



A Global Market Research White Paper **KNOWING WHEN YES DOESN'T MEAN YES**

Successful marketing strategies depend on solid market research. And global market research is highly affected by language and culture. As such, considering equivalencies at the outset will ensure that data outputs will be comparable and valuable.

Most researchers are familiar with the idea of construct equivalence, which means that the instrument is relevant and comparable across different countries and that it produces equivalent responses regardless of cultures and languages. Construct equivalence can be broken down into Functional equivalence (is the instrument serving the same purpose in each country), Conceptual equivalence (is the instrument being "expressed" similarly in each country), and Category equivalence (does the instrument rely on the same class of activities across countries).

Normally given less consideration, Measure equivalence is also important. You need to know the research instrument you have constructed is actually measuring identical content. There are four areas of Measure equivalence to which you should pay particular attention:

Translation Equivalence

A translator needs to be fluent in the source and target languages. The importance of source fluency is often underestimated in market research. If a translator does not understand subtle nuances of emphasis, for example, these areas will be missed in the translation of the instrument.

As an example, consider the following source sentence: **"Consult your doctor before stopping your medication."**

The Spanish back translation might produce:

"You should consult your doctor before stopping your medication."

The Spanish translation makes this more of a recommendation than a command.

Ethnocentric Bias

Even when an instrument is well-translated, the issue of ethnocentric bias must be considered. The same question may not carry the same thing in a different country. For example: **"Are you eating healthier since your stroke?"**

This is a loaded question. For someone in the US, eating healthier may mean cutting saturated fat from their typical diet. For someone in Japan, where the typical diet contains little to no saturated fat, eating healthier will have a different meaning. The question elicits a "yes" response in both countries, but exactly what that yes means will differ.

Cultural Response Patterns

Culture impacts the way people answer questions - even when the questions are exactly the same and independent of other obvious bias. In a study group, for example, the typical response of an Italian can be one of extreme emotion; whereas, in the more restrained culture of the U.K., a more sedate response is to be expected. Directly comparing the sample means of these two sets of data without taking equivalency into account would produce incorrect conclusions: that Italians surveyed feel more strongly about their medication than Brits, which may not be the case.

Moderator/Delivery Equivalence

Related to response equivalence, moderator equivalency is dictated by the impact of differences in delivery. The role of the moderator is critical. You may have one moderator per cultural group or a multi-cultural group of moderators that works with each segment, but ideally your moderators should have similar roles to their subjects across cultures. Moderators should have similar levels of education and experience and their guidelines for coding data should be consistent.