

Encouraging migrant domestic workers in Singapore to seek help from HOME and FAST via Facebook advertisement messages

Key findings from trial



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Executive summary



Introduction

The Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME) and the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (FAST) collaborated with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to conduct a Facebook advertisement trial and investigate if certain messaging types can encourage more migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in Singapore to seek help.



Executive summary



Key Findings

1. **Sending a Facebook message, or clicking / reacting to the advertisement** - Users were less likely to click or react to the advertisement, or send a Facebook message in response to 'Social Norms' messaging
2. **Treatment and Control advertisements elicited different types of responses-** More users interacted with each other (including sought help) in the comments section under 'Don't Wait' and 'Social Norms' advertisements compared to 'Control'

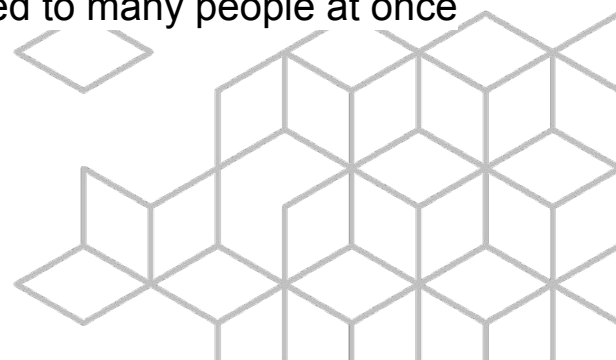


Executive summary



Recommendations

1. **Social Norms messages need to be tested more thoroughly before scaling up** - social norms messages can lead to different effects depending on how the message is framed; we recommend that this is thoroughly reviewed and tested again before any roll-out
2. **Facebook can be used as an effective communication channel** - this trial demonstrated the effectiveness of Facebook in reaching and engaging MDWs, especially Indonesian and Burmese groups
3. **Consider monitoring and replying comments left on advertisements by MDWs asking for help** - this can increase the visibility of formal advice provided to many people at once



Background

Project overview and research aims

Encouraging more MDWs to seek help earlier before their issues escalate



Context

- There are a number of organisations set up to support MDWs, including the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME) and the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (FAST)
- **However**, MDWs either do not seek help from these organisations, or often seek help once tensions with their employer have already escalated to a critical point, such as when they have already run away and are about to return home
- This is often **too late** to prevent significant harm, and opportunities to repair the relationship before such harm is done have been missed

The objective of the current project is explore ways to encourage more MDWs to seek help from HOME or FAST when they have problems.

Conducting a trial to the test impact of messaging in encouraging MDWs to contact HOME and FAST

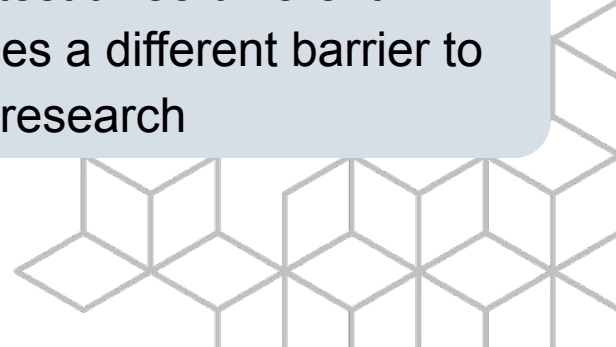


Research Aim

To understand what messaging (if any) can encourage more migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in need of help to contact HOME and FAST

What We Did

We conducted a Facebook advertisements trial to test three different advertisement messaging, where each version addresses a different barrier to help-seeking identified in our exploratory research





Intervention

Testing out three versions of
Facebook advertisements

We developed and compared 3 different advertisement messages

We compared **three different messages** against each other. The objective of the messages was to encourage MDWs to click on the advertisement in order to send a Facebook message to HOME/FAST.

- **Control:** Direct message
- **Treatment 1:** Highlighting social norms (“Social Norms”)
- **Treatment 2:** Creating a sense of urgency (“Don’t Wait”)

Each advertisement included the hotline number for the respective organisation and a button to click to send a Facebook message.



Condition	Intervention	Description
Control	-	This advertisement contains a short and direct message informing viewers about the organisation’s hotline and Facebook messenger service.
Treatment 1 (Social Norms)	Highlight social norms	<p>This advertisement normalises the act of help-seeking and highlights the number of calls that the organisation received last year.</p> <p>It also contains a list of common issues that MDWs have reached out to the organisation for help with, and emphasises the confidentiality of the service.</p>
Treatment 2 (Don’t Wait)	Create a sense of urgency	<p>This advertisement encourages MDWs to reach out for help earlier and not wait until their problem has escalated.</p> <p>It also contains a list of common issues that MDWs have reached out to the organisation for help with, and emphasises the confidentiality of the service.</p>

Messages were chosen based on exploratory findings and prototyping feedback



Explore findings

- **Social norms and influence:** MDWs often sought help from their social network. Those who sought formal help did so upon advice and encouragement from friends and acquaintances.
- **Sense of urgency:** In our Explore work, we found that HOME and FAST often encountered MDWs who were in dire circumstances and who would have benefited from earlier intervention.

For more information about our Explore findings, check out our [earlier blog post](#).

Prototyping feedback

- We prototyped 6 different versions of an advertisement with MDW volunteers and sought their feedback. The two Treatment arms (Social Norms and Don't Wait) were chosen based on prototyping feedback.
- **Social norms and influence** ranked higher than other prototypes as it was perceived to be a useful message that normalises help-seeking behaviour.
- **Sense of urgency** ranked higher than other prototypes as it was perceived to address the barrier of seeking help immediately by communicating a sense of immediacy and urgency.

Control: Direct message

We operate a 24-hour helpline that you can call if you need help or advice.

Send us an FB message or call our 24-hour hotline (1800-339-4357)

As similar as possible to existing materials that FAST and HOME already put out (direct information about helpline)



We operate a 24-hour hotline that you can call if you need help or advice.

[...see more](#)

**24/7
HOTLINE FOR
DOMESTIC
WORKERS**

1800-339-4357




OR

Send us a FB message

Call or message us for
help

FAST is a non-profit organi...

 SEND MESSAGE



Like



Comment



Share

Treatment 1: Social norms

Text in advertisement above poster:

It's normal to ask advice when we are in a different country. Last year, HOME fielded more than 200 calls and messages to our helpline.

No issue is too small. People call in for many reasons, including:

- 1. Feeling overwhelmed*
- 2. Don't get along with employer*
- 3. Need medical help*

We will not make a report, call anyone, or tell anyone else about your troubles unless you want us to.

Send us an FB message or call our 24-hour helpline (1800-339-4357).



Foreign Domestic Worker
Association for Social Support and
Training - FAST 
Sponsored · 



It's normal to need advice when when we are in a new country. Last year, HOME fielded more than 200 calls and messages to ...see more

**EVERYONE
ASKS FOR ADVICE
SOMETIMES**


**24/7 HELPLINE FOR
DOMESTIC WORKERS**



FB Message / 1800-339-4357

MESSENGER

It's normal to ask for
advice

 SEND MESSAGE



Like



Comment



Share

Treatment 2: Don't wait, call earlier

Text in advertisement above poster:

Small problems can become big if you don't resolve them early. Our hotlines and Facebook are open for even the smallest of problems, to make sure it doesn't become an emergency.

No issue is too small. People call in for many reasons, including:

- 1. Feeling overwhelmed*
- 2. Don't get along with employer*
- 3. Need medical help*

We will not make a report, call anyone, or tell anyone else about your troubles unless you want us to.

Send us an FB message or call our 24-hour helpline (97873122).



Foreign Domestic Worker
Association for Social Support and
Training - FAST 
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Small problems can become big if you don't resolve them early. Our hotlines and Facebook messenger are open for even the ...see more

**DON'T WAIT
UNTIL IT'S
TOO LATE**


**24/7 HELPLINE FOR
DOMESTIC WORKERS**



FB Message / 1800-339-4357

MESSENGER

It's important to call for
small problems

 SEND MESSAGE



Like



Comment



Share



Determining the impact of our interventions

Main Research Questions

- Did more users send a Facebook message to FAST/ HOME after seeing the revised advertisements?
- Did more users click after seeing the revised advertisements?

Exploratory Questions

- Did more users 'react' to the revised advertisements?
- Did more users share the revised advertisements?
- Do the revised advertisements change the way users comment on the advertisement? What did they comment about?
- Did the most effective advertisement vary by language group?
- Did the advertisements (in general) affect phone calls to the support organisations' helplines?



Trial Design

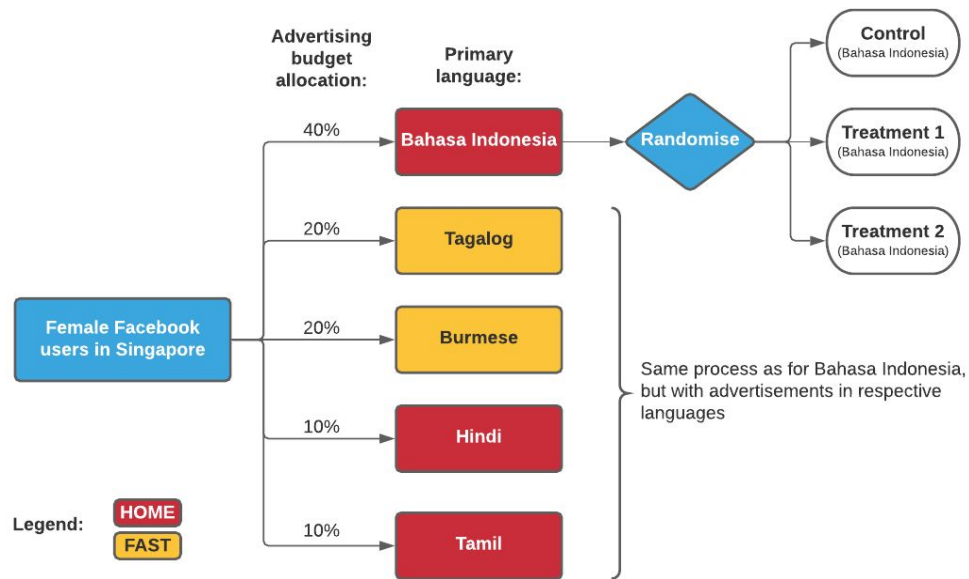
Design and Research Questions



Users are randomly assigned to see one of 3 messages

BIT ran the trial for 3 weeks using 'Facebook Experiments' feature.

- Users are selected for the trial if they use Facebook in one of the target languages*
- An MDW may be subscribed to both HOME and FAST pages - to avoid spillover**, advertisements for different languages are split between FAST and HOME
- Facebook randomly assigns users to see one of 3 versions



* As Facebook does not support using Burmese, we selected users who 'liked' pages related to Myanmar as a proxy for Burmese

** Spillover is where one individual may see the same or a different version of the advertisement from a different organisation

Our Findings

Overview of user sample

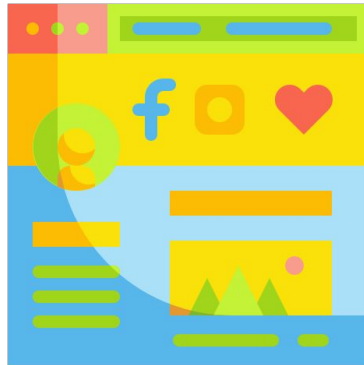
Our advertisements reached approximately 45,359 users



Our sample consists of Facebook users who are:

- women in Singapore
- aged between 18-50 years old
- reported one of the following languages as their primary language: Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Burmese*, Hindi, Tamil

The number of users who saw each version of the advertisement message was approximately equal i.e. ~15,000 per message. Across languages, the Indonesian group is the largest of the user pool (36.9%), followed by Tagalog (32.6%), Burmese (11.9%), Tamil (9.5%), and Hindi (9.1%).



A user may see the same advertisement multiple times during the trial period. However, they are only measured once based on whether they engaged at any point.

** As Facebook does not support using Burmese, we selected users who 'liked' pages related to Myanmar as a proxy for Burmese*

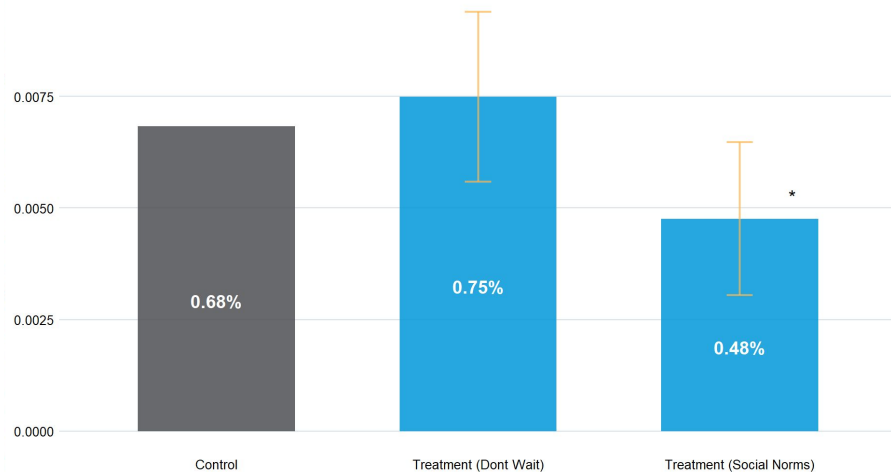
Did more MDWs send a Facebook message after seeing the revised advertisements?

Main Research Question 1

Users were less likely to send a Facebook message in response to the Social Norms advertisement



% of people who sent a message to HOME/FAST after seeing the advertisement, by treatment



Users who saw the 'Social Norms' Facebook advertisement were **significantly less likely to send a Facebook message** to HOME or FAST (0.48% sent a message) as compared to our 'Control' group (0.68% sent a message).

'Don't Wait' advertisement did not change users' likelihood of sending a message compared to the control.

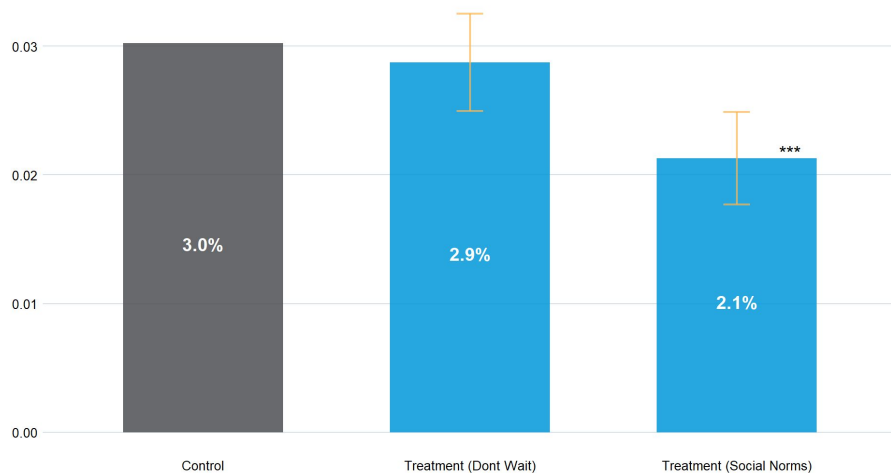
Did more MDWs click on the revised Facebook advertisements?

Main Research Question 2

Users were less likely to click on Social Norms advertisement



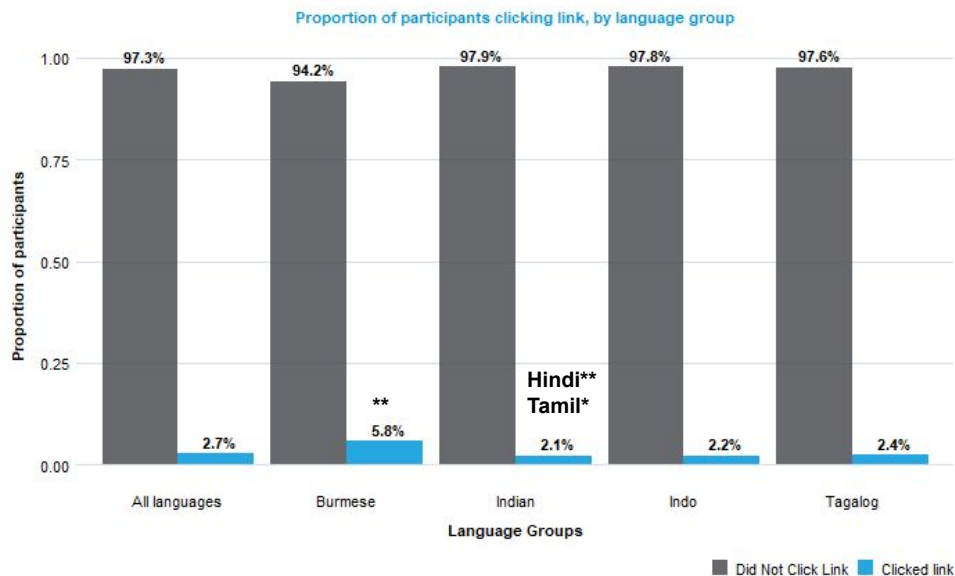
% of people who clicked after seeing the advertisement, by treatment



Users who saw the 'Social Norms' Facebook advertisement were **significantly less likely to click on the advertisement** as compared to our 'Control' group.

'Don't Wait' advertisement did not change users' likelihood of clicking the advertisement compared to the control.

Click rates differed by language groups



** significant at $p < 0.01$

* significant at $p < 0.05$

Users shown the Burmese advertisement were 3.6% more likely to click on the advertisement compared to those shown the Indo advertisement*.

In contrast, users shown the Hindi and Tamil (Indian) advertisement were 0.6% and 0.5% less likely to click on the advertisement compared to those shown the Indo advertisement respectively.

These results suggest that the targeting method chosen for the Burmese group remained effective in reaching out to MDWs despite being different from other groups. On the other hand, targeting Hindi and Tamil users on Facebook was not as effective in targeting MDW users.

**The Bahasa Indo group is used as the control comparison group as it is the language group with the largest sample size.*

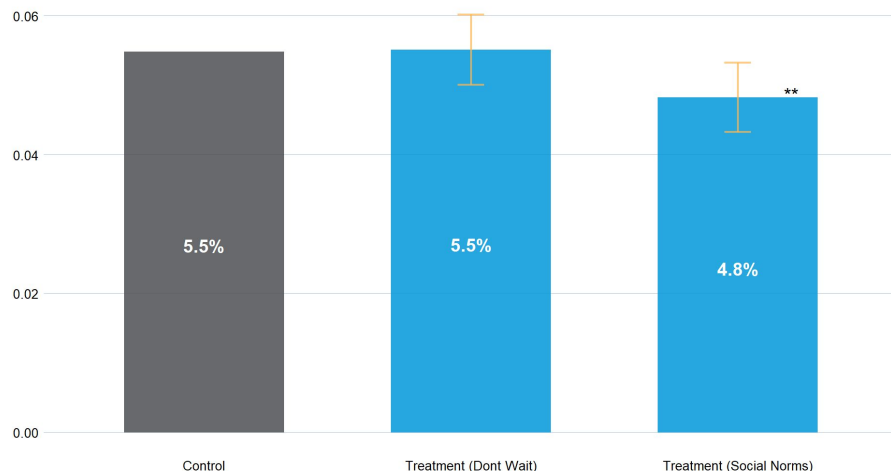
Did more MDWs 'react' to the revised Facebook advertisements?

Exploratory Question

Users were less likely 'react' to the Social Norms advertisement



% people who reacted after seeing the advertisement, by treatment



Users who saw the 'Social Norms' Facebook advertisement were **significantly less likely to react on the advertisement** (i.e. respond with a 'reaction') as compared to our 'Control' group.

'Don't Wait' advertisement did not change users' likelihood of reacting to the advertisement compared to the control.

Responses across languages were mixed. Compared to users shown the Indo advertisement, those who were shown Burmese and Tagalog advertisements were more likely to react to it (7.5% and 3.5% more likely), while those shown the Tamil and Hindi advertisements were less likely to do so (3.0% and 2.2% less likely).

Did more MDWs share the revised Facebook advertisements?

Exploratory Question

Users were equally likely to share Control, Don't Wait and Social Norms advertisements

	Control	Don't Wait	Social Norms
Shared	1.0% (154)	1.2% (188)	0.7% (104)
Did not share	99.0% (14569)	98.8% (15383)	99.3% (14927)

We found that users were equally likely to share 'Control', 'Don't Wait', and 'Social Norms' advertisements.

The likelihood of users sharing any our advertisements is relatively low (at ~1.0% of all users who had been exposed to the same advertisement). This is consistent with the historical base rate of shares on Facebook.



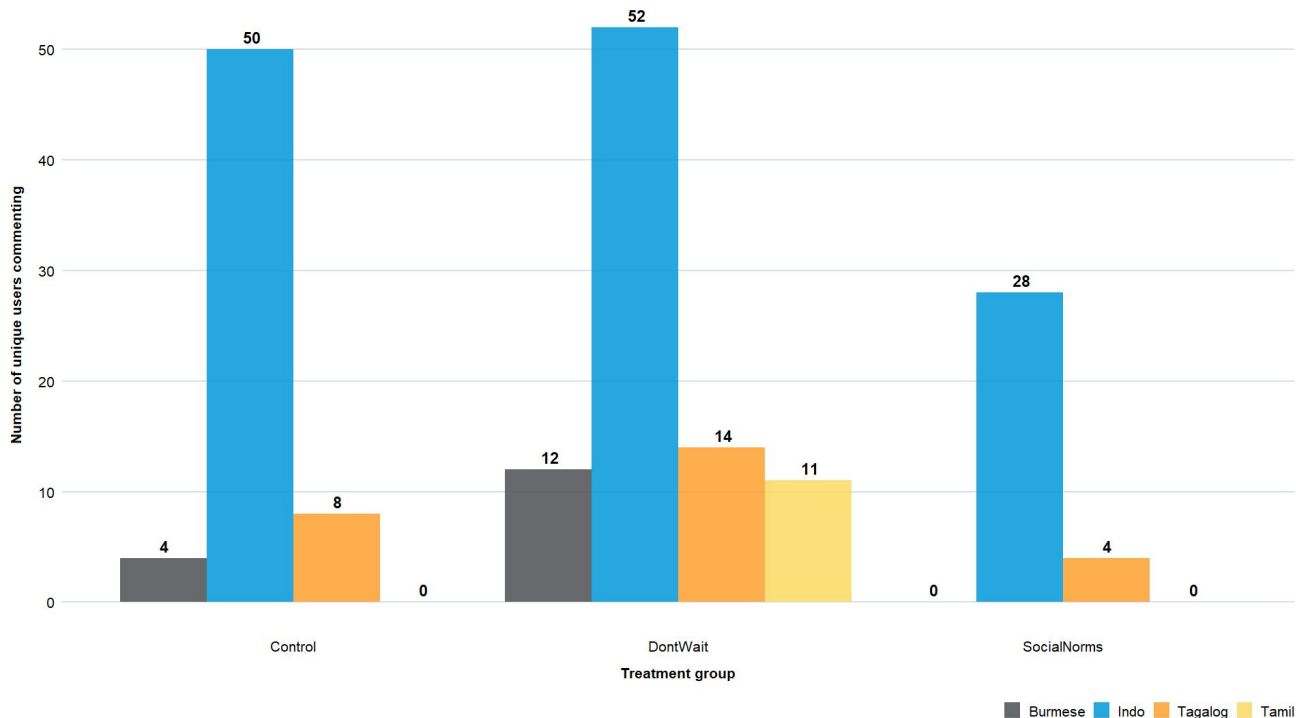
Do the revised advertisements change the way users comment on the advertisement?

Exploratory Question

‘Don’t wait’ ads saw the most comments by unique users...



Number of unique users commenting, per arm per language group

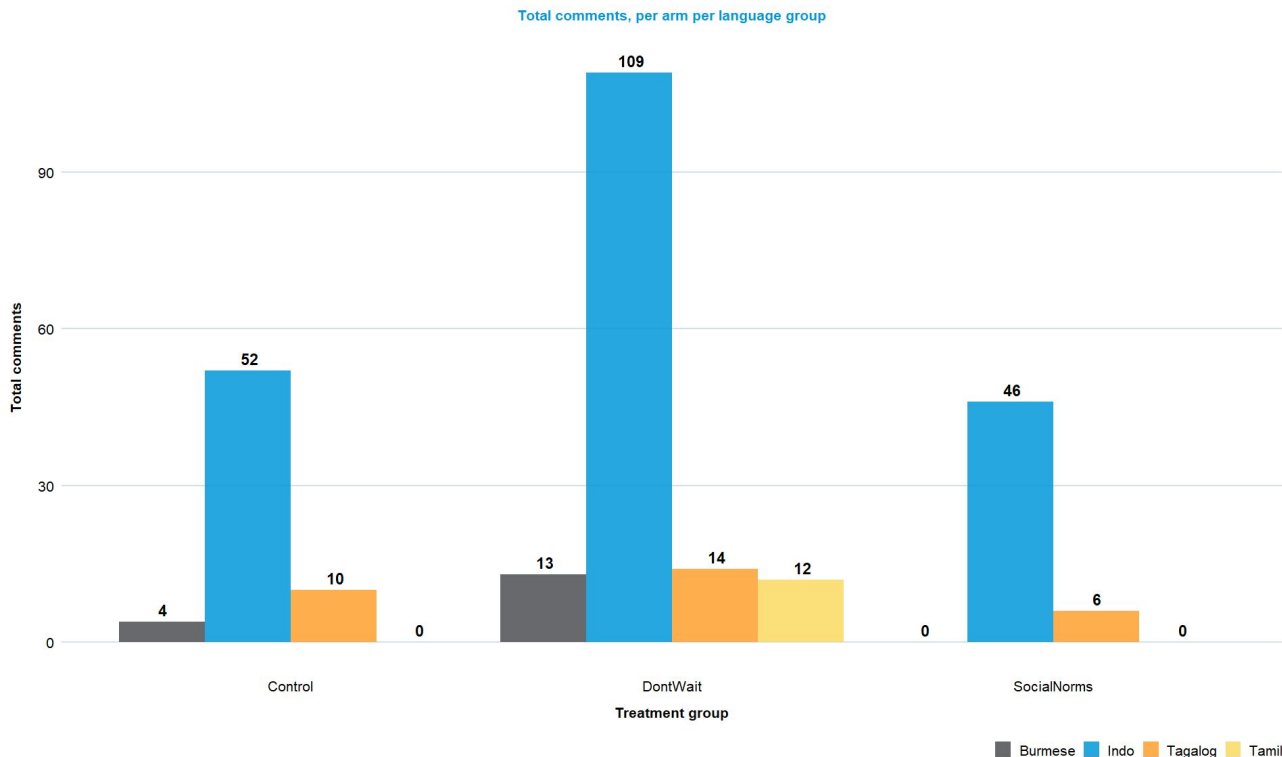


This graph shows the number of comments left by **unique users**.

Bahasa Indo users appeared to be the most active commenters of all user groups. In addition, most comments were left on ‘Dont Wait’ advertisements, while ‘Social Norms’ advertisements had the fewest comments.



... with Indo users also interacting with each other more in 'Don't Wait' and 'Social Norms' advertisements



This graph shows the **total number of comments** left by all users.

For the Bahasa Indo group, the 'Don't Wait' and 'Social Norms' advertisements appeared to be more more effective than the 'Control' advertisement in encouraging users to interact with each other. Bahasa Indo users commented on the treatment advertisements more than once - users were seen replying or reacting to each others comments.

Users interacted by replying to each other's questions and tagging their friends, mostly on Indo advertisements



Most of the comments were left on Bahasa Indo advertisements, with very few comments left on advertisements in other languages.

- Users who left comments on the 'Don't Wait' and 'Social Norms' advertisements in Bahasa Indo **asked for help and advice, replied to others seeking help, or shared the information with their friends by tagging them.** This was not observed from:
 - users who commented on 'Control' advertisements
 - users who viewed advertisements in other languages, apart from a few asking for help in the comments
- Across all language groups, most comments left by those seeking help related to concerns about terminating employment by transferring employers / flying home e.g. employer refusing to sign release letter, or negotiation of salary increases. The type of comments did not differ between 'Social Norms' and 'Don't Wait' advertisements.

"I asked for an increase in salary, but my employer didn't want to increase my salary"

"I don't want to extend the contract, I want to transfer to change agencies and employers."

"The money for the ticket has not been returned to me for 4 years."



Three types of comments left on Facebook advertisements

<p>Some took to the comments section to vent their frustrations.</p>	<div data-bbox="637 292 1078 467"><p><i>"I'm sleeping on the floor... (then do maids have to be like robots, can't greet people when meeting people)"</i></p></div> <div data-bbox="1097 292 1391 467"><p><i>"...until now I don't even have a signature on the renewal contract"</i></p></div> <div data-bbox="1410 292 1845 467"><p><i>"@Username we are the same Ms.. and I have to continue the contract again with a very small salary increase of only \$25"</i></p></div>
<p>Users who replied to other users' comments advised others to communicate their issue with their employers / MOM / agency or shared their own experiences.</p>	<div data-bbox="637 565 931 740"><p><i>"Why don't you talk to your employer or agency or MOM"</i></p></div> <div data-bbox="962 565 1317 740"><p><i>"I got 1,300, that's 1 month salary bonus money + ticket money for not going home"</i></p></div> <div data-bbox="1342 565 1835 740"><p><i>"If CDE no response call embassy sis. Don't let yourself upset because we only helper... I have also sent a complaint to the Ministry about this"</i></p></div>
<p>Users who saw 'Control' advertisements mostly left "thank you" messages and stickers.</p>	<div data-bbox="738 882 1300 975"><p><i>"This very helpful....thank you"</i></p></div> <div data-bbox="1365 882 1750 975"><p><i>"[Thumbs up sticker]"</i></p></div>



In summary...

- Users were less likely to contact HOME/FAST for help via Facebook, or engage with the advertisement, if they saw the 'Social Norms' advertisement
- More users sought help or interacted with each other in the comments section under 'Don't Wait' and 'Social Norms' advertisements as compared to 'Control'. Most of these comments were left by Bahasa Indo users.



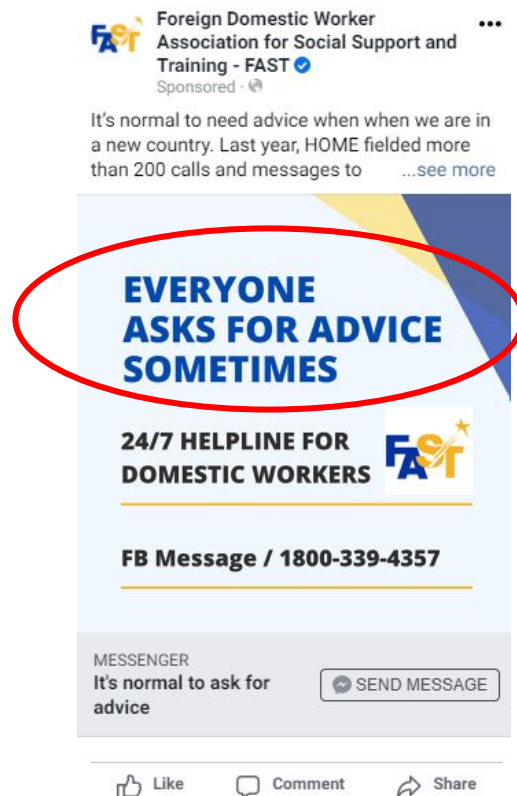


What might explain the negative response to the Social Norms advertisement?

1. Phrasing of key message was not relatable, leading to disengagement and inaction



- Users may have been disengaged as they were **uncertain of why they needed to ask for advice**
 - The key message did not highlight that seeking advice was an essential step in getting help for their problems. Although the text in the post itself highlighted the types of problems people could get advice for, this required one to take the extra step of clicking into the message and was not as immediately obvious to users compared to the main poster.
 - In addition, while social norms encourage behaviours, the act of asking for advice itself may not be a barrier that is causing MDWs to not seek help.

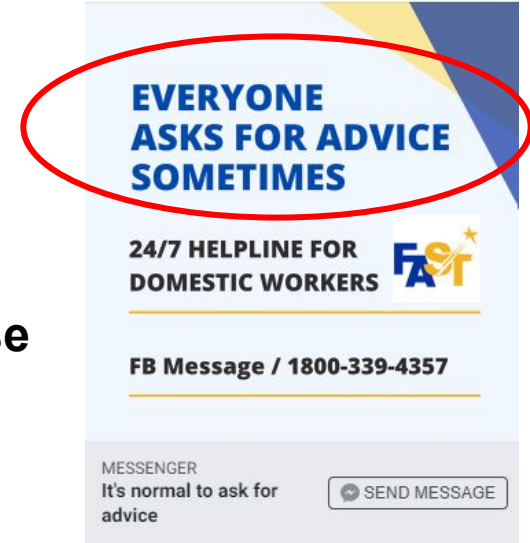


1. Phrasing of key message was not relatable, leading to disengagement and inaction (Cont'd)




- People's behaviours are only motivated and influenced by others if they **identify with the social group**¹
 - Users may not identify with “everyone” in the key message, especially if they do not identify with the act of asking for advice, and therefore dissociate themselves from it as they believe the advertisement does not apply to them
- The use of the word “*sometimes*” may **lack a sense of urgency** and does not point to the need to take action at the point of seeing the advertisement

 Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training - FAST 
Sponsored · 
It's normal to need advice when when we are in a new country. Last year, HOME fielded more than 200 calls and messages to ...see more



**EVERYONE
ASKS FOR ADVICE
SOMETIMES**

**24/7 HELPLINE FOR
DOMESTIC WORKERS** 

FB Message / 1800-339-4357


MESSANGER
It's normal to ask for advice 

¹Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 224-237.

2. 'Social Norms' advertisement highlights prevalence of using call helpline




- Could users have been directed to call the helpline instead of engaging HOME/FAST via the Facebook advertisement?
 - The 'Social Norms' advertisement brought attention to the number of calls received by HOME/FAST, which may have highlighted that others tend to reach out by calling the number and that HOME / FAST is responsive to calls.
 - This may have encouraged users to call the helpline rather than engage with the organisations via Facebook, especially if users had problems which require more urgent help. Indeed, the number of calls to HOME increased during the trial period (although we do not know if these callers had seen the 'Social Norms' advertisement).

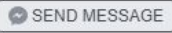
Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training - FAST  Sponsored · 

It's normal to need advice when when we are in a new country. Last year HOME fielded more than 200 calls and messages to ...see more

EVERYONE ASKS FOR ADVICE SOMETIMES

24/7 HELPLINE FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS 

FB Message / 1800-339-4357

MESSEGER
It's normal to ask for advice 



Limitations

Effect of messages after translation may be different from the original English version



- In the current trial, it is not clear if the messages in all languages apart from English carried the same meaning as their English counterpart and whether they exerted the effect intended
 - For example, the word “advice” might be interpreted on varying levels of severity in other languages compared to the English version, depending on how it has been translated
 - This might be an issue if differences in translation might have caused users who should reach out to not do so, especially if it is ambiguous what type of “advice” users can expect.

Consider seeking detailed feedback via pilots on future translations for meaning and interpretation in all languages to ensure that the translated advertisement conveys the intended message.

Prototyping feedback process could have been improved overall



- Due to the pandemic, we were unable to hold the prototyping session in person and had to rely on NGOs to gather feedback from volunteers before passing it along to us. It is unclear if social influence affected the process, especially if volunteers discussed what they thought before responding.
- Due to ordering effects during prototyping, the sequence of prototypes shown might have influenced the ratings of prototype messages as raters may have paid more attention to the first or last few prototypes in the list due to ease of recall. There remains a possibility that shortlisted messages may not have been the most effective amongst the prototypes.

Future piloting to be done in-person and randomised across all raters to prevent serial-position effect (primacy and recency effect)

Facebook may not be the best communication channel to reach out to Indian MDWs



- Hindi and Tamil advertisements received less click-through and engagement via comments compared to the other language groups, an indication that Facebook may not be an effective channel in reaching out to the Indian MDW population.
- It is also possible that the advertisement reached out to fewer Indian MDWs compared to MDWs of other nationalities, due to their smaller population in Singapore and/ or the larger number of non-MDW Facebook users who were “wrongly” captured by the targeting method of using Facebook in Hindi/ Tamil

Either way, a targeted approach may be required to reach out to the Indian MDW population, such as pushing out information in communication channels that they use more often, or for support staff to reach out proactively to this group.

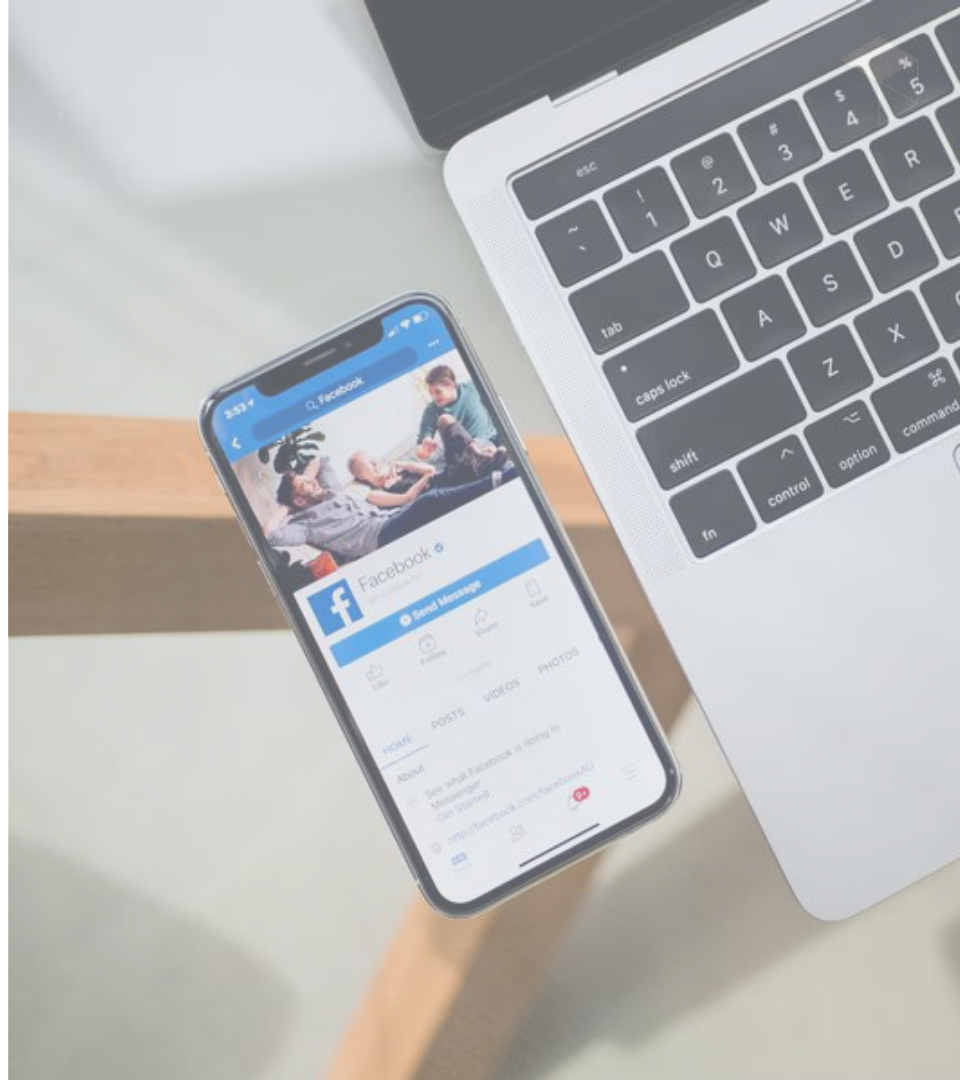
Our Recommendations

Insights from findings

Reconsider use of ‘Social Norms’ messaging

Our trial showed that the use of the key message, “*Everyone asks for advice sometimes*”, contributed to users being less likely to click on or react to the advertisement, and to send a facebook message to HOME/FAST.

Due to its negative impact, **we do not recommend that advertisements normalise help-seeking behaviour** until the phrasing is reviewed and tested again, or combined with another effective message.



Use Facebook especially with Indonesian and Burmese MDWs...

The advertisements in Bahasa Indonesian garnered the most comments in our trial, where we saw users engaging with each other's questions or issues.

Facebook appears to be effective in creating a sense of support and community among the Indonesian audience and should continue to be used as a key communication channel in helping the Indonesian MDW community build and obtain social support.

On the other hand, the Burmese group was more likely to click on the advertisement compared with other language groups. In other words, **Facebook can be used with Burmese MDWs**, especially if we are looking to push out information on help and sources of help.



... but not with Indian MDWs

However, Hindi and Tamil advertisements received less click-through on the advertisement and engagement via comments compared to the other language groups.

Given these findings, Facebook may not be an effective channel in reaching out to Indian MDWs, even if the lack of engagement may be due to the small population of Indian MDWs in Singapore. If resources are available, **we recommend HOME/FAST to proactively check in on this group**, and to push information out via communication channels that they will use or engage with more frequently.



Monitor/ respond to comments on advertisements where users are asking for help

Users may choose to ask for advice / help by leaving comments instead of messaging HOME/ FAST. In our trial, comments under the “Don’t Wait” advertisements garnered the most comments.

In addition to Facebook Messenger, response teams can consider monitoring and replying to comments on advertisements, as this can increase the visibility of formal advice provided to many people at once, even to those who have the same problems but do not ask for advice directly.

We recommend using the “Don’t Wait” messaging to do so as we found more users leaving comments on these advertisements.





Further research / considerations

Apart from the recommendations informed by our trial findings, we also have additional considerations to highlight on the use of messaging to encourage help-seeking as well as further research which can be explored by HOME/ FAST:

1. **Make use of various online communication channels.** Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities to utilise help channels via walk-ins have greatly reduced as people continue to stay connected online. NGOs should place more focus on communicating via online channels, especially the ones that MDWs use most often. Where Facebook is not the best channel, we can consider using other online platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, or TikTok.





Further research / considerations (*Cont'd*)

2. **Examine if there were differences in the types of messages sent by users in response to different advertisement messages.** In the current trial, we did not look at the types of messages received across treatment interventions. If we are particularly interested in encouraging more MDWs to seek help for certain problems, we recommend looking into the types of messages to see if there are differences in the nature of message content received across treatment arms. For example, we might see MDWs sending messages on smaller problems in the “Don’t Wait” arm compared to other messaging types with its emphasis on having a sense of urgency and seeking help early.
3. **Trial other messages and investigate effectiveness for different groups.** As MDWs have differing needs where some groups of MDWs face particular barriers or challenges more than other groups, the effectiveness of messaging may vary. HOME/ FAST can consider trialling again on Facebook or other online platforms to trial other messaging, and assess how well they work for certain groups.

Thank you

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