

One Size Doesn't Fit All

Multiple people can impact the success of a pharmaceutical product, from patients and physicians to payers and nurses. Market research needs to consider these different groups of people, all of whom are complex individuals. People can quite comfortably hold contradictory opinions or exhibit behaviours which are not in keeping with their stated beliefs. Many may carefully recycle their rubbish, and reduce the number of plastic bags they use. However, these same people are comfortable to go on distant holidays without considering the environmental impact of airline travel.

If in your research plan you limit yourself to one approach with one target audience, you will only see one side of the argument. It's not about changing the research methodology, or using the newest approach, it's about taking a holistic view. Patients are difficult to understand, if you ask them what advice they would give a newly diagnosed patient, they often say 'take your medication as prescribed'. Yet, they will freely admit

that they don't follow their own advice, but can't explain why. To fully understand this, you need an all encompassing research plan. Recently a patient in an in depth interview claimed he exercised every day. We asked if we could spend a day with him, and discovered that he walked his dog every day from his mobility scooter, thereby not taking a single step of exercise – his perception was very different to the reality. Only a well designed research study could capture this. Physicians do not make prescribing choices on clinical data alone. Clinical experience and what happens in their surgery are critical, but what is also important is their subconscious emotional response. Why do so many physicians over-estimate the efficacy of products? It is because they *believe* in them, they are engaged and trust them, even when the raw clinical data says something different.

As researchers, we need to be in the world of our audiences, we need to get out from behind the data and experience their lives. It is

not only important to ask good questions, but to ask the right questions to understand the international cultural context. A German's concern about over eating can be a Korean's worry about stomach cancer. They come from the same source, but the cultural perception is different. Your understanding of people, whoever the stakeholder is, should not be constrained by the research methodology you select. Research has to be really good at capturing the big picture and the totality. People don't make decisions or take actions using a linear process, they think, feel and do things, whether they are physicians or payers.



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