds and behaviors, ask yourself, will it actually achieve this? Messages can sometimes be based on assumptions which can prove wrong. Testing helps you know if you are correct that your message will work and why. It allows you to learn more about the audiences and the messages you intend to communicate.

> ... to see if your messaging and programming will perform as well as you think it will.

What testing can and cannot do

What testing can do

- ✓ Tell you which messaging and framing approaches work best with different target audiences
- ✓ Determine the best channels for your communications
- Help you learn about your audience in a nuanced way
- ✓ Save you time and money by determining a narrower path forward and identifying which approaches to scale up
- ✓ Ultimately improve the impact and legitimacy of your work

What testing can't do

- ✗ Be used as a one-shot deal. Old testing findings can't be re-used for new messagings in new contexts.
- ✗ Tell you how long your campaign will stay effective for. Just like how human behavior is adaptable, campaigns need to be adapted over time so that your message stays fresh.
- ✗ Replace spending time with the people your organization most cares about and helps

What could I test for?

You should test the elements in your campaign that you think could drive the most impact with your audience to see how they respond to them. On the right are some elements that matter in how effectively you communicate.

... elements that drive the most impact with your audience.

Comprehension

Will your intended audience understand the message relayed?

Attractiveness

Does the message capture their attention?

Acceptance

Is there anything about the message that is offensive or inappropriate? Is this the right message for your audience?

Believability

Is the message believable and realistic to them?

Relevance

Is the message related to the issues faced by them?

Motivation/persuasion

Does the audience understand the call to action, and are they inspired to act?

Improvement

Is there anything that needs to be done to improve the message? What are the specific suggestions from your audience?

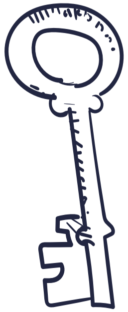
SECTION 3

Using behavioral science to strengthen messaging

There are some concrete steps you should complete before assessing how you can integrate behavioral science into your messaging and/or testing approach. Here's what you should have already done:

- Identify the goals of your campaign;
- Identify the audience(s) you need to engage in order for change to happen;
- Identify what the success outcomes of your campaign are (e.g., certain behavioral or perspective changes and actions in your audience);
- Create some initial draft messages appropriate for your different audiences.

During the last step of creating your messages, we want to offer some tips on how using behavioral science framings can strengthen your messages. Behavioral science is the study of human behavior and how we make decisions. It provides useful insights that your campaign teams can rely on to improve how your audience responds to your messaging.



For instance, one version of the messages you are testing could use social norms framing (when you reference how the majority of a group acts in positive perceptions or behaviors, thus signalling the behavior as "appropriate" for an indecisive audience) versus another version where you use your "business as usual" **messaging approach without framing.**

Or you could test messages where one uses loss-aversion framing (when you frame something like national progress actively being lost without the desired action) and the other uses gain framing (when you frame national progress being gained as the result of the desired action).

The following four pages have some key behavioral science framings you could use for your messaging:

Behavioral science is the study of human behavior and how we make decisions. It provides useful insights that your campaign teams can rely on to improve how your audience responds to your messaging.

Social Norms Framing

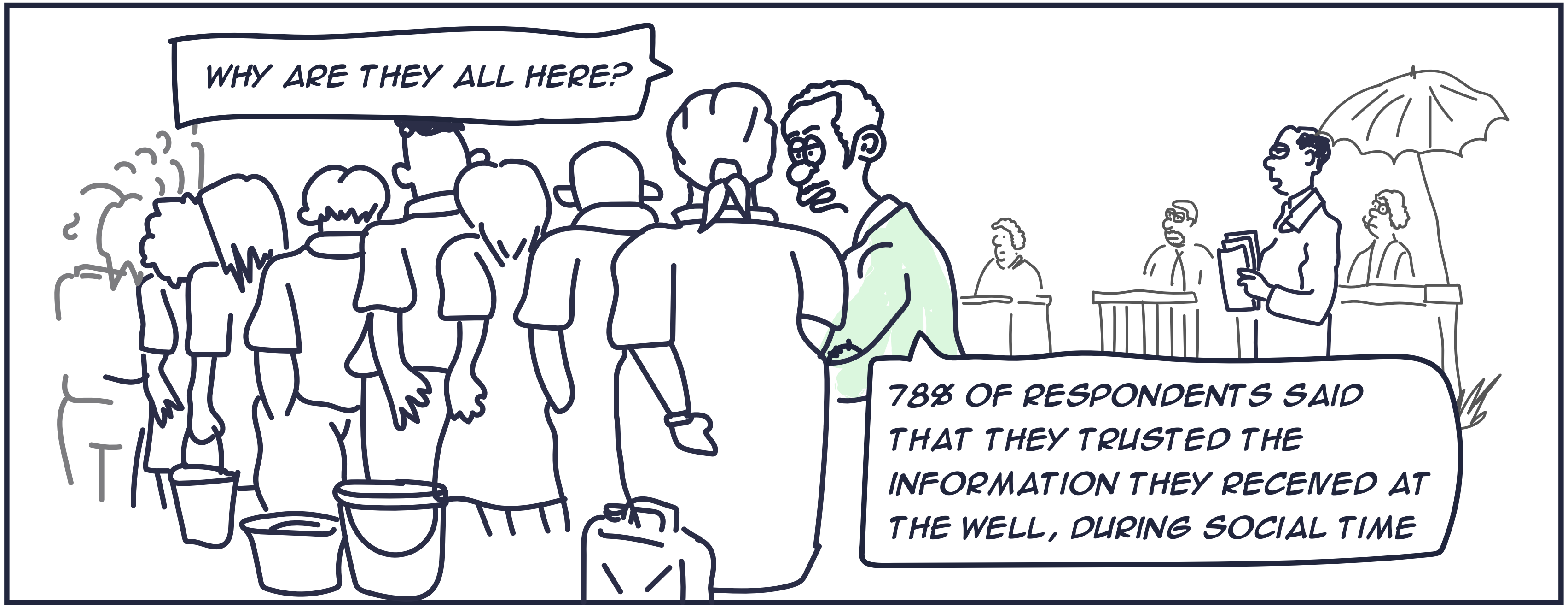
As social beings, we tend to follow behaviors that are largely acceptable or desired in society. The goal of social norms framing is to show that the majority of a certain group of people are doing the desired behaviour; this could then motivate your audience to adopt this behavior because it becomes more "acceptable". It is important to recognize that many social and human rights issues in East Africa are very complex, and that activists will need to distinguish what kinds of social norms framings might or might not lend themselves effectively to a public awareness communications campaign.

Social norms can backfire if it highlights the wrong behaviour, so only use this when there is an overwhelming majority, e.g. 60% of women doing Action X (which suggests 40% don't!). It is also useful to highlight personal stories and testimonials and bring them to life with colour and photos.

The goal of social norms is to show that the majority of a certain group of people are doing the desired behaviour

It is also useful to highlight personal stories and testimonials and bring them to life with colour and photos

For example, if you want to deploy a message campaign based on social norms to reduce gender-based violence, you can consider using a message like: **“7 out of 10 people in your city report to the nearest police station whenever they experience gender-based violence”**. This messaging shows that the reporting of gender-based violence within the city is a typical behavior which should be encouraged. However, make sure these numbers are well-researched and factual if you want to keep your audience’s trust.



Simplification

The easier something is for people to do or understand, the more likely they are to do them. People can only process, absorb, and recall a limited amount of information at any given time. So it's very important to make messages easy for them. As a CSO, you can simplify your messages in the following ways:

- → Remove jargon and reduce text;
- → Give very specific instructions, not requests e.g. 'Call 999' instead of 'Please Ring';
- → Break actions into steps using numbers, bullet points or checklists;
- → Use colours, images, bold or larger fonts to highlight key phrases.

People can only process, absorb, and recall a limited amount of information at any given time

Gain/Loss Framing

If you highlight the benefits of an action or the consequences of inaction, you can strongly influence the decisions of your audience. People are more likely to avoid losses than seek gains; emphasising what they could lose by inaction is often a more powerful motivator than telling recipients what they will gain by acting. However, it is important for you to test out a gain-framed versus a loss-framed message to see which gives the best results before rolling out a campaign.

- For example, if you want to frame a message to combat gender-based violence, you can consider variations on the following two messages:

- **If you report gender-based violence today, you help in saving a life (gain-framed).**

  If you fail to report gender-based violence today, you are responsible for the harm caused on the victim (loss-framed).

People are more likely to avoid losses than seek gains

For more behavioral science concepts useful in messaging and communication, you can look here.

SECTION 4

The testing process

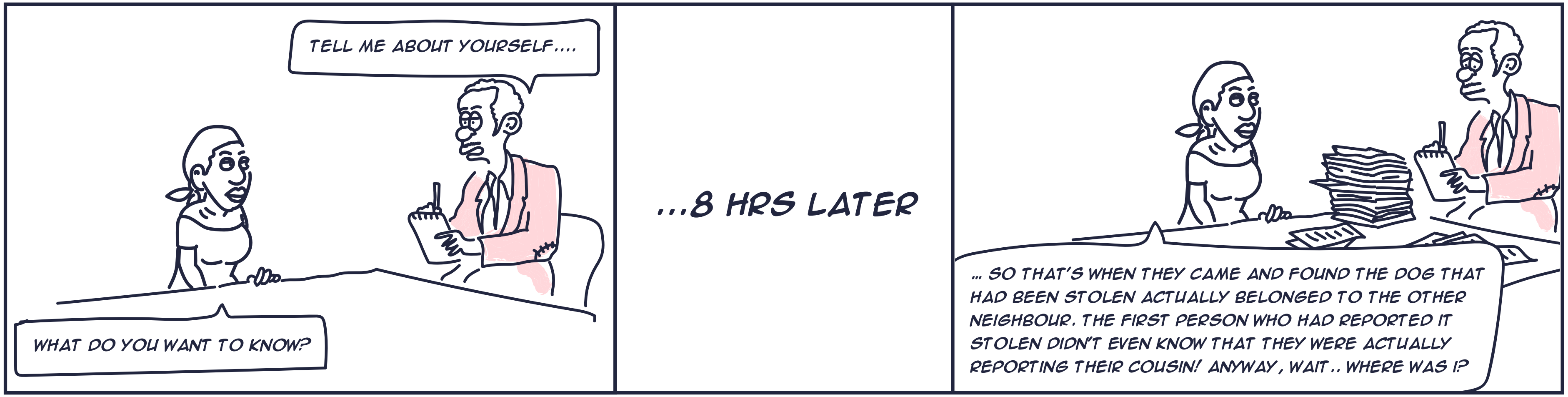
To kick-off testing, think about the question (or questions) you wanted to answer about your message. This is your research question and here's how you can identify it.

STEP 1

Outline your reasons for testing

Know what you are looking for

Research questions help you know what answers you're searching for in your test. They guide you towards achieving the mission of your testing activity, and it is from this mission that the research questions are crafted. The most important element to decide in the early stages of research is to understand if your research is **formative** or **summative.** **Formative research** is the first stage in evaluation, where you seek to explore and understand the context of a problem, how your audience responds to said problem, and determine the best ways to reach them. In this phase, you may use tools like in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to understand the problem and audience. Formative research is the "understand" phase. **Summative research** is near the last stages of research, when you want to test if and how your designed solution works. In this phase, you may use more quantitative methods like surveys and A/B testing to reach more conclusive insights.



What goes into a research question?

When testing your message, a research question needs to show the relationship between two variables. The first variable (called "independent variable") is the key feature that you are hoping to test. The second variable (called the "dependent variable") is the outcome you think the key feature will have.

For example, if you want to test whether a positively-framed message can increase the reporting of gender-based violence, your research question can be as follows: "Do positively-framed messages increase the reporting of gender-based violence?" The positively framed message is your key feature and the increase in reporting of gender based violence is the outcome you hope to achieve.

Consider the following when designing your research question:

- How you choose to measure your outcomes: Which approach would be easy and clear to the respondent? Would quantitative or qualitative approach be better to the questions you are interested in? In both approaches, how are you going to choose to operationalise (or measure) the things you most care about, especially concepts like trust, sustained interest, and behavior change?

The first variable (called "independent variable") is the KEY FEATURE that you are hoping to test.

- Channel of communication: Will it be online, SMS, in-person, or phone call? Or will you test all four channels to see how they affect your outcome? In this case, a good research question will be: "Do SMS invitations increase the number of people who sign up for the gender-based violence campaign?"

The second variable (called the "dependent variable") is the OUTCOME you think the key feature will have.

- Features of your message: This has to do with what your message has to look like to achieve your outcome. For example, you might want to add images or a sound to see if it will increase the number of sign-ups. Agood research question here would be:
  "Will images in the invitation message increase the number of people who sign up for the gender-based violence campaign?"

STEP 2

Choose your testing method

Which approach do I use?

Now that you know your research question, which method should you use to try to answer it?

There are different resource dependent methods that you can use to effectively test your messages. Over the next two pages a snapshot of 4 key methods that you can use, including what the method looks like under a low budget, is provided.

1 Focus Group Discussions

What is it? Small groups of people, usually 6-8, are brought together to have a semi-structured discussion on a topic under investigation. Great for formative research, or validating summative quantitative insights.

Good because It gives an in-depth knowledge of the topic under investigation.

Less good because The data collected is more subjective than factual or objective.

How to do it on a budget? Have a few guiding questions to engage with your audience. For sample selection, rely on your networks through a snowballing technique (relying on the easily available and asking them to refer other people to you). The basis of the analysis is summarizing the data per each research question.

2 In-Depth Interviews

What is it? Individual interviews on a one-on-one basis between an interviewer and respondent using a semi-structured conversation on a specific topic. Great for formative research, or validating summative quantitative insights.

Good because It provides in-depth qualitative knowledge and experiences that cannot be collected in a group setup.

Less good because The respondent might give biased responses due to their stakes in the program.

How to do it on a budget? Have a few guiding questions in the interview guide to discuss one or two themes of interest. Select the purposeful sample based on knowledge or experience with a particular phenomenon. Conduct the interviews in person.

What is it? | Good because | Less good because | How to do it on a budget?

3 Surveys

Surveys use a list of questions to extract specific information, mainly numerical data, about a message. Great for either formative or summative research.

Data is more objective and can be done remotely over a large sample, which provides rich data.

Does not capture in-depth knowledge on the topic under investigation.

Have a few guiding questions based on your research objectives. Check what other instruments have had for questions around the same topic. Implement via readily available tools such as survey monkey or google forms. Use your network to identify a suitable sample. Draw out general trends that relate to your research objectives.

4 A/B Testing

It tests two, or more different types of messages or communications to identify which message best encourages engagement with the audience. Best used in summative research.

Suitable for drawing out findings that are generalizable to your target audience.

Requires some specific knowledge, e.g., randomization, to deploy such a test effectively.

Have two or more messages for testing. Use remote channels, e.g., social media, to roll out your test. Have only one iteration. The analysis is mainly to identify general trends without drawing generalizable conclusions.

What is it? Good because Less good because How to do it on a budget?

What's a sample?

A **sample** is a subsection of the population under study. Since studying an entire population (or census) is time-consuming and expensive, a sample is normally preferred. A sample provides key insights about a particular demographic without having to study the entire population.

A **sampling strategy** should outline who is eligible to participate in the study. The **eligibility criteria** includes both inclusion and exclusion characteristics which are taken into account when selecting participants.

For example, you are seeking to conduct a message campaign to encourage people to report cases of gender-based violence violence against women in Uganda. The communications campaign will provide the public with a toll-free number to report any incidents of violence and harassment against women. When testing the effectiveness of this campaign before scaling up, your sampling strategy can include the following information:

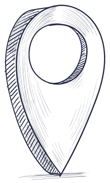
Inclusion criteria

- ✓ Must be a resident of Uganda, specifically Kampala;
- ✓ Participants must have experienced or observed an incident of GBV in the community at least once within the last one year;
- ✓ Participants who are 18 years and above will be recruited
  a) We will ensure to capture both the young **(at least 18 years old and above)** and the elderly **(maximum of 80 years)**;

Exclusion criteria

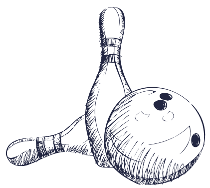
- ✗ Any individual unable to provide voluntary consent to participate will be excluded from the study; these include minors and persons with cognitive limitations that prevent them from providing consent without a guardian.

Once you know who your audience is, you can sample them using any of the below options:



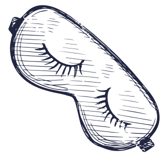
Nationally representative sample

This is a sample that represents the country's population in key demographics. For instance, if you are interested in testing how different channels of your communication are effective to different ethnic communities, you will need to have a numerically-appropriate representation of each ethnic group in your sample (e.g. if you are targeting the Baganda group in Uganda, they need to make up 17% of your study's sample size). This option is prefered for high cost testing approaches due to the amount of resources and time required to achieve such a sample.



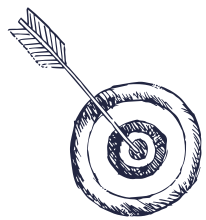
Snowball sample

Snowball sample: This option relies on your close network or at least one or more identified people who fit your inclusion criteria. Snowball sampling will rely on these people who are easily available, and ask them to refer other people to widen your study network. This method is appropriate for low and medium cost testing approaches.



Random sample

With this option, every member of the population you are targeting has a chance of being selected for the test. This option is suitable for A/B tests where you need to confidently determine that your key feature caused the desired outcome. In this approach, you randomly assign numbers to people within your population of interest then pick people with certain numbers for inclusion into the test. For instance in an A/B test, you could ask people to toss a coin, and then decide to only choose the heads to be included in the test. Depending on the randomizing method, this sampling approach could be applied across low, medium and high cost testing methods. For instance with a high cost test where the sample is large, you cannot ask everyone to toss a coin. Instead you'll want to use an Excel function to randomize such a large population.



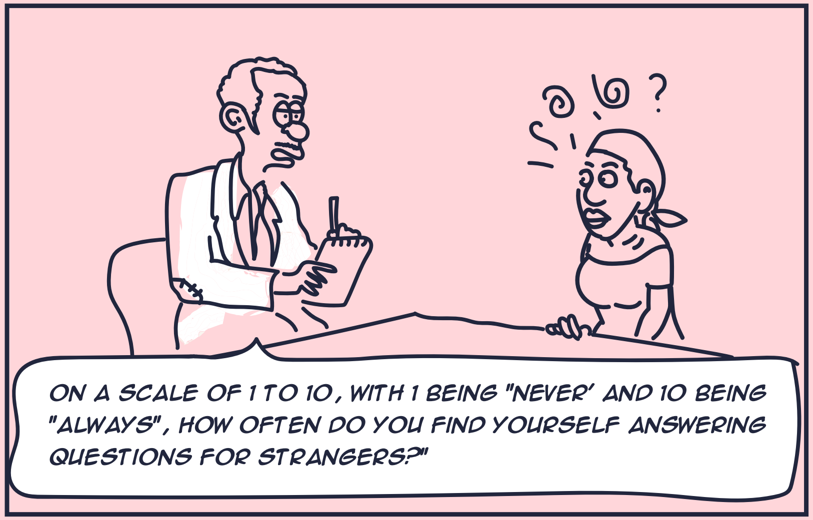
Targeted sample

Targeted sample: This approach is preferred when you have a clear definition of your sample. For instance, you might have resolved to target women, within the middle income bracket, of ages 18-40. You would then go ahead and find such people to include in your test. This approach is likely to be time consuming thus not appropriate for low cost testing methods.

METHOD 1

In-depth/individual Interviews (IDIs)

1



What is it?

In-depth interviews (IDIs) are a qualitative research method in which a conversation with an individual (respondent) is conducted by a trained staff member who collects specific information. This process involves one interviewer and one participant in a single session. IDIs can help develop your qualitative understandings of various audiences and their attitudes, and can thus play a part at any stage of message development (i.e., pre-crafting, crafting, and validating your designed messages).

IDIs can be used in formative and summative assessment to gain an in-depth understanding of perspective when testing the effectiveness of message campaigns. Since IDIs entail participation from multiple stakeholders, it can help to identify what elements of the message campaign works or which areas need improvement.

When should I use it?

You can use IDIs when:

- You need to collect individual information that may not arise in a group setup (e.g., focus group discussions), especially when a topic is too sensitive, such as the lived experiences of survivors of gender and sexual violence
- You need insights, experiences and "outlier" attitudes that are hidden in a group setup for instance the gender dynamics in reproductive health in the use of family planning
- Seeking high-level information from key stakeholders (for instance, interviewing community leaders to obtain an overview of a community's needs and concerns).

Sample campaign message: "When I see violence against women, I report it. What about you? Call the toll-free hotline: 777"

1. Do you think that this campaign message can motivate people in your community to report GBV cases against women?

2. Do you think that people will be comfortable with the toll-free number or do we need to change it? Why do you think the number should be changed?

3. What do you think of the campaign message?

4. What do you think would motivate GBV survivors and observers to use the hotline to report GBV cases?

5. What are the ideal locations in your community that you think this campaign should be displayed? Options (a). A billboard at the marketplace, (b). Printed stickers in public service vehicles, (c) Local chief's office, (d) Public address system (e) Other, specify

Examples of questions most appropriate for this methodology

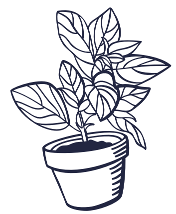
What I need to implement this approach

A sample of 20-30 key informants

A trained enumerator (qualities of a well-trained enumerator are available here)

A detailed interview guide with closed and open- ended questions for the enumerator

A voice recording device to record the conversation for later transcription



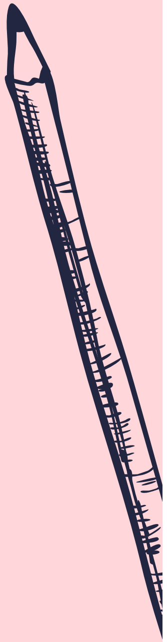
A safe and comfortable environment to enable the respondent to open up

How do I conduct this test?

1. Define the research question(s)
2. Identify the target respondents and determine the IDI sample size
3. Develop an interview guide with closed and open-ended questions
4. Train the facilitator and go through a test-run
5. Recruit respondents
6. Implement and record the IDI in a safe space
7. Analyze results via thematic and statistical analysis

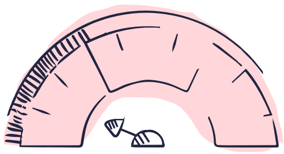
How do I analyze this data?

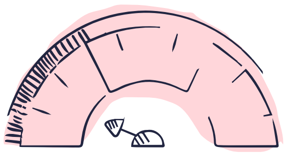
- Review the research questions and read through the transcripts to identify emerging themes
- Make summaries and draw out conclusions per research question
- Collate responses within the different themes by arranging the responses within each theme
- Identify the broad patterns that are common across your sample
- Formulate your narrative and write your findings report



Considerations

- Avoid "Yes" or "No" type of responses by asking a follow-up question e.g., If yes, why/how?
- The interview should be between 30-45 mins as longer interview sessions result to respondent fatigue that affect the quality of responses
- Ensure that the interviewer is adequately trained to administer the tool as the discussion may involve sensitive topics
- Start with easy, non-threatening questions to put the respondent at ease
- Ensure questions are mostly open-ended with necessary probing questions as needed
- Record the interview for later transcription and qualitative analysis
- Keep collecting data until you reach a level of saturation (the same themes keep coming up in different interviews)

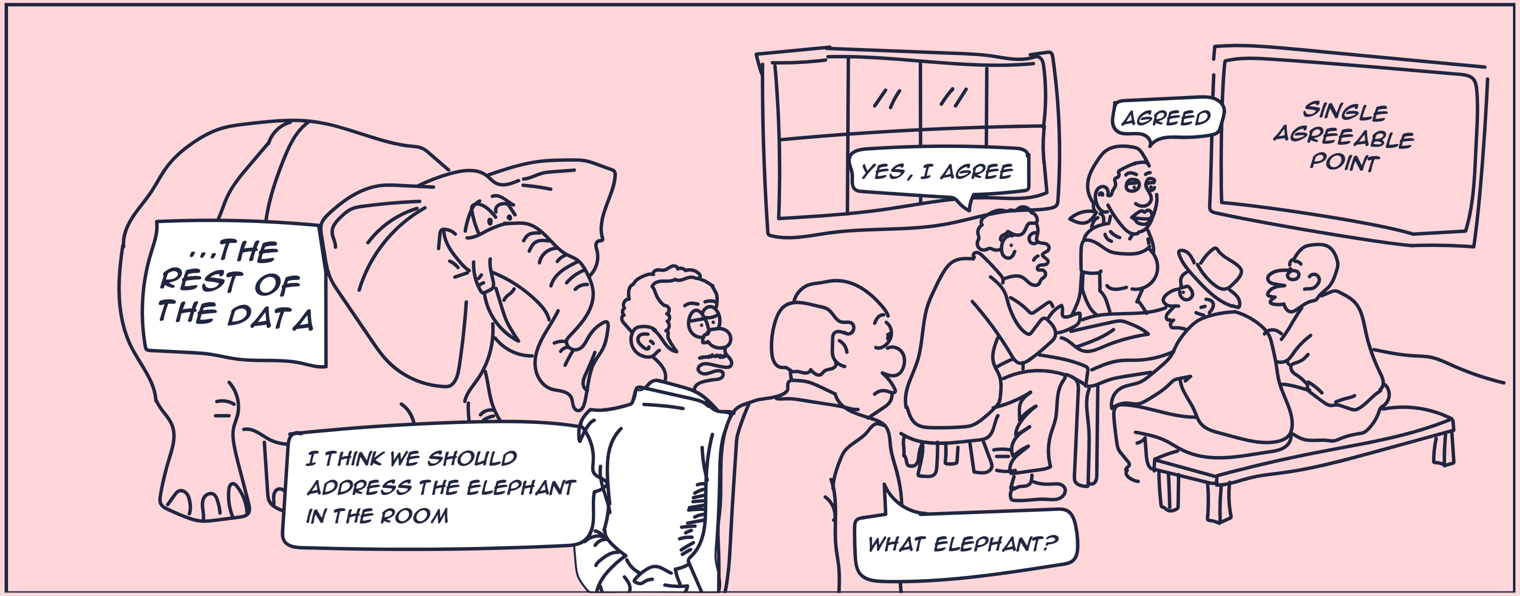
Resources Required	Resources Required	Benefits	Limitations
Low 	**The number of questions:** The semi-structured guide will contain a few questions to investigate 1 or 2 themes. **Sample size:** This level will require a relatively smaller sample as it is difficult to achieve statistically. **Channels:** The interviews can be conducted in person at a venue where the respondent is most comfortable. **Staffing capacity:** Have 1 trained interviewer to administer the tool and 1 experienced data analyst to make sense of the findings. **Analysis:** Use your research questions to make summaries from the data collected. The research staff will basically listen to the audios or read the transcript and draw out conclusions. In some instances, since transcription is time consuming, on-the-go analysis may be performed. This involves drawing out summaries as you speak to your audience.	The findings can inform the research team on key elements of the interview guide e.g which questions the respondent struggled with, length of the tool and many others.	The smaller sample size will limit you from getting divergent views but if there's more variation within the small sample, it will still give you a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of your message.

Resources Required	Resources Required	Benefits	Limitations
Middle 	**Number of questions:** The interview guide is relatively longer and can therefore investigate multiple themes between 2-3 overarching themes relevant to the project. **Sample size:** The sample size is relatively larger but extensively dependent on the project budget to sustain incentives. **Channels:** The survey can be administered in person, or virtually using Skype for example with key informants who are especially hard to reach. **Staffing capacity:** 1 trained interviewer and 1 data analyst to process the findings. **Analysis:** Same as with the low-cost considerations. However, with more resources, you can use softwares such as Dedoose, Atlas or Nvivo, which require specific skills to use but follow a normal thematic analysis approach, with some extensive coding, among other features.	Multiple themes are under investigation making the findings to be more insightful. The sample is relatively larger which gives varied opinions and perspectives.	The sample size is too small to make any general conclusions. However, the findings can be generalized to a specific population.

METHOD 2

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

2



What is it?

An FGD is a qualitative method that uses semi-structured group discussions on a specific discussion topic. FGDs seek to collect in-depth information on a particular concept or phenomenon with a group of people from similar backgrounds and experiences. Like IDIs, FGDs can help develop your qualitative understandings of various audiences and their attitudes, and can thus play a part at any stage of message development (i.e., pre-crafting, crafting, and validating your designed messages). It can be used in either formative or summative research.

When should I use it?

Use FGDs:

- In exploratory phases, when you want to investigate a problem that isn't clearly defined.
- When you want to understand your audience's feelings, reactions, motivations, experiences, drivers (barriers and levers), influences and decision-making processes. This could be regarding certain social topics or in analysing their response to your organization's past, current or future campaigns, messagings, and programming.
- To reveal where group opinions are the same and where they differ.
- To help you gain insight before more quantitative methods like surveys

Examples of questions most appropriate for this methodology

Sample campaign message: **"When I see violence against women, I report it. What about you? Call the toll-free hotline: 777"**

1. What has been your experience when you previously reported a case of GBV?

2. What do you think are some of the biggest barriers that survivors of GBV face in reporting GBV?

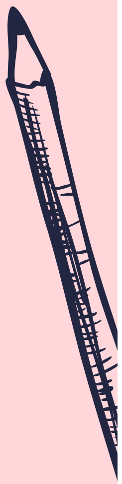
3. What do you think of the campaign message? Do you think that it can influence GBV survivors and observers to take action? If yes, why? If no, why not?

4. What do you think of using a hotline "777" to report GBV cases?

How do I conduct this test?

1. Define the research question(s)
2. Identify target respondents
3. Craft open-ended questions and interview guide
4. Train the facilitator and note-taker through pilot runs
5. Recruit respondents
6. Implement and record FGD in safe space
7. Analyze results via thematic analysis

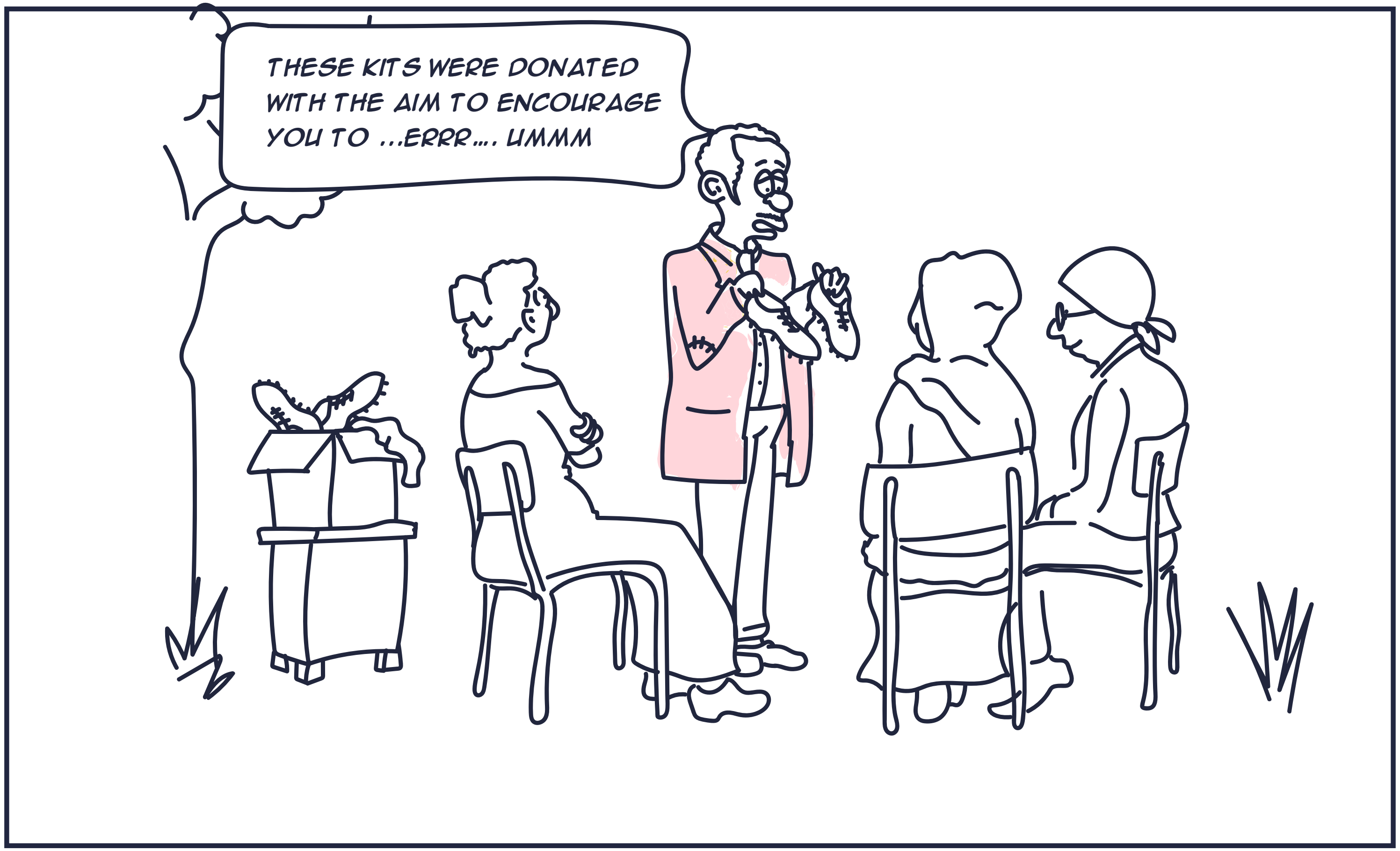
How do I analyze the data?

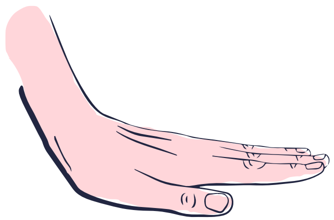


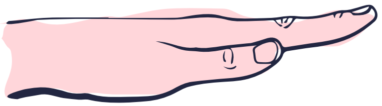
- Go back to your research questions and listen through the audios/read through the transcripts
- Make summaries and draw out conclusions
- Whether online or in-person, create an interactive process by printing out transcripts, cutting out answers, and arranging where responses fall under categories like "in agreement", "in disagreement", and other themes important to your research question
- According to the patterns, see what broad trends you can discern amongst your target audience(s)
- Formulate your narrative and write your findings report

Considerations

- ✗ Avoid questions that can be answered with "yes" and "no"
- ✗ Avoid more than 10 people in an FGD to ensure everyone is getting heard
- ✗ Avoid too many sensitive questions-- reduced levels of confidentiality means that your respondents may lie, resulting in inaccurate data
- ✗ Prevent your FGD from running over an hour and a half. This will result in respondent fatigue, also leading to inaccurate data
- ✓ Use specific "how", "why", "when" questions
- ✓ Start with easy, non-threatening questions to put the group at ease and for them to find common ground
- ✓ Ensure your trained facilitator encourages everyone to talk. FGDs run the risk of being dominated by stronger voices
- ✓ Ensure your trained facilitator is aware of some moderator skills to run effective FGDs
- ✓ Ensure you are equipped with either a voice recorder or a transcriber


THESE KITS WERE DONATED
WITH THE AIM TO ENCOURAGE
YOU TO ...ERRR.... UMMM

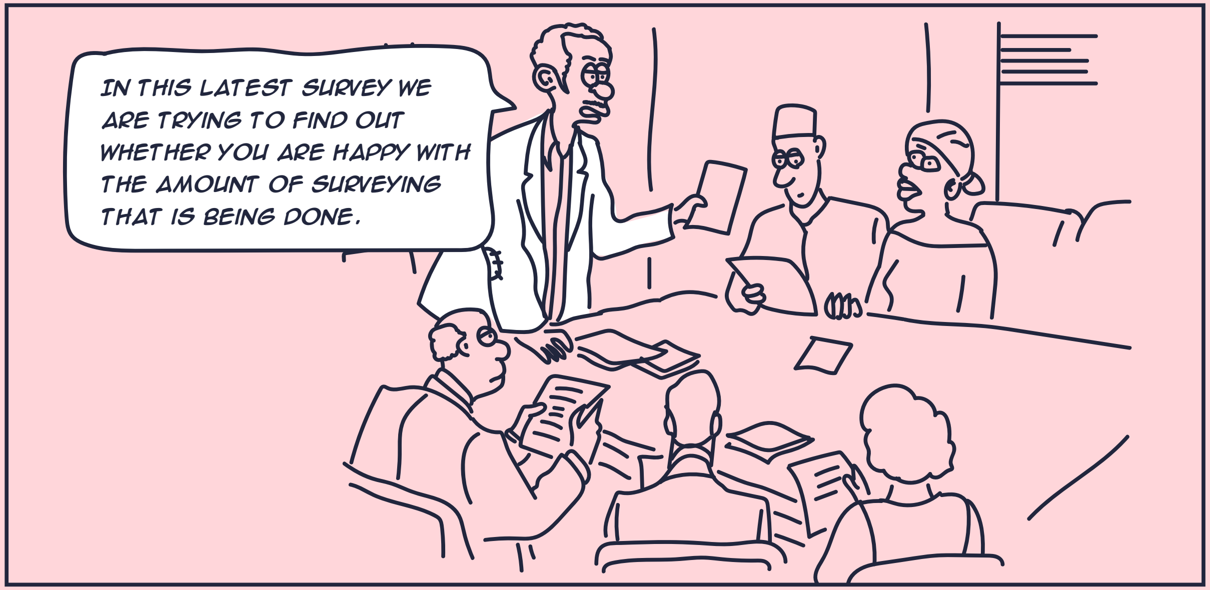
Resources Required	Resources Required	Benefits	Limitations
Low resource 	**The number of discussion sessions:** Hold 3 FGD sessions to determine the questions, group dynamics, and how people respond to the questions. Consider this level as the pilot sessions before you conduct the main study. **Venue:** Use readily available safe spaces to allow for conversations without disruptions, such as under a tree. **Staffing capacity:** 2 staff are needed. One to moderate the session and the other to take notes. **Sample size and sampling strategy:** 6-8 people are sufficient in each FGD session. Participation in the sessions should be informed by purposeful sampling and all participants should share common characteristics according to the needs of the project. **Core themes:** Due to the limited number of sessions, the semi-structured interview guide should contain critical questions that address the project's needs. **Analysis:** Use your research questions to make summaries from the data collected. The research staff will basically listen to the audios or read the transcript and draw out conclusions. In some instances, since transcription is time consuming, on-the-go analysis may be performed. This involves drawing out summaries as you speak to your audience.	Data from this level is crucial to examine whether the questions can be easily understood. It also informs the interview guide's design as it may be re-designed if the questions are too long or ambiguous.	Due to the limited number of FGD sessions, the study can only explore a few specific themes of specific interest to the study topic. This will still however provide you with some insights on the few topics covered You would probably not be able to extrapolate the data to a wider population due to the small sample, but some of the group dynamics useful to your test will still be revealed.

Resources Required	Resources Required	Benefits	Limitations
Medium resource 	**The number of discussion sessions:** This level can hold 5-8 FGD sessions to obtain in-depth insights on a particular concept or phenomenon. **Venue:** Use readily available safe spaces such as office space to host the FGD sessions. **Staffing capacity:** 2 staff are sufficient to moderate the session and take notes. **Sample size and sampling strategy:** 8-10 people can participate in each FGD session based on purposeful sampling. All the participants must share common characteristics based on the needs of the project. **Core themes:** Assess 3-4 themes in the interview guide as the FGD sessions will run for an average of 45 minutes. **Analysis:** Same as with the low-cost considerations. However, with more resources, you can use softwares such as Dedoose, Atlas or Nvivo, which require specific skills to use but follow a normal thematic analysis approach, with some extensive coding, among other features.	The qualitative data will be more insightful as multiple themes will emerge in the data.	The data can only be generalized to a specific demographic and not the entire population.

METHOD 3

Surveys

3



What is it?

Surveys are a list of questions aimed at extracting specific information, often from a sample of a wider population. For instance, a census is a survey. Contrary to qualitative techniques, surveys are mostly used to collect numerical data and not in-depth information. It is therefore more often concerned with explaining the what, when and where of a phenomenon rather than the why and how. Surveys can be used at any stage of message development, whether it is during pre-crafting, crafting, or validating your messages. It can be used for formative or summative research.

When should I use it?

Use surveys:

- When you want to quantify your information, e.g., monthly household income
- When you want to obtain broader findings from a large population (as opposed to FGD and IDIs)
- When you want to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short period
- When testing with an audience that has little time to participate

Examples of questions most appropriate for this methodology

To what extent does this campaign message - When I see violence against women, I report it. What about you? Call the toll-free hotline: 777 - motivate you to act? [Choose one option - To a lesser extent, To a moderate extent, To a greater extent]

Since you saw the campaign message on violence against women (VAW), how would you say your perception has changed towards VAW? (Options: (a) No change at all, (b) Moderate change, (c) I am more concerned now about VAW)

Do you know which hotline to call when you see a case of VAW? (Options: (a) Yes, (b) No)

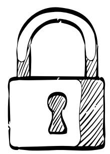
From the following actions, what did you do when you experienced a case of VAW? (Options: (a) I did not do anything, (b) I intervened and saved the woman, (c) I called the hotline, (d) All of the above, (e) None of the above)

What I need to implement this approach

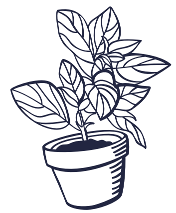
The necessary sample size enough to generalize your findings to a larger population

A trained facilitator

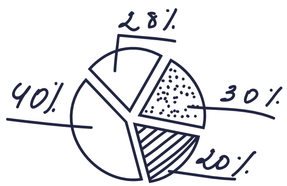
A set of close-ended questions for your respondents to reply to, with relevant instructions



Secured databases where all the information is collected



A comfortable environment for the interviewer and respondent



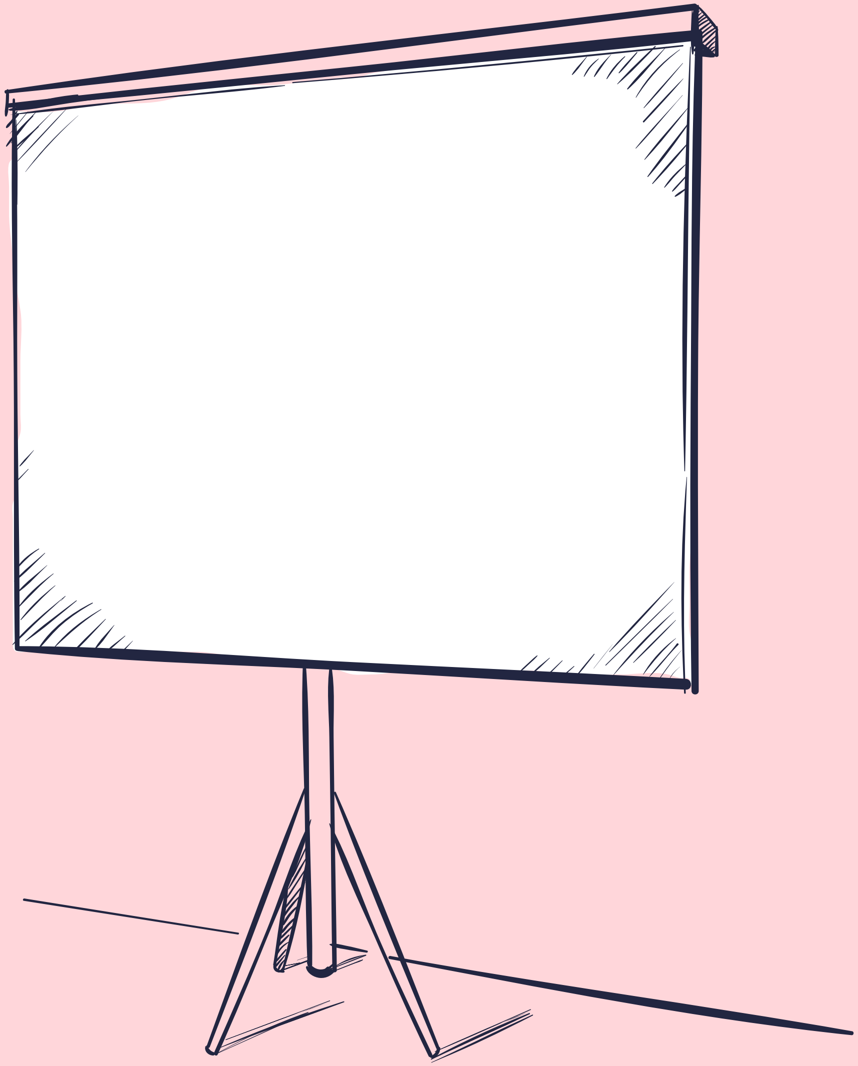
A plan on how to analyze your data

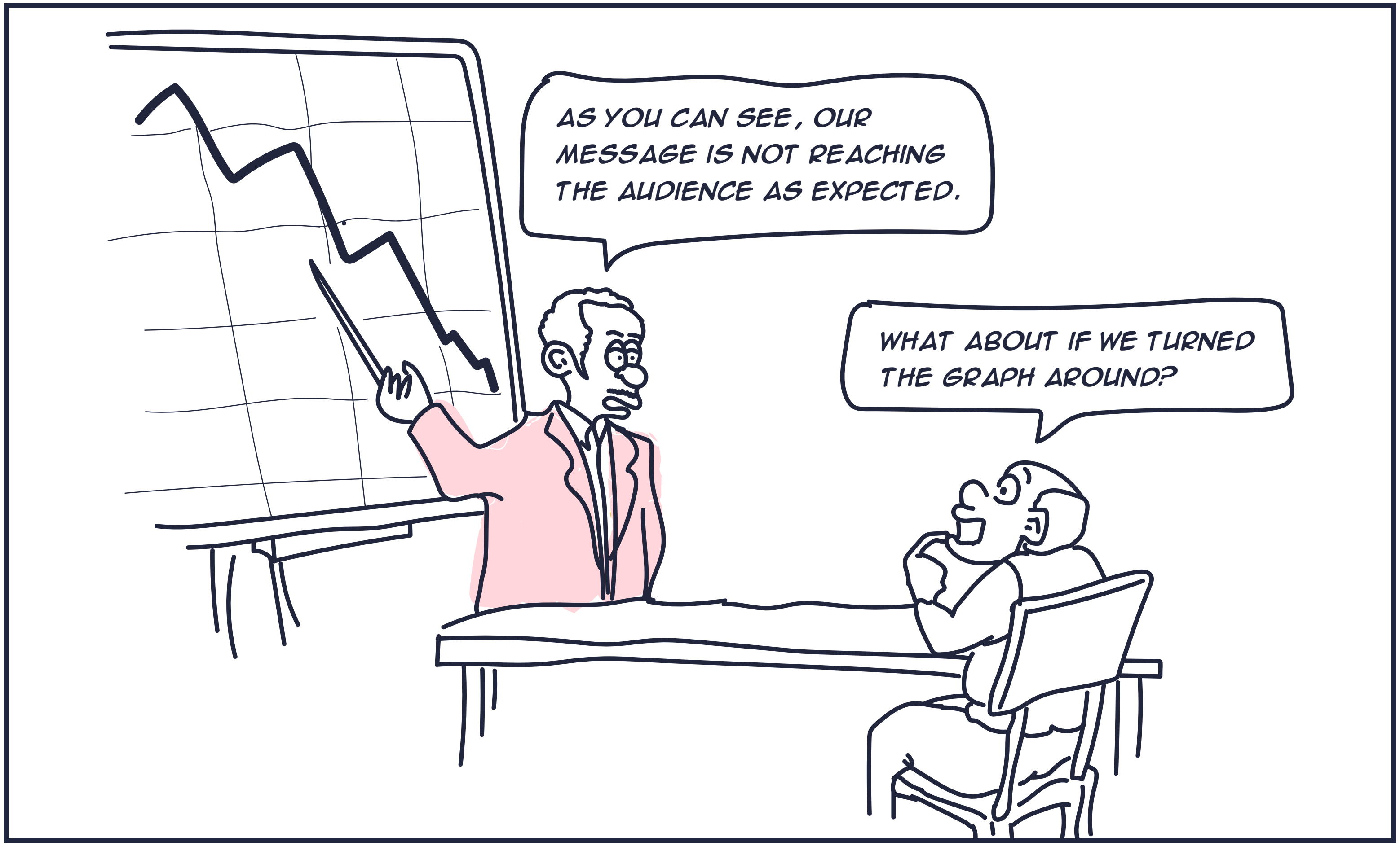
How do I conduct this test?

1. Define the research question(s)
2. Identify target respondents
3. Calculate your sample size
4. Craft close-ended questions and interview guides
5. Train the facilitators through pilot runs
6. Recruit respondents using a defined sampling approach
7. Collect the data
8. Draft your analysis plan
9. Analyze results using statistical software

How do I analyze this data?

- Write an analysis plan that includes the analytical procedures you'll want to use across your research questions
- Identify the statistical software that you are most comfortable with, e.g. Excel, Stata, et cetera
- With guidance from your analysis plan, conduct the analysis, one research question at a time
- Establish trends across your research questions and draw out relevant conclusions. Simple statistical approaches are usually useful to draw out trends that you will then make conclusions about. Such approaches include identifying the average, count, minimum, and maximum. However, to observe relationships, you will need to perform more complex analyses
- Formulate your narrative and write your findings report




AS YOU CAN SEE, OUR MESSAGE IS NOT REACHING THE AUDIENCE AS EXPECTED.
WHAT ABOUT IF WE TURNED THE GRAPH AROUND?

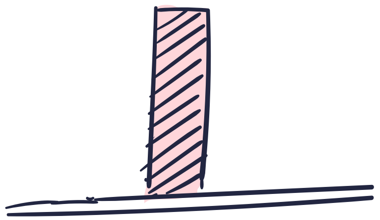
Considerations

- ✗ Don't write two questions as one (double barrelled-questions). It will be impossible to get accurate data. Be as simple and direct as possible.
- ✗ Don't write leading questions where respondents feel pressure to answer what they think is the "right answer"
- ✗ Don't use jargon in any questionnaire, but especially in large-scale surveys where you, the researcher, can't clarify the meaning for respondents
- ✗ Avoid sampling biases, e.g., when people are unwilling or unable to respond to your survey (called "non-response bias"), when people are left out from your sample due to the testing method used (called "sampling bias"), when respondents 'spin the truth' in their responses in order to portray themselves in a good manner (called "social desirability bias")
- ✗ Surveys also don't capture in-depth information which can be useful in understanding the "why" and "how"

- ✓ Decide on the channel for surveying. Surveys can be administered through in-person interactions (face to face), phone calls, via the internet (Google forms, digital collections like Survey Monkey), or via mail. The choice of the channel depends on whether you want to conduct a low cost or high cost survey test.
- ✓ Start with questions that can be easily recalled, e.g. age, gender, education level.
- ✓ Ask about one topic at a time
- ✓ If following a historical sequence of events, follow a chronological order from earliest to latest
- ✓ When switching topics, use a transition, such as, 'The next section examines your opinions about…'
- ✓ Use filters where needed, such as, 'If you answered "yes" to question 5, please proceed to Section 2. If you answered "no" go to Section 3'.

Surveys for different scenarios

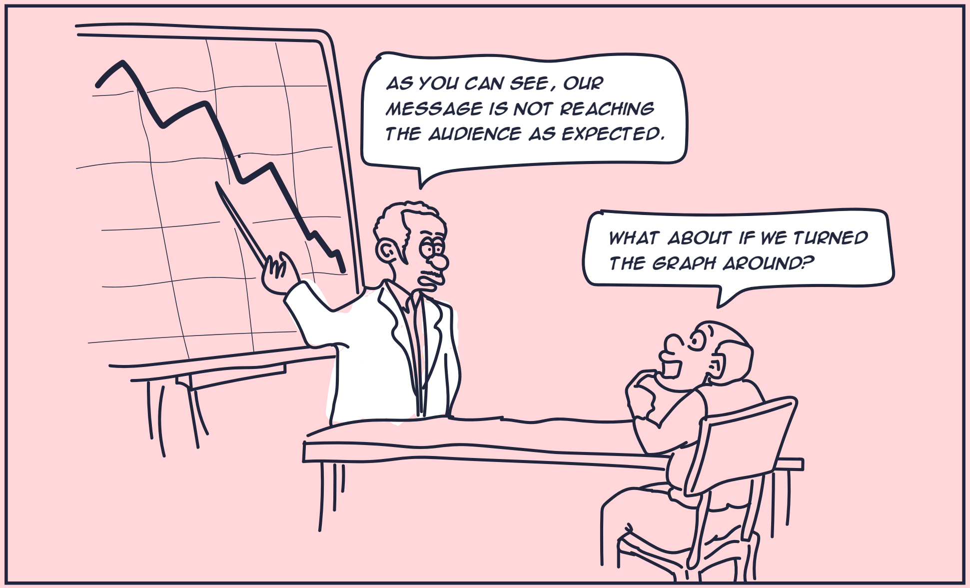
Resources Required	What's the Approach?	Benefits	Limitations
Low resource 	**Number of questions in the tool:** Few questions that can directly be linked to the research questions. See here as a starter for some survey questions. Use a few filters if any. Sample size: Recruit from within your networks. This can include your workmates, friends, or relatives as long as they match your criteria. The size of the sample isn't calculated statistically, and is dependent on your budget. Timeframe: Due to the low number of questions, it takes a few minutes to administer (mostly 15 to 30 mins). Channels: Remote channels e.g. phone calls, online tools (social media, website) are commonly used. In-person channels, e.g. door-to-door surveys can also be useful especially if you are interested in body language signals. Staff involved: Ideally 1 to 2 staff, e.g., one core research team member and a support staff to help in locating respondents and administering the instrument if necessary. Analysis: Draw some simple and general trends from the data, including averages, counts, minimum and maximum.	Important for informing the research team on elements such as flow, duration of interview and clarity of questions in the test. It is not dependent on any specialized skills to conduct it.	You may not be able to make any strong conclusions due to the small sample, but will still yield you some insights on the effectiveness of your message. Since it requires low capacity, this type of test might lose out on some helpful skills such as a statistician who can advise on strategic sampling and data analysis. However, this could as well be a chance for you to upgrade your statistical skills.

Resources Required	Resources Required	Benefits	Limitations
Medium resource 	**Number of questions in the tool:** Enough to just capture important aspects of the key research questions. Add filters where necessary. **Sample size:** If you have the knowledge, then you can calculate a sample size statistically. However, the budget and timeline should also guide you on this. **Timeframe:** 30 minutes to an hour to administer the questionnaire in person. **Channels:** Remote channels like phone calls or online methods are appropriate. You can also conduct face to face interactions, e.g. door-to-door surveys. **Staff involved:** highly dependent on the budget and timeline. With low capacity organizations, you may need a few external data collectors for support. **Analysis:** If you can, conduct the analysis by yourself with some little support from a specialist. The specialist will mainly be there to guide you on what type of analysis to conduct.	You can move around things to fit your budget and get close to some quality data, e.g. you can avoid having a statistician to help in calculating sample sizes and instead use estimations for your sample size.	May not yield highly reliable results but will still get you some insights to determine the effectiveness of your messages.

METHOD 4

A/B Test

4



What is it?

With A/B testing, one compares two or more versions of a message or product to figure out which performs better or which one people like more. In the CSO world, different types of messages or communications can be A/B tested to identify which message best encourages engagement with the audience. A/B testing is best used for only testing and validating your designed messages. There, use this method only for summative purposes.

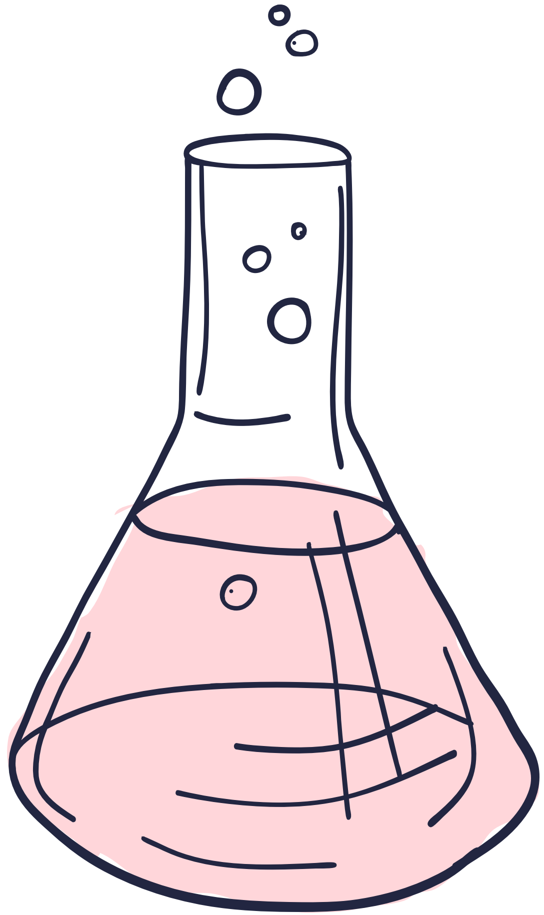
When should I use it?

Use A\B tests:

- When you have two or more versions of the same message, and you want to know which version will perform better. Alternatively, you could also have one message and you want to test which medium or messenger to use, e.g. online vs in-person.

- When you want to identify the desired **success metric** due to exposure to the best message or medium (e.g., higher newsletter sign-up; increase in emails opened; increase in individual's donations, an increase in the number of times campaigns were forwarded by subscribers to other recipients, et cetera).

- When you want to make low-risk modifications to your campaign message.



Examples of questions most appropriate for this methodology

1. Between two versions of a message, i.e., a gain-framed and a loss-framed message, which one will make the public more aware of the actions to take whenever they experience a VAW case?

    a. Gain framed message: Reporting violence against women saves lives. Call the toll free number: 777 to report a case of violence against women.

    b. Loss framed message: 7 women die of violence in the household every week in Kampala. Call the toll free number: 777 to report a case of violence against women.

Messages A and B would then be shared to participants (in this case, members of the public), and each participant would randomly get one of the two messages. You will then observe which message leads to the public being aware of the action to take whenever they experience a violence against women incident.

2. Compared to generic or "business-as-usual" messages, will a social norm message encourage more people to report cases of violence against women?

    a. Generic message: Call 777 to report an incidence of violence against women.

    b. Social norm message: People from your community report violence against women when they see it. What about you? Call the toll-free hotline: 777

Messages A and B would then be shared to participants, each participant randomly getting one of the two messages. You will then observe which message leads to more people reporting violence against women.

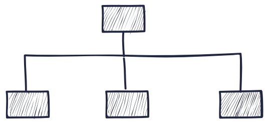
3. Will adding images to my messaging campaign appeal more to my audience?

a. Option A: Your campaign message accompanied with images

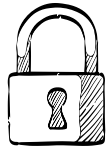
b. Option B: A plain campaign message with no images

You can then invite your participants to a central place and each participant gets to see the two versions of your campaign and observe their reactions. You can even combine this with a brief survey where you'll collect their verbal responses on their preferences between options A and B.

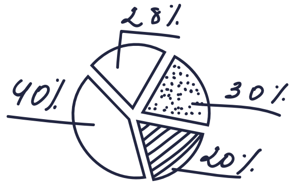
What I need to implement this approach



Variations of the messages you want to test



Secured databases where all the information is collected



A plan on how to analyze your data

A sufficient sample size to draw out meaningful conclusions. There is no specific magic number to consider for your sample in an A/B test. For a more robust A/B test you may want to calculate the sample size. However, your budget and timeline can guide you on the number of participants to consider

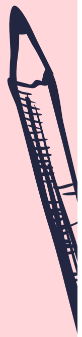
A way to randomize respondents into Message A or Message B. Randomization is essential since it's the best way to create equivalent groups between our comparison groups. See here for more information on randomization. Randomization is important for avoiding some common biases, and there are simple ways of doing it as referenced here. If randomization is not within your reach, you could expose your participants to the two message variants and get their perceptions on both

How do I conduct this test?

1. Define the research question(s)
2. Identify target respondents
3. Calculate your sample size
4. Design your messages
5. Conduct pilot runs to test your process
6. Recruit respondents using a defined sampling approach
7. Randomize which respondents get which message
8. Collect your data
9. Analyze results using statistical software

How do I analyze this data?

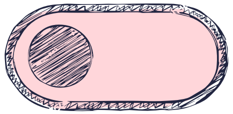
- Write an analysis plan that includes the analytical procedures you'll want to use across your research questions
- Identify the statistical software that you are most comfortable with, e.g. Excel, Stata, et cetera
- With guidance from your analysis plan, conduct the analysis, one research question at a time
- Establish the best performing message. For a more robust A/B test, apart from trends, you need to also identify what we call statistical significance. Statistical significance is the degree to which you can be confident in your results. It tells you how confident you can be that a difference or relationship exists. This is especially essential for A/B tests, where you want to be confident that variant A performs better than variant B
- In low-cost methods, use Excel to analyse the data. In more involved A/B tests, rely on statistical softwares such as R or Stata for your results. These do require special skills and might therefore need to hire someone with such skills if you presently do not have such a person within your team
- Formulate your narrative and write your findings report

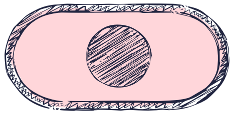


Considerations

- ✔ Randomize which audience gets which message to avoid any biases affecting your results
- ✔ Standardize everything, i.e. provide the same rules for the audience getting the different messages. For instance, do not observe one message for 1 week and the other for 2 weeks
- ✘ Do not test too many elements together. Two messages is what is recommended
- ✘ Do not make changes to your test before the test is complete. This will lead to wrong results

A/B tests for different scenarios

Resources Required	Resources Required	Benefits	Limitations
Low resource 	**Number of message variants to test:** Ideally 2 variations of your messages. If you are testing mediums, then have the variations of the mediums you are testing **Skills/knowledge needed:** Knowledge on how to randomize, and analysis of quantitative data will be needed. For randomization, simple techniques such as an Excel function, tossing a coin or a dice could be used. **Sample size:** Need not be conducted statistically but can be determined by your budget and timeline. **Timeframe:** This should be quicker to implement compared to the mid cost option. The sample size is smaller thus a shorter time frame. **Channels:** Remote channels like phone calls or online (social media, websites) are used. You could simply share the test on social media among your network, or make phone calls to a few people within your network. You can also gather your participants in a central place and get their physical or verbal reactions to what you are testing. **Staff involved:** No need for a statistician for the analysis if you are able to draw some general trends on the data. The core members of the test usually run the test by themselves, with little support. **Analysis:** Use simple statistical approaches to draw out trends that you will then make conclusions about. These include average, count, minimum, and maximum.	Quick to conduct Can be done with less skills in randomization, sampling and analysis	If sampling is not targeted, the test misses out on gathering insights from the people it is meant to be applied on You might lose out on some important technical skills needed, but this could as well be a chance for you to learn some of the needed skills, e.g. randomization and analysis

Resources Required	Resources Required	Benefits	Limitations
Medium resource 	**Number of message variants to test:** Ideally 2, but you can add more variants to investigate. This though will require careful monitoring to identify the change caused by each variant. **Skills/knowledge needed:** Knowledge on how to randomize, sampling and analysis of quantitative data is essential. **Sample size:** Should closely resemble your entire sample, but emphasis can be placed on which demographics are reachable. If you have the knowledge, then you can calculate a sample size statistically, but if not, then a ballpark figure can do. **Timeframe:** With a manageable sample size, it needs a few days to a week to conduct such a test. **Channels:** Remote channels like phone calls or online are appropriate. However, in-peron gatherings like community events can also be used, where you'll be interested in how people react to your different messages. **Staff involved:** Majorly relies on internal staff where possible, but if you lack any specific skills, you can rope in 1 or 2 more external people for support. Support may largely be needed in data collection and performing analysis. **Analysis:** Use simple statistical approaches to draw out trends that you will then make conclusions about. Such approaches include identifying the average, count, minimum, and maximum.	You can move around things to fit your budget and get close to some quality data, e.g. you can avoid having a statistician to help in calculating sample sizes and instead use estimations for your numbers.	It will still get you some useful insights about your message campaign but the results may not be representative of everyone you finally intend to target.

Final Notes on Budget Friendly Options

While our budget-friendly options offer heuristics and low-cost approaches around sampling, sample sizes, timeframes and channels for research, keep in mind that there are more creative solutions! For instance, if you are trying to save on funds, work with research students or interns from local and global universities. Find low-cost or free places to host your research interviews if you cannot host it at your own organization or in your own city. See if you can tack on exploratory questions for research and messaging onto existing projects, if it is sensible and pertinent to do so.

Ethical considerations

When conducting your test, attention should be paid to maintaining ethics throughout your testing process. This includes treating your audience with utmost respect and abiding by the necessary rules and regulations of conducting the test.

At the bare minimum, the following principles should be considered:

+ Voluntary participation of respondents in the process is important. Moreover, participants have rights to withdraw from the test at any stage if they wish to do so.
+ Respondents should participate on the basis of informed consent that among other things explains the purpose of the test, what their participation involves, risks and benefits of participation.
+ Privacy and anonymity of respondents should be maintained unless the test requires otherwise.
+ Abide by the necessary laws guiding the test in the country. Depending on the test to be done, research approval may be required from the relevant authorities. See Appendix B for types of projects that may require an approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB).
+ Once you have secured approval, you are allowed to recruit respondents from the areas indicated and you may use recruitment script and recruitment consent form which explicitly gives information about the whole exercise and their information needed for them to participate.
+ Respondents can be retained in the database as long as you wish unless they request to be removed.

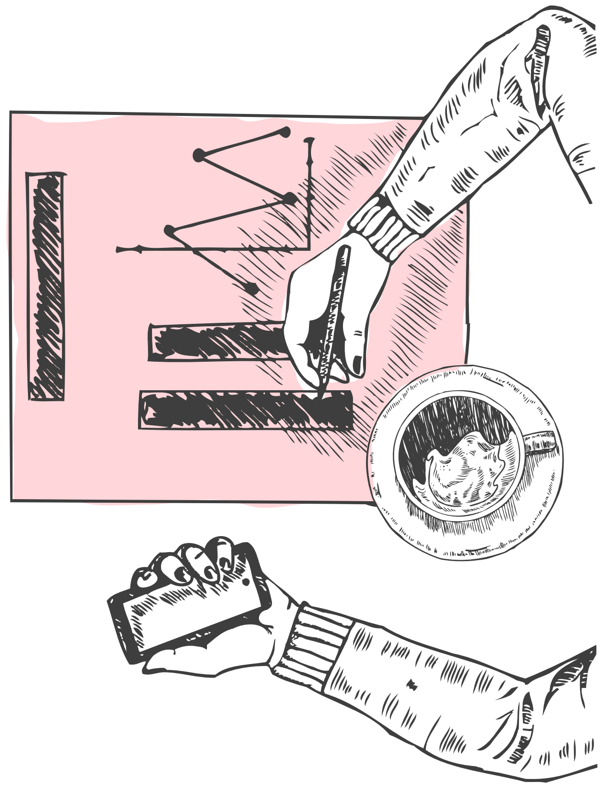
Tracking the testing process

It is important for the study team to track the testing process to ensure everything goes according to plan. The tracking process can slightly differ depending on the testing method used but there are general features that you can track across the different methods, including:

- **Number of people who have participated:** At different intervals, it is important to check the number of people who have participated against the targeted number. This can easily be done through daily reports where the number of audience who have participated is reported. The numbers are important to track especially in cases where you have a specific breakdown of different demographics to collect data from.

- **Is the process being followed:** Almost all testing methods depend on the plan being followed strictly. For instance with A/B tests, you'll want to make sure that the right selected audience receives variant A and the other audience receives variant B. For IDIs and FGDs you'll want to make sure that the questions are being asked in the right way, and that all the necessary questions are being asked.

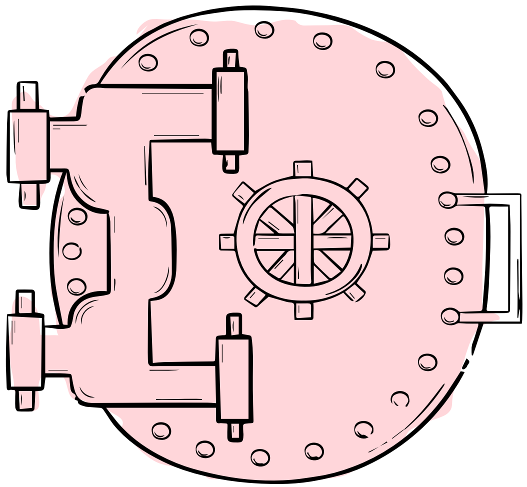
- **Quality of incoming data:** The test won't achieve its results if the data collected is poor or inaccurate. Therefore, during the testing process, checks should be performed on the data to ensure that quality data is being collected. For A/B tests for instance, consider these checks, that among other things tell you what you should check for to ensure high quality data. For conversational approaches such as IDIs and FGDs, one can select a few audios, if recorded, to listen to. If notes were captured, you can as well go through the notes to identify how efficient the data is.



Data Protection and Privacy

Data collected and processed should conform to data protection and privacy laws of the countries of operations and General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR. During data processing, data protection principles which are universal should be adhered to, as well as respecting the data subject rights.

Institutions should put in place data protection and privacy policies which should be comprehensive yet with simplified language for data subjects. Participants should be allowed to know how the data will be collected and processed and given opportunities to withdraw their data at indicated time. Frameworks and full systems should be put in place showcasing how data breach will be minimized, how data deletion will be effected, data access and sharing will be implemented.



Data protection policies should have information about the following key issues on personal data processing:

Definition of key terms in the data protection regulations;

- Data processing, accessing and sharing;
- Data security and breach;
- Data confidentiality and privacy;
- Data storage;
- Data disposal and deletion;
- Consenting and retracting consent process.

The policies and guidelines put in place should be in accordance with data protection laws and regulations of the country of operation. Additionally, be sure to prepare for data security when engaging outside field officers. For instance, provide mobile devices with pre-loaded software and strict security settings in order to protect your respondent's data digitally.

SECTION 5

After testing - Iterations & fine tuning of communications


IS HE FINALLY RETIRING?
NO. HE IS THE YOUNGEST EVER TO FINISH ALL THE STEPS NECESSARY TO LAUNCH HIS FIRST PRODUCT CAMPAIGN.

Once you have analysed your test results, the key question you should ask yourself is whether the test answered your research question or not. If the test answered your research question positively, e.g. your message brings out the desired results, then you can now roll out your message campaign. For instance, in the AB test example on gain framed vs loss framed message campaign, if we find out that the loss framed message leads to more people reporting violence against women, we will suggest to the CSO to consider this message for their campaign.

The key question you should ask yourself is whether the test answered your research question or not

At times, the test may not necessarily answer your research question, but could still give some important insights to improve your message campaign. In such a case, alterations may be needed on your message. Drawing back from the VAW example given under the Survey method test:

Consider the following tagline in a campaign - "When I see violence against women, I report it. What about you? Call the toll-free hotline: 777"

From this tagline, you are interested to know whether it motivates people to act in the right way (report gender-based violence when they see it). With this objective in mind, you develop the following survey question:

When you hear of this tagline, what action are you likely to take?

a. I'm likely to keep quiet when I see violence against a woman being committed.
b. I'm likely to call the toll free hotline when I see violence against a woman being committed.
c. Not sure

If most of your respondents chose options A or C, then either minor alterations or major alterations may be needed on your message.

Minor Alterations Needed Scenario

This scenario highlights instances in which elements of your message campaign may be hard to understand or relate with by the audience. In such a case, minor edits to the message content such as using simpler words, contextual terms relevant to a specific demographic area or group among others may be used to enhance the content. In the example above, you may want to display it in the local language or a language that people may easily relate with or comprehend.

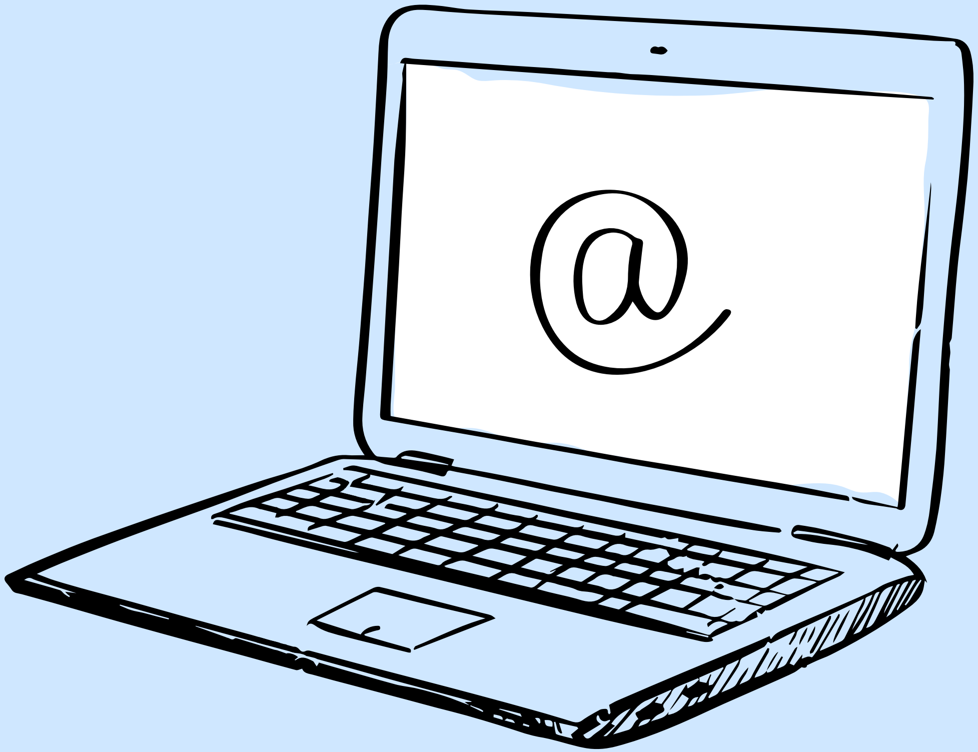
Major Alterations Needed Scenario

Sometimes, the findings from the testing exercise may highlight major gaps in your message content. For example, your target audience may not relate with the content at all. In such a scenario, your project team will need to re-assess all the elements of the message campaign. For example, Do you understand how the audience conceptualizes the VAW issue? Are you using the right medium to disseminate the content (e.g fliers and posters to an audience that may be largely illiterate)?

Such findings may highlight the need to restructure the testing strategy especially when the content or target audience is changed. Such changes warrant additional testing to determine if the message campaign is effective within a particular context. In the VAW tagline example above, you may want to test a different tagline or change the method of testing, e.g. test through an FGD or IDI to capture in-depth information from those who might choose options A or C. Then use their recommendations to develop a better tagline.

Guidebook Microsite

Interested in a more interactive way to engage with this guidebook's content? Go to the Low-cost Messaging and Testing microsite to learn more about how you can apply testing to your work:
https://sites.google.com/busaracenter.org/lcmt-guide/section-1



Resources

How to Conduct a pretest
https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-conduct-pretest

How to do an audience analysis
https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-do-audience-analysis

How to Design SBCC Messages
https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-design-sbcc-messages

A Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy
https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/sbcc-tools/field-guide-designing-health-communication-strategy

Social Science Research: Principles, Methods and Practices (Revised edition) by Anol Bhattacherjee

Sample size determination in qualitative research
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230832973_Sample_Size_Policy_for_Qualitative_Studies_Using_In-Depth_Interviews

Appendix

Appendix A: Further Reading

There are many other helpful guidebooks to help you in developing your communications and evaluative capabilities. Find two closely related guidebook references here:

1. The Strategic Communications Handbook by Well Made Strategy to give you a more focused and strategic approach to message design; and
2. The Testing Comms Guide by the Public Interest Research Centre for a primer on how to test your messagings through accessible methods and on a low budget.

Appendix B: What type of tests do/do not need IRB approvals?

Component	Tests that require IRB Approval have any of the following:	Tests That don't need IRB Approval have the following:
Study Population	If your test involves vulnerable populations. There are two important types of vulnerabilities: (1) Decisional impairment, whereby potential subjects lack the capacity to make autonomous decisions in their own interest, perhaps as a result of undue influence/inducement; (2) Situational/positional vulnerability, whereby potential participants may be subjected to coercion. Vulnerable populations include minors, prisoners and pregnant women.	General population depending with study inclusion criteria There may be small-scale studies you can conduct on sensitive topics like message strengthening with LGBT coalitions, so long as the sample size is low and the content is carefully reviewed by internal staff.
Study Design	If your project is designed to develop or contribute to the scientific field of knowledge. This may involve randomization of individuals to different treatments, or processes. If your project has novel research ideas for experimental activities that are not yet known to be efficacious.	Not designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge; If the project does not involve randomization of individuals, but may involve comparison of variations in programs.

Component	Tests that require IRB Approval have any of the following:	Tests That don't need IRB Approval have the following:
Dissemination of the Results	If your project's results is expected to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge by filling a gap in scientific knowledge or supporting, refining, or refuting results from other research studies. If your project objective is to publish in research/scientific publications and grant proposals.	If the study objective is to publish or present information to program stakeholders and participants; may be publicly posted (e.g.,website) to ensure transparency of results; When published or presented to a wider audience, the intention is to suggest potentially effective models, strategies, assessment tools or provide benchmarks rather than to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.
Study Objectives	If the project is designed to test a hypothesis and thereby to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (expressed, for example, in theories, principles, and statements of relationships).	Intent of the project is to evaluate a specific program, only to provide information for and about that program.
Study Areas/Topics	Examples of sensitive topics are sexual behaviours, drug abuse, covid19 related projects, mental health, sexual reproductive health, death and other topics sometimes labelled as taboo subjects. Many areas of research have the potential to be threatening to those taking part.	General topics including agriculture, environmental etc.
Effect of program/ Practise evaluated	Research findings will be used to develop a problem statement, research questions, and/or theory-based hypotheses.	Findings of the evaluation are expected to directly affect the conduct of the program and identify improvements.