

### Effectively fielding International Research...

#### Global research...

**Adam:** Welcome back Jim how did things go in Europe? **Jim:** Well, good and bad. I know we get hyped up about the NBA or NFL playoffs and March Madness can sometimes make me take a long lunch but jeez who knew a soccer game can literally shut down a whole country...we show up for groups in Milan and no-one else does, Italy wasn't even playing but they won some earlier game and so everyone was watching other games to see who they would play next. It was insane!!!

*"Imagine every western holiday rolled into a week-long semi-hedonistic party. That's Chinese New Year. The Chinese New Year is traditionally a 14 day celebration. Mainland China has a "Golden Week" holiday, where most of the country will be off work for the first week of the festival. Chunyun ( or the Spring Festival Travel period), features the world's largest human migration. Over 2 billion people, Chinese and overseas Chinese, will travel during the forty day period surrounding Chinese New Year. And then factor in the migration back to the big cities and work!"*  
(<http://www.asianramblings.com/category/other/holidays/>)

Research needs over the past 10 years have become increasingly global. It is more important than ever to understand customer needs worldwide to guide product development and marketing efforts. However, conducting effective qualitative research outside the U.S. requires consideration of a myriad of issues. Working with a marketing research firm that has global research knowledge and expertise is critical.

- Established, trustworthy relationships with recruiters and moderators in multiple international areas can make or break your research project.
- Knowledge of cultural issues and local norms is essential in designing research to meet your objectives; a uniform design across all countries may not necessarily result in success.
- Project management of international research requires a level of resources far beyond that of a domestic research project; scheduling, recruiting, facilities, and quality control while in the field can be hampered by language barriers and time zone delays.

To further complicate the process, handling many of these issues has become a moving target. On the one hand marketing research practices worldwide have converged considerably over recent years to more closely mirror those in the United States. What was not feasible 5 years ago, such as lunchtime groups in Paris, is now more acceptable. Conducting phone interviews, previously considered very impersonal and ineffectual in many cultures, has become more feasible in certain regions. On the other hand, these trends do not necessarily hold true everywhere.

#### Some of the issues...

##### Local language moderating or not?

In nearly every case it is better to find and hire a good local language moderator with expertise and experience moderating your target market and understanding the subject matter. This typically yields a higher quality of output over recruiting English speaking respondents (often considered to avoid paying for local resources). Aside from the obvious bias of only recruiting those in your target market that speak English, there are always nuances in the local language, local cultural norms, and regional customs that can affect communications.

##### Face to Face vs. Online vs. Telephone?

Selecting the appropriate methodology requires taking the region, the culture, and what is considered 'acceptable' into consideration. Though online and phone based research is widely accepted in the US, and is increasingly more acceptable internationally, there are many regions where logistically or culturally it is not feasible.

- Online and phone-based methods rather than face-to-face have historically been met with resistance and considered very impersonal in many regions outside of the U.S. This has changed somewhat over the last 3-5 years with phone and online methodology becoming more acceptable in some areas (but not all).
- Local resources are still required for this type of methodology to be effective and managing those local resources can be problematic especially remotely. Effective briefing of a local moderator is difficult over the phone, especially if the topic is highly technical. Monitoring the research via translators or English transcripts can be expensive and real-time "listening" of simultaneous translations for clients can be logistically difficult. To be confident in your results where real time monitoring can't happen, complete trust in your local resources is required to be confident that the right questions are being asked, the answers are being diligently probed where necessary, and the analysis is accurate.

Where financially feasible, conducting international qualitative research face-to-face is always preferred and being on-site to manage the local resources is essential. Face-to-face at a research facility is also much more conducive to client real-time attendance via simultaneous translation and video streaming services.

##### When do you schedule your research?

A big consideration when setting the schedule for your international research is sensitivity to local/national holidays. Unlike the U.S. where it is expected that the majority of the workforce will be 'at work' on the days prior to or after a national one-day holiday, many cultures spend time away from work preparing for or recovering from their important national holidays, many of which are more than one day in length.

In the EMEA region it has traditionally been extremely difficult to conduct any research during the month of August. It is customary in some areas for a three-week 'shutdown' to ensure worker holidays; often to meet union or local city/regional laws. December is another month where a two-week shut-down is not uncommon. This has changed somewhat over the years in some areas (i.e. this is rarely an issue in the U.K. anymore).

Another consideration that warrants deferring to local suppliers/facilities is the "best" time to conduct your research. Many focus groups in AP are better attended by higher quality respondents if they are conducted on the weekends rather than weekday evenings. This doesn't mean that groups cannot be done on a weekday evening just that the likelihood of better research outcome can be increased with a time that is 'preferred' by busy professionals. Preferential times for consumer research are completely different.

- This, like many other issues, has converged recently. Successfully conducting lunch time groups is a very recent phenomenon in some areas of Europe. The notion of conducting more than one evening group on a weekday is another recent phenomenon in AP areas. Two-to-three years ago both of these options would have been completely rejected by suppliers in those regions.
- It is also important to be aware of local events (like sporting events) and how *important* those events are to the local culture.

#### Yarnell Difference

Yarnell, Inc. has handled hundreds of international projects across the world over the past 15 years. Our success is a result of:

- Strong established partnerships and expertise in each country or region. Development of this has resulted from years of working to train and educate our partners to meet the needs of our US clients as well as working closely with them to become trained and educated on conducting research in that particular area.
- We can quickly identify and resolve local cultural issues that might affect a project as early as the proposal phase of a project laying a foundation for a strong methodology that results in quality research.
- We have full-time in-house resources to field and manage international projects ensuring a smoothly run project with quality results.

#### Local language vs. English is not always an issue of 'language'

In some regions (primarily Europe) recruiting English speaking respondents can work well. In Germany, for example, it is possible to recruit IT decision makers comfortable with discussing technical and marketing issues in English (although these tend to be from very 'globalized' firms).

Conversely, in France most IT decision makers are less comfortable a) talking on the phone and b) participating in research in a second language.

Research in Asia Pacific and Latin America is exclusively conducted in the local language (exceptions being areas where the local language is English such as Singapore, Australia and New Zealand).

Bilingual respondents are not uncommon in Latin America but like France, respondents are more comfortable discussing issues, particularly technical issues, in their first language.

#### Understand local privacy laws

Privacy laws in many countries can affect what you can expect to gather in the way of background information on your research participants.

Germany for example, prohibits the distribution of certain respondent information. In Japan, unless you manually pixelate each individual person it is illegal to video tape (or stream) respondents participating in research without their knowledge of the sponsor and written permission.

These issues can sometimes be addressed with 'confidentiality' paperwork or through local supplier guarantees to their recruits and often means that distributing research stimuli (if needed for online or phone based research) might have to be done through local suppliers to accommodate those laws.

Researchers should always preserve confidentiality of their research participants but this has to be strictly adhered to when dealing with international research. Any deviation can not only jeopardize an otherwise strong relationship with a quality supplier but may even cause legal issues for them.

**Spend research dollars in proportion to your ignorance; anyone can spend less money, Yarnell can help you spend your money smarter.**

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