

## GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL ASIAN AMERICAN RESEARCH

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### ABSTRACT

Because the Asian American market in the United States is regionally large, fast growing, and affluent, many marketers will want to learn more and more about it. However, doing research on this market requires some special knowledge and techniques. Our objective in this paper is to alert readers to methodological problems, obstacles, and pitfalls that they may encounter when doing market research focused on Asian Americans.

The authors undertook an exploratory study to examine the attitudes of elderly Asian Americans toward their doctors and their health care. We faced challenges similar to researchers doing international marketing research: (1) Complexity of research design, (2) Lack of secondary data, (3) Costs of collecting primary data, (4) Coordination of research and data collection across countries, (5) Difficulty of establishing comparability and equivalence. Our versions of five significant challenges and our responses are briefly noted below in this abstract.

### FINDING RESPONDENTS

The San Francisco Area is home to many Asian Americans but gaining access to them and responses from them is difficult. Our study's population target, elderly Asian Americans, and research topic, health care attitudes, were specific enough that we contacted some health care facility administrators to obtain respondents.

### ASIAN AMERICAN SUBSEGMENTS

We suggest that it will rarely be useful to group all Asian Americans together. We believe that certain beliefs and values will differ if a person comes from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, or China. Chinese people vary in attitudes and beliefs depending on whether they immigrated to the U.S. from Mainland China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong. In

addition to country of origin, the length of time in the United States will make a difference in their attitudes and opinions.

### QUESTIONNAIRE SCALES AND CULTURE

The scale most often used in our questionnaire was a five point scale ranging from very negative to very positive. Many of our respondents were not comfortable with using this scale, one commonly used in the United States. Also some elderly female Chinese American respondents wondered why professors would want their opinions.

### TRANSLATION FOR THE WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Getting the questionnaire translated well is a crucial task that is time consuming and expensive. We learned that the idea that although there are several different spoken Chinese dialects but only one written Chinese language does not mean all readers will obtain the same meaning from the same written characters.

### TRANSLATORS FOR FIELD RESEARCH

We did anticipate the need for translators at the senior center where we obtained about one-third of our sample. We hired a variety of translators who spoke both Mandarin and Cantonese as well as fifteen different dialects of Chinese.

### CONCLUSION

Our experiences suggest that marketing research among Asian Americans is likely to be more expensive, more time consuming, and more trying than research among the majority population of nonAsian Americans. Nevertheless, this market is a very important one for many marketers and will become more important in the future.