THE LCM GUIDE

A guide to low-cost messaging & testing

Busara

Created by Busara with help from the following collaborators:

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

INTRODUCTION

About this guidebook

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

What is this guidebook?

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

1 It will help you understand the purpose and needs of testing.

2 It will help you understand how testing can improve your communications design.

3 It will take you through step-by-step on what you need to decide from designing your communications to testing your materials.

4 The guide will help you choose which testing method is most suited to your needs.

5 Finally, it will help you make sense of your results and guide you on what you should do after the testing.

Who is this guidebook for?

This guidebook is for organizations with little to no experience with message testing.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) like yours often work with limited funds, time, and resources. There is also a misperception that message testing is expensive. We would like to show you that this is not always the case. This guidebook presents some simple ways to test your messages and campaigns so that you can identify how to best achieve your desired results - all while preserving your resources.

Who can use this guidebook

This guidebook is meant for advocacy, communications, research and programs teams. These can be officers, managers and directors working with nascent or even established CSOs, social enterprises and other non-profits.

It is particularly useful to officers and teams that take up the roles of program and project implementation, communications, public affairs, research, stakeholder engagement and advocacy. These can be Communications Officers, Research teams, Communications Leads, Project Managers, Program Managers and Coordinators, Grant Managers, Advocacy Leads, Engagement Managers and Directors, Chiefs and Directors of Advocacy and other similar roles. Executive Directors and Board Members of these organizations also have a role to play as they are the custodians of the overall organizational strategy and vision. When communicating to an organization’s primary stakeholders and partners, this guidebook is a free resource that can be used to complement the communications and advocacy strategies. The guidebook therefore can be used as a tool when crafting advocacy messages and campaigns, when releasing project information on interventions, reporting implementation and communicating impact.

How can I use this guide?

The guidebook gives a step by step process on message testing to achieve the best results.

To get the most out of this guide, it is 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 that you need to test. This will help transform the guidebook from a mere reading companion to a compass in your testing journey. In essence, the guidebook is an open resource that will guide you and your team with information on effective messaging. It gives you a quick induction into using behavioral science to influence positive behavior change among your target population by curating messages with behavioral science concepts. Tailoring messages to different audiences has been found to be a useful way of leveraging messaging.

This guidebook will help you to adjust the messages for your specific context based on testing feedback and finally, the guidebook can be used as a training resource for project teams and clients on advocacy messaging.

The guidebook has several sections which makes it easier to follow. The first section is about why testing messages is important. Use it to understand why testing can take your campaigns a level up and ultimately save your organization time and money. From Section 2 onwards, we start getting more applied tools. Use Section 2 to understand first how to craft your messaging campaigns, especially using behavioral principles, before we begin 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. Walk through this section when you are ready to test your materials. We will include examples to ground your understanding throughout each phase.

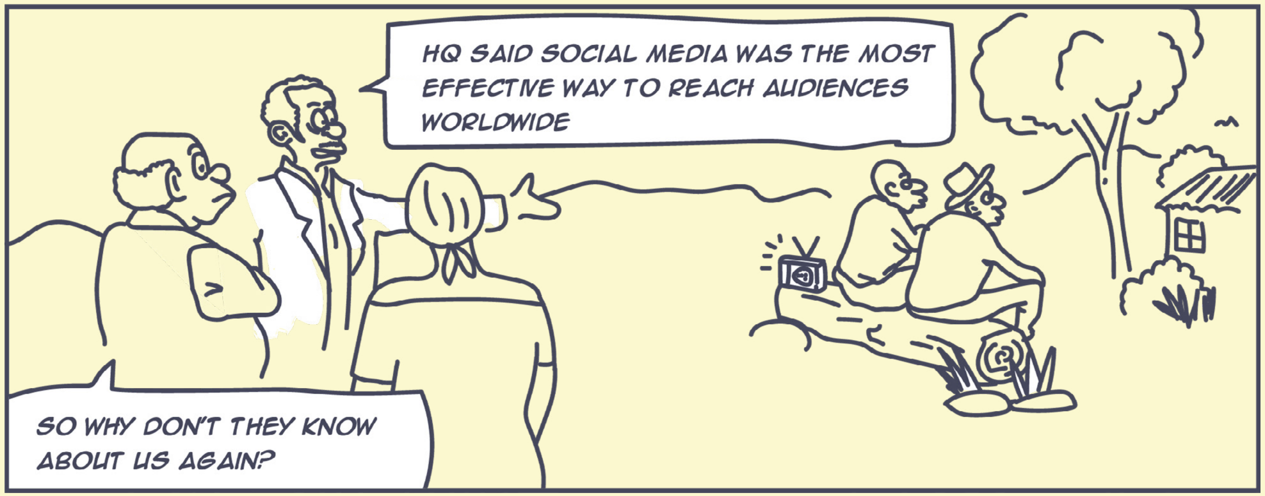
Are there other resources?
Yes. At the end of this guide, we will provide you with online resources to assist you in testing. We also offer a link to this guidebook's website, an interactive platform that will provide more testing information.

SECTION 1

Understanding testing

What is testing?

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



Why should I test?

Sometimes we think we have great campaign ideas that can meaningfully shift our audience's minds and behaviors. But will they actually achieve this? We're often working quickly to create a message and get it out to our audience. Our messages often are based on what we as CSOs assume will work. Our assumptions can be proven wrong. The rule of the thumb is this - you should test to see if your messaging and programming will perform as well as you think it will. Testing will help us to know if we are correct in assuming what will work and why. It allows us to learn more about the audiences and the messages we intend to communicate to them.

... 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

- ✓ Can tell you which messaging and framing approaches work best with different target audiences.
- ✓ Can determine the best channels for your communications.
- ✓ Can help you learn about your audience in a nuanced way.
- ✓ Can save you time and money by determining a clear path forward and identifying which approaches to scale up.
- ✓ Can ultimately improve the impact and legitimacy of your work.

What testing can't do

- ✗ Can't be used as a one-shot deal. Old testing findings can't be re-used for new messages in new or different contexts.
- ✗ Can't 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 messages stay fresh.
- ✗ Can't replace spending time with the people your organization most cares about and helps.

What could I test for?

Test the elements in your campaign that you think could drive the most impact with your audience. Test to understand how your audience responds to the most important elements of your communication campaigns. Some of these elements 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 2

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. Below are key behavioral science concepts you can use to guide your testing.

For instance, you might want to test messages where one version uses social norms framing (when you reference how the majority of a group acts in positive perceptions or behaviors, thus signaling 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 community or regional progress actively being lost without the desired action) and the other uses gain framing (when you frame community or regional progress being gained as the result of the desired action). Get some inspiration from our examples on the next page:

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 our society. The goal of social norms framing is to show that the majority of a certain group of people are doing the desired behavior; 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 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 behavior, 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 framing is to show that the majority of a certain group of people are doing the desired behavior.

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For example, if you want to deploy a message campaign based on social norms to reduce gender-based violence, you can consider such a message: **"7 out of 10 people in your city report to the nearest police station whenever they experience gender-based violence".** Such a message 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

As humans, we are more likely to do simple things over complex ones. People can only process, absorb, and recall a limited amount of information at any given time. It is therefore 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 and larger fonts to highlight key phrases.

People can only process, absorb, and recall a limited amount of information at any given time. It is therefore important to make messages easy for them.

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; emphasizing 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.

People are more likely to avoid losses than seek gains.

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 are saving a life (gain-framed).**
- **If you fail to report gender-based violence today, you are responsible for the harm caused to the victim (loss-framed).**

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

SECTION 3

The testing process

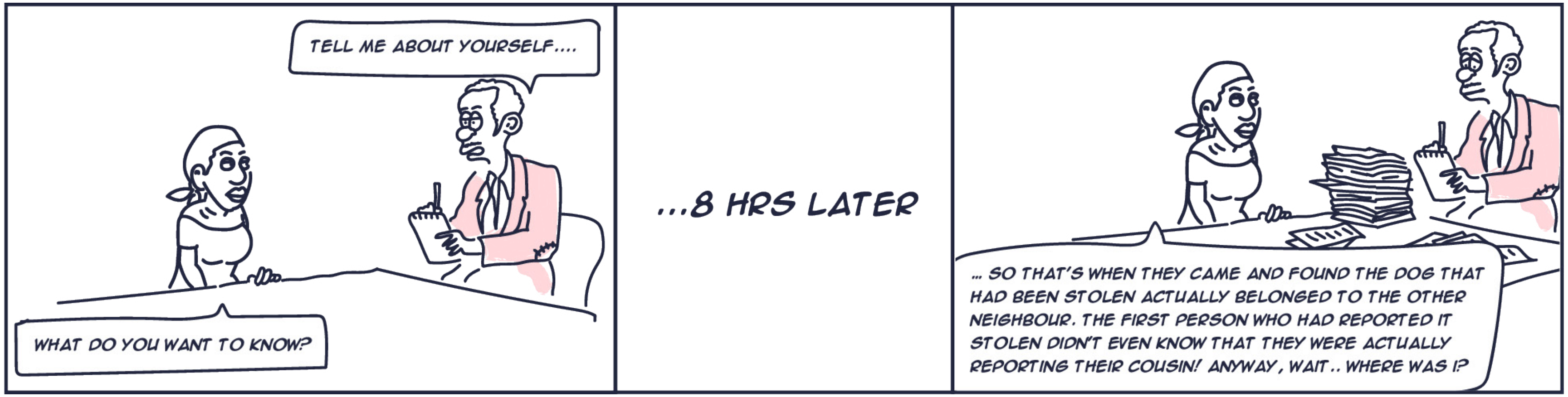
Now you need to test those messages. What's the question (or questions) you want to answer about your message? This is your research question. Identify it with us.

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 where the research questions are crafted from. 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: "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.

When designing your research question, put the following in consideration:

- How you choose to measure your outcomes: Is a quantitative or qualitative approach better in the questions you are interested about? Which approach is easy and clear for the respondent to answer? For both quantitative and qualitative, how do you choose to operationalize (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? Depending on your resources and the method used, you could test these four channels and see how they affect your outcome. An example of a good research question here 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, some of you will want to add images or a sound to see if it will increase the number of sign-ups. An example of a good 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 methods that you can use to effectively test your messages, depending on what resources you have. Below we provide a snapshot of 4 key methods that you can use, including what the method looks like under a low budget.

1 Focus Group Discussions

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 quantitative research findings.

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

The data collected is more subjective than factual or objective.

Have a few guiding questions to engage with your audience. For sample selection, rely on your networks through a snowballing technique. The basis of the analysis is summarizing the data per each research question.

2 In-Depth Interviews

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.

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

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

Have a few guiding questions in the interview guide to discuss one or two themes of interest. Select the purposeful sample (page 26) 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 compares 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 you with key insights about a particular demographic without having to study the entire population.

A **sampling strategy** should outline the eligibility criteria of who can 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 an advocacy campaign to encourage people to report cases of gender-based violence against women in Uganda. The 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, our sampling strategy can include the following information:

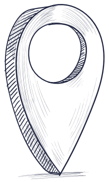
Inclusion criteria

- ✔ 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

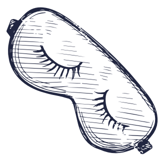
- ✕ Any individual unable to provide voluntary consent to participate will be excluded from the study; these include minors and persons with cognitive limitations that prevent them from providing consent without a guardian.

Once you have an idea of your audience, you can now think of how to sample them using the options below:



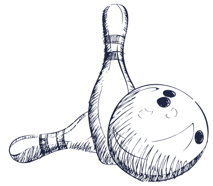
Nationally representative sample

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 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 preferred for high cost testing approaches due to the amount of resources and time required to achieve such a sample.



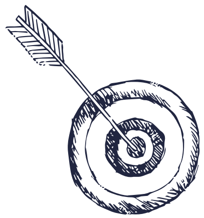
Random sample

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.



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.



Targeted sample

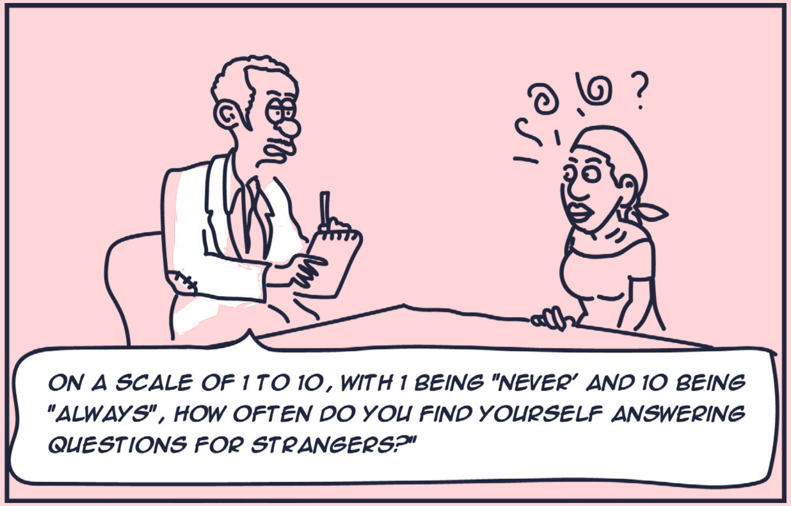
This approach is preferred when you have a clear definition of your sample. For instance, you might have resolved to target women, within the middle income bracket, of ages 18-40. You would then go ahead and find such people to include in your test. This approach is likely to be time consuming thus not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

When testing your messages, ensure you do not keep engaging the sample for various aspects of the message campaign. For example, once you test and do major changes to the content of the message, you should not re-test with the same sample.

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 our 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).

In testing the effectiveness of message campaigns, IDIs can be used in formative and summative assessment to gain an in-depth understanding of perspectives. Since IDIs entail participation from multiple stakeholders, it can help to identify what elements of the messaging 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 open and closed ended questions for the enumerator

A voice recording device to record the conversation for later transcription

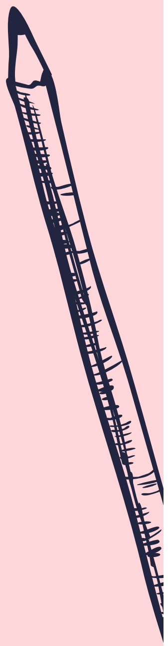
A safe and comfortable environment to enable the respondent to open up

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 the data?

- Review research questions and read through the transcripts to identify 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

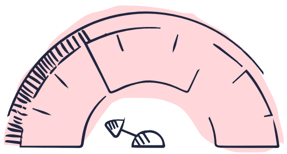


Considerations

- ✗ 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

Low



What's the approach?

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.

Benefits

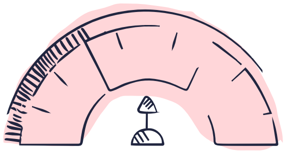
The findings can inform the research team on key elements of the interview guide e.g which questions the respondent struggled with, length of the tool and many others.

Limitations

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

Middle



What's the approach?

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 Zoom or Whatsapp 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.

Benefits

Multiple themes are under investigation making the findings to be more insightful.

The sample is relatively larger which gives varied opinions and perspectives.

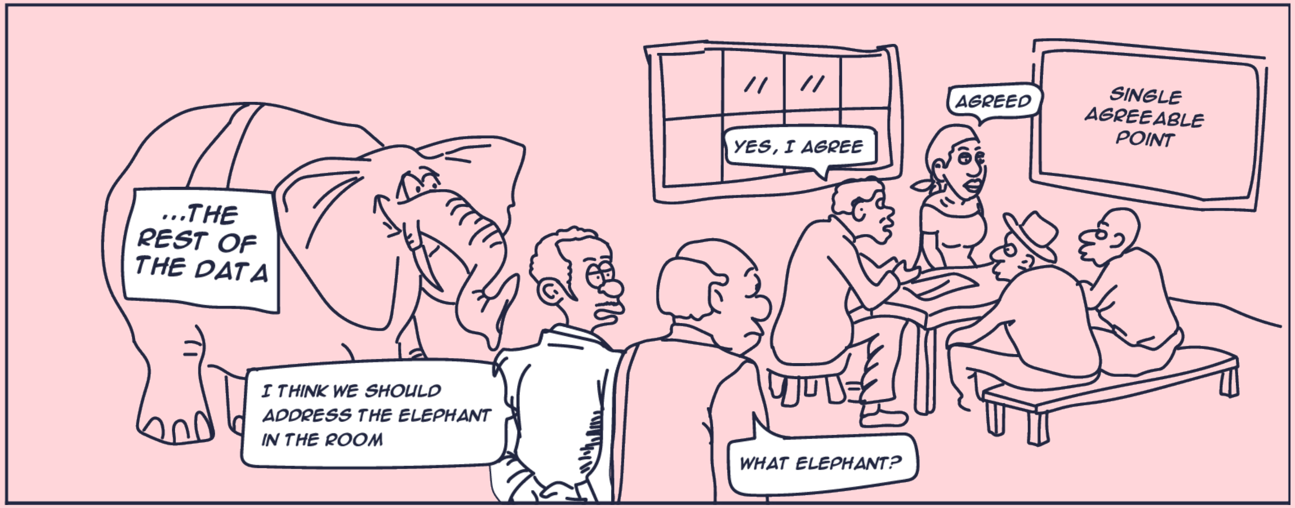
Limitations

The sample size is too small to make any general conclusions. However, the findings can be generalized to a specific population.

METHOD 2

Focused 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 our qualitative understandings of various audiences and their attitudes, and thus, can 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 analyzing their response to your organization's past, current or future campaigns, messagings, programming and interventions
- 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 not, why?
4. What do you think of using a hotline "777" to report GBV cases?

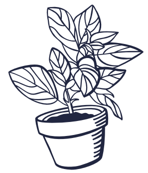
What I need to implement this approach

A minimum of 5 people from similar backgrounds

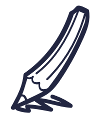
A trained facilitator (characteristics of which can be found here)

An interview guide with instructions for your trained facilitator, a list of open-ended questions for your research, and a place to document them (example found here)

A note-taker or a voice recorder for data collection



A comfortable environment for respondents and the interviewer



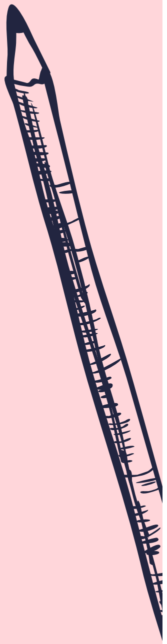
Final transcripts for analysis

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



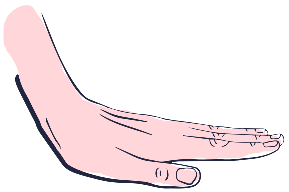
Considerations

- ✗ 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.

Resources required

Low



What's the approach?

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 will moderate the session while the other will 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.

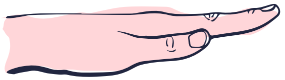
Benefits

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.

Limitations

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	What's the approach?	Benefits	Limitations
Middle 	**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

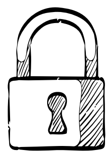
1. **To what extent** does this campaign message motivate you to act? - When I see violence against women, I report it. What about you? Call the toll-free hotline: 777" [Choose one option - To a lesser extent, To a moderate extent, To a greater extent]
2. Since you saw the campaign message on violence 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 now more concerned about VAW)
3. **Do you know** which hotline to call when you see a case of VAW? (Options: (a) Yes, (b) No)
4. **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

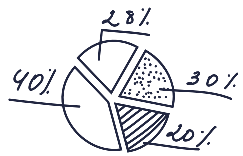
A trained facilitator

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



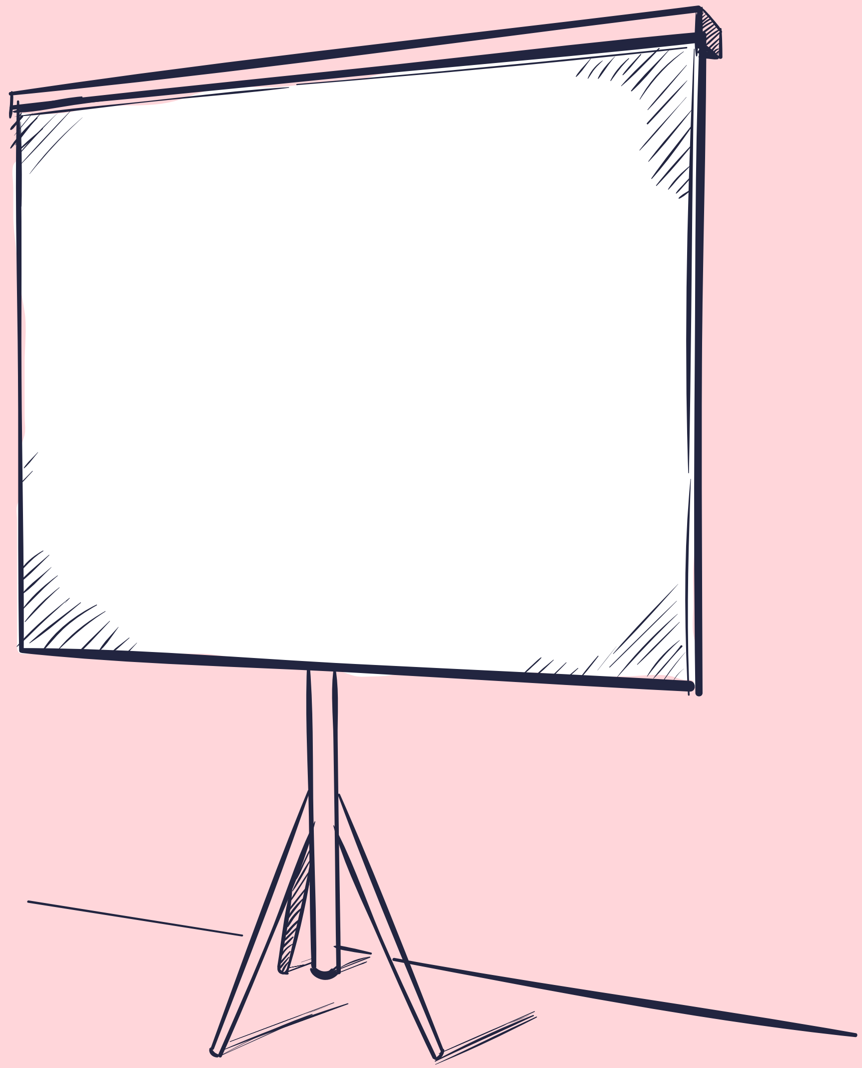
A plan on how to analyze your data

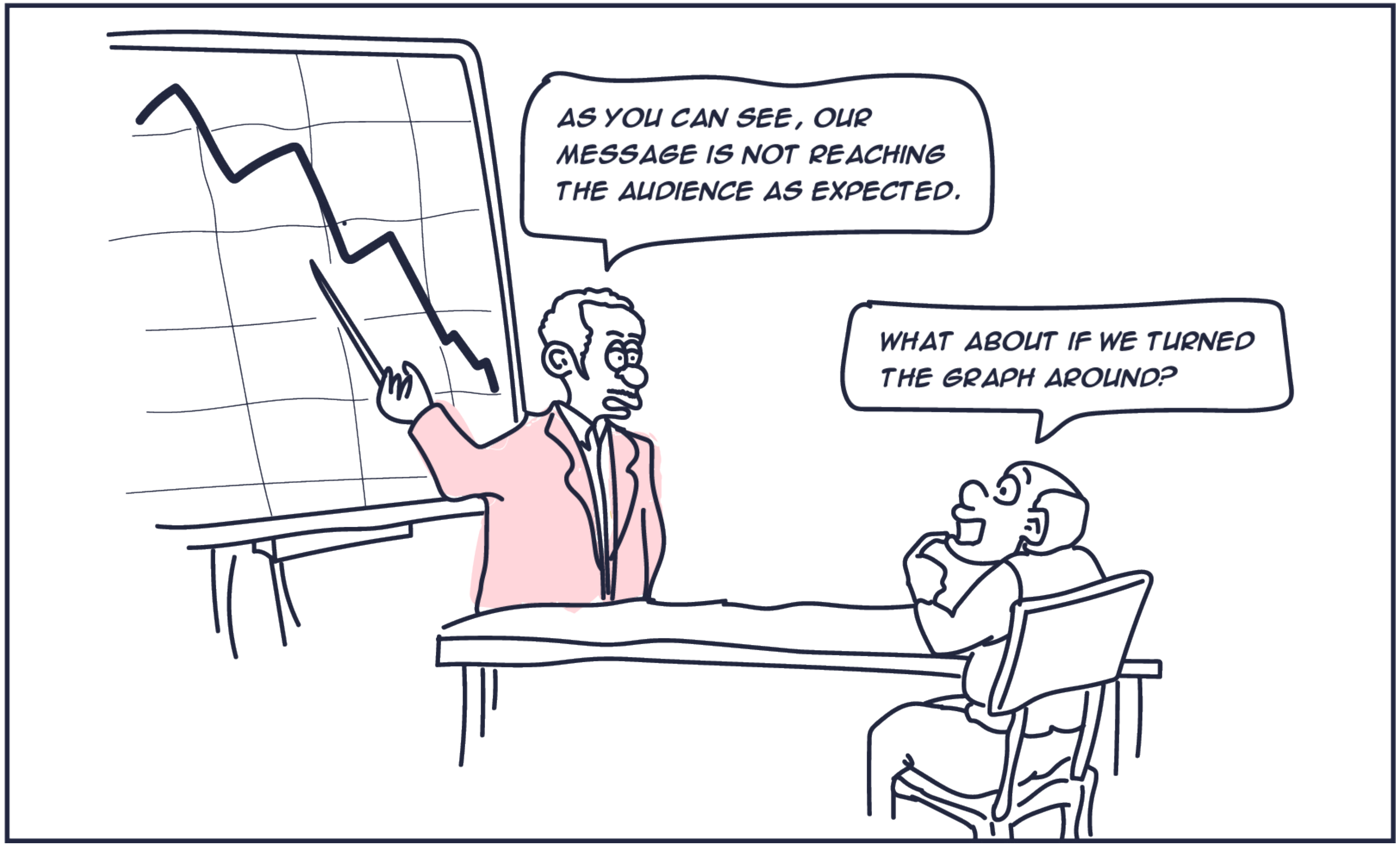
How do I conduct this test?

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 guides
7. Collect the data
8. Draft your analysis plan
9. Analyze results using statistical software

How do I analyze the data?

- Write an analysis plan that includes the analytical procedures you'll want to use across your research questions
- Identify a statistical software that you are most comfortable with; Excel, Stata, etc
- 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 double-barrelled questions (two questions in one). 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 ("sampling bias"), when respondents 'spin the truth' in their responses in order to portray themselves in a good manner ("social desirability bias").
- ✕ Surveys also don't capture in-depth information which can be useful in understanding the "why" and "how".

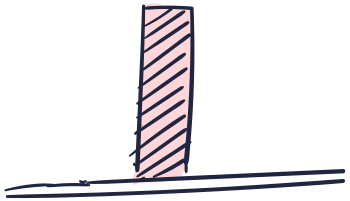
- ✓ Decide on the channel for surveying. Surveys can be administered through in-person interactions (face to face), phone calls, via the internet (Google forms, digital collections like Survey Monkey), or via mail. The choice of the channel depends on whether you want to conduct a low cost or high cost 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 	**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

Middle



What's the approach?

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 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.

Benefits

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.

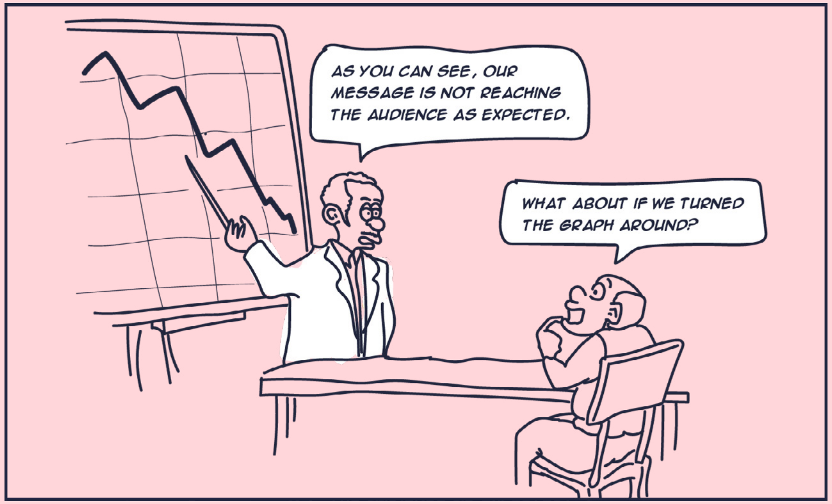
Limitations

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



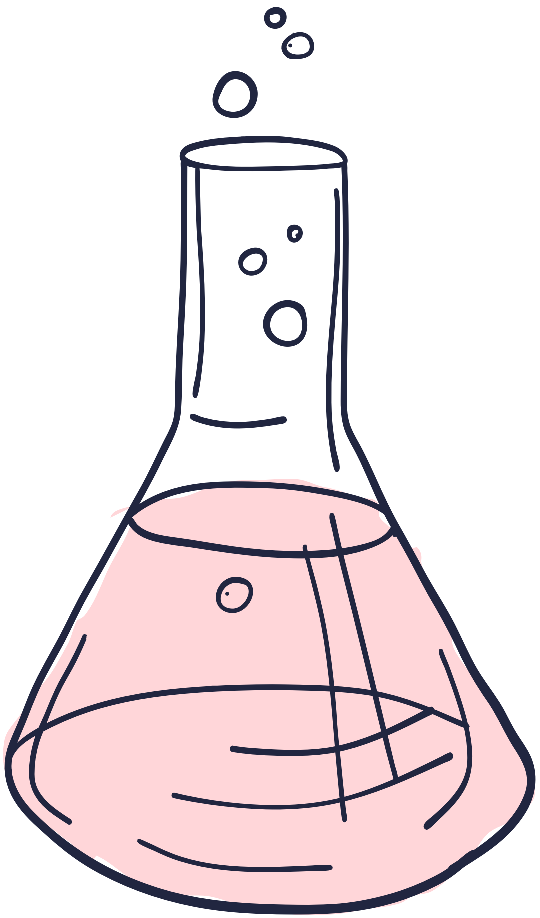
What is it?

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 advocacy messages 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. A/B testing seeks to determine which message/s or product/s users understand, like or relate to better.

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 a 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 ask your participants which of the messages is likely to influence them to report incidences of violence against women when they observe it.

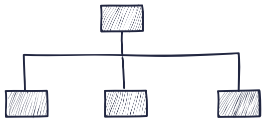
2. **Compared to generic or "business-as-usual" messages,** will a social norm message encourage more people to report cases of violence against women?
   a. Generic message: Call 777 to report an incidence of violence against women.
   b. Social norm message: People from your community report violence 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.

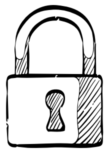
3. Will **adding images to my messaging campaign** appeal more to my audience?
   a. Option A: Your campaign message accompanied with images
   b. Option B: A plain campaign message with no images

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 collect their verbal responses on their preferences between options A and B.

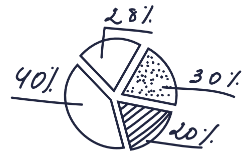
What I need to implement this approach



Variations of the messages or mediums you want to test



Secured databases where all the information is collected and stored



A plan on how to analyze your data

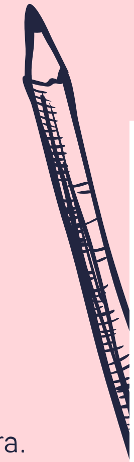
A sufficient sample size to draw out meaningful conclusions. There is no specific magic number to consider for your sample in an A/B test. For a more robust A/B test you may want to calculate the sample size. However, your budget and timeline can guide you on the number of participants to consider

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 to avoid 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 two message variants to 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 the 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 analyze the data. In more involved A/B tests, rely on statistical softwares such as R or Stata for your results. These require special skills and might therefore need to hire someone with the skills if you do not have such a person within your team.
- Formulate your narrative and write your findings report.

Considerations

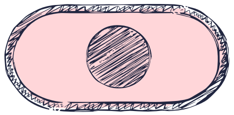
- ✔ Randomize which audience gets which message to avoid any biases affecting your results
- ✔ Standardize everything, i.e. provide the same rules for the audience getting the different messages. For instance, do not observe one message for 1 week and the other for 2 weeks
- ✘ Do not test too many elements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

A/B tests for different scenarios

Resources required	What's the approach?	Benefits	Limitations
Low	**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

Middle



What's the approach?

Number of message variants to test: Ideally 2, but you can add more variants to investigate. This however 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.

Benefits

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.

Limitations

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 realistic 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.

You can also leverage on using two methods in one setting to cut costs. For example, IDIs can be conducted after an A/B test to establish the reasons why the audience made certain decisions during your test. While this method is budget friendly, you must ensure that it does not compromise your sampling characteristics by ensuring that all participants fit your inclusion criteria as outlined on page 25.

Ethical considerations

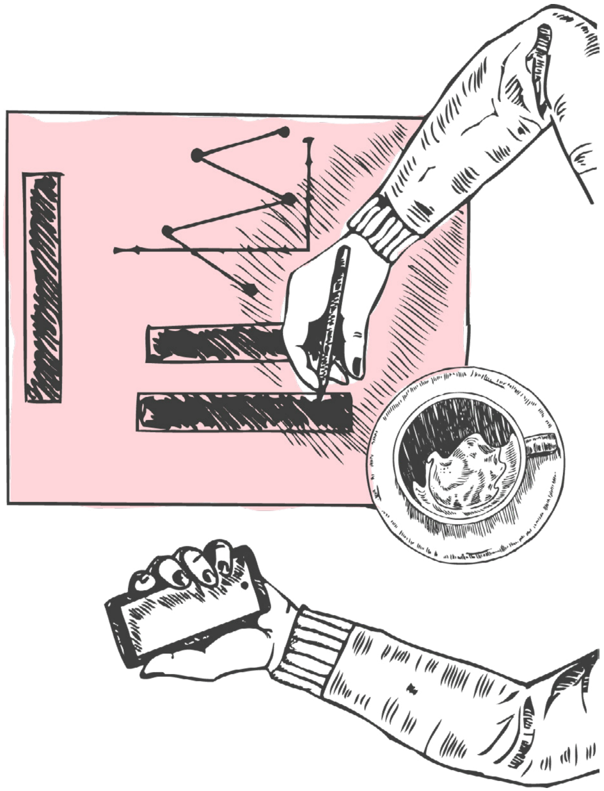
When conducting your test, attention should be paid to maintaining ethics throughout your testing process. This includes treating your audience with utmost respect and abiding by the necessary rules and regulations of conducting the test.

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 want to.
- 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 want to make sure that the right selected audience receives variant A and the other audience receives variant B. For IDIs and FGDs you 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

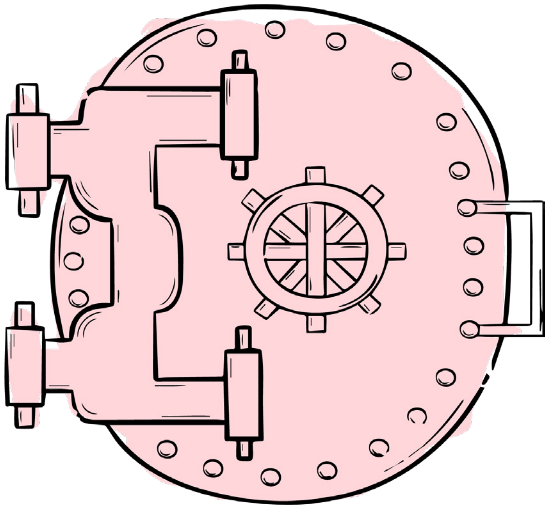
Data collected and processed should conform to data protection and privacy laws of the countries of operations and General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR. During data processing, data protection principles which are universal should be adhered to, as well as respecting the data subject rights.

Institutions should put in place data protection and privacy policies which should be comprehensive, but 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 4

After testing - iterations and 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 analyzed 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. did your message bring out the desired results?, only then can you 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 a local language or a language that people may easily relate with or comprehend.

Major alterations needed scenario

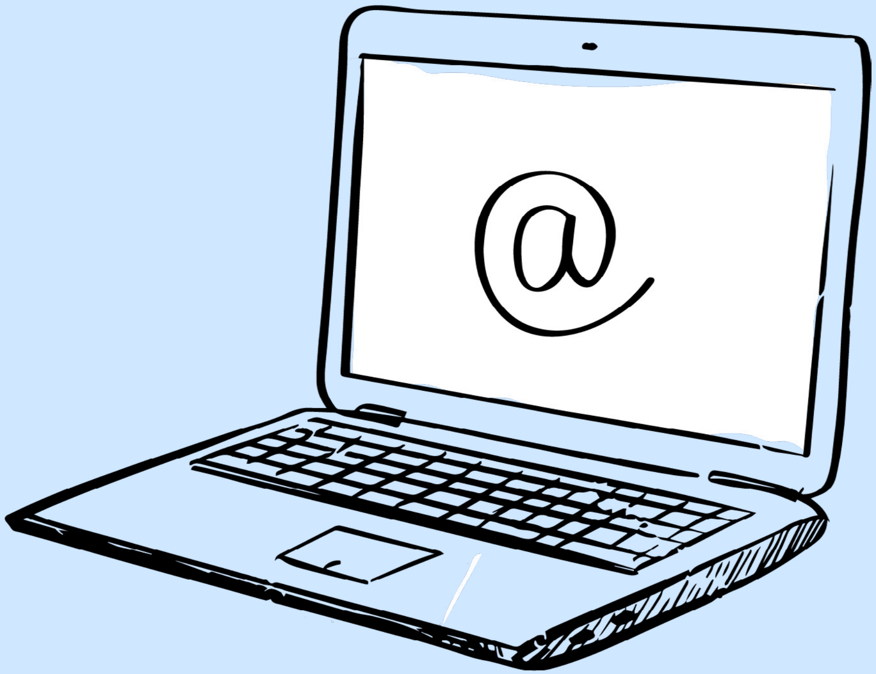
Sometimes, the findings from the testing exercise may highlight major gaps in your message content. For example, your target audience may not relate with the content at all. In such a scenario, your project team will need to re-assess all the elements of the message campaign. For example, Do you understand 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 website

We have developed a guidebook website website which is a more interactive way of engaging with the contents in this document electronically. Go to our website to learn more about how you can apply testing to your work:

https://messagetestingguidebook.busara.global/



Resources

Guidebook Feedback Form

Swahili LCMT Version

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.

The Low-Cost Message Testing guidebook was published by Busara in Kenya, 2024.

Busara is a research and advisory organization, working with researchers and organizations to advance and apply behavioral science in pursuit of poverty alleviation. Busara pursues a future where global human development activities respond to people's lived experience; value knowledge generated in the context it is applied; and promote culturally appropriate and inclusive practices.

To accomplish this, we practice and promote behavioral science in ways that center and value the perspectives of respondents; expand the practice of research where it is applied; and build networks, processes, and tools that increase the competence of practitioners and researchers.

Busara publications present information, analysis, reflection and key recommendations on issues relating to behavioral science and global development.

Disclaimer: The views presented in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the positions of our diverse set of funders and supporters.

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