



# Conducting Audience Research

———• Francis Ayieko •————

# Reader Research



It's a process of understanding the needs, wants, desires and interests of your readers or prospective readers so that you can serve them well.

# Four critical questions you should answer

2

- o Who are my current or prospective readers?
  - o Where do they live or work?
  - o What are their current information sources?
  - o Do they want something different?
- **Learn as much as you can about your target readers' interests and needs**



# Why Audience Research?

- o Research reduces risk and creates opportunities to serve readers better
- o Defines or redefines your core audience
- o Clarifies your target audience
- o Helps editor craft content that meets needs of readers
- o Lends unbiased authority to your sponsors and advertisers
- o Helps in designing appropriate content and design



# Keys to Effective Research

**Have clear research goals.**



What is the most important information we need to find out about our readers? This study needs to be conducted because.

**Ask effective questions.**



Good questions produce reliable results.

**Maintain a limited focus.**



Don't try to research everything you want to know all at once.

**Commit to evaluate and apply results.**

Research should be actionable.



# There are two basic types of research

## 1. Primary Research

- o Information or data that does not already exist
- o Collected for a particular purpose

## 2. Secondary Research

- o Published or recorded data that has already been collected for other purposes
- o Available in governmental reports and research, journals, magazines, online sources, local newspapers, libraries, books



## ► Primary Research Techniques

- o Use a mix of surveys, focus groups, interviews or experiments to generate both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (non-numerical) data

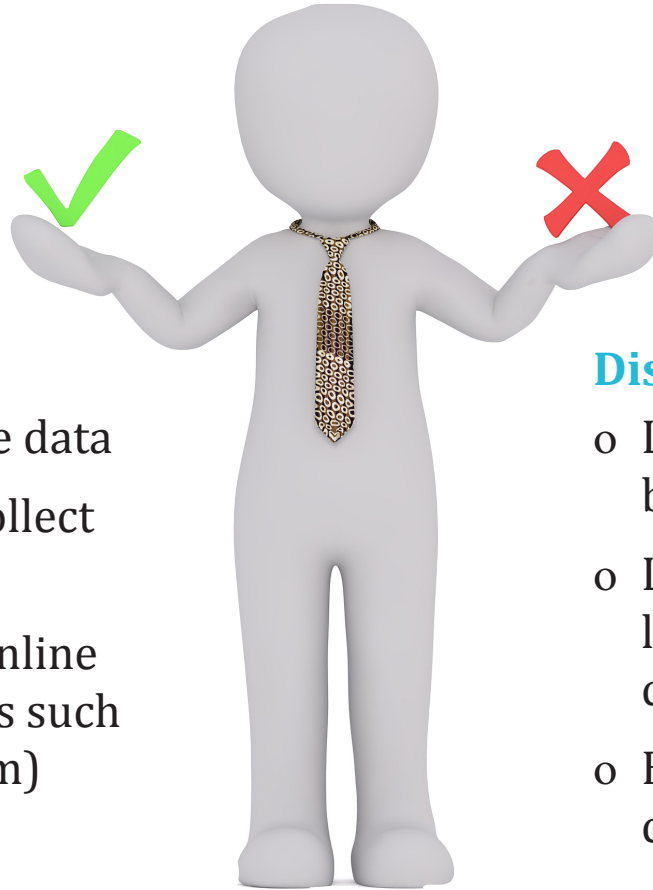


## Surveys

- o Written questionnaires
- o More quantitative, larger number of responses
- o In-magazine surveys (self-selecting respondents)
- o Mailed surveys (more objective and accurate)
- o Survey handed out at conferences, concerts, special events







## Advantages

- o Provides quantitative data
- o Relatively quick to collect multiple data points
- o Often inexpensive (online surveys use free tools such as [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com))

## Disadvantages

- o Limits answers or feedback
- o Low response rate (unless you provide an incentive)
- o Errors and biases are common

► **When to use surveys**

- When you want quantitative data to use for a chart or graph about your readers
- When you need to hear many perspectives



## Focus Groups

- o A semi-structured, free-flowing interview with a small group of readers (usually between six and 10) and a moderator
- o Ask their opinions about publishing questions like feelings, ideas, article topics, graphics, what they like about your magazine
- o Ask questions exactly as they are written and never give your opinion
- o Be a good listener (you are there to learn, not to teach or tell)



- o Do not interject with your opinions
- o Control discussion without being overbearing
- o Do not allow one or two members of the group to dominate discussion
- o Audio and/or video record the focus group
- o Interpret the results cautiously due to the small number of participants
- o Conduct multiple focus groups with same questions



## Interviews

- o Involves asking a limited number of questions live or over the telephone.
- o Interview people at concerts, churches, special events or any place your target audience gathers.
- o Create a standard list of questions that every interviewer must use.
- o Use simple, short-answer questions.
- o Interviews offer opportunity for feedback or clarification.
- o Allows for “probing” based on answers.







### ► Informal research

- o Letters to the editor.
- o Observation – observe the popularity of different issues of the magazine.
- o Talk to readers when you meet them.
- o Chat with vendors if your magazine is sold on the newsstands.

# What you Need to Know About your Readers

14

## ► Demographic Information

- o Gender - men vs women
- o Age
- o Marital status
- o Education
- o Denomination
- o Income





### ► Similar Publications

- What else do they read?
- What kind of design do they like?
- What kind of articles do they read?
- What blogs and websites do they visit?
- What devices do they use?



## ► Opinions About your Publication

- What do readers like?
- Are there parts they don't read?
- Do they like your design and illustrations?
- Which part do they read first?
- Which other topics do they want you to cover?



### ► **Current Spiritual Life**

- Are readers new Christians?
- Do they have daily devotions?
- Are they discipling others?
- What are they struggling with?



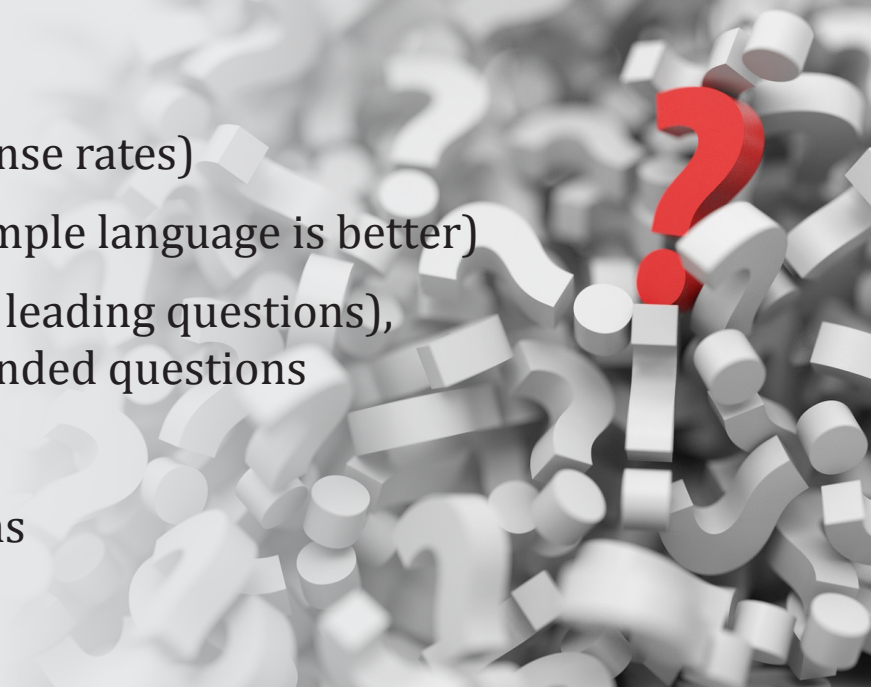
► **Areas in Which they Need Help**

- What are their concerns?
- What do they have questions about?



# Write Good Research Questions

- o Keep it short (gets better response rates)
- o Keep it simple (avoid jargon, simple language is better)
- o Use open-ended questions (not leading questions), but also avoid too many open-ended questions
- o Be as specific as possible
- o Avoid double-barreled questions



# How to Increase Survey Response Rates

20

- **Advance notice:** email, announcement, postcard, ad in the magazine, cover wrap on the magazine, notice on your website.
- **Make it easy to respond:** postage paid envelope included with mail survey, one click to access in an email message or online.
- **Watch the length of the survey:** about 20 questions is maximum for mail and the same online. Include progress completed bar for online surveys.
- **For email delivery:** subject line about 34 characters and carefully select day of week sent.
- **Follow-up notice:** from three days to one week after initial notice.
- **Offer an incentive:** give a prize to respondents



# Analysing and Using Research



- o Analyse the results of individual questions as well as combinations of questions.
- o Interpret what the numbers are telling you.
- o Track research results from study to study to identify trends or significant changes.
- o Analyse and discuss research results as a team to help you plan future editorial content and improve the publication.

### Class Exercise

1. What are 10 things you would like to know about your reader or prospective readers?
2. What will you do with this information?
3. What method of research do you plan to use?
4. Write out your questions.



**Enjoy and be Blessed**

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