

Executive Summary

This survey was created with the objective to better understand perceptions and attitudes that current ACR members hold of their association. Specifically, the survey provides insights into the following eight issues:

- a) professional concerns that members feel the association should assist with;
- b) perceived value of the international summer conferences;
- c) reasons for not attending the 2016 annual conference in Berlin;
- d) past actions taken by the association to improve the life of its members;
- e) future actions the association could take to improve the life of its members;
- f) process of election of ACR board members;
- g) perceived global nature of ACR;
- h) willingness to participate in ACR committees.

Findings from the survey confirm that ACR is regarded as a global institution that has an important role to play in the professional development of its members and the advancement of the discipline of Marketing. The data uncover ways in which ACR can help satisfy the professional needs of its members and shed light on their preferences in relation to conference organization and attendance:

- networking is the main professional need for which members seek assistance. Non-North American members would additionally welcome help with publishing criteria and research funding;
- members identified “cost reduction” as a future action the association could take to improve their life;
- non-North American members are the most appreciative of the international summer conferences. In addition to the networking opportunities that the more intimate environment of these conferences offers, they also see value in the greater diversity and greater focus on Consumer Culture Theory;
- overall costs and teaching conflicts prevented a substantial portion of members from attending the Berlin 2016 conference;
- the election process of board members is on the whole perceived as fair, transparent, and appropriate by North American and non-North American members alike.

Introduction

The survey was designed by Simona Botti with the help of Rajiv Vaidyanathan and of past ACR Presidents Amna Kirmani, Mary Frances Luce, and Meg Campbell. We thank Leandro Galli, visiting PhD student at London Business School, for his assistance with the data analysis. The survey was launched after the ACR conference in Berlin, on October 24 2016, and data were collected until the end of November 2016. Overall, 657 members participated in the survey, but 19 respondents failed to provide information about the geographic region of their academic institution and were excluded from the following analysis. The final number of respondents is therefore 638.

The quantitative analysis was conducted using the software package IBM SPSS Statistics. Open-ended questions were analysed qualitatively with the aid of SAS

Enterprise Miner Text Analytics. The analyses focus on comparing the views of respondents based at North American institutions to those from non-North American institutions.

Sample Demographics

Over a third (36%) of non-North American respondents are doctoral students, while this figure drops to around a fifth (19%) for the North American subsample. Conversely, Full Professors feature more prominently among the North American based respondents, as they comprise almost a third (29%) of the North American subsample but only a sixth (16%) of the non-North American one. A similar pattern is observed for Associate Professors (23% versus 17%). Assistant Professors are represented equally across both groups, with around 25% of survey participants falling into this category.

Over two thirds of respondents come from public, versus private, schools.

About half of the respondents come from North American schools, 30% from schools in the European Union, and 9% from schools in Asia.

The reported average number of years of ACR membership is around 13.5 for North American members versus 5.5 for non-North American respondents.

In sum, non-North American respondents are on average more junior compared to their North American counterparts, both in terms of their professional experience (job title) and number of years of membership (see tables 1-4). The following results substantially hold when controlling for the professional seniority of the respondents.

Results

1. Professional needs to be addressed

Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point scale (1= not at all; 5 = very much) the extent to which they felt ACR should help them address each of the following professional needs: publishing criteria, travel funding, research funding, funding to organize academic events, external visibility, networking, research method skills, communication skills, writing skills, editorial review boards membership, representation in academic organizations, other.

A composite measure obtained by averaging across the listed professional needs revealed that ACR on the whole is perceived as having a relatively important role to play ($M_{\text{overall}} = 3.4$, $SD = 0.74$). Non-North American members feel more strongly about the need for ACR's assistance than North American ones ($M_{\text{N-NA}} = 3.6$, $SD = 0.76$ vs. $M_{\text{NA}} = 3.2$, $SD = 0.76$; $p < 0.01$). In fact, with the sole exception of "external visibility," non-North American respondents systematically report higher means, although these differences do not always reach statistical significance (see table 5).

The two groups of respondents largely agree in terms of the relative extent to which ACR should be responsible for dealing with networking, which is viewed as top priority ($M_{\text{NA}} = 4.0$, $SD = .98$; $M_{\text{N-NA}} = 4.3$, $SD = .94$), and communication skills, which is not considered particularly important ($M_{\text{NA}} = 2.6$, $SD = 1.2$; $M_{\text{N-NA}} = 3.0$, SD

= 1.2). Differences among the two groups emerge for other types of professional needs.

External visibility (M = 3.6, SD = 1.2) and research methods (M = 3.6, SD = 1.1) are the top concerns for North American respondents. Non-North American members also would like ACR to provide assistance with: publishing criteria (M = 3.9, SD = 1.1), research funding (M = 3.8, SD = 1.2), and funding to organise academic events (M = 3.6, SD = 1.1).

For North American members, travel funding (M = 2.7, SD = 1.4) and writing skills (M = 2.5, SD = 1.3) are not areas of particular concern. In contrast, non-North American members would appreciate some degree of assistance with travel funding (M = 3.4, SD = 1.3) and writing skills (M = 3.4, SD = 1.3).

Table 6 reports the full list of professional needs, and classifies these according to respondents' expressed degree for assistance. Scale mid-point t-tests were conducted to determine which groups reported a "low," "average," or "high" need for assistance.

2. Perceived value of the international summer conference

Only 31% of North American members have attended an international summer conference outside of the US. The summer conferences are not much more popular with non-North American respondents, with only 36% of these stating to have attended a conference.

In spite of the relatively low level of attendance, non-North American members place significant value on the conferences, reporting a mean of 3.9 (SD = 0.94) on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all valuable; 5 = extremely valuable). North American members also recognise some value in the conferences, although to a lesser extent (M = 3.4, SD = 0.97, $p < .01$).

When asked to qualify their answer, the top reported reason for liking the summer conferences is the networking opportunities. North American members and non-North American members alike appreciate the more intimate environment and the opportunity to meet academics that they would not otherwise be able to meet. Non-North American members also see value in the greater diversity and CCT focus, and the shorter travelling distance. North American respondents view the conferences as a good opportunity to broaden their cultural awareness.

A re-occurring theme for both groups is the lower academic quality of the conference, manifested in the submission and presentation standards, as well as low attendance. Some non-North American members are of the opinion that the summer international conferences are not sufficiently differentiated from the main annual conference.

3. Reasons for not attending the 2016 annual conference in Berlin

Members were asked to explain why they chose not to attend the annual conference in Berlin by ranking a series of factors in the order of their importance in determining their decision. The factors were: teaching conflicts, overall costs, school would not

reimburse international travel, colleagues were not planning to attend, concerns over travelling in Europe, and other.

For both groups the two most prominent reasons for not attending the Berlin conference were “overall costs” and “teaching conflicts.” “Overall costs” was the primary reason for 36% of North American members and for 25% of the non-North American members. Teaching conflicts was instead the main barrier for 35% of non-North American members and 32% of North American members.

Around 16% of non-North American members reported the school’s refusal to refund international travel as the principal cause for not being in Berlin. For North American members the reimbursement of international travel was seemingly not a major obstacle: only 3% indicated as the top reason for not being present.

Finally, concerns over travelling in Europe was not a factor that significantly influenced members’ decisions, whereas the notion that colleagues were not planning to attend was listed among the top three deciding factor for not attending by about a third of members.

4. Past actions taken by the association to improve the life of its members

Around a third of respondents answered the open-ended question, “*What has ACR done so far to improve your life as a member?*”

North American and non-North American members alike recognised the role that ACR plays in facilitating networking and creating a vibrant academic community, which helps generate new research ideas. This is especially encouraging to learn given that networking is a domain in which members feel ACR has a key role to play.

Other themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis are:

- the events: doctoral symposium, workshops, and special sessions;
- the creation of the new journal (JACR);
- the good quality of the conferences;
- the effective e-mail communication.

The non-North American subsample was also grateful for the fact that the main conference was hosted outside of the US in 2016.

5. Future actions the association could take to improve the life of its members

The open-ended question “*What do you suggest ACR do, to improve your life as a member?*” was answered by 46% of the North American respondents and (36%) of the non-North American ones.

Cost reduction emerged as one of the core themes from both groups, in the form of travel subsidies for PhD students and reduced registration fees for all, or at least for members coming from emerging countries.

North American members expressed the desire for the main conference to remain within North America and to preferably take place during the summer. Perhaps predictably, non-North American members would like ACR conferences to take place

outside of North America more frequently. It was also noted that presentations could be made available on the internet (key-note presentations especially).

Calls for increasing the number of workshops and specialised training sessions (i.e. new methods, analytical tools) were also put forward. Finally, suggestions were made to put in place a tutoring/shadowing initiative whereby the more senior and experienced members could help guide the less experienced members through projects of common interest and the publication process.

6. The process of election of ACR board members

Members were asked to evaluate the process of election of ACR board members along the dimensions of fairness, appropriateness and transparency (1= completely unfair/inappropriate/ not transparent, 5 = completely fair/appropriate/transparent).

For the three criteria, the average is above the scale mid-point: fairness ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.89$ $p = 0.00$), appropriateness ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.88$ $p = 0.00$), transparency ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.1$, $p = 0.00$). North American and non-North American members perceive similar levels of fairness and appropriateness with the process. The two groups differ on perceived transparency: compared to their North American counterparts, non-North American members view the process as more transparent ($M_{NA} = 3.09$, $SD = 1.2$ vs. $M_{N-NA} = 3.4$, $SD = 1.1$; $p = 0.00$; see table 7). Only about 7% of respondents gave a total average score across the three dimensions that was less than the scale mid-point of 3.0 ($M \leq 2.67$).

7. The global nature of ACR

Members were asked to rate how global they feel ACR is, relative to other associations they are aware of (1 = less global, 5 = more global).

On average, members perceive ACR to be more global than other marketing associations: the reported mean is 3.59, $SD = 0.1$, significantly different from the scale mid-point ($p = 0.00$). North American and non- North American members share the same perception of ACR's global nature ($M_{NA} = 3.62$, $SD = 0.9$ vs. $M_{N-NA} = 3.56$, $SD = 1.1$; $p = 0.44$)

8. Members' willingness to be active members of ACR committees

Members were asked to what extent they would like to be active members of the ACR committees (1= not really, 5 = definitely).

Members appear somewhat indifferent to the idea ($M = 3.01$, NS), although non-North American respondents reported a higher degree of enthusiasm ($M_{NA} = 2.9$, $SD = 1.3$ vs. $M_{N-NA} = 3.1$, $SD = 1.1$; $p = 0.03$).

Appendices

Table 1: Job title

	North American (n = 333)	Non-North American (n = 305)
PhD	19% (63)	36% (111)
Assistant Professor	25% (86)	25% (77)
Associate Professor	23% (75)	17% (51)
Full Professor	29% (96)	16% (48)
Other	4% (13)	6% (18)

Table 2: School location

Africa	.5% (3)
Asia	9.4% (60)
Eastern Europe	.8% (5)
European Union	30.3% (193)
Middle East	2.2% (14)
North America	52.2% (333)
Oceania	2.4% (15)
South America	2.4% (15)

Table 3: School status

Private	32.1% (205)
Public	67.2% (429)

Table 4: Average years of membership

North American	Non-North American
13.5	5.5

Table 5: Assistance with professional needs

		n	M (SD)	t-test M difference	Combined mean (SD)	t-test scale midpoint
Networking	North American	279	4.04 (.98)	$p = 0.09$	4.11 (.96)	$p = 0.00$
	Non-North American	250	4.28 (.94)			
Research methods	North American	281	3.56 (1.1)	$p = 0.01$	3.67 (1.1)	$p = 0.00$
	Non-North American	247	3.80 (1.1)			
Publishing criteria	North American	278	3.26 (1.3)	$p = 0.00$	3.58 (1.3)	$p = 0.00$
	Non-North American	250	3.94 (1.1)			
External visibility	North American	276	3.60 (1.2)	$p = 0.06$	3.57 (1.2)	$p = 0.00$
	Non-North American	245	3.54 (1.1)			
Research funding	North American	279	3.19 (1.3)	$p = 0.00$	3.48 (1.3)	$p = 0.00$
	Non-North American	248	3.81 (1.2)			
Funding to organise academic events	North American	275	3.18 (1.2)	$p = 0.00$	3.37 (1.2)	$p = 0.00$
	Non-North American	247	3.58 (1.1)			
ERB membership	North American	275	3.24 (1.2)	$p = 0.23$	3.3 (1.2)	$p = 0.00$
	Non-North American	248	3.37 (1.1)			

Representation in academic organisations	North American	277	3.09 (1.1)	<i>p</i> = 0.14	3.21 (1.2)	<i>p</i> = 0.00
	Non-North American	244	3.34 (1.2)			
Communication Skills	North American	275	2.56 (1.2)	<i>p</i> = 0.00	2.77 (1.2)	<i>p</i> = 0.00
	Non-North American	246	3.01 (1.2)			
Travel Funding	North American	278	2.68 (1.4)	<i>p</i> = 0.00	3 (1.4)	<i>p</i> = 0.95
	Non-North American	247	3.37 (1.3)			
Writing Skills	North American	277	2.52 (1.3)	<i>p</i> = 0.00	2.92 (1.3)	<i>p</i> = 0.17
	Non-North American	248	3.37 (1.3)			

Table 6: Professional needs grouped by assistance degree

Low (below scale mid-point)		Average (scale mid-point)		High (above scale mid-point)	
Non-North American	North American	Non-North American	North American	Non-North American	North American
N/A	Travel funding Communication skills Writing Skills	Communication skills	Representation in academic organisations	Networking Publishing criteria Research funding Research methods Funding to organise academic events External visibility ERB membership Travel funding Writing skills Representation in academic organisations	Networking Publishing criteria Research funding Research methods Funding to organise academic events External visibility ERB membership

Table 7: Election process of ACR board members

		M (SD)	<i>t</i> -test M difference	Combined mean (SD)	<i>t</i> -test scale midpoint
Fairness	North American	3.59 (.92)	<i>p</i> = 0.18	3.64 (.89)	<i>p</i> = 0.00
	Non-North American	3.70 (.86)			
Appropriateness	North American	3.68 (.91)	<i>p</i> = 0.54	3.70 (.88)	<i>p</i> = 0.00
	Non-North American	3.72 (.86)			
Transparency	North American	3.09 (1.2)	<i>p</i> = 0.00	3.25 (1.1)	<i>p</i> = 0.00
	Non-North American	3.43 (1.1)			