Ultimate guide to translation for market research

Top tips for getting it right first time

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Introduction

Translation is a key part of international market research projects and getting it right first time can not only save time and money, but ensure the smooth running of the project from start to finish.

In this guide, we will look at your options for translating your market research materials, how to select a provider, preparing your materials and what to expect from the process.

We'll go through the process one step at a time:
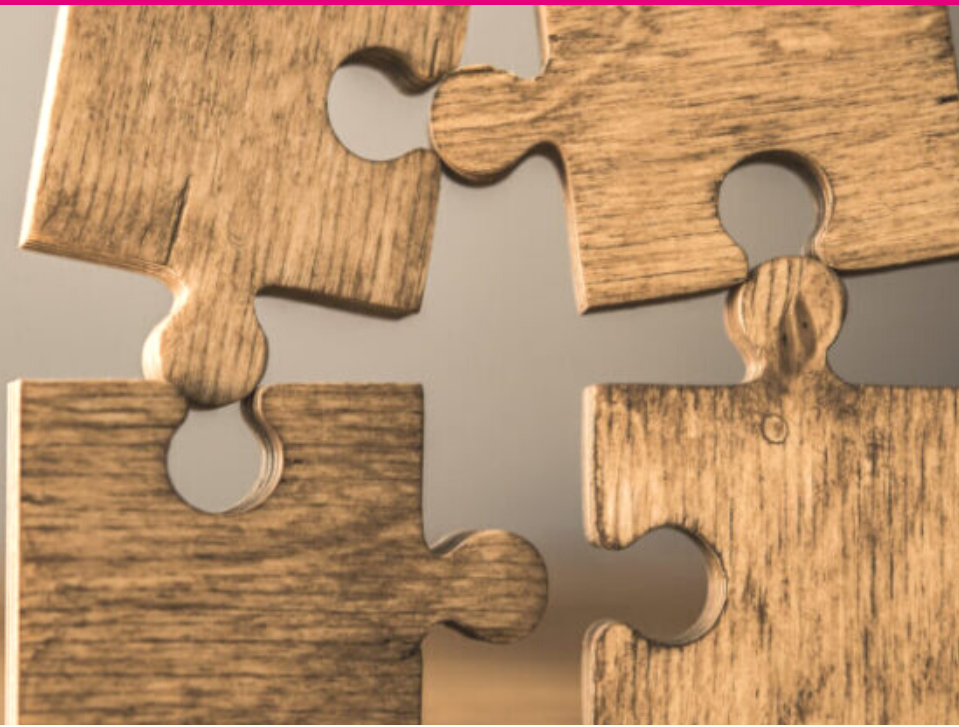
Step 1 - Translator or agency?

Step 2 - Selecting a translation agency

Step 3 - Preparing your project

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Translator or agency?

It's no secret that budget is important in any market research project and working directly with a translator may seem the most cost-effective and time-efficient option.

Liasing directly with your linguist may be advantageous on a single-market project. However, if you are running a multi-country study or multiple studies at once, this process becomes more complex and time-consuming.

Multi-country studies require a linguist for each market, in some instances multiple linguists. This increases the level of communication proportionately as you liaise with multiple linguists, working independently and potentially in different time zones.

Working with a reputable translation agency, offers advantages that go beyond budget:

- A single point of contact for each project or multiple projects

- Experienced and specialist Project Managers for concise communication

- Access to professional linguists, hand picked based on language combination and industry experience

- Consistently managed query handling

- Additional services such as proofreading or online QC by second, equally-qualified linguists, verbatim translation, coding and transcription

- A smooth process from initial brief to on-time delivery of translated materials

- Flexibility when projects are behind schedule

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Selecting a translation agency

There are a plethora of translation agencies out there in what is largely an unregulated industry. With so many to choose from, there are still criteria you can use to find the right one for your market research project.

Market research experience

An experienced agency will understand the market research industry and its challenges, including the balance of cost, timings and quality.

Recruitment process

To ensure quality, linguist recruitment should be based on mother-tongue language ability, membership of professional bodies and references. A successful test translation will help to ensure they can deliver what they promise. In the case of market research, experience in the right terminology, phrasing and cultural references is also vital.

Data protection

As a Data Processor for you, the Controller, the agency should have relevant procedures in place for the safe and legal handling of personal data. This includes signed contracts with their linguists in their capacity as Sub-Processors plus, where appropriate, EC Standard Contractual Clauses.

Quality

In addition to industry best practice quality procedures, compliance with the relevant portion of ISO 20252 will ensure the best quality for your market research translations. Further ISO standards such as 17100, which governs translation and revision services, will also provide reassurance as to the quality of the service you are receiving.

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Preparing your project for translation

Space and time

Allow enough time
Factors that may affect the translation timeline include the length of the document, local bank holidays and linguist availability particularly when translating into a less common languages.

Keep it short and simple
Short, concise sentences are easier to translate accurately. Avoid conveying multiple ideas in the same sentence to improve consistency in your results.

Layout and space
Translations may be longer than the original text so allow extra room in your layout for this expansion. This is particularly important in PowerPoint presentations or one pagers such as product profiles.

Language

Public holidays
Linguists in different countries may have national or regional holidays not observed where you are. Brief your agency to ensure you have the right translators available at the right time. The same is true of respondents and your translation agency should be able to advise you of periods best avoided.

Software
Languages using different fonts and/or written right to left, such as Arabic and Hebrew, can prove challenging for some market research software. You may wish to conduct some tests prior to launching your survey and we would always recommend an online QC to ensure the survey presents as it should.

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The translation process

The translation process may seem simple and if you work with a reputable translation agency it should be - to you. Understanding what steps your Project Manager (PM) takes may help you with planning the project at your end so here are some key points.

Experienced project management

Quoting
The PM will prepare your files, screening the text for complexities and duplicated copy to guarantee the word count and cost are accurate. An experienced PM can also identify potential challenges and anomalies, saving time in the long run.

Selecting and liaising with linguists
The PM will handpick your linguists based on their language combination, specialist subjects and an understanding of each translator's strengths. They will also handle any queries, pre-screening and grouping them to forward to you.

Managing project timelines
A deadline will be provided, taking into account project size, linguist availability and quality assurance procedures. The deadline, once confirmed, should not be subject to change.

Ensuring quality
Pre-delivery quality checks should follow industry best practice and may include proprietary procedures.

Handling client feedback
Any feedback from the client will be reviewed promptly and passed to the linguists. File updates will be handled similarly, with time being of the essence.

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Quality control

Proofreading (or revision)
Performed by a second, equally-qualified linguist, proofreading involves checking that the translation accurately conveys the meaning of the original text, contains no spelling or grammar mistakes and is appropriate for your target audience. Some agencies may consider proofreading to be monolingual, only reading through the translation, so check to make sure you are getting the service you expect.

ISO certification
For additional reassurances, ISO standard 17100:2015 provides requirements for the linguistic competences, processes and resources necessary for the delivery of a quality translation and revision service. It is regarded as the gold standard in translation quality.

Membership of professional bodies
For UK-based translation agencies, look for membership of the ATC (Association of Translation Companies), ITI (Institute of Translation and Interpreting) or CIoL (Chartered Institute of Linguists).

Linguists themselves may be members of professional bodies in their respective countries, such as the French SFT (Société française des traducteurs) or German BDÜ (Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer).

Data protection
Data protection has significant implications for market research. Any personal data in materials for translation should be flagged to the translation agency. They in turn should only entrust these materials to linguists who have signed a data protection agreement and are in the EEC, EEA or a country deemed adequate.

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1,000+ mother-tongue translators

3 decades of experience

About The Language Factory

For over three decades, The Language Factory has been helping market research companies improve the success of their research projects with high-quality, specialist translation services delivered by mother-tongue linguists.

Our combination of a global network of experienced specialist translators, market-leading technology and expert Project Managers, ensures flawless translations and a seamless end-to-end service.

In addition to survey translation, we also offer other language-related services for the market research industry, including proofreading, English editing, concept matching, online QC, verbatim translation, in-language coding, focus group précis and report translation.

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