

Market Research in New Markets

Market research is an indispensable tool for understand your customers in new markets. But it is a dangerous one too. People in different countries may misinterpret questions you put to them more easily than you might think. This can lead to costly mistakes.

Comprehension errors

Your research questions may not translate well. Where Americans may be used to discussing how much income they make, Asians and Europeans might be more reticent. You may need to ask in a different way. Common terms may also have been insensitively translated.

Sampling errors

The sample size and composition needed in a foreign market could be very different to your home market. Income distribution and social profile may also be vastly different, making your benchmarks meaningless. You may also be talking to the wrong people entirely in your target market.

Incorrect “triggers”

A lot of research – especially qualitative – relies on imagery to convey feelings and responses. The imagery selected in your home country may be entirely inappropriate (think for example of the way women are perceived in some Asian and Middle Eastern societies). Your focus group discussion guide translation needs to be aware of this.

Insufficient depth of research

A good research programme combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This means that you need to translate your whole research programme, not only a part of it. On the qualitative side you probably need to sit down with a local moderator and take on board their input to make even more changes.

However you do your market research, your translators should be professionals with experience of market research. They need to be conversant with market research terminology: this will save you significant time and money. Most importantly of all, they should be aware of the implications of each question asked and to proactively suggest amendments.

In short, it is essential to get your market research translations done by professionals who understand market research as well as translation.