A collection of medals and a compass on a wooden surface. The medals include a red ribbon medal, a blue ribbon medal, and two silver star-shaped medals. A pair of glasses is also visible. A compass is in the bottom left corner.

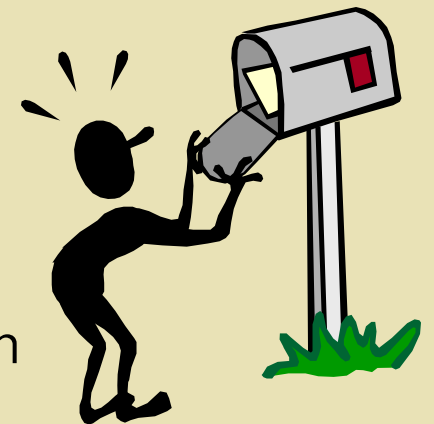
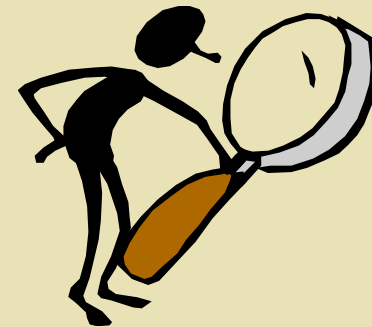
How to survive international mail surveys:

A personal reflection based on two large-scale surveys

Anne-Wil Harzing
University of Melbourne
Email: anne-wil@harzing.com
www.harzing.com

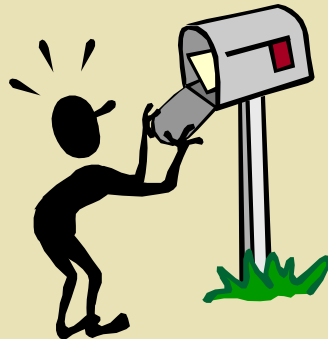
International mail surveys

- ◆ **Database of addresses**
 - Accuracy will vary across countries
 - Get locals to verify addresses
- ◆ **Mailing process**
 - International reply-paid, mailing times
- ◆ **Personalisation**
 - Pictures
 - Real signature
 - International committee of recommendation
 - Note for PA/secretary in local language
- ◆ **Incentives**
 - Money, tea/coffee, results, article
- ◆ **Language & timing**



Response rates by country

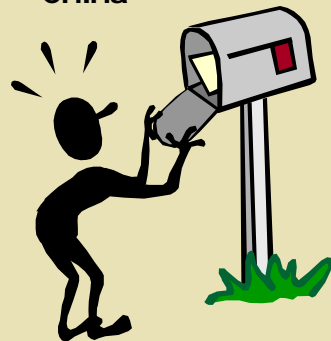
Country	Response rate	Country	Response rate
Hong Kong	7%	Belgium	20%
USA	11%	Sweden	20%
Argentina	13%	Brazil	22%
France	14%	Italy	24%
Singapore	14%	Netherlands	27%
Venezuela	14%	Japan	29%
Mexico	15%	Switzerland	30%
Germany	16%	Ireland	31%
Spain	16%	Finland	32%
UK	19%	Norway	41%
Austria	19%	Denmark	42%



Harzing, 1995-1996,
mailed from the Netherlands

Response rates by country

Country	Response rate	Country	Response rate
North America	2.35%	Latin America	3.48%
USA	1.2%	Argentina	6.5%
Canada	5.8%		
Europe	2.92%	Australia	16%
Netherlands	6.5%	New Zealand	22%
Portugal	11.4%		
Austria, France, Italy, Greece	0%	Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Egypt, Tunesia, Ghana (6 questionnaires or less)	17%-100%
Asia	3.28%		
China	6.3%		



Harzing & Noorderhaven, 2002
mailed from Australia

IMS: Language effects

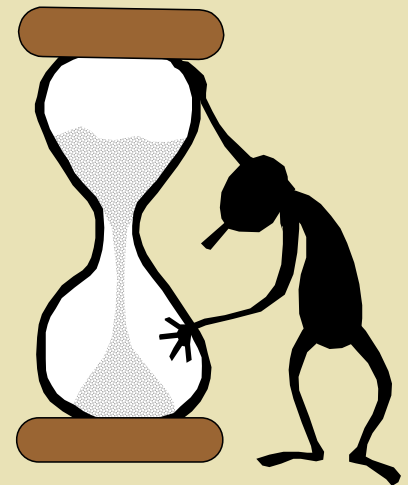
- ◆ Research question: Do people respond in a way that reflects the cultural assumptions embedded in the language of the questionnaire (cultural accommodation)?
- ◆ Strictly matched respondents, UG students in Business
50% English questionnaire, 50% native language
- ◆ Three types of questions:
 - cultural values (Activity, Relationship),
elective choice, ideal job
- ◆ 22 countries, major cultural groups: Anglo, Scandinavian, Germanic, Latin European, East European, Near Eastern, Far Eastern, Latin American (still looking for new countries!)
- ◆ 3,200 respondents, data collected March 2001-April 2002
- ◆ Conclusion: language influences responses on attitudinal questions and English-language questionnaires underestimate differences across countries



IMS: Timing effects

The September 11 effect

- ◆ Data collected as part of language project
 - USA in March 2001 and October 2001
 - UK February 2001 and October 2001
 - Anglo-Saxons in France Feb-June 2001
- ◆ Sign. differences between UK 1/2, Anglo France, US1 and USA 2 on:
 - Relationship Hierarchy
 - Relationship Individualism
- ◆ Significant differences between US 1 & 2 on:
 - Ideal job: variety & adventure, security of employment, serve your country
- ◆ Timing of data collection can impact results



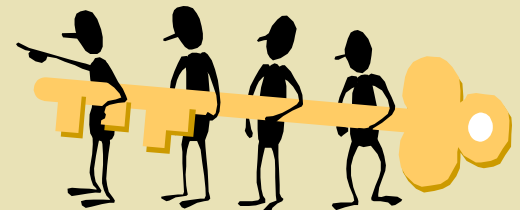
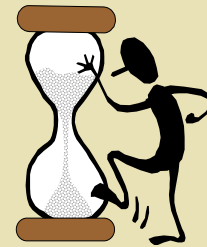
IMS: Conclusions

- ◆ For top managers: forget it, unless you have a huge budget!
 - Too busy, PA will filter
 - Many MNCs company policy not to respond
 - Most incentive techniques will not work
 - Be realistic, more than 15-20% might be impossible even for domestic surveys
- ◆ In general: investigate alternatives
- ◆ If you do decide to conduct an IMS:
 - Pay attention to every minute detail yourself or get a dedicated RA
 - Don't treat data collection as a last minute operation, the weakest link will determine your result



IMS alternatives: Decentralised data collection?

- ◆ Good alternative for “easy” populations & research design, but think really long-term otherwise
- ◆ Translation procedures
 - Country collaborator responsible
 - Coordinator verified (back-)translation
- ◆ Data collection and data entry
 - CC responsible, provided details on circumstances of collection
 - Coordinator supplied 10 page (single-spaced) instruction document for data collection
 - Fully coded SPSS data entry file & data entry instructions provided by coordinator
- ◆ Team building
 - Regular status reports, democratic decision-making, introductions document, co-authorship, **COMMUNICATION** (>2000 emails)





Some references



- ◆ Harzing (1997) **Response rates in international mail surveys: Results of a 22 country study**, *International Business Review*, Vol. 6, no. 6, pp. 641-665.
- ◆ Jobber & O'Reilly, D. (1998) **Industrial Mail Surveys. A methodological Update**, *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 27, pp. 95-107.
- ◆ Harzing (1999) **Managing the multinationals: An international study of control mechanisms**, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 425 pp. ISBN 1-84064-052-9 [includes detailed review of studies that have investigated ways to improve response rates]
- ◆ Dillman (2000) **Mail and Internet Surveys. The Tailored Design Method**, New York: Wiley [very good guide, but virtually no info on international mail surveys]
- ◆ Harzing (2000) **Cross-national Industrial Mail Surveys: Why do Response Rates Differ Between Countries**, *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol 29, No 3 May/June, pp. 243-254.