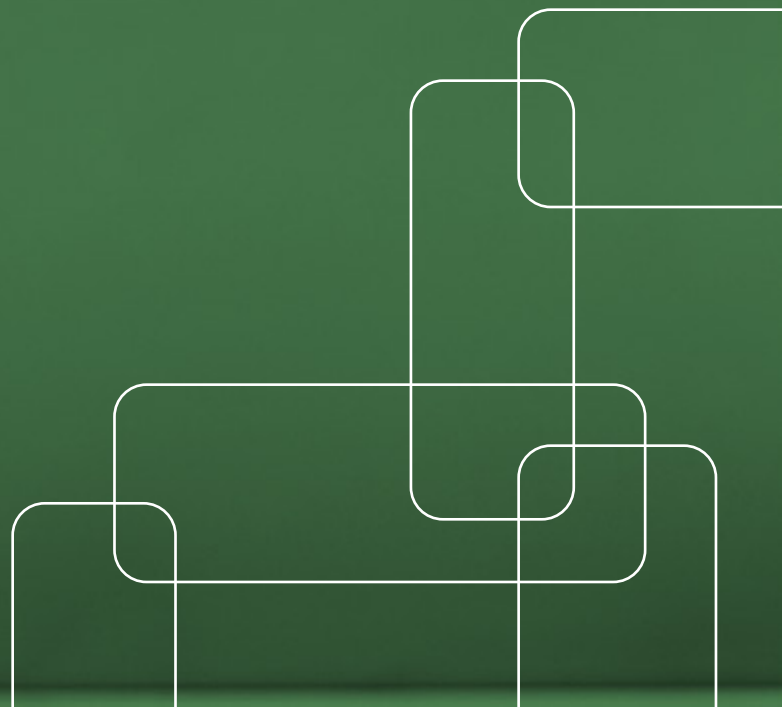




HOW TO ACE GLOBAL QUALITATIVE STUDIES

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INTRO

Taking the pulse of global markets can be one of the most important research investments your client will make in a year and can bring critical insights for their success in the local marketplace.

Navigating the complexities of conducting qualitative research globally is challenging. While the steps are similar to those for most domestic projects, being ignorant to differences or not accounting for the impact of multiple languages, cultures, times zones, and stakeholders, can result in unforeseen setbacks, compromised results, or additional costs.

This short guide shares our best practices to help you enjoy the richness and reap the rewards of successful global qualitative research.



DO I GO IT ALONE OR SEEK GLOBAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT SUPPORT?

Your first decision is whether to manage an international study yourself directly with providers in each country or whether to use the services of a global project management company. Weigh the pros and cons for your particular study and what works for you at the time.

Going It Alone

The control freak in you may love to have direct involvement in every element of the study, especially if you are an excellent project manager as well as an excellent market researcher. Cost for cost, managing the project yourself is likely to be at a lower price. If you have a large, experienced team and the operational bandwidth to oversee all elements of the study and if you have strong trusted relationships in your

markets, and experience on the method and target in those markets, then handling logistics yourself may be the right solution for your study.



Global Project Management

Providers of global management solutions position themselves to take the pain out of unfamiliar factors and project logistics so that researchers can focus on their clients. The direct cost of your study will probably be higher, but the indirect costs of management time, opportunity, and risk will likely more than offset this.

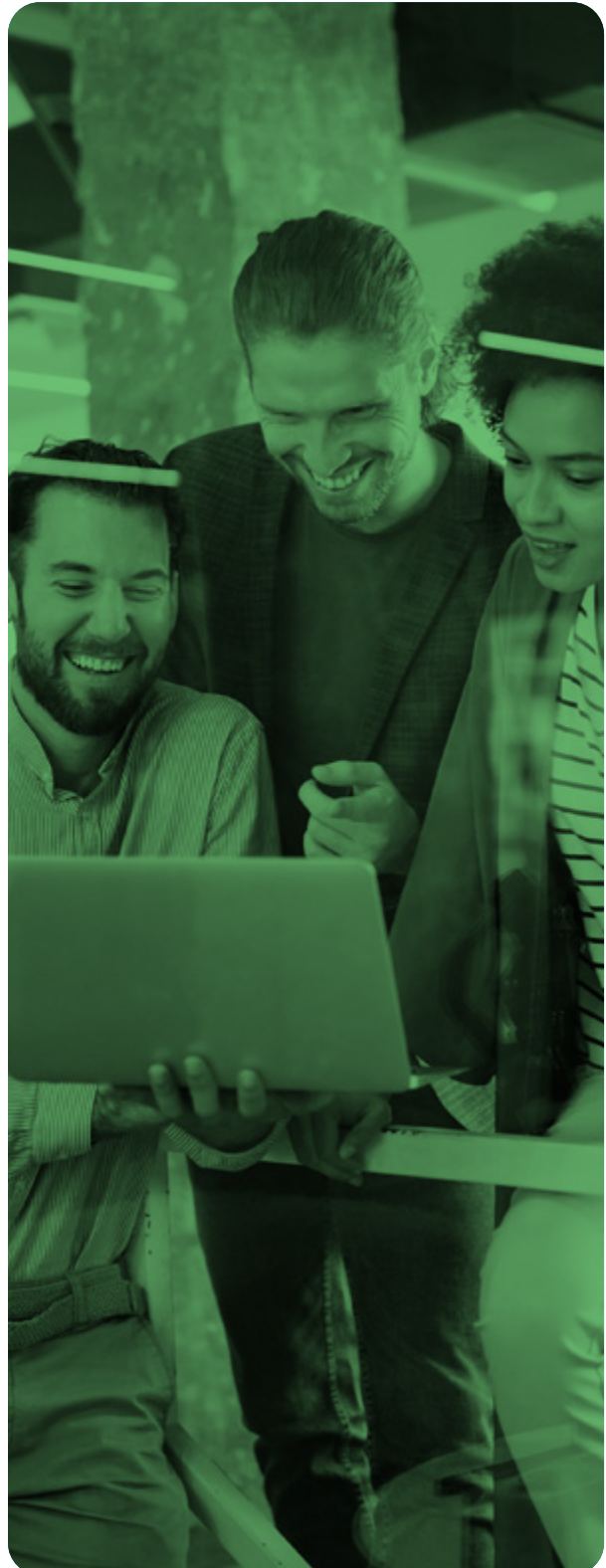
A global management provider will typically customize a study to your needs so that you can decide which elements you would like managed. They will typically provide one point of contact, one quote, and one invoice to help you keep your own quote and budget on track. The overriding benefit, of course, is the collective experience and the local relationships held by the best of such companies.

You may have done a few studies in your target country, but that does not make you an expert; a global partner will have done hundreds, if not thousands. This allows you to capitalize on their knowledge and gives them the ability to anticipate challenges rather than just overcome them as they come up. The relationships that global management teams can have with their local partners is also not to be underestimated. Partners will be vetted, tried, and tested project by project. Some providers even have proprietary research offices in key local markets. The larger providers will have the 'market clout' needed to make sure your study is treated with priority, especially when overcoming obstacles. Expert providers will also have their fingers on the pulse of changing international landscapes and regulations.

KEEP GOOD COMPANY

Whatever direction you go, it is essential to align with partners who adhere to international market research codes such as ESOMAR and EphMRA. You may also want to check that your research partner is a member of their local association for marketing research.

ESOMAR



DON'T EXPECT SUCCESS – PREPARE FOR IT

Seek Clarity

If you are working directly with a local partner vs. a global fieldwork company, be sure to follow-up any conversations and that outline your key points by email. Your partners may speak English; however, they may also be embarrassed to admit when they have not fully understood you. A recap will help identify any miscommunication or gaps in understanding. You may want to request a written agreement to avoid wrong assumptions or communication issues about what is and is not included in your project.

Invest in Your Project Set Up

Get specific for successful budget planning.

- Consider how much time you estimate respondents will need to spend doing a task is (e.g., homework, how much time each day to be spent doing a diary or a bulletin board).
- Plan the development of stimulus in good time, and where possible, use visuals over text.
- Plan your reporting needs from the outset. If local stakeholders exist, discuss individual needs. If you want a report, be very specific. Do you have language requirements? Are interim reports expected? Is a topline sufficient or do you require something more detailed? How many pages do you expect? Do you require a full report with verbatims? Are you expecting video clips?
- Will you require a platform (for digital work), or do you have your own?

ASK A COMEDIAN, TENNIS PLAYER, CHEF, OR PROJECT MANAGER – TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Timing considerations are crucial to much of the detail in getting global research right and avoiding pitfalls.

- Keep in mind that timing might vary by market. For example, in the US, a bulletin board could be conducted in 3 days, but in less developed markets, where internet access is not as readily available or is expensive, those respondents may need more than 3 days to complete a 3-day bulletin board.
- Oddly, there is a difference between 'English minutes' and 'non-English minutes'. In the US, you might be able to conduct a group discussion for 90 minutes and share four creative concepts to obtain

what you need. In other markets, it takes longer to express the same message, and general conversation can be more extended. So, knowing the flow of the discussion and the stimulus is important in helping determine feasibility.

- Research whether there are holidays in the local markets that need to be factored in – both for the recruitment but also the local project management. Be sure you note any at the outset of a project. Chinese New Year impacts more than just China, and celebrations extend beyond the one day shown on the calendar. Japan essentially shuts down during Golden

Week. Ramadan is observed by Muslims worldwide, and events such as Carnival in Brazil or World Cup soccer also influence timing.

- For global projects, it is not entirely about just sending a screener and getting started. There are additional timeline considerations to build in to allow for the screener to be translated, for briefings with the fieldwork teams, facilities, interpreters, and the moderators in local markets. Smaller local providers can be tight on resources and have a different attitude to overtime than you may be used to.
- In the US, most groups are a maximum of 2 hours. In other countries, in Europe, for example, groups are frequently and comfortably 2.5- 3 hours. In many

countries, such as Brazil, respondents tend not to share opinions before some relationship has been established. More time at the beginning of a session for socialization is required to build trust, and then respondents will open up and share experiences and opinions that may deliver the richest insights.

- Be tuned in to the use of military time, formats for dates, and whether or not they have been localized for you. 7/6/2021 is July 6th in the US and June 7th in Europe. Daylight saving times can also begin and end 1-2 weeks apart between the US and Europe. Also, take into account at the planning stage that delays can occur in providing updates or other communications due to time zone differences.

- Many Asian markets hold focus groups on Saturday and Sunday – especially if the target is a B2B target. In Middle Eastern Markets, the workweek is Sunday to Thursday and the weekend is Friday and Saturday.
- Punctuality is valued differently across the world. In some cases, measures need to be taken to work around respondents who will think nothing of arriving 15 minutes late. In other countries, your session could go badly if you have kept your respondent waiting even a short while.

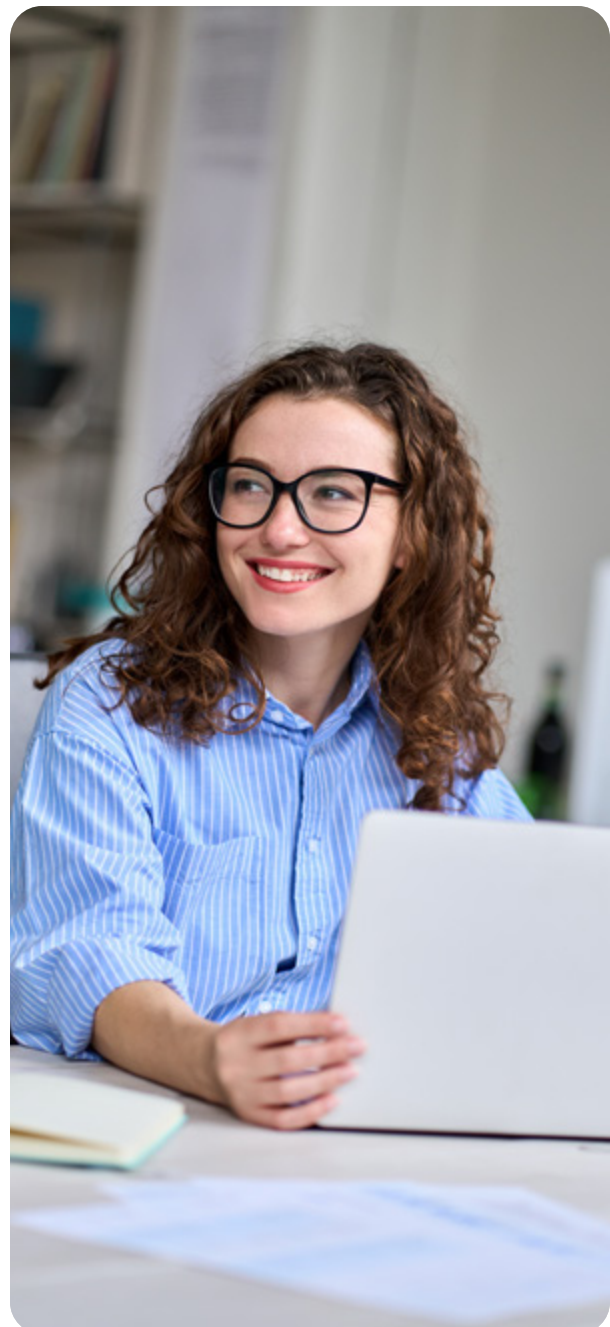


Avoid Trying To Force-Fit Your Research Approach

Discuss your plans with your provider to ensure you are choosing market-appropriate approaches and methods. Enquire how recruiting will work and be guided by what kinds of incentives are appropriate.

- In some countries, group discussions may work well, but in others, feasibility may depend on the topic. A topic might be more sensitive in one country than another.
- In-depth interviews might be better for specific targets in some countries. Some markets in Asia, for example, need to consider status (age, job title, etc.) before agreeing to a group discussion.
- GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) rules (in the EU) are designed to protect privacy and will dictate what can and cannot be done in a given country. For example, in interview

video footage, respondent faces may need to be blurred – so your ability to create a compelling video with first-person accounts, would be impacted.

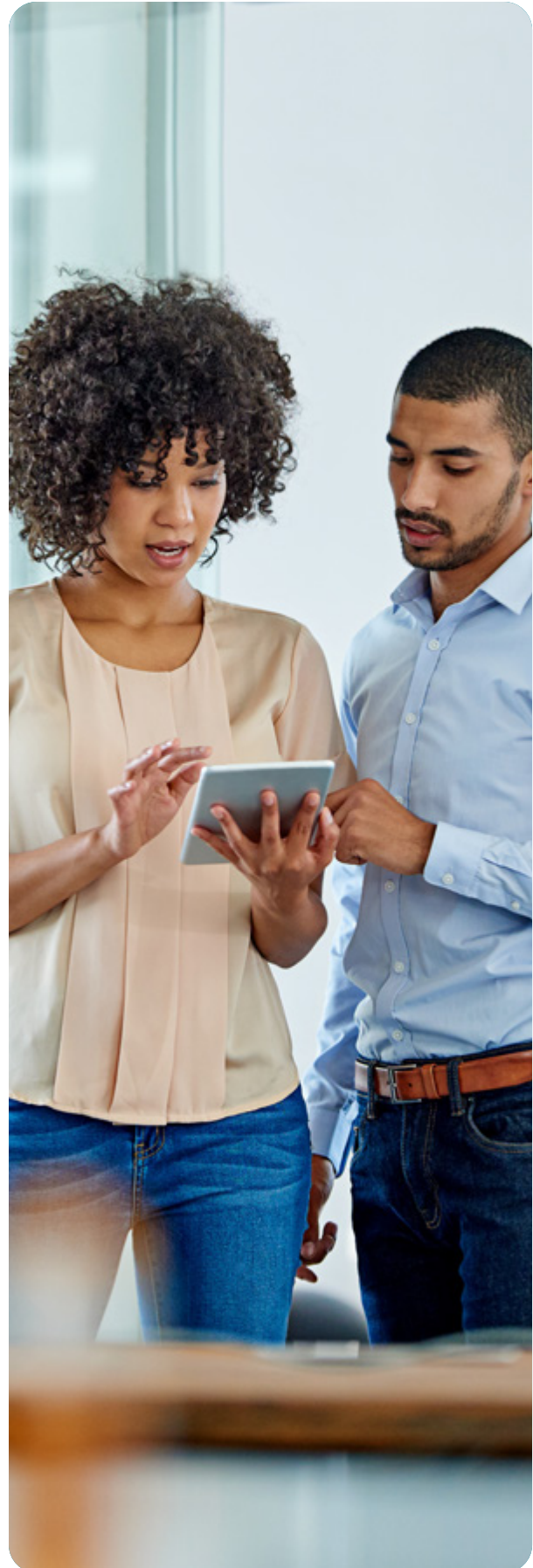


Localization – Harness Local Partner Knowledge

Even in countries where we speak the same language, localization is necessary. Considerations such as the way in which different countries measure socioeconomic status, job title and role differences, brand name differences, spelling and vocabulary variations etc. should be part of this process. Invite consultation from partners to help shape the research so it is effective in each market.

- Socioeconomic targets should be clearly defined. While in the US, one might target “upper middle class” with the screener reflecting this by household income and education, in other markets, those screening questions can be very different with some countries using more indirect questions, such as ‘how many people live in your home? What type of home do you have (how many rooms)? How many cars do you own?’
- When using online qualitative solutions, it is easy to invite respondents to share images and photos of their lives to provide local context to socio-economic considerations and the answers they are giving but not all cultures want to share personal photos.
- Some job titles do not have an equivalent. Others may exist but the roles may be different. This is often the case for healthcare professionals, for example, in France, lung cancer may be treated by a respiratory specialist with an oncologist on the team. Payers’ job titles and their accessibility exist differently in countries with national healthcare systems where the government is the single buyer.

- Your partner may suggest alternative locations for the research. The type of venue can vary depending on the target. In India, for example, there are various acceptable options of qualitative venue; professional facilities, household facilities, or even hotels. Not all venues will have a one-way mirror; hotels will use closed-circuit TV.
- It may be necessary to tailor specs or group composition by country. In some countries, genders should not be mixed. In others, such as Japan, a wide age range will lead to younger people deferring to older people out of respect.
- Be cognizant of cultural norms in each market when drafting discussion guides. Do not get stuck on stereotypes. While it is tempting to view local culture in its traditional origins or relatively recent traits, contemporary culture in countries such as Japan is moving faster than ever before, much influenced by the rest of the world.



Moderation – Go Native!

Native or local moderators are likely to provide good return on the research investment. Leveraging local language moderators allows respondents to feel more comfortable and at ease. People are more natural, expressive, and eloquent in their native language. They communicate differently, allowing for a richness of feedback and insights that you would not otherwise gather.

Simultaneous interpretation is a significant expense. Take recommendations and ensure your interpreters are experienced in your topic of research, particularly around healthcare, science, and technology. They should also be native speakers.

Some countries, such as Germany, have a high level of English competency, and

there may be a temptation for English-speaking researchers to conduct studies in English. In some cases, for certain respondent types, such as physicians, some business professionals on specific topics, interviews or small sample size groups can indeed be conducted in English. However, consider that when specifying Englishspeaking respondents, the incidence of your target decreases, and costs go up. The screener will still need to be translated, as, although your target may speak English, the local recruiters may not. Participants may state that they are fluent, yet group dynamics or data quality can still be impacted by respondents not having the desired level of accuracy or understanding of language subtleties.

Don't Get Lost in Translation!

Plan for translation of screeners, homework tasks, and stimulus, and allow time for human translation and assessment. For any foreign language, there can be risks around translation and interpretation of your research questions. The most foolproof approach is translationretranslation, also known as back translation. Prepare your question or stimulus text in your language. Then have it translated. A second translator will return the question back into the original language, allowing you to compare that new translation with the original text and reconcile any meaningful differences between the two. This technique is usually deployed for critical, high-risk content where translation accuracy is paramount and any errors could have major research consequences. An increasingly popular alternative to retranslation is the employment of local subject matter experts to evaluate translated materials.



PROJECT KICK-OFF

- **Prepare a detailed briefing document** containing project background, research objectives, project timing and expected deliverables, method and sample, stimulus material. This will help ensure clarity of understanding and build familiarity and confidence in the materials (especially if you are using unique exercises or projective techniques).
- **As part of the briefing, if possible, conduct your home market first** and invite the international teams to watch you conduct the research either live or recorded. This helps set expectations, familiarizes local teams with the discussion flow, and provides opportunities to ask questions.
- **Share a report template.** Be specific about what you are expecting, even down to the design. Sample reports are useful and a template

will allow you to compile a consistent global deliverable post research.

- **Bring the interpreter in early.** Choosing to include your interpreter in your briefing is extremely helpful, especially when the topic is technical. It is very helpful for the interpreter to hear clients talk about the topic in advance to become more familiar with the language specific to an industry, specialty, or company.



DURING THE FIELDWORK

Be present during the fieldwork. Whether you do so in person or digitally, your presence will help you understand your planning impact and if any adjustments are needed for other markets or stages. Be prepared that the first session may not be perfect. In the first session, the moderator may work out some kinks. Schedule the first day of research with just one group or two in-depth interviews observed by clients. Hold a debrief directly after, and invite constructive feedback. Let the moderator know where you need to see changes – where you need to probe more or skip.



PROJECT CLOSURE

So much time and effort are put into the planning and execution of a project, it can often be forgotten that the end of a project is equally important, especially if it went well and you are moving onto your next market or pressing study.

Conduct a Debrief in Each Market

- Conduct a quick debrief with each local team to ensure you are aligned with the findings.
- Bring the interpreter into the debrief – they are translating language and also interpreting how people spoke and can also help provide insight into emotional expression and context.

Reporting

- Our recommendation would be to have the local moderator provide a deliverable of some sort, even simple notes or a topline. This will help you write your own reports and

explain any cultural nuances to best understand audiences in their markets.

- If your local moderator is drafting a report, the best practice would be to hold a debrief after they have submitted this so the debrief can include any questions on the report.

Feedback Well Given Will Directly Affect Future Success

It is always worth carving out some time to let your project manager know what went well and what should be adjusted for future studies. A good project manager will be proactively seeking ways to deepen understanding, note learnings, and grow your relationship to enhance future performance. It is also good practice to invite feedback from your project manager about anything you could provide or do differently to enhance any future collaboration.



Adaptive solutions, confident decisions.

Let's Work Together

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