

A Standardized Tool to Evaluate Panel Leader Competencies: A Global Case Study



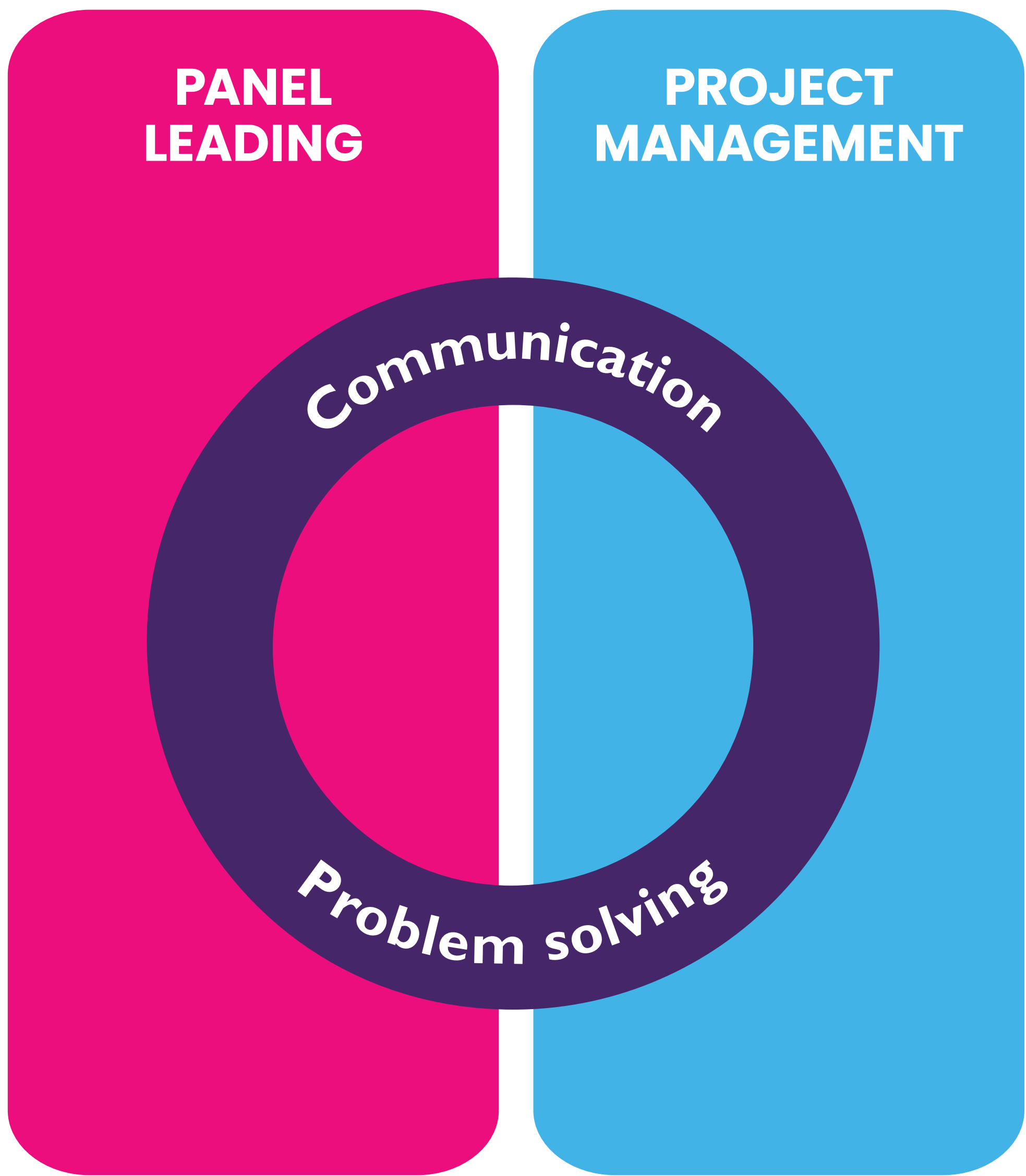
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BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE

The expertise of sensory panel leaders plays a crucial role in ensuring the consistency, validity, and reliability of Descriptive Sensory Research. This role demands a blend of leading consensus discussions, understanding scientific sensory methods, managing projects, and interpreting statistical analysis. This research aims to develop a standardized and systematic tool for assessing panel leader competencies using a global case study.

WHAT IS IT?

We have developed a quantitative tool to assess panel leader's competencies covering essential skills in panel leading and project management across all phases of the sensory study, along with core abilities in communication and problem solving.



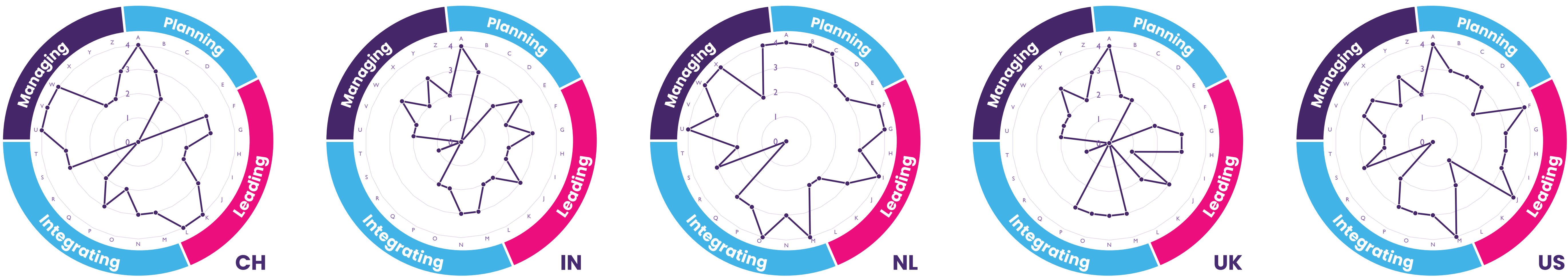
STUDY DESIGN

Five panel leaders with varying levels of experience from China, India, the Netherlands, the UK and the US participated in a global case study. Before the study began, general guidelines and instructions were provided, outlining the expected deliverables and tasks at each stage of the study. Each panel leader independently managed and led the entire study, conducting descriptive analysis profiling on the same set of 6 strawberry milk candies. MMR sensory experts rated the competencies of the panel leaders on a 4-pt scale, based on MMR's internal career framework.

PANEL LEADER COMPETENCY TOOL

	COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE EXPECTED
PLANNING	Quantity estimation	A. Calculate product quantities B. Control product inventory
	Panel session plan	C. Develop panel session plan
	Kick-off meeting	D. Set up & lead kick-off meeting E. Provide a summary afterwards
LEADING	Live-session review	F. Clear communication G. Connection with the panel H. Manage panelist behavior I. Demonstrate panel consensus
	Lexicon & evaluation protocol	J. Develop an efficient protocol K. Develop clear non-confounded lexicon L. Create relevant references
INTEGRATING	Initial data analysis	M. Extract raw data from the software N. Run initial analysis O. Review outlier removal
	Panel performance	P. Run panel performance metrics Q. Interpret panel performance R. Provide feedback to the panel
	Summary of key findings	S. Create data output T. Summarize key findings
MANAGING	Communication	U. What to communicate – risk assessment V. When to communicate – on a timely manner W. How to communicate – verbal vs. written
	Problem solving	X. Identify the problem Y. Determine the magnitude of the problem Z. Provide resolution for the problem

PANEL LEADER COMPETENCY PROFILES



0 – NA, expected deliverables not provided on time
3 – Intermediate, demonstrates a functional proficiency level

1 – Developing, demonstrates limited use of the skill
4 – Advanced, demonstrates in depth proficiency level

2 – Foundation, demonstrates some use of the skill

CONCLUSION:

- In general, panel leaders across the regions show high level skills in panel leading, communication and problem solving.
- Competency ratings tend to reflect panel leaders' current level of experience. The outputs highlight areas of further development and progression.
- The scores for data analysis and topline reporting are the lowest among all panel leaders; however, these tasks are not currently part of their primary responsibilities.
- While valuable, recorded discussions and transcripts of panel sessions proved challenging to provide.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The tool clearly defines the essential skills of panel leaders, quantitatively measures their competencies, and effectively bridges language barriers and time zones.
- A standardized study design is essential when assessing panel leaders with varying levels of experience, as it eliminates variation in methodology, scaling and product category.
- The scoring system can be further refined to better emphasize the unique skills essential for panel leading (ie. weighting the leading skills).
- This exploratory study highlights the need for live, in-person feedback during panel sessions. We are exploring other types of immersive technology to achieve this.