

# UNBREAKABLE:

## Designing for Trustworthiness in Private Messaging

October 2022



Dalberg

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# Executive Summary

## INTRODUCTION

**Private messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram have become an integral part of our day-to-day lives and yet much of what is shared remains private when compared with open forums on the internet.**

We know that these private messaging platforms have a profound impact on our digital behavior and emotional well-being, yet it is hard to step back and see the forest for the trees given their ubiquitous nature. While these platforms play an essential role in securing our privacy, they also expose users to a range of risks that undermine their sense of security and trust. This undermining of trust can affect their perceptions of peer platform users, corporations and even governments. We each have our own personal and evolving opinions about how private messaging platforms can be made more trustworthy based on our lived experience, whether through better design choices, more comprehensible policies or more transparent governance models.



*"I no longer go by my old name, just because the internet is a place. You can't search me by my documented name, it's a decision I made long ago. Also weary about sharing photos and geotagging, I no longer post often as I used to. I try to keep my face hidden to strangers and mostly identifiable to family."*



*"I follow up with a phone conversation and see how true it is or go online to verify that story before I choose to re-broadcast it. But in some cases, many people don't verify, they just repost and repost and it causes panic and in a few hours they find out it's fake."*



*"Sometimes, especially when counseling, the information shared (with me) is very sensitive. For instance, if you are doing counseling and you (message someone that they) should separate from their husband, this (message) is sensitive and you need security."*

## FINDINGS

**Since these markets are distinct and individual journeys within private messaging platforms are personal, there is always a risk of generalization when attempting to summarize this sort of user experience research. Nonetheless, there are some common patterns that seem to transcend these differences:**

**A// We found that people across very different markets have become incredibly sophisticated in how they understand and navigate the intricacies of these platforms.**

Across geographies, most users have built up fairly complex ways of engaging and adapting to risks and concerns as they perceive them (for ex: switching into airplane mode so that other users won't be able to tell if they have read their messages). This finding in particular calls into question the assumption that people are not likely to adjust their preferences even if these options were made more easily accessible. Even with insufficient features, people are finding a myriad of workarounds to address gaps and minimize shortcomings.

**B// Heightened perception of risk generally arises in response to specific situations, not all of which can be attributed entirely to the platform providers themselves.**

The risks that are most top of mind vary by market (e.g., in Nigeria, it was fraud. In the US, it was corporate surveillance). While private messaging platforms are responsible for some of the vulnerabilities and design gaps which make the risks more likely to materialize into harm, some factors leading to risks – for instance, cultural norms or existence of bad actors – are not fully preventable by messaging service providers. Still, because platform design and governance can enable and exacerbate these harms, platform providers have a responsibility

to both understand them and take steps to mitigate them. Given these complexities, users generally do not have a full understanding of where to direct or who to attribute their concerns to. Often, they take on a sense of responsibility for themselves ("I should have known better") so their response choices bear little connection to the risk itself, and tend to fade over time. Regardless, perceptions of trust in messaging platforms change rapidly and irreversibly in response to these acute situations.

Over the course of ten weeks, our team engaged a total of 185 diverse participants from Colombia, Nigeria and the US. While we have drawn our own conclusions in this report, **we hope that this research can serve as a resource to many different stakeholders as they consider ways that the design of these platforms can be improved, including:**

**1 // Platform owners and providers:** To negotiate competing product priorities and adjust product planning to address user concerns and diminishing perceptions of trust within messaging experiences.

**2 // Policymakers:** To better assess the risks that matter to residents and citizens related to security, democracy, and information integrity, understand and prioritize the harms that occur on private messaging platforms, and inform meaningful policy solutions.

**3 // Advocacy, Civil society:** To buffer advocacy efforts with data points and anecdotal evidence of the harms a diverse set of global users experience on private messaging platforms and examples of concrete changes that could improve trustworthiness.

**4 // Researchers:** To equip the trust and safety research field with actionable user-centered data, and offer a blueprint for mixed methods methodologies focused on user experiences of private messaging platforms. Researchers have the opportunity to replicate this approach in other markets and with other communities to further quantify these harms.

**5 // UX designers:** To augment their own user research and data analytics, and influence product priorities in line with user trustworthiness.

**6 // Platform value chain players & governments offering services on private messaging platforms:** To assess the potential impact of user concerns on the trustworthiness of services they offer on private messaging platforms. User perceptions of private messaging platform trustworthiness will shape their trust in services offered by governments and other value chain players on private messaging platforms, as we have seen during the pandemic. A lack of trust will likely lead to less engagement with both the messaging platforms and corresponding services offered on top.

to both understand them and take steps to mitigate them. Given these complexities, users generally do not have a full understanding of where to direct or who to attribute their concerns to. Often, they take on a sense of responsibility for themselves ("I should have known better") so their response choices bear little connection to the risk itself, and tend to fade over time. Regardless, perceptions of trust in messaging platforms change rapidly and irreversibly in response to these acute situations.

**C// Users also face a huge gap in terms of recourse and redress, which is a critical element of trustworthiness.**

The platforms themselves do not offer many clear affordances for seeking redress, particularly affordances that do not come with some reciprocal social costs (flagging another person's bad behavior or misinformation often leaves users more vulnerable to harassment).

**D// Most users do not feel that they have real choice and can "venue-shop" based on personal preferences.**

Even those with heightened awareness (human rights activists, for example) or high levels of technical knowledge find it practically challenging to avoid defaulting to the most common and pervasive platforms (WhatsApp in most cases). Because of this, choice alone cannot be held up as the silver bullet for ensuring better practices in the messaging platform market. While it's critical that new entrants prioritize trustworthy and safe platform design, existing platforms also need to take user concerns seriously and commit to enhancing trustworthiness with, inter alia, their design choices.

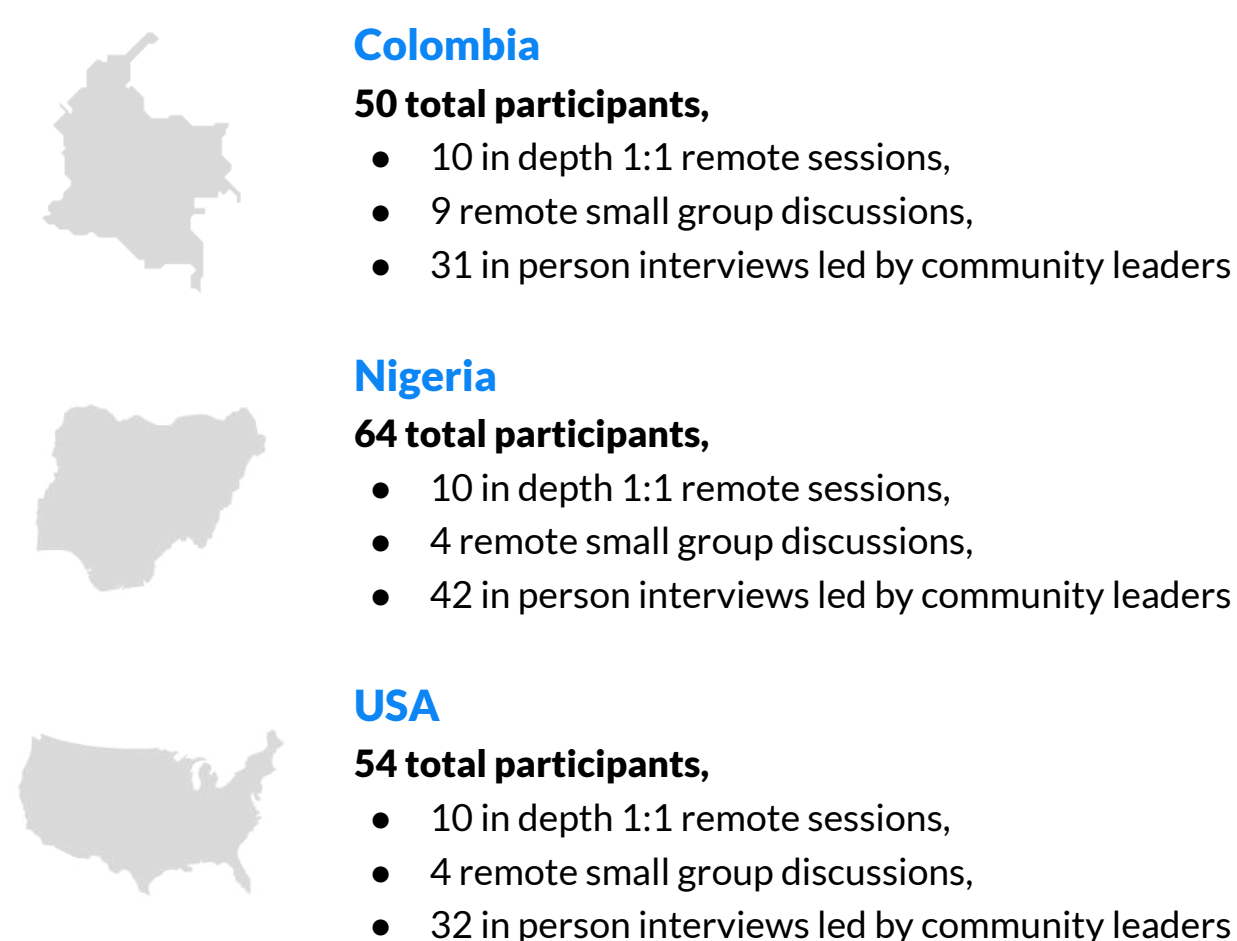
## APPROACH

The user experience of platforms like WhatsApp have become second nature to users in Colombia, Nigeria and the US. The design choices of platform providers are something users work around every day, sometimes unaware of how they shape both their personal behavior and that of others, as well as their very expectations of what private messaging platforms can and should be. **Human-Centered Design (HCD) approaches help us to make apparent dynamics and behaviors that are latent or under the surface.**

For this reason, it was critical that we take a participatory, Human-Centered Design (HCD) approach to pierce this veil and bring forward the voices and cross-cutting concerns of private messaging platform users. What risks are they most aware of when using messaging platforms? Where and how do these risks show up in their day-to-day behavior? Who do they hold responsible, and do they feel that they have any opportunity for recourse or redress? What choices and tradeoffs are they comfortable making to safeguard their data privacy and security and where do they feel powerless?

To gain insight into these questions, our team engaged a total of 185 participants over the course of 10 weeks. We met with ecosystem experts from several countries in the context of co-creation workshops, and community leaders and platform users in 1-on-1 and small group discussions in Colombia, Nigeria and the US.

All sessions were conducted remotely due to COVID-19 except for the community-led sessions. A breakdown of our research is as follows:



## CONCLUSION

**There is much that private messaging platform providers can do differently if they choose to prioritize trustworthiness in platform design. User choice is not a sufficient excuse to justify the current shortcomings. Our research suggested that few users feel that they have real choice in the market despite the availability of multiple private messaging platforms.**

Pointing to the retention and engagement of users as a sign that they are satisfied with current interaction models and tradeoffs does not ring true. We heard consistently that the tradeoffs of leaving a dominant environment, – WhatsApp in most cases, – are incredibly daunting for all users, even the most security-conscious like human rights activists. Platform providers have a long way to go in bettering the design of their services, (though we are seeing discrete instances of intentional trustworthy design with recent changes by WhatsApp that allow users to leave group chats without alerting others, for example). We would also encourage private messaging service providers to be transparent in how they engage users in regular cycles of feedback using the sort of methods we employed for our research study – not just analyze user data behind closed walls.

**The dialogue around trustworthiness has remained at a theoretical level for too long.** We hope these findings will help those advocating for change (whether policymakers, researchers or activists) point to real and concrete design choices that can increase

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In such opaque and highly personal environments, how might we better understand opportunities to intervene to address a set of common concerns? What would a better experience look like? To fill in that picture, this report breaks down what we heard into the following areas of analysis:

→ **EXPERIENCES:** It is critical to first contextualize these findings within a holistic view of people's everyday experiences and patterns of behavior on private messaging platforms. This report shares three sets of representative experiences from each market we looked at as a way of highlighting commonalities and differences from user perspectives.

→ **HARMS:** We identified the key risks leading to various harms that are most important to users across the three markets and are likely to have the biggest impact on their sense of trustworthiness. Any future design improvements should start by prioritizing the risks that are most important to the users themselves.

→ **GAPS:** The lack of mental models (other than text messaging) for how private messaging platforms work creates many gaps for users as they navigate risks and experiences of harm. Users lack supporting resources to evaluate and attribute their growing sense of concern. Who should they trust (their group admin? WhatsApp customer support?) when they encounter these gaps? In most cases the platforms provide few paths to recourse in the moment and little to no feedback to understand how their concerns might be resolved.

→ **DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES:** What can design really accomplish to minimize these risks, fill in these gaps and build trust once it is lost? Our research identified many pressing concerns regarding trustworthiness related to common elements of private messaging platform design, such as: group dynamics, misinformation and generalized anxiety relating to mental health. In each case, it is not hard to begin to see a path to provide users with better tools to manage risk and make informed choices – a number of which we illustrate with sample designs that were prototyped and tested with users to further inspire change. These designs are not prescriptive: they are meant to be representative of how a private messaging platform provider MIGHT address a specific gap or design opportunity. We recognize that any design changes are likely to come with tradeoffs and potentially impact business goals related to customer growth and engagement. **Some key areas where users responded most positively to potential design improvements include:**

- **Securing and/or modifying account information**
- **Providing accessible & tailored security & privacy controls**
- **Providing support mechanisms & emergency controls**
- **Improving verification & permission mechanisms**
- **Improving administrative & management tools**

trustworthiness on private messaging platforms. We also hope this research offers stakeholders a provocation to consider more fundamental changes to the environments in which these platforms operate, whether it be business models or interoperability standards. In that sense, these recommendations are complementary to a number of related initiatives for fighting disinformation and dangerous speech on private messaging platforms – including research, technical partnerships, dialogue and convening with policymakers and technology leaders, and public advocacy – and should be seen as an integrated part of this broader effort.

**The most distinctive outputs of this study – concrete, user-informed design recommendations – are just a starting point.** To some, our design recommendations might seem incremental in the face of the scale and severity of user risks and concerns experienced on private messaging platforms. These recommendations do not point to a comprehensive end state which, if implemented, would satisfy all user needs and address all experiences of harm. Instead, the design recommendations in this report can provide a path towards beginning to address these harms if they are implemented within a user-centered and iterative process. They can help pave the way for a more trustworthy messaging future.

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# 01 About



# Project overview

**“ I no longer go by my old name, just because the internet is a s— place. you can't search me by my document name, it's a decision I made long ago. Also weary about sharing photos and geotagging, I no longer post often as I used to. I try to keep my face hidden to strangers and mostly identifiable to family.”**

In the digital realm, end-to-end private messaging plays an important role in upholding individual rights to privacy and free speech. Platforms like WhatsApp and Signal allow residents to communicate with each other without the fear of governments, advertisers, or even snooping family members listening in or moderating the content of their communication. But these digital environments are not without many harms that undermine end user trustworthiness. Given their widespread adoption, it is critical that platform providers prioritize design choices that strengthen, not undermine, trust. That sounds great in principle, but where should they turn for guidance?

***The goal of this report is to share design opportunities that address harms that exist on private messaging apps and matter the most to a globally diverse selection of individuals. These design opportunities aim to enhance individual experience to provide a safer and secure messaging environment.***

What is at stake? For participants, private messaging can deliver offensive and inappropriate content, it can channel disinformation and “fake news”, and it can be used by nefarious actors to defraud unsophisticated or unsuspecting individuals. For example, our research reveals the rampant cases of hacking and scamming in both Nigeria and Colombia leading participants to look for alternative options (e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> party apps) to protecting their accounts and verifying unknown contacts, even though these 3<sup>rd</sup> party apps compromise their privacy and security.

Platform providers may be tempted to view widespread adoption and high levels of engagement by individuals and groups as a reason to feel confident in current design choices. But our research participants are deeply concerned about their level of dependence on messaging services and their lack of control over the experiences within these messaging environments. Encryption alone does not confer a sense of safety and security, as it is poorly understood by almost everyone we spoke with. Participants are unsure of whom to trust – even scrutinizing the statements and reported behavior of senior executives like Mark Zuckerberg (Meta Platforms) or Pavel Durov (Telegram Messenger) as proxies for the relative integrity of WhatsApp or Telegram. It is only by investing in more effective and better-informed design choices that providers can help individuals and groups manage the risks inherent in these platforms; and work together to create chat environments that are safe, supportive and responsive to our changing needs.

This research looked to surface and test a preliminary set of design solutions that are likely to reduce the deleterious potential of private messaging platforms. As civil society organizations continue to push for more responsible technology, we hope our findings can be used by private messaging providers and other third-party players to build on the emerging ideas and test and implement potential solutions. While we do not expect our work to be the end-point in designing the right answer, we do hope it is an important step in that direction.

# 02 Country Insights



# Country insights



Through our in-depth one-on-one sessions and small group discussions with participants in Nigeria, Colombia and the United States, we identified three main user archetypes in each country to communicate important individual preferences, behaviors and practices when using private messaging apps. These archetypes are by no means comprehensive, however, they highlight some important factors which can be used as a foundation to explore relevant gaps in addressing individual needs.

Below is a breakdown of the archetypes for each of the three countries:

## Nigeria



### 1. Authoritative Admin

This archetype comprises administrators who are trusted by group members, seen as a point of authority and expected to resolve most group issues. This soft power, along with the ability on private messaging apps to add and remove participants; review and remove content; as well as make key decisions about group interactions and content that is allowed, empowers them to become dominant figures.



### 2. Citizen Journalist

This archetype comprises individuals who heavily depend on private messaging apps to share critical public/emergency information with others and to highlight important events that are unfolding and may not be available on mainstream media channels.



### 3. Low Tech Influencers

This archetype comprises traditional influencers (e.g., religious/community leaders) who typically rely on physical interactions with followers but are now moving their engagements/interactions to digital platforms for ease and wider reach.

## United States



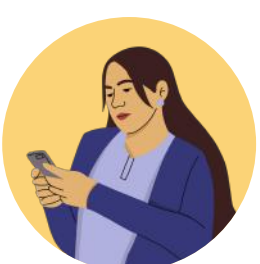
### 1. Advantaged Activist

This archetype comprises individuals who use private messaging apps for social and political activism. This group tends to have access to important support structures for information, and safer privacy and security practices, as well as the availability of different private messaging app options for more safer and private communications.



### 2. Globe Trotter

This archetype comprises individuals who conduct frequent international communications across multiple private messaging platforms (e.g., frequent travelers, international students).



### 3. Ceremonial Admin

This archetype comprises individuals who are admins in groups of larger than 100. They are viewed as regular members by other group participants and usually not expected to moderate interactions or make key group decisions (e.g., removal and reviewing of content).

## Colombia



### 1. Concerned Activist

This archetype comprises activists in Colombia who have limited alternatives to dominant private messaging apps, and face increasing risks due to their activism and limited safety options (e.g., legal protection, effective safety practices) to leverage in order to counter growing risks (e.g., surveillance, hacking etc).



### 2. At Risk Adolescent

This archetype comprises individuals who are below legal adult age or who have recently become adults. This group faces particular challenges due to their susceptibility, and limited awareness/knowledge of risks as well as limited safety options to mitigate these risks.

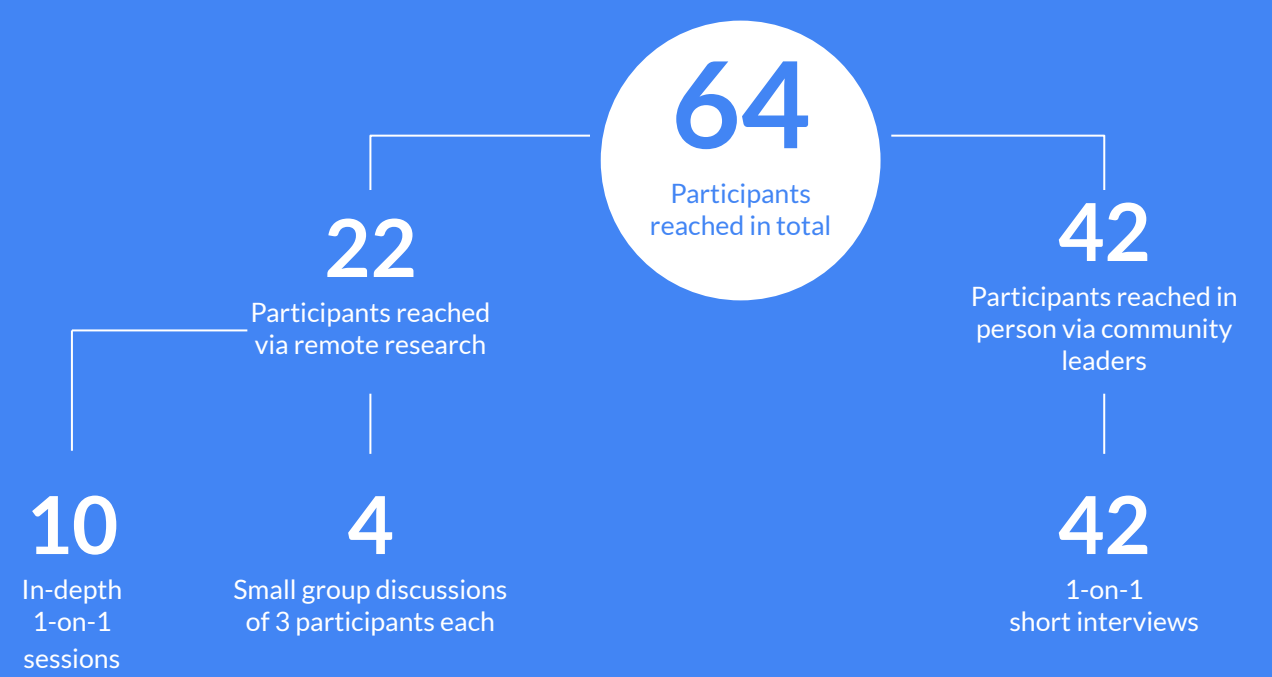


### 3. Low Tech Entrepreneur

This archetype comprises entrepreneurs (e.g., transport service, plumbing) who have started to significantly leverage private messaging apps for communications and operations but have limited know-how of how to effectively use private messaging platforms to safeguard their businesses from hacking while maximizing communications.



# Nigeria



## The Nigerian Context

Nigeria has a population of 216 million<sup>1</sup> of which about 51% access the internet through mobile devices, as of the beginning of 2022.<sup>2</sup> It is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse country with strong collective bonds. This general social context manifested in a stronger short and long-term commitment to membership within 'groups' at various levels of society<sup>3</sup> relative to the other two countries studied, and as reported by our research participants. These foundational values and beliefs directly influence the approach, usage and mental models of the majority of the private messaging app users in Nigeria.

Currently, the private messaging market in Nigeria is dominated by WhatsApp, with a 91.9% penetration as of mid 2021 among private messaging platform users.<sup>2</sup> Our research suggests that the majority of private messaging communications tend to happen in group spaces (compared to P2P) with members entrusting group admins with a great deal of authority to manage and make important decisions in the best interest of the group.

## Adoption and usage of messaging apps in Nigeria

WhatsApp is the most common private messaging platform in Nigeria. It is especially popular for a range of individuals, such as community workers, parents of international students, religious leaders and young adults. Adoption of WhatsApp in Nigeria is driven by its popularity among individuals' social circles as well as the low cost of communication due to affordable mobile data, compared to regular calls and SMS, for both business and personal use. Our research also suggests that the adoption and use of Telegram is on the rise, especially with tech enthusiasts, and for use by groups of 300+ members.

Private messaging in Nigeria is commonly used for:

- In-country and cross-border communications
- Business/work communications tool
- Marketing and outreach
- Reporting of emergencies/breaking news, especially for communities living in conflict regions
- Social political organizing
- Entertainment
- Training and educational content
- Socializing and entertainment via status and story updates

### RELATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

N: Nigeria C: Colombia U: USA

#### Private Messaging App Market

Monopolistic N C U Oligopolistic

#### Values Driving User Decision-Making

Individualist U N C Collectivist

#### Decision-Making in Groups

Distributed Power U C N Hierarchical Power

## Perceptions and concerns about privacy and security

Due to widespread cases of hacking of accounts and increases in emergency scams, participants in Nigeria were acutely worried about their security. They reported that they were less worried about their privacy with respect to surveillance and data mining, whether by governments or corporations. Although, some individuals were also strongly concerned about other factors that might infringe on their privacy including: spamming, exposure to graphic/offensive content, and misinformation.

Most participants expressed gratitude for the benefits that private messaging apps (WhatsApp mainly) brought (e.g., connecting with family that's far away or in conflict zones, promoting work). Still, the following three concerns were commonly mentioned by the participants we spoke to:

- Hacking and scamming related to their accounts (e.g., cloning of private messaging apps account)
- Spamming or exposure to offensive/ graphic content (e.g., violence, pornography)
- Quick circulation of erroneous or deceiving information (e.g., false emergency reports on WhatsApp stories)

## Representative archetypes in Nigeria

The participants we interviewed in Nigeria exhibited some overall commonalities regarding their mental models, usage behaviors and choice of private messaging platform. This was likely influenced by cultural and societal values and beliefs. But we also observed meaningful differences based on personal experience. We selected three archetypes in Nigeria, to represent the different behavioral and social influencing factors to the adoption and usage of private messaging platforms which emerged from our research.



### Authoritative Admin

This archetype comprises administrators who are trusted by group members, seen as a point of authority and expected to resolve most group issues. This soft power, along with the ability on private messaging apps to add and remove participants; review and remove content; as well as make key decisions about group interactions and content that is allowed, empowers them to become dominant figures.



### Citizen Journalist

This archetype comprises individuals who heavily depend on private messaging apps to share critical public/emergency information with others and to highlight important events that are unfolding and may not be available on mainstream media channels.



### Low Tech Influencers

This archetype comprises traditional influencers (e.g., religious/community leaders) who typically rely on physical interactions with followers but are now moving their engagements/interactions to digital platforms for ease and wider reach.

# Authoritative Admin

## Meet Blessing

Blessing is passionate about educating and empowering youth. She believes technology has the potential to unlock opportunities for young people. However, she is concerned about the growing threats and risks in the digital space in Nigeria.



## Blessing's story

Blessing is a 34-year-old female photojournalist and educator. She lives in Abuja, Nigeria, where she runs a foundation that is primarily focused on education and social impact among youth and children. She uses WhatsApp, Telegram, Discord and Zoom to communicate, conduct training sessions as well as community outreach. Blessing is also the admin of several groups on private messaging platforms. As an admin she is seen as a point of authority and is expected by group members to resolve disputes and address misbehavior and serve the best interests of the group.

“ *One of the main things I'm interested in is education, especially for children in underserved communities. I take pictures to tell their stories. [through public spaces on private messaging apps, e.g., status/stories, groups]* ”

“ *During the lockdown, we used Discord a lot because the children had laptops and tablets. It helped disseminate the info we wanted them to know... [using discord], they could do their projects and they could send it back on files.* ”

Online interactions through private messaging has become a very important part of her day-to-day community engagement, especially with the significant limitation of in-person interactions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the high adoption of private messaging platforms by Nigerian youth. Her use of private messaging apps has evolved from pure communications, to running training sessions, organizing outreach programs and distributing program information such as photographs across several groups on different platforms. This has also brought significant challenges to her in managing these interactions across several groups and different messaging platforms.

### Challenges & concerns

Due to the increase in hacking of private messaging platforms and social media accounts in Nigeria, Blessing is concerned not only about her safety but also the safety and privacy of her students, especially in the group spaces on private messaging platforms. Personally, she has activated two-step authentication for her private messaging platforms accounts to prevent unauthorized access, although she admits that it's not 100% secure.

### Related Global Harms

- Vulnerability to targeted harassment for youth and young adults
- Vulnerability to hacking, scamming, blackmailing, extortion, fraud, and harassment
- Vulnerability to manipulation (misleading content, mis/disinformation) or exposure to offensive content

### ABOUT BLESSING

#### Conforming to groups

(e.g., thinking, practices)

MODERATE

#### Comfort with technology

(e.g., use of private messaging platforms)

HIGH

#### Privacy & security vulnerability

HIGH

#### Perceived exposure to risks

HIGH

### Needs

Blessing feels a lot of pressure as her role comes with a huge responsibility to manage group affairs and she is often expected to resolve contentious issues as well as taking action on members who misbehave in the group. She wishes for more streamlined options that would allow her to act on group issues (e.g., misbehavior, conflicts, suspicious links) and maintain a positive discourse in group spaces.

### Related Global Design Opportunities

- Improving administrative & management tools (e.g., verification of unknown hyperlinks, protection of copyrighted images, Group restriction options 'e.g., message forwarding & screenshots')
- Providing support mechanisms & emergency controls (e.g., new contact verification options)

# Citizen Journalist

## Meet Victor

Victor is a community leader who places the best interests of his community at the center of his work. He relies on private messaging apps to connect with community members and distribute critical information on an urgent basis. At the same time, he is also concerned that these private messaging platforms have become important communication tools for individuals who cause instability in his region.



## Victor's story

Victor is a 38-year-old development manager and community leader. He resides in northern Nigeria, where he works with religious and refugee organizations in remote areas in assisting locals in empowerment initiatives and emergency support interventions. He primarily uses WhatsApp alongside Facebook Messenger and sometimes Telegram to communicate and organize community activities.

**“ We use WhatsApp for meetings and [to] share documents: reports, pictures, videos, etc. As a result of insecurity (e.g., banditry and terrorism) which we have encountered in our region, [in order to increase reach] we try to ensure other forms of communication to engage.”**

**“ I follow up with a phone conversation and see how true it is or go online to verify that story before I choose to re-broadcast it. But in some cases, many people don't verify, they just repost and repost, and it causes panic, and in a few hours they find out it's fake.”**

Social media and private messaging platforms have become crucial communication channels for individuals in regions with significant unrest, like Northern Nigeria. Victor often lends his phone to community members who do not have WhatsApp-enabled phones to communicate with their loved ones in and outside the country. Victor, and other community members who have access to a private messaging app (e.g., WhatsApp), play a critical role in sharing emergency news (e.g., when there is a bandit attack) to warn others and mobilize emergency support. Victor prefers to use WhatsApp because it is used by many, offers more media sharing options (e.g., video, audio, image support), and costs less than regular calls/SMS due to low data costs.

### Challenges & concerns

Even though the benefits offered by private messaging apps outweigh the problems, Victor still feels that there are a few significant risks that impact his communications on private messaging platforms.

### Related Global Harms

- Vulnerability to manipulation (misleading content, mis/disinformation) or exposure to offensive content
- Vulnerability to hacking, scamming, blackmailing, extortion, fraud, and harassment

### ABOUT VICTOR

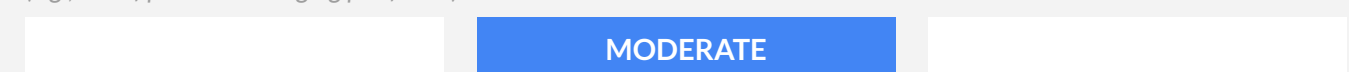
#### Conforming to groups

(e.g., thinking, practices)

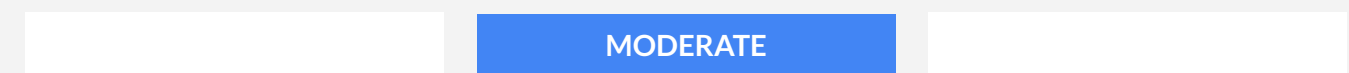


#### Comfort with technology

(e.g., use of private messaging platforms)



#### Privacy & security vulnerability



#### Perceived exposure to risks



### Needs

Victor believes that private messaging platforms have a significant role to play in connecting people, and circulating critical public information to the masses. Although, with all of these benefits, he is also worried about the use of these platforms to plan for violent attacks. He wishes that certain support tools could be introduced to better manage the information and accounts on private messaging apps.

### Related Design Opportunities

- Improving verification & permission mechanisms (e.g., notifications of offensive content before viewing)
- Providing user support mechanisms & emergency controls (e.g., Tagging and reporting of false information & content authentication tools)

# Low Tech Influencer

## Meet Emmanuel

Emmanuel is a trusted leader and a deeply religious man. He has a significant following in his hometown, where he offers his teachings and inspirations. He usually meets with his followers at a local church that he has helped set up, as well as other community gatherings and spaces.



## Emmanuel's story

Emmanuel is a 48-year-old church leader who lives in Lagos, Nigeria. He runs a local church and is also an inspirational speaker and life coach to his followers. He often meets his followers through scheduled public gatherings, however after he started using a private messaging app, he quickly realized the convenience it offered through individual and group communications, so he now heavily uses private messaging apps to engage his followers. He primarily uses WhatsApp to communicate, but he also connects on other platforms like Telegram in order to reach as many followers as possible, wherever they are most comfortable.

“For WhatsApp, I have a broadcast group where I put content on a daily basis. Inspirational content. People get to react directly.”

“Sometimes, especially when counseling, the information shared is very sensitive. For instance, if you are being counseled that you should separate from your husband, this is sensitive and you need security. [to prevent unauthorized access by a third-party]”

Private messaging platforms have become an important tool in his communication arsenal. These allow him to reach as many people as possible from the comfort of his home, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although, with the increase in different messaging platforms and the ever-changing features and risk factors, he is admittedly struggling to understand which platform best suits his need to engage with his followers in a safe, efficient and effective manner outside of in-person church gatherings.

### Challenges & concerns

Many of Emmanuel's interactions with his followers happen on social media and preferred private messaging apps. These interactions include marriage counseling, inspirational talks and the sharing of sensitive documents and information. Due to the nature of his interactions, he is primarily worried about the privacy of his communications and the security of his account.

### Related Global Harms

- Vulnerability to manipulation (misleading content, mis/disinformation) or exposure to offensive content
- Vulnerability to hacking, scamming, blackmailing, extortion, fraud, and harassment
- Vulnerability to digital surveillance and monitoring

### ABOUT EMMANUEL

#### Conforming to groups

(e.g., thinking, practices)

HIGH

#### Comfort with technology

(e.g., use of private messaging platforms)

LOW

#### Privacy & security vulnerability

HIGH

#### Perceived exposure to risks

MODERATE

### Needs

Even though Emmanuel has deep concerns about private messaging apps, especially with an increase in hacking of private messaging accounts, his low understanding of tech impacts his ability to troubleshoot and resolve critical account issues (e.g., blocking and recovery of hacked account) so that he might feel more secure in managing his fears. He would require very user-friendly solutions to help him to manage or mitigate these risks.

### Related Global Design Opportunities

- Providing accessible & tailored security & privacy controls (e.g., Security options to lock chats / conversations within the messaging app)
- Providing support mechanisms & emergency controls (e.g., Restrict screenshot & forwarding of messaging, Blocking and recovery of hacked accounts)

Thank you

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