

# When in Rome ...

## Multi-Cultural UX Research Management

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### Abstract

“When in Rome, do as the Romans do”. It is common sense amongst UX researchers and designers that products work best when they have been adapted to local and cultural contexts. As a UX practitioner, I explore the practical aspects of multi-cultural UX research and design projects.

## 1 Introduction

From a manufacturer’s point of view, products should ideally be standardized across all points of sale as much as possible. However, most interactive products need to be adapted to local and cultural aspects to some extent. As UX researchers, it is our goal to identify differences and commonalities between cultures and to guide manufacturers to product designs that are successful across all points of sale.

## 2 Topics

Typical management challenges that are unique to UX research include, but are not limited to:

- Finding the best management model
  - centralized, decentralized or cooperative. We need to find the best balance between a structured and standardized approach and at the same time tapping into the local cultural knowledge of local experts.
- Collaborating with local experts/vendors
  - Finding a local vendor is difficult. We need to make sure we have a common understanding of methods, processes and scientific background in UX. The vendor needs to

be aware of cultural differences and able to help with interpreting research findings. International networks such as the UX Alliance or the International UX Partners are a great resource. Preparing a study, briefing all parties, ensuring a consistent methodology and execution as well as interpretation and documentation of findings need careful planning and practice.

- Recruiting the right research participants
  - Does the target population even exist in all countries? We need to make sure we recruit participants who represent the target population in each country. The target group needs to be described in familiar terms to local recruiters. Rather than using exact figures (e.g. income brackets), we need to understand how each recruitment criterion translates in each country. This requires preliminary research and effort.
- Using suitable tools, scales and metrics
  - Remote testing tools are a great way of targeting an international audience. However, we need to ensure that all rating scales and measurements are comparable across countries. Also, remote testing is not always a suitable stand-alone approach. A careful mix of tools, methods and metrics must be designed for each multinational study.
- Logistics
  - We need to consider worldly challenges such as technical standards, customs, shipping of testing materials, travel, internet access etc.

### 3 Author's background

Jakob Biesterfeldt is Managing Director for UserZoom Germany. UserZoom is software for remote UX research and is used by clients worldwide for multi-cultural remote UX research studies.

Previously, Jakob served as Director International Research for UID, where, he managed UX research projects in over 30 countries. In 2006, Jakob founded the International User Experience Partners, a global network of UX agencies.

Jakob is a board member of the UXPA and was conference chair for the 2010 international UPA conference in Munich.

Jakob speaks, publishes and lectures on intercultural usability and UX.

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