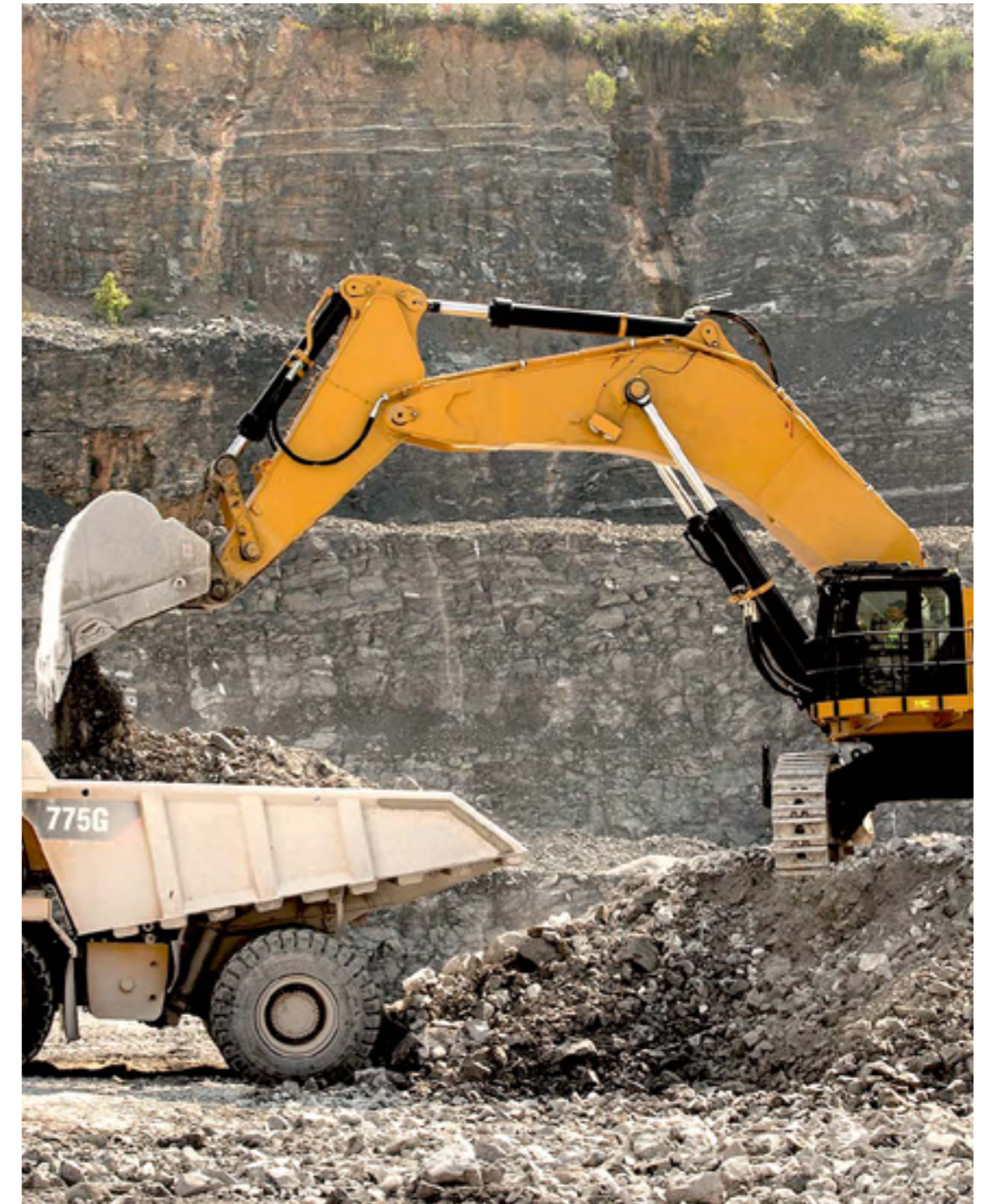


# OVERCOMING COMMON CHALLENGES IN GLOBAL B2B MARKET RESEARCH

Understanding how to best manage research projects in developing markets

WHITE PAPER  
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# DEMAND FOR MARKET RESEARCH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CONTINUES TO INCREASE

The need for market research across developing countries and regions continues to increase. In fact, Africa is the fastest growing segment of the global insights industry, clipping at a rate of 22 % annual growth <sup>1</sup>. Other regions like Latin America continue to see serious advancements in market research and potential for new business. Take for example the fact that Brazil has been the largest exporter of cattle meat in the world. One in each five pounds of commercialized cattle meat is from Brazil, which is also the fourth biggest producer of pig meat <sup>2</sup>. All of that said, Latin America's share in global companies across

major sectors outpaces the amount of B2B market research done in the region. While it is in the realm of 7 % to 27 % of share across healthcare, construction and agriculture sectors, it accounts for just 3 % share of the region in global B2B market research <sup>3</sup>.

There is a demand for B2B market research in developing regions, including Africa and Latin America. And it is imperative for global market research firms to understand best practices for working within developing regions, especially when bringing on supplier partners in those regions.

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<sup>1</sup> ESOMAR 2017 Congress

<sup>2</sup> FAO, 2012

<sup>3</sup> "Looking for B2B research partners in Latin America" – ESOMAR Latin America 2017

Many market research firms who do business in developing regions find some challenges along the way. The challenges begin during the RFQ stage and finding the suppliers to send requests to. Oftentimes, researchers need to give an answer to the client on whether they can cover a region or not even before they've developed detailed quotes. If that's the case, you'll want to do a quick assessment of the region to determine if you can successfully deliver data from that region. Additional challenges occur during the fieldwork stage. While many research around the world endorse and abide by the ESOMAR Code of Conduct, many practical aspects of project quoting, commissioning and fieldwork vary a lot, influ-

enced by local culture and business realities <sup>1</sup>. As a global research firm, we have experienced some of the challenges firsthand along with other international research partners.

In fact, we addressed this dilemma in a recent research paper written for ESOMAR, the European global market research organization we're an active member in.

The problems vary across regions, but we have noticed some similarities and general core challenges. They include difficulty in attracting suppliers, challenges with cultural and communication differences, concern with language specifics and safety concerns for researchers.

# BUT CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES POSES SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

The good news is that there are ways to take the challenges head-on and, in fact, do some great market research worldwide. We will dig deeper into some of these changes below. ▼

<sup>1</sup> [www.esomar.org/what-we-do/code-guidelines](http://www.esomar.org/what-we-do/code-guidelines)

# 1. OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE OF IDENTIFYING SUPPLIERS

In many developing countries, one of the major initial concerns of any market research firm in the design stage is finding a supplier who is going to fit the needs of the client. Many agencies may not share sector expertise information in descriptions on their website or may advertise themselves as market research generalists and not dig deeper into B2C, B2B and specific industry specializations.

One way to overcoming this challenge is to turn to market research associations like AMAI in Mexico, ABEP in Brazil and SAMRA in South Africa for help in identifying the best agencies to partner with <sup>1</sup>. An agency like that has the

knowledge to connect firms with the right partner prospects – for example, the Association could send RFQs to qualifying agencies who match the needs of the project at hand.

There are a couple of ways to overcome the challenge of finding agencies in developing countries with sector-specific expertise (i.e. ones with experience in agriculture research). One way is to take a two-stage approach when quoting. First, ask for sector expertise first and cover a wide array of companies. Next, send detailed requests to a limited number of local agencies who are the best fit based on your first question asked.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.samra.co.za](http://www.samra.co.za) [www.amai.org](http://www.amai.org), [www.abep.org](http://www.abep.org)

# 2. OVERCOMING CULTURAL AND COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES

In our experience and the collective experience of colleagues around the globe, cultural differences in developing countries can lead to process changes acceptable to local suppliers, but not acceptable to the commissioning agency. One example of this would be conducting an interview with a senior-level professional at a cafe instead of in an office setting.

This sort of challenge can be fixed so long as the commissioning agency establishes concrete expectations from the outset of the project. Providing detailed requirements and instructions about the time, place

and setting for face-to-face interviews can help — and be sure that this is documented by the contracted local supplier. Also, have local suppliers clarify any changes to the agreed upon process before proceeding with interviews. Establishing this kind of quality control and being diligent about its implementation can dramatically help in this situation.

Perhaps the local agency isn't being as proactive as the commissioning agency would like them to be — in this instance, the commissioning agency should both educate and push the agency on the way to work on this particular

project. Implement new ways of working with preferred partners and make it clear that your agency will only continue to do business with local partners who can meet the expectations set forth for them. Researchers should also take every opportunity to meet colleagues from other countries at trade shows and international conferences — even if they do not have an immediate request, meet the agencies and ask them to quote for a potential project. A “sample” quote is often very revealing in terms of local practices and communication norms. ▼



Another communications concern that can arise during the commissioning stage is increases in the cost of the project. This is something that needs to be addressed before that – the commissioning agency should discuss specific amounts dedicated to travel and incentive ex-

penses after the initial agreement but before the actual commissioning. But even before that, work during the RFQ stage to ensure the breakdown of cost will include all ancillary expenses. As a final measure, make it clear that approval for additional travel costs is needed prior to

conducting new interviews. The clearer you can be about expenses, the better. And make sure there is an open line of communication about expenses from before the interviews start.

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# 3. OVERCOMING CONCERNS OVER LANGUAGE



It is not enough to have someone who speaks Spanish or another local language be a part of a project. There are times where Spanish translations won't work in a given country like Chile or Mexico because of local dialect. For this reason, turn to professional translators and agencies specializing in particular industries from Mexico, Chile, Brazil, etc.

Language barriers can present a challenge during the briefing section of a research project. Often, it is not possible for a commissioning agency to brief recruiters and moderators directly in developing countries. There are several ways to combat this problem:

- Budget to have an interpreter present during all briefings, agreeing with the agency beforehand that briefing participation is required.
- Arrange video conferences instead of audio calls. The combination of listening and watching a speaker may help with comprehension.
- Provide written text of the briefing containing information regarding goals of the project, ways of addressing each question of the guide/questionnaire and explanations for specific industry terms. The information should be provided in both English and native languages.
- Include an interpreter familiar with the project on all teleconferences, briefings and call.



## 4. OVERCOMING SAFETY CONCERNS

Lastly, one of the concerns of doing market research in some developing countries is the safety of the researchers, particularly if they are carrying expensive tablets, computers and other equipment. This can be a concern for researchers who venture away from a major city in a developing market into the countryside. They may be a target for robbery, which not only impacts the research project but puts people in serious danger.

This concern is one that can be overcome by gathering participants in a central place with internet connection. For example, if you're doing an agricultural market research in the countryside, invite farmers to a central location with internet connection. Even if getting them there and having them attend may be an add-on to the budget, it can be worth it in the long run as it lessens the risk of any damage to equipment or injury to researchers in the field.



# SET EXPECTATIONS UP-FRONT AND BE PROACTIVE WITH LOCAL SUPPLIERS



One of the most important things to keep in mind as a European or North American market research agency working with market research partners in developing markets is to be proactive and stay ahead of any possible challenges you may face during the engagement. It is imperative to realize there are going to be cultural and communication differences, but that it is possible to bridge the gap with the right strategies in place.

Keeping in mind the solutions proposed in this paper can help you maintain a clear head and dilute some of the stresses that are common when conducting vast research projects across multiple regions.

# LEARN MORE ABOUT US

Our company, Bazis, would love to continue the conversation with you. Are you experiencing similar challenges when conducting research projects? Are there other challenges you're experiencing that we haven't discussed in this paper?

We are always committed to talking to our peers and educating whenever we can. And, if you're a company in need of a market research consultant in a developing country, we are available to work alongside you. As a strategic member of The Research Alliance, we work with a network of more than 20 research agencies around the world – our alliance has the capability to carry out market research in just about every corner of the globe.



# WHO IS BAZIS?

Bazis provides expert market research across the globe, making a positive difference in the world's companies and people by uncovering truly inspiring, effectively-actionable insights into thoughts, feelings and behavior. Our team of highly-skilled research professionals is fluent in both English and Russian and provide international market research expertise to clients around the world from its offices in Chicago, USA and Ekaterinburg, Russia.

## TWO SEGMENTS

### 1. BAZIS INSIGHTS

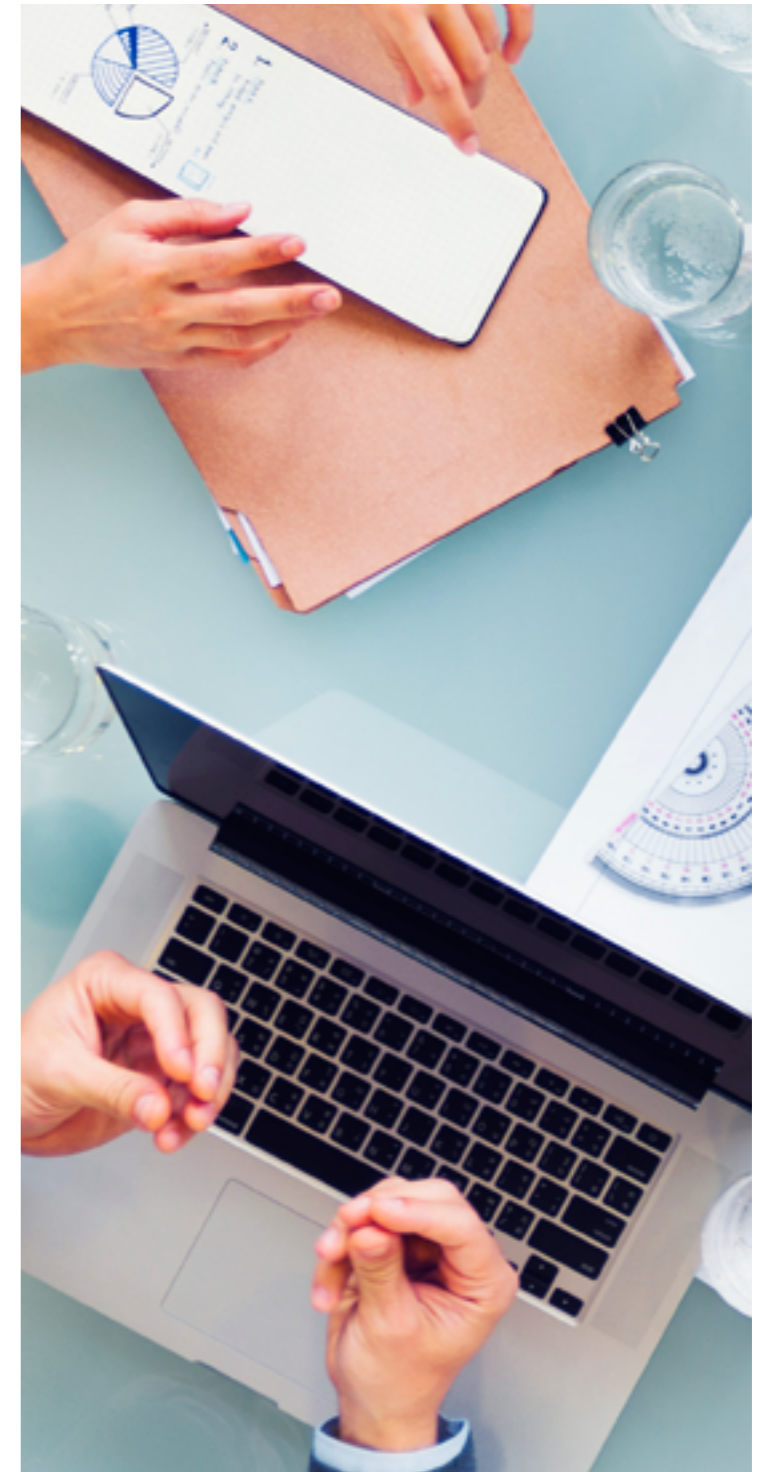
Composed of global, full-service sector experts, provides full-service research across the world in the key sections of construction, healthcare and agriculture.

### 2. BAZIS OPERATIONS

Composed of fieldwork and data experts in Russia, delivers a deep understanding of the Russian market by offering highest-quality fieldwork and analysis solutions.

Our expertise in the agriculture market includes a clear, demonstrated understanding of the key business drivers in the market, including such topics as crop seasonality and farmers' lifestyles, allowing us to deliver truly insightful recommendations in this unique sector.

We understand how to reach the many diverse target groups in the agriculture sector, including growers, integrators and industry experts. We collect those insights and share them through the Bazis Agro Tracker.



# BAZIS CONTACTS

Bazis is a full-service research firm offering B2B marketing research expertise across many sectors. Contact us to learn how we can advance your next market research project.

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