

Customer Experience Research in a Global Context

By Kathleen McKnight, KS&R Project Manager

Just as it is important to take cultural nuances and preferences into account when companies are creating sales, marketing, and operational strategies, the same principles should be applied when conducting customer experience research on a global basis. If a one size fits all research approach is used on a global basis you risk missing subtle differences across geographies which could lead to frustrated respondents and misleading results.

Below are a few examples of how customer experience research approaches and methodologies may need to be altered in order to get actionable results on a global basis:

- Different modalities may need to be used in certain countries.
- For instance, in Japan, business respondents typically do not like to stay on the telephone for more than 10 minutes, so mail, fax, or online methodologies often need to be used in order to complete longer studies.
- Lack of internet or telephone connectivity continues to prevent effective use of those modalities in some emerging markets (e.g. in Africa) so face to face methodologies may need to be employed.
- Local customs may need to dictate the composition of in-person focus groups. In some countries (for instance, India) it is not always appropriate to conduct focus groups with mixed groups of men and

women. Mixed groups would likely lead to a situation where participants don't participate as actively and openly as they would otherwise.

- Respondents in different geographies often use scales differently. Some tend to respond using higher integers no matter what question is asked; others are more cautious no matter what the topic. In quantitative studies a normalization process can be used to look at the scores across countries and make some statistical adjustments so that results can be compared across countries.

Respondents tend to be more thoughtful and forthcoming when they are in an environment that is comfortable for them. The more you take into account some of these cultural nuances in the up-front planning of customer experience research, the more likely you are to get actionable insights for your company.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathleen has nearly 20 years of market research experience with a strong emphasis on the Technology sector. She has managed and executed numerous multi-country quantitative and qualitative studies.

