



Apr 7, 2015

Five Tips & Tricks To Make Your Indian Research Project Go Smoothly

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By [Ankitha Bharadwaj](#)

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On the surface it might look like there aren't a lot of differences in how UX research is conducted in India, or any other country. Yet, during my stay in Hyderabad and working with the Kern team I quickly learned there are significant differences between the US and India in terms of the design, planning, and execution of a research project. As an Indian and a researcher myself, some of these revelations were particularly illuminating.

So here I am to share with you my top 5 tips for conducting user research in India.

1. Know that Indians are very agreeable people. This becomes important in [user research](#) when you realize that interview results may be skewed because Indians are trying to be agreeable rather than being honest. I found some of the respondents were inclined to try to

please me as the researcher and tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. The way to correct this is for the researcher to ask open questions that aren't leading in any way. This will keep participants from latching on to what they think we want to hear, and their responses will be more focused on genuine experience.

2. Be aware of the holiday calendar. Indians celebrate numerous holidays and festivals and our study was initially slated to take place in the middle of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. We were advised to push our start date back and had a much easier time recruiting because of the updated schedule. Here's [a brief calendar of events](#) in India to keep in mind as you plan your projects through the end of 2021.

3. Be scrappy in your recruiting. Recruiting agencies aren't quite established in India, so the Kern team had to effectively use the following methods to find research participants for our study:

- Facebook posts
- Tweet blasts
- Meet-up groups
- Word of mouth
- Recruiting through previous participants

In this way we were able to find and engage with the participants, and meet our study's requirements.

4. Be prepared for all manner of cultural and technical possibilities. Internet can be unreliable, so bring a back up WiFi hotspot if connectivity is required. Make sure there is a female researcher present when interviewing female participants to ensure they are comfortable. Finally, plan to conduct the interview in the most common language in the area you are doing the research. Usually English will suffice if you are speaking with educated people or working professionals. For research in more rural areas, it gets tricky. India has major languages that vary between states and within each language there are hundreds of dialects. Double check the language requirements beforehand and contract with a local translation company as needed.

5. Be a good houseguest. When conducting [in-home research](#), it's important to dress the part (i.e., clothes that are more on the conservative side) and keep the environment in mind. Indian homes tend to be small and families large, so limit the staff to one researcher and one observer/tech staffer. Remove your shoes upon entering — it demonstrates that you respect the participant's home. Bring your appetite, as you will be offered food and drink! This is very normal. Finally, be prepared to be a bit of a spectacle. Family members may stare and ask for a photo with you, especially if you are fair-skinned. My best advice is to smile and be as agreeable as possible — it isn't every day that strangers are invited in to their homes and this is a big occasion for the participants.

While only a short list of tips and tricks, I am sure there are many others that deserve a place on this list. What have you learned in your research in India or other foreign nations?



Ankitha Bharadwaj works in user research at Blink UX. She's a doer and a trier, and spends her free time thinking about how we know what we know is, in fact, the truth.