

Marketing Research 101

Introduction

During the last meeting of the Market Research Working Group (MRWG) it was suggested that the volunteer members could use an overview or summary of marketing research terminology and methods. This paper is by no means a comprehensive view of marketing research, but rather a basic primer intended to familiarize members of the MRWG to basic marketing research concepts.

What is Marketing Research?

Marketing research is a systematic process that collects, analyzes and draws conclusions from data gathered from consumers, business owners, or other groups of interest.

Types of Marketing Research

There are different types of Marketing Research and each type has its place in attempting to answer questions and meet the needs of an organization. Marketing research can be broken down many ways. One of the most common is to group research into quantitative versus qualitative methodology.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is usually exploratory in nature and is useful for uncovering insights into research questions that may not be well defined or no previous research has been done in the area. Methodologies include focus groups, in-depth one-on-one interviews, observation, etc. Qualitative research is defined by:

- Smaller sample sizes (i.e. < 30 respondents)
- Non-random sample (i.e. respondents chosen based on their willingness to attend)
- Less structured/Open-ended survey design
- Longer interviews in order to uncover and explore attitudes and perceptions
- Results are not projectable to any group or population

For example, let's assume that research conducted on behalf of the beef industry has shown that consumers rate enjoyment higher than either convenience or nutrition when deciding which protein to choose for in-home dinners. In order to gain an understanding of exactly what "enjoyment" means to consumers, a focus group methodology is chosen. Typically, this consists of recruiting 10-12 respondents who will attend a session at a central location. A moderator will facilitate these sessions using a moderator's guide that has been developed in order to guide these respondents into the topics that need to be addressed. The session may last one to two hours or more and these sessions are typically video- or audio-taped. The final deliverable is report summarizing the findings of the session with sample verbatims that give a flavor respondents answers to specific topics or questions.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is used when there may already be a body of knowledge about the questions or topics of study. Methodologies include telephone, mail, internet or in-person surveys. Quantitative research is defined by:

- Larger sample sizes (i.e. 100 respondents or more)
- Random sample (i.e. each respondent has an equal chance of being selected)
- Structured/formalize/closed-ended survey design
- Interviews may be as short as a few minutes, or much longer
- Results are projectable to a group or population

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Custom Research

Custom, or primary, research is where one client bears the total cost of the research and all of the research findings are proprietary to that client. Advantages of this type of research are the proprietary nature of the findings and the ability to customize the questionnaire in order to get the exact findings wanted. The main disadvantage of this type of research is the cost.

Syndicated Research

With syndicated research the total cost of the project is shared across multiple clients. The main advantage of this type of research is the lower cost. The main disadvantage of this type of research is the inability to formulate specific questions to address research objectives. One example of syndicated research used by NCBA is the NPD Group's CREST database. This research uses an online panel of respondents who record their purchase behavior in commercial restaurants. This data is then compiled and companies pay a fee for access to the database. NCBA can then use this large database to pull out the specific data (e.g. beef vs. chicken servings) it needs and customize the data to some degree.

Secondary Research

Secondary research may include research that has been widely published and freely available or reports from industry source available for a fee. Research results may be gathered from multiple sources and the final report is then offered for sale to interested parties. The U.S. Hispanic market presentation is one example of this type of research. NCBA purchased the full report and the Center for Research and Knowledge produced a presentation and executive summary that focused on beef industry issues with regard to the Hispanic population.

Glossary of Terms

Custom Research: Research where one client is responsible for the entire cost of their search project, but has final say as to objectives, survey design, methodology and has ownership of all data.

Panel Research: A panel of respondents is recruited and maintained in order to gather their attitudes and opinions in a cost-effective manner. Different research methodologies such as mail, telephone, online, focus group, in-person may be used.

Primary Research: Original research that a company or organization either completes in-house or is done by an outside contractor. (See Custom Research.)

Projectable Results: Research results that reflect the attitudes and opinions of an entire population or group.

Qualitative Research: Research that is exploratory in nature and uncovers attitudes and preferences, but may not be reflective of an entire population or group.

Quantitative Research: Research that uses randomized sampling methods and large sample sizes in order to be reflective of an entire population or group.

Random Sample: Sampling methodology where each potential respondent has an equal chance of being selected.

Secondary Research: Research conducted by a company in the hopes of attracting potential clients to purchased the finished product.

Syndicated Research: Research conducted on a broad topic where the total cost of the research is shared by multiple clients.

Tracking Study: Research that measures changes in attitudes or behaviors over time, utilizing a standardized, consistent survey instrument and methodology.

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