



YOU CAN GO GLOBAL WITH TECHNOLOGY

SIX IDEAS TO TAKE AROUND THE WORLD

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The world is shrinking and becoming more interconnected. Products and companies span nations and continents. Research agencies, large and small, increasingly must have a global qualitative research view to adequately serve their clients. Fortunately, today, all researchers can do that, anywhere, anytime.

“Today anyone can do global qualitative.”

For decades, market research on a global scale was the purview of the large global research agencies. These multi-national organizations bought or established offices in dozens of countries to serve multi-national corporations. Far-flung offices provided access to local researchers and respondents and shipped the results to the central office to be compiled into a single, comprehensive global research report. Projects required time and resources and a small army of researchers scattered around the world to complete.

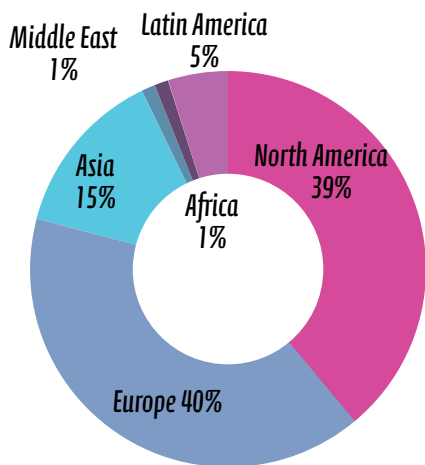
Those days are over.

Communications and research technology have leveled the playing field.





Global Research Spend



Today, even the lone research practitioner has access to researchers and respondents virtually anywhere, anytime. A quick check of the QRCA membership shows at least 75 researchers who live outside the U.S. and Canada available to QRCA members, and are as close as a phone call or an email. Access is no longer a limitation.

Moreover, as researchers, we have an obligation to our clients to develop a world research capability. Today, no region of the globe accounts for more than 40% of research expenditures. If we are to serve our industry well, global capabilities are imperative.

Fortunately, just as communications technology is helping us access researchers and respondents everywhere, research technology is allowing us to work faster and more efficiently than ever before. Global capabilities are now within the grasp of every qualitative researcher.

Interconnectivity: A New Global Normal

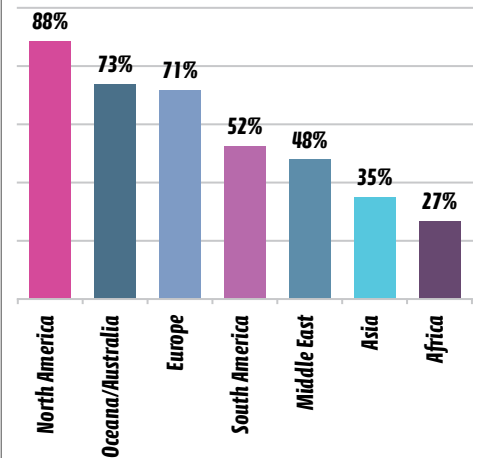
Access to the Internet through computers and mobile devices is a global phenomenon that opens markets and levels the playing field among large and small researchers.

The key is Internet access. In the more developed countries, virtually any online qualitative method can be used. Most of these methods were developed for such environments, and they provide a wide selection for the researcher.

When 60% of households have access to the Internet, online qualitative goes mainstream. In the U.S., online qualitative became accepted as a viable research method in 2006 when household penetration surpassed 60%. We have seen a similar trend in Europe and Oceania/Australia. From an Internet access perspective, we will consider these three areas as the “Developed world” and the remaining four as the “Developing world.”

World Internet Penetration 2014

Source: Internetworldstats.com



Here are six effective and easy methods for conducting global research, three new ideas for developed markets and three smart choices for developing markets.

3 New Ideas for Developed Markets

High broadband Internet and smartphone penetration make online research in the developed countries of North America, Europe and Oceania/Asia rela-

“There are now more mobile phones in the world than people.”

tively easy. The researcher has the entire spectrum of new online and mobile technologies available to him/her.

Virtual Intercepts. Mall intercepts were once a mainstay of market research. Today, our respondents are living online, not at the mall. Why not find them online and recruit them directly to a qualitative interview? Create a link from any digital source (Facebook®, a webpage, an email, etc.) that directs the respondent to a screener. If they pass the screener, they can be directed into the appropriate qualitative method (live webcam or mobile interview, bulletin board, chat, etc.).

Live Mobile Ethnography. In these developed markets, a high percentage of respondents have smartphones. Why not interview them in their home, using their smartphone? It's a live interview with the freedom to move around the house as the interviewer directs. A researcher studying dishwashing detergent can literally look under a dozen kitchen sinks in a single day in a dozen different countries. This methodology will be commonplace in a few years.

Simultaneous Translation. Researchers seem to be most intimidated by language differences. Today's technology is removing language as a problem. Virtually all technology providers have options for simultaneous translation of live interviews. Clients and researchers can follow the discussion, gather insights and provide direction in near-real time.

Translation of text is even more exciting. “Machine translation” is dramatically improving. Even more interesting is crowdsourced translation that translates a large amount of text very quickly utilizing a dispersed pool of human translators. This cuts translation time from weeks to hours.

Research in Developing Markets

Developing countries are a challenge. Here's where the large global agencies

have a significant advantage. However, smaller agencies can compete if they identify local partners and are smart about using the appropriate technology.

A local partner can make or break a study, particularly in a developing country. Often, language and cultural barriers are significant and require a native to navigate the nuances. A native qualitative researcher can moderate and provide insights that a non-native would simply overlook. Luckily, there are many sources for partners, such as QRCA.org.

The local partner can also help identify qualified recruiting firms. Some cultures are fairly sophisticated with phone banks and in-house panels; others continue to utilize on-the-street recruiting. If you choose not to enlist a native researcher, you will need to find a recruiting source by networking with your current suppliers or through one of the many directories available to researchers.

In developing areas, Internet access does not necessarily mean high bandwidth. Many people access the Internet using mobile devices, others simply do not have high volume broadband. Therefore, it's usually a good idea to stay away from video- or audio-centric technology that requires more bandwidth than respondents may have available.

There are now more mobile phones in the world than people. In many developing countries, mobile access is voice-only and often does not include a data plan. For instance, Africa has a 75% mobile penetration rate, yet it has one of the lowest Internet access rates in the world. Even smartphone penetration is not always a good indicator of Internet access as data plans are very expensive in developing countries. Researchers often make the mistake of assuming that a high mobile penetration rate equals high Internet accessibility. This is often not true.

3 Smart Choices for Developing Markets

Each developing market must be evaluated separately. Countries that share a boundary could have vastly different technology adoption profiles. Before selecting a methodology for a specific market, understand the technology adoption and use profile of that specific market, not just the region.

Bulletin Boards are a good technology solution for respondents who may have

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access to computers and the Internet but may not have strong bandwidth. It's a versatile methodology and able to run on fairly low bandwidth if there are no audio, video or picture requirements. Bulletin Boards are also available in many languages, and new languages can be added fairly quickly. Crowdsourced human translations are generally available within hours of a respondent's post. Since most have some type of smartphone app, they can also be used in applications where respondents have smartphone access.

Digital Ethnography is used in many developing countries where respondents can upload pictures from a mobile phone to document their day or a specific activity. Such digital ethnography allows the researcher to spend “a day in the life” of several respondents in several countries in a very short amount of time.

Telephone Depth Interviews (TDIs) are always an option. In less-developed countries, Internet access and smartphone penetration are both low. However, mobile phone penetration is very high. Researchers can work with a local partner to conduct TDIs on mobile phones while the researcher and the client listen, learn and direct using simultaneous translation. Since most mobile phone users in developing countries use pre-paid phones, respondents can be paid by adding minutes to their phone as an honorarium.

The World is Our Oyster

The adage to think globally and act locally has never been more true. Now anyone can. Communications and research technology are shrinking our world and creating opportunities for us to conduct research we never dreamed possible a few years ago. This technology is bridging the gaps in distance, language and culture that once divided us.

It's a new world. Let's embrace it. 