Global Usability Testing

"Think Local, Win Global"

A Conversation with Apala Lahiri Chavan
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Global Usability Testing
"Think Local, Win Global"

"We are in a time when one interface is definitely not going to satisfy everybody. This is why I like to say, "Think global, lose local. Think local, win global." If you think only of the big, macro-global picture, you may completely lose out on your potential user population that requires some very specific localization to the interface. There will be many local organizations who will step in and provide interfaces and products that meet the local needs, and you will lose the opportunity. So, if you think locally, you will always win locally as well as win globally. "

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Apala Lahiri Chavan, Chief Oracle and Innovator of Human Factors International, talks about usability testing in today's international markets.

As more companies move into global markets, there will be a need to test products and services in many countries. Is the usability field ready for this?

You are very right, usability testing has certainly gone from being easy to conduct in just one location, usually in the US and a few other countries in western Europe. Now we need to be able to conduct usability tests across the world, not just in the emerging markets in Asia, but in maybe 8, 12, 15 countries spanning both the mature markets as well as the emerging markets. This completely changes the game.

Now it becomes a much more complicated affair. We have to consider not only the logistics of setting up and running tests across so many different countries, with so many different environments and infrastructure capabilities. We also have to know how to design the tests so you can get meaningful data. You also need to be able to analyze and interpret the data so it's really useful for the organization that's sponsoring the test. It has definitely gone to another level of complexity because of the requirement to conduct the tests globally.

If a company is planning to test a product or service in a global market, what should they look for? How should the test be set up? What's different or unique about a global usability test?

Most importantly, the organization that is sponsoring the test may not be aware of the kind of infrastructure, researcher capability, and usability professionals that are available in these countries. All these things matter a lot to the success of the test, and the client may not be aware of them at all. Now the tests are going to be run in some city in China, maybe not even in Beijing or Shanghai, but a smaller city in China. Maybe two second-tier cities in India, and simultaneously in Kenya, and Indonesia.

So it's just not possible for an international corporation who needs these tests to be done to be on top of all this. A design team sitting in Portland, US, is not really ly aware of the approach to take until somebody is actually able to conduct these

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tests in all these countries and deliver the results in a consistent manner, without compromising the integrity of the tests.

Therefore, if you are looking to conduct tests across many countries, including a lot of emerging market countries, you need to find a vendor who has been doing usability testing for a long time, *and* has had a global presence for a long time. Which means this vendor should have already demonstrated their ability to understand the differences in terms of culture, infrastructure, the ethics of conducting studies in different countries, and the local regulations and customs in these countries.

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The vendor should, without any shadow of a doubt, have already demonstrated that they understand this world. This is the kind of vendor you need to look for, because most of the time it is just not possible for an organization, with their internal resources, to be able to conduct tests with this scale of complexity.

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If I am in the United States or Western Europe and want to move a product or build a website for Brazil, can't I just hire a usability company in Brazil, who knows the local market, to do the testing for me?

Yes, If there is just the requirement to do the testing in one country, it's a bit simpler. Then you just need to be aware of how to evaluate whether a vendor who is situated in Brazil has the capability to run your usability test. If you can do this, then it is very possible to get a local vendor in that one country.

"If there is *any* chance you may be doing this test in many countries, it's good to start by looking for a global vendor, who will be able to seamlessly execute the test in all the countries that you need."

Now, why is it so important that you be able to evaluate whether there is such a vendor in Brazil? It's important because you may find that there are lots of vendors in Brazil, and for that matter in several other countries, other emerging countries, who are very skilled at doing market research. They have been conducting focus groups for a long time, surveys for many years. But that doesn't mean they have the skill or the experience to conduct usability testing. Testing is definitely not the same as running focus groups, or running quick surveys. Therefore, it is important that you, as the person who is looking for a local vendor in this one country, be able to understand whether they are really good at running usability tests.

However, if today you are going to do testing in Brazil, but you also know that six months down the line, you will have the requirement to run the same product test across eight other countries spread across other emerging nations… in this case it would not be such a wise decision to look for local vendors in each of these countries. It will be a huge responsibility to make sure that every single vendor you find in each of these eight countries are equally skilled, and can deliver consistent results and interpret the data in a way that you can use. And they must give you valid data, because it is going to be used to launch this new product that you're trying to test.

So, if you really have the requirement to test in just one country, then it's good to look for a vendor that's in that one country. But if there is *any* chance you may be doing this test in many countries, it's good to start by looking for a global vendor, who can run your test today in Brazil, and tomorrow when your requirements expand, the same vendor will now be able to seamlessly execute the test in all the other countries that you need.
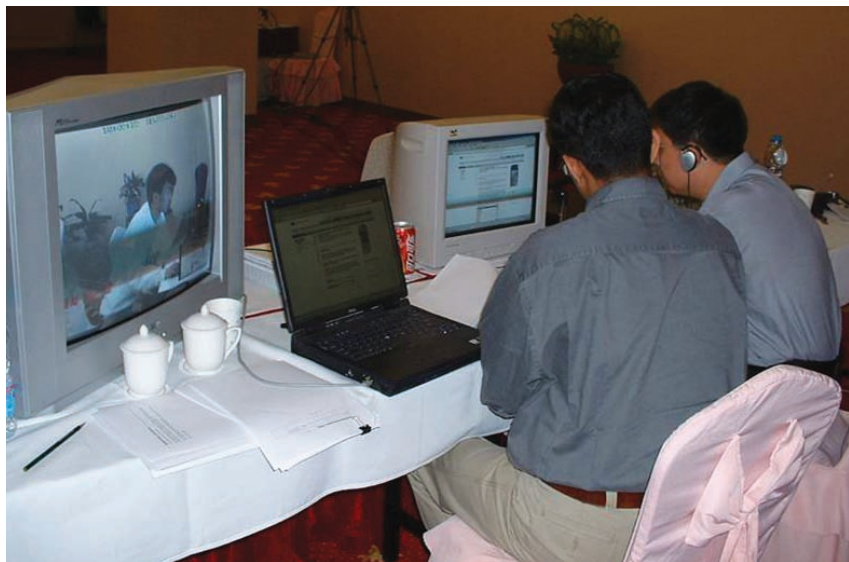
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Apala, you have done a lot of testing in many countries. What kind of surprises pop up that you do not normally find in tests you do in the United States or Europe?

One of the strange aspects of working in many of the emerging market countries, is you have to be very sure, right from the very beginning, that the test participants are genuine. After all the participants are what make or break your test, apart from, of course, your ability to do the testing well. If the participants are not genuine then you don't have any chance of getting any really valid data. Why is this a surprise?

If you are used to running tests in the USA or UK, or France or Germany, it may come as a shock that participants could be fake. You wouldn't find this in the US or Germany. The first time anybody does testing in India or China, it's very difficult for them to even imagine they have to look for this. They have to do a lot of creative screening of participants before they walk into the facility where the testing is being done. They have to make absolutely sure that when the participants walk in the door of the testing facility, there is no doubt they really fit the bill.

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Imagine you have the client sitting there to observe the test you are running. You have no idea that in this country there is the possibility of fake participants. You have a participant who walks in, and you start testing, and then it becomes obvious within fifteen or twenty minutes that there is something very wrong.

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The participant, in spite of the "supposed" background that you have specified for eligible participants, doesn't seem to understand even the line of questioning. They are not able to answer anything. Your clients are observing this and they also clearly understand something is very wrong.

For a vendor who has been working in the US, and has contracted to do some testing for a client in other countries, it's a nightmare, because they have no idea of the local ecosystem. Similarly if clients themselves try to run tests in countries that they are not familiar with, this kind of surprise is very unpleasant.

Because we have run tests in so many countries, I have come across this. In the beginning it was difficult to believe that this was actually happening. You would think that the recruitment agencies would not be party to having fake participants, but you just cannot be sure where the gap is, where the loopholes are.

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We have learned to devise really creative ways in which you can do additional screening before the participants come in. Otherwise there can be these *very* nasty surprises. So this is one important aspect of testing I have found to be very different from the way things work in the US.

Can you give an example of this type of creative screening?

Yes, sure. First of all when we contract out to a recruiting agency, we require a list of the people they are recruiting as it is proceeding, because we want to also make sure they are really going to be ready on time.

Several recruiting agencies in emerging countries have the tendency to say "Yes, yes we are recruiting." Say you have only three days to conduct the test, and 15 participants over those 3 days. But when the day comes to start the testing the recruiting agency comes up and says, "Oh, well we haven't got all the participants, but don't worry we are trying hard." What a disaster.

So as soon as the recruiting agency takes the screening questions and they go off and they start their work screening participants, and they tell us, "It's progressing," we no longer just take their word for it. Instead, what we say is, "OK, as soon as you have a participant, pass on the details to us."

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"We often ask, when we call to do our checking, for them to tell us a story about what we are testing."

This does two things. First, we are sure that they really have somebody, and second, we do a second level of screening. What do we do? We have people in our team who are dedicated to help with this. They call up the participant and ask a few additional questions. They do not ask the participant the same questions as the recruiter has already asked, because the participant already knows those questions, and already knows, if they are fake, how to qualify.

So we ask them completely different questions. It could be a fifteen minute conversation over the phone, and we ask questions which they are not expecting. But the answers to each of these new questions either validate or negate their qualification to be part of the test. At the end of our fifteen minute conversation, we are very clear whether this is a genuine participant, or if there is a doubt. If there is any doubt, we immediately go back to the recruiter and say, "Sorry, you have to find somebody else, because we are not feeling totally satisfied with this particular participant."

You can see the amount of extra effort. There is a lot of ingenuity used in how we construct those 3 or 4 questions that we would ask them. We often ask, when we call to do our checking, for them to tell us a story about what we are testing.

Say we are testing printers. We have given a set of criteria to the recruiters, that this person must be a user of say, an HP printer. It doesn't matter which model. They must be a user of an HP printer for a minimum of say one year, should have been buying cartridges and toner over this year, etc. When we call them we ask, "Can you tell us a story about a problem that you have had with your HP printer very recently?"

Now, this is not something they expect. If they are not genuine, if they are not users of HP printers, if they don't buy toners and cartridges, etc., this is where they get caught. They start hesitating, and hemming and hawing, because they don't know of any instance where a problem happened with a specific HP printer. The moment we find that hesitation and that floundering, the alarm bells start going off. Then we think, "Uh-oh, this looks like a participant who does not actually qualify."

So this is how we construct a defense wave of questioning them over the phone and making sure that they really qualify to be in that test.

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What other surprises come up?

The other big surprise is about infrastructure. If you are used to conducting tests in the US, or France, or Germany, or the Scandinavian countries, and have contracted with somebody for a facility where the test will be done, you usually get what you ask for.

They tell you that the facility has an observation room where you can communicate via a wireless microphone with the moderator who is sitting in the other room. You are told the facility has seating capacity for 8 people in the observation room. Everything will be recorded, you will be able to see the video recording in front of you as it's happening. They can mix different images and give you an edited version. Everything that you are told, 99.9% of the time you will walk into the facility and find it exactly like that. There is no difference from what was described to you. You can walk in and everything is set up. All you need to do is take out your laptop and get ready for the participant to walk in, and you can start.

"If you are testing in India, Kenya, Indonesia, or in China, you can *never* be 100% sure what has been described in a particular facility actually exists."

But if you are testing in India, Kenya, Indonesia, or in China, you can *never* be 100% sure what has been described in a particular facility actually exists. You could very well walk into a facility, expecting it to be the way you always have it in the US, and "Surprise, surprise." You find there is no observation room at all. What they have done is put a wooden temporary screen in the middle of the room where the testing will happen, and they try to convince you that because you sit across on the other side of the screen, you will be able to hear what's happening but the participant and the moderator won't be able to see you.

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> **"Different cultures have different values. But you cannot divide the world into cultures who are very shy, and not shy. That would be easy. But there are different shades in terms of the barriers people have about speaking."**

It's just a makeshift arrangement that has been done. And you may have even been shown pictures of a very different facility. You may find that the video recording does not exist, and several reasons that are given—you didn't tell them, they had some sort of big "snafu" that morning, whatever. A variety of different reasons why the video recording is not happening. So there is *no* way to communicate in an unobtrusive manner with the moderator, no way to ask the moderator to question in a certain manner, or in a certain direction while the test is going on.

In other words, in spite of all your preparations, you stand there at the beginning of the day when you would have started the testing, and realize, "My goodness, I don't know how I am going to do the test in this kind of facility." If you cancel at that last moment, just imagine all of the cost and the effort that is lined up to get those tests done in exactly that time frame. So this is another very big surprise that happens if you are working across different emerging markets.

In past white papers you explained how eliciting information from people in emerging markets can be quite a challenge. Could you comment on how this would also apply to international testing?

Yes, that's a very good question. International testing, by its very nature of being dispersed across so many cultures, has the same issues. You are going to be sitting across the table from a participant in a culture where they are not at all comfortable speaking with a stranger. You have a standard protocol with 12 questions that are written up. But as you ask each question, the participant, who is so conditioned by the culture that he or she belongs to, will answer the questions in a manner that does not reflect what they are really thinking. They have been brought up to be very, very cautious about what they say in front of a stranger.

If you are unaware of this, you will take what they say at face value, thinking that what they say is exactly what they mean. But the result is you are going to carry information to your client, based on which they are going to make product decisions, which may be completely incorrect. The participants who are not comfortable telling you what they really think, only told you what they felt was safe, and what you seemed to want to hear. So this is another very big issue.

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Different cultures have different values. But you cannot divide the world into cultures who are very shy, and not shy. That would be easy. But there are different shades in terms of the barriers people have about speaking. Some may be happy to speak, but have a problem speaking freely if the moderator happens to be a very young person. In the hierarchy of that particular culture, if the participant is a much older person, he or she will not speak on any serious matter with somebody so much younger. Now you have a problem. Here the person would speak very freely if the moderator was around the same age as the participant.

But in other countries it is the opposite. A participant could feel very hesitant to speak freely in front of somebody who is the same age, but seems more qualified than the participant. This participant will speak more freely with a moderator who is much younger. The participant thinks, "Oh, he's a kid. In my culture you don't take kids seriously, you don't feel scared of them. I can say whatever I want in front of this kid."

"Every culture has its own triggers that make people speak freely. In order to successfully run tests, and get people to talk as if they are thinking aloud, you have to understand what those triggers are."

So, every culture has its own triggers that make people speak freely. In order to successfully run tests, and get people to talk as if they are thinking aloud, you have to understand what those triggers are, so you make the situation very conducive to

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making people resonate in the way that you ask the questions. They need to feel comfortable with the way the moderator talks to them, the body language of that person, etc. This is of paramount importance in international testing.

Once you have all of that in place, you have the correct participant, the correct infrastructure, and you know how to ask the questions, what kind of information can you expect from a global UT that you wouldn't get from traditional testing?

Because it's global, the interesting aspect is to see how the same interface fares across many different cultures. That's the most interesting part for me. Say we have an interface that was created in the US, we have done a lot of testing in the US, and everything is fine. But suddenly now, when you test in 9 different countries, participants in every country have very different reactions, both emotionally and in terms of performance. They have different results and reactions to the same interface. It's fun to see the patterns across all these countries, which tell you what's working and what's not working in different cultures, in terms of the interface you are testing.

This is what is unique about global testing. I have seen a lot of things that come as a very big surprise when you take an interface and expose it to people in different countries. You say, "My goodness, the participants just interpreted that interface in a completely different way from what I saw in the last country where I tested it." This kind of thing happens a lot when you do international testing.

We were doing testing for a large sports footwear company. What we found was *very* surprising, They asked us to test their site in six countries. The site was meant for youngsters in the 15 to 21 age group. The company wanted us to find out whether this target segment would look at all their sports clothing, all their track suits, their shirts, t-shirts, etc. Would these youngsters be interested if there was a whole section on the site with all of these garments available?

So in the United Kingdom as each participant came in we said, "Say you want to buy a t-shirt from this company, and it's available on this site. Can you please go and look for an appropriate t-shirt." They look everywhere, but they can't get beyond the first page. They say, "There is no such place. There is nothing here that tells me that they're selling or showing us any t-shirts on this site."

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Why did this happen? Because the company named the section, "Apparel." Not one British youngster of that age group understood the word "apparel." It is a word that is not in currency in Britain in this age group. That word was a show stopper, because everyone came away with the impression that the company doesn't have anything like that on their site. So that was very surprising.

Also, this company spent a lot of money in having videos of David Beckham, the popular football player, in one section of the site. Their assumption was again, that these youngsters are going to love their products and come to the website multiple times every day because all of these Beckham football videos, and endorsement videos etc. that are available in this one section.

Now, each participant when given a scenario about finding Beckham's latest video, found the section very easily. Then, when asked about whether they would use it, about how satisfied they were with this section of the site, they said, "Why would we use this? Beckham has his own website. Why would we come to this site and watch what Beckham has said or done when we could go to Beckham's own website and get much better video and audio coverage?"

So here you go. The company is trying to fulfill a need that doesn't exist. And they have spent so much money already in putting it together, but it's already too late when they figure out in the test that it is not going to help them.

"There is a need that doesn't exist, and the company has spent so much money already in putting it together, but it's already too late when they figure out in the test that it is not going to help them."

Is it helpful when designing an interface in North America for a global market, to use designers from the countries that the organization wants to be in right from the start?

Absolutely. If that was to happen as a mandate or "best practice", it would make so many products more successful and much more cost effective in terms of the time and effort spent on developing them.

I think a lot of people might feel that if you use a picture of the Taj Mahal on your interface, that somehow this takes care of localizing it for India because

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people will feel at home when they see that. Have you seen situations where people have "localized" their interface, but had unexpected results?

Even when local designs are made, there can still be surprises. Designers often feel that they can sit in one country and design a website, and decide from a distance how to treat it for localized audiences. They don't bother to ask anybody locally. They take no interest in the local culture. This can sometimes cause some very nasty surprises to arise.

> **"Designers often feel that they can sit in one country and you design a website, and decide from a distance how to treat it for localized audiences."**

For example, we were doing the testing for a European telecommunications website across 8 or 9 different countries. Their design team had said, "We know that every country's home page should really reflect a certain connection with the local value system, what the local population finds important." They had created different images and layouts for the home pages of the different country sites.

On the French website, the home page had an image of the actor Pierce Brosnan who played James Bond. This company did a lot of product placement in the James Bond movies at that time and wanted to leverage that association. They also understood that the French audience liked Pierce Brosnan.

We gave the French participants a task—to find a particular product. They come to the home page, and what do they see—Pierce Brosnan takes up 3/4 of the

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> **"But the real problem that the design team was very isolated in one country, and using their creative ideas to localize stuff and then test. And such an expensive effort to test it."**

page. The result is, information that should have been on the first page isn't there. They have to go somewhere else, to some other page, to find the product.

The participants had very interesting reactions. They got very angry, and said, "Why have they wasted all this space on this actor? I am not interested in looking at the image of this actor. You are asking me to find a product. Why should I sit here and waste my time? I will just walk to a shop. They won't waste my time with this photograph."

So that was a very strange reaction to the company, because they thought they had done a great job in putting Pierce Brosnan's picture there.

Then we went to the United Kingdom. Here the home page had a large cartoon taking up 3/4 of the page. It talked about the products in general, but it was a cartoon. Every participant who saw this asked, "What is this? Am I *really* on the right site? It can't be. How can they be talking about something serious like their products with this childish cartoon here? I just don't feel I can trust this site. Are you sure you want me to continue to do all of these tasks on this site?"

Again, something very surprising, because here the design team had done all their research and their homework, and discovered that the British population probably like cartoons. But the real problem was the design team was very isolated in one country, and using their creative ideas to localize stuff and then test. And such an expensive effort to test it.

Have you done a usability test and discovered that the particular product or service or interface isn't appropriate for that culture at all, and the company should really go back to the drawing board and start again?

Yes, totally. We were testing a particular financial services website which was to be launched in China. Luckily it was prior to launch that we were testing it. We were testing 24 participants. After about 7 participants it became very clear the concept itself was completely misunderstood by the participants. They just could not understand why they would use a website like the one that we were testing, for transacting monies, since it was not a bank. They were completely confused and feeling like this was not anything useful for them. They said they would use alternative mechanisms. Why on earth would they use this website?

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"You need to understand diversity in cultures, in other words, anthropology and ethnography. I think it's a very useful background to have to do international testing."

It became very clear after about 7-10 participants that running this test was the wrong thing to do. What we needed to do instead was to stop the test, and do some exploratory research with the remaining participants. We needed to see *why* they didn't understand the concept. Certainly they were not familiar with the concept, but even when it was explained to them they just didn't warm up to the idea. So we had to switch the test from looking at doing tasks on the interface, to trying to get their insights about what they felt about the general concept. What would make them want to use a concept like this?

So yes, it has happened that the client thinks that they are ready to go ahead and launch their product, and they have a prototype they want to test, but it's really bad news. They haven't done enough work to understand whether the concept connects with the local population—if there is a need for it at that time or not.

It sounds like you need a background in ethnography to really be good at global usability testing.

I personally feel that really helps. When we were doing usability testing in just one country, then it was all very different. You could be a usability engineer, and you could come from a background of psychology ,or design, or human factors. That

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was sufficient, because all you were doing was looking at one culture, and most of the time it was your own culture, and you were testing people on a particular interface. But when that changes, and you, as the person responsible for the testing, have to factor in 10 different cultures as far as this one product is concerned, then a completely different type of discipline is needed. You need to understand diversity in cultures, in other words cultural anthropology and ethnographic techniques. I think it's a very useful background to have to do international testing.

"It is a little bit like being a detective, because you have to constantly look for clues to be sure that a particular local facility, or language moderator, or translators that you may use in any specific location, are really genuine."

It seems that as well as being an expert in usability testing, you also have to manage all the companies that you use for testing in ways that are quite different from what you are used to in North America.

Totally. It is a little bit like being a detective, because you have to constantly look for clues to be sure that a particular local facility, or language moderator, or translators that you may use in any specific location, are really genuine. You have to know the signs to look for that reassure you that everything is fine, and the signs that tell you, "Oh-oh, it's not good." Then you start to ferret out more information, to be clear you are on the right track with these local facilities, etc. So yes, it's a combination of different skills that you don't need if you are just doing testing in one country.

Can anyone who knows how to do traditional testing run a global UT? Or is there special training involved?

It's certainly not the case that if you've been doing traditional testing in one country, you can now use that skill easily and run testing in multiple countries. A very different skillset is required. Can somebody who is very good with usability testing in one country be trained? Yes, I believe they can. As long as they are interested in the fact that there are cultural differences, and we must accommodate those differences in how we design our testing, how we deal with the local infrastructure. If you are open and interested in dealing with these issues, and learning how they factor in, and find that, in itself, an interesting learning experience, then it's possible to be trained.

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On the other hand, if someone expects no matter what, everything in every country should be conducted and run exactly like it is in the US, then that person is going to be very difficult to train for multiple country testing.

What would you say are the 4 or 5 factors that make an international UT really world-class?

Firstly, that the team doing the international effort, is a team that is very skilled with understanding, analyzing, and interpreting cultural differences. That's critical, that's number 1.

Number 2—the team should be very experienced with the differences in terms of infrastructure and logistics for running tests across different countries. That's very critical.

Number 3—the team needs to be very familiar with the customs in different countries in terms of incentives for participants. This can make it very easy to set up testing in different countries or not. If you are aware of the different expectations and customs regarding how to incentivize test participation, it's going to make it a lot easier to get really good participants.

Number 4—being able to understand how you use remote testing technology, If you have clients who are in a very different geography, and you are given the responsibility of organizing and running tests across multiple countries, you should have a complete grasp of the latest tools and technology that allow people view these tests remotely, as you run them. So, in real time, people can log in and view the test, and see what's going on. This makes it much easier for the client organization to get a first-hand feel without having to travel. This helps them understand why international testing has differences from the way they may be used to conducting tests in their own country.

Number 5, of course, is your ability to interpret the data and get insights from both the similarities you see across the different countries, and the differences. How do these similarities and differences impact the product, the interface, the service you are testing. Your ability to give insightful recommendations is a very critical factor in getting real value out of international testing.

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I would say these are the most important things that make an international testing effort well worth the money.

HFI also does PET design™ research, where they look at drives and blocks in terms of persuasion, emotion, and trust in the design. Is there a relationship between persuasion research and doing global usability tests? Do some of the principals of PET design need to be applied, or is that a completely separate approach?

PET research is very different. Though, to be honest, the more I do usability testing I feel that testing, in itself, needs to expand its own horizons, and include the kind of approach one uses in PET research, and in other ethnographic research, where we use a lot of participant and ecosystem observation, projective techniques etc.

> **"To be honest, the more I do usability testing I feel that testing, in itself, needs to expand its own horizons, and include the kind of approach one uses in PET research, and in other ethno-graphic research."**

In usability testing you are basically looking at the interaction between the user and a particular product or interface—it's a one-to-one relationship that you are probing. But the fact is that the person, when using the product or interface inside the lab, is in a very artificial situation. That person decides everything based on so many influences that are actually outside the testing lab. So usability testing should now morph a little bit into becoming broader in its approach.

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It should not just be, "Let's go through 10 tasks and see how efficiently people do this." This is what we have been doing all the time, and of course it's very important. But we should also ask, "Will this person really use this interface?" which is what we do in PET research.

Pet research is completely focused on trying to get deep into the participants' minds and discover the deep fears that prevent them from using something. It's not just about efficiency, it's also about motivation. I feel traditional usability testing now needs to embrace some of this PET approach, thereby making it more holistic in the output one can offer a client from a usability test.

"I would say that 90% of the success of this kind of effort depends on identifying the right kind of vendor."

If a company is ready to go ahead and do some testing, in 5, or 10, or 20 different global markets, what are the steps that they should take to move forward?

If they are going to do testing in so many different countries, the most important thing is to find a vendor that is most appropriate and most qualified to run tests in multiple countries. I would say that 90% of the success of this kind of effort depends on identifying the right kind of vendor. So any corporation, anybody who's embarking on a multi-country test initiative, *please* get the right vendor in place, then everything else will very naturally fall into place.

Do you have any closing remarks?

It's very important that everybody who has been involved in conducting usability testing, or in commissioning usability testing, should now be prepared to look at usability testing 2.0. We can no longer take a protocol with 10 tasks that were written 20 years ago, and just keep changing the name of the product or the interface, and a few words here or there, and keep using the same protocol. It's not going to work anymore, because the world is now much more interlinked, more complex. There are more environmental factors, by which I mean the influence of the participants' ecosystem. All of this is becoming very critical to understand, even when you are deciding whether the interface of your website is the most appropriate interface that you want to have out there. So, I think that it's time for everyone to look at what usability testing 2.0 is going to be like.

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We are in a time when one interface is definitely not going to satisfy everybody. This is why I like to say, "Think global, lose local. Think local, win global."

If you think only of the big, macro-global picture, you may completely lose out on your potential user population that requires some very specific localization to the interface. How do you understand what is required if you haven't done any exploratory research, ecosystem research, or PET research, and you are just doing usability testing later on in your design life-cycle? How do you understand and factor in the local requirements in your interfaces? How do you even elicit that information?

"We are in a time when one interface is definitely not going to satisfy everybody. This is why I like to say, 'Think global, lose local. Think local, win global.'"

This is very important. Otherwise you will continue to think globally, but lose all your local customers. There will be many local organizations who will step in and provide interfaces and products that meet the local needs, and you will lose the opportunity.

So, if you think locally, you will always win locally as well as win globally. I think this need is very clear in today's world, and that in itself will drive towards a different way in which usability tests will be conducted. I believe it will become mainstream to have this international element, as well as other approaches, incorporated into usability testing.

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About Apala

Apala Lahiri Chavan, MS, CUA
Chief Oracle and Innovator
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Apala Lahiri Chavan, MA, MSc, CUA, was responsible for starting up Human Factors International's UX consulting operations across Asia (Mumbai, Bangalore, Pondicherry, Shanghai, and Singapore) since joining HFI in 2000 as Managing Director–India, and Vice President–Asia.

Apala has taken on a new role recently in HFI as Chief Oracle and Innovator. Apala and her Contextual Innovation team have helped designers, marketers, product managers, and ethnographers in Fortune 500 companies apply her innovative techniques to develop exciting new concepts and products.

She systematically guides the ideation process to uncover subtle patterns in ethnographic and market data to reveal the exciting breakthrough ideas that can drive business and generate more revenue and profit on the one hand, and improve quality of life for users on the other hand.

Recently, her focus has been on the emerging markets. She has co-edited a book on this subject, *Innovative Solutions: What Designers Need to Know For Today's Emerging Markets*.

Apala is an award winning designer (International Audi Design Award) and specializes in the area of Cross Cultural Innovation and Design.

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