

Testing Considerations FAQ

How quickly can I get the results of my test?

One week after the final interval of your brand's study, The Benchmarking Company (TBC) will deliver a final report of the results of your test.

How short can a test be, and how long?

Your test is customized to your needs. Tests can be as short as one day, measuring immediate results, or as long as 6 or more months, measuring long-term results.

How many panelists should I test with?

Our panels range in size from 35 to 1,000 people. Determining the right number of panelists is at the discretion of your legal team. Generally speaking, TBC recommends no fewer than 100 panelists. If your brand anticipates using these claims for national network TV advertising or to make competitive claims it is recommended you review the network requirements and review ASTM standards prior to determining panel size. Both may require more than 250 panelists. Specific networks require panels of 400.

What are the risks of testing with too few panelists?

Testing with too few panelists may not provide you with a statistically significant sample. To withstand legal and regulatory scrutiny, your sample size must be large enough to be an adequate representative sample. Other risks include insufficient consumer feedback to substantiate the claims and skewed data that is not indicative of the overall consumers' real in-use experience.

I have a very specific, niche panel that I'd like to recruit to test my product(s). Can TBC accommodate my unique panelist needs and will it cost more?

Yes, TBC can accommodate most any type of panel need. With more than 250,000 female and male testers across the US, we can find any size panel with any skin/hair/body condition, age range, ethnicity, household income, geographic location, sensitivity issues, lifestyle habits, buying behaviors, etc., that you need. And no, the complexity of your testing panel parameters won't mean a higher fee.

How quickly can TBC begin my consumer in-home use test?

TBC's size and agility is a major plus for brands needing test results ASAP. As soon as we know when you'll be able to ship the needed test products to our shipping office, we can create a work plan to start immediately. TBC also offers rush job options.

Should I test with a 4-point scale of agreement or 5-point scale?

TBC generally tests products on either a 4- or 5-point scale of agreement, and there are pros and cons to both. A 4-point agreement scale includes Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree, whereas a 5-point agreement scale includes a neutral option. Specific retailers prefer 4-point scales whereas certain self-regulatory bodies will only recognize tests conducted using a

5, 7, or 9-point scale. TBC can conduct your tests on the scale determined best by your legal team.

Blinded or branded – is there an advantage?

TBC recommends conducting blinded tests when possible. Blinding the products ensures that panelists are not biased in any way and are evaluating the products solely based on sensorial attributes and their perception of efficacy. The choice to conduct your trial with blinded or branded products is at the discretion of your legal team. If your brand opts for a blinded study, you may opt to have a “big reveal” of the brand and products, but only after all responses have been collected and the study closes.

Can my test be a true double-blind?

Yes, TBC offers double-blinded tests. These tests are designed so neither the TBC panel leader nor the panelists know the identity of the brand sponsoring the test or the identifying product information. Contact us for specifics regarding double-blind studies.

Does TBC offer blinding and labeling services?

Yes, TBC offers blinding and labeling services. In a blinded study, it is imperative that all brand identifiable information is removed or covered over with a non-removable covering. Sometimes it is masking a packaging color that identifies the brand or using a dremel to remove a raised emblem. TBC uses a variety of products to blind test products, from non-removable black tape, void tape, and safe paints and ink. We have an established protocol for ensuring products are properly labeled, identified and shipped to the panelists testing the products.

Are TBC’s tests recognized and approved by QVC, HSN and ShopHQ (formerly Evine)?

Yes, TBC is an approved vendor for claims substantiation studies with these home shopping networks.

Do TBC’s tests allow for the collection and use of panelist testimonials?

Absolutely. Panelist testimonials are a powerful asset for any company’s marketing toolbox. As part of every in-home use test, we collect open-ended feedback from each panelist at various intervals of the study. Every panelist has completed a consent form which allows the brand to use their testimonials in marketing, advertising and promotion. We recommend consulting your legal counsel prior to leveraging these testimonials to ensure that the claims made by the panelists are in line with claims guidelines set forth by the FDA and FTC.

Do my products need to be safety/HRIPT or stability tested before conducting testing with TBC?

Yes, all products for testing must have undergone HRIPT (if skincare) and stability testing. Products that may affect the eyes must have undergone ocular irritation testing. If you have not conducted safety or stability testing on your products, we are happy to refer you to a clinical lab that can conduct this testing prior to your consumer in-home use study with us.

Does TBC offer testing on products that contain CBD?

Yes, TBC conducts in-home use testing on products containing CBD. To ensure these products meet the criteria of allowable products under Federal guidelines, we require a Certificate of Analysis. From ingestibles to topicals, we have specific protocols we are happy to share with you. Schedule a call with us to discuss your specific product and testing needs.

Does TBC offer testing on OTC products or FDA cleared medical devices?

Yes. We test products such as acne treatments, pain relief lotions and devices, hair regrowth serums, intimate care products and the like. The classification of these products allow for different claims than those that can be made for cosmetics products. We will work with you and your team to ensure your claims are impactful but also in line with FDA monographs and 510(k) guidelines.

Does TBC offer testing on ingestible products and supplements?

Yes, TBC offers in-home use testing for supplements and ingestible products such as tinctures, drinks, tablets and powdered products. As part of your pre-test planning session with our team, we will review the findings of your clinical testing and help you determine if you should test your supplements or ingestible products using a controlled placebo test.

Are there specific recommendations when conducting a comparative test?

Comparative tests are the most likely form of testing to come under regulatory scrutiny or legal and competitive challenges. TBC recommends following ASTM standards for comparative sensory testing. Considerations include having an adequate number of panelists, third-party acquisition and blinding of the products, questionnaire design and statistical thresholds for preference, parity and superiority. TBC will work directly with you to ensure we meet the protocol requirements set forth by your legal team.

Have many products to test in a given year? Chat with us about bulk pricing.