

Market Research and Consumer Insights

CHAPTER

18

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Introduction

This chapter addresses market research and consumer insights. In Chapter 1, we saw that the process of constructing a marketing strategy was based on a diagnosis of the current situation, the business, the market and the main competitors, among others. Market research and obtaining consumer insights is a crucial part of informing a strong diagnosis and making good decisions. In addition, market research is an important tool in the feedback loop, as discussed in Chapter 1. This chapter will focus on 'market research', not 'marketing research'. The basic difference between the two is that market research is concerned with investigating markets (the cohort of people that make up possible consumers), while marketing research is concerned with investigating any issues related to marketing (consumer behaviour, advertising effectiveness, salesforce effectiveness, branding, social commerce, marketing strategy, etc). Market research is, therefore, a subdivision of marketing research. Market research can be defined as:

The process of systematically gathering data about a market (people or companies) and then analysing it to better understand the size, nature and needs of the market. The results of market research, which are usually summarised in a report, are then used to help marketer make more informed decisions about the company's strategies, operations, and potential customer base.¹

Today's organisations operate in dynamic environments and are affected by various factors, including technological change, economic instability, legislation and demographic shifts.² Changes in consumer behaviour and the business environment have impacted organisations' ability to meet the needs of their customers, and, subsequently, the products required to meet those needs. The ever-changing nature of consumers in the business environment means that it is important for organisations to formalise the process of acquiring accurate and timely data about customers, products and the marketplace, thereby enabling them to adjust their strategies where needed.³ For an organisation to thrive and remain competitive, a sound understanding of its customers, its competitors and the wider environment is imperative. This understanding is usually obtained through market research.

In this chapter, you will learn about the purpose of market research and its role in business decision-making processes. This will help you to gain some insight into the market research industry.

The purpose of market research

Connecting the marketer to the market is one of the main purposes of market research. This is done by providing information that can be used to make key business decisions.⁴ The two key functions of market research are to provide feedback on past events and to pinpoint new opportunities. Additional purposes of market research include:

- Gaining a better understanding of customer preferences
- Identifying potential customers
- Closely monitoring competition in the market
- Providing a sound basis for marketing decisions
- Identifying changes in the market
- Developing and completing a business plan
- Identifying and solving business problems
- Launching new products or services
- Establishing realistic goals
- Anticipating or forecasting market trends
- Measuring the efficacy of marketing communications.

Where and how market research fits into the overall organisational structure depends on the size and nature of the organisation. Small businesses typically do not have a market research department and do not employ fulltime researchers; moreover, they often cannot afford to outsource this function. Instead, small businesses might use existing data or conduct small-scale market research. Bigger businesses can conduct market research internally as they usually have sufficient resources, or they can outsource, depending on their specific needs and the availability of resources. Regardless of the size of an organisation, market research can provide invaluable insight into the development of new products or services and enable growth into a new market space. Market research can guide an organisation's decision-making processes by helping the organisation to better understand its customers and their decisions. Market research can also provide organisations with new techniques to maximise profits by, for example, determining the effect of an increased product price on profits and sales.

When an organisation conducts market research to solve problems, it must consider both controllable factors (product, price and place of selling the products) and uncontrollable factors (political and legal environment). Market research teams need to combine these different factors in order to conduct effective research and ultimately achieve the desired outcome. Market research activities inform the following processes in organisations:

- **Controlling processes:** Market research helps management keep track of its products in the marketplace.

- **Problem-solving processes:** Acting on the results of market research can solve both short-term and long-term business problems related to products and consumers.
- **Planning processes:** Market research can inform the business's value proposition, information regarding its target market, its position relative to competitors and budget allocations.

For example, a small retailer finds that the number of customers has declined and wants to understand why this is happening because the decline is negatively affecting revenue. The retailer may need to analyse the product selection, pricing and store location to determine the cause of the problem. In addition, the reasons for the decline might have very little to do with obvious causes. There could be another cause, which could be uncovered by simply asking some questions before making assumptions.

Below is a list of questions that a marketer intent on executing a marketing strategy through marketing tactics (as discussed in Chapter 1) may need to ask of a market researcher in order to be effective:

- **Product:** Which product design is most likely to be successful? What kind of packaging should the business consider using?
- **Price:** What price should the business charge for its product or service? When production costs decrease, should the product price also decrease, or should the additional income go towards improving product quality? What is the price elasticity of the product or service (how do price changes influence demand for the product)?
- **Place:** Where should the product be sold? What incentives should the business consider to drive sales of the product? Should the business consider using ecommerce?
- **Promotion:** How much does the business plan to spend on advertising or promotion?

How will the funds be allocated to different products or services? What form of integrated marketing strategy should the business consider using? Which ads are effective in engaging an audience? How would a message have an impact upon attitudes or brand perception?

The next section outlines a market research process that consumer marketers can use in order to gather knowledge of their markets.

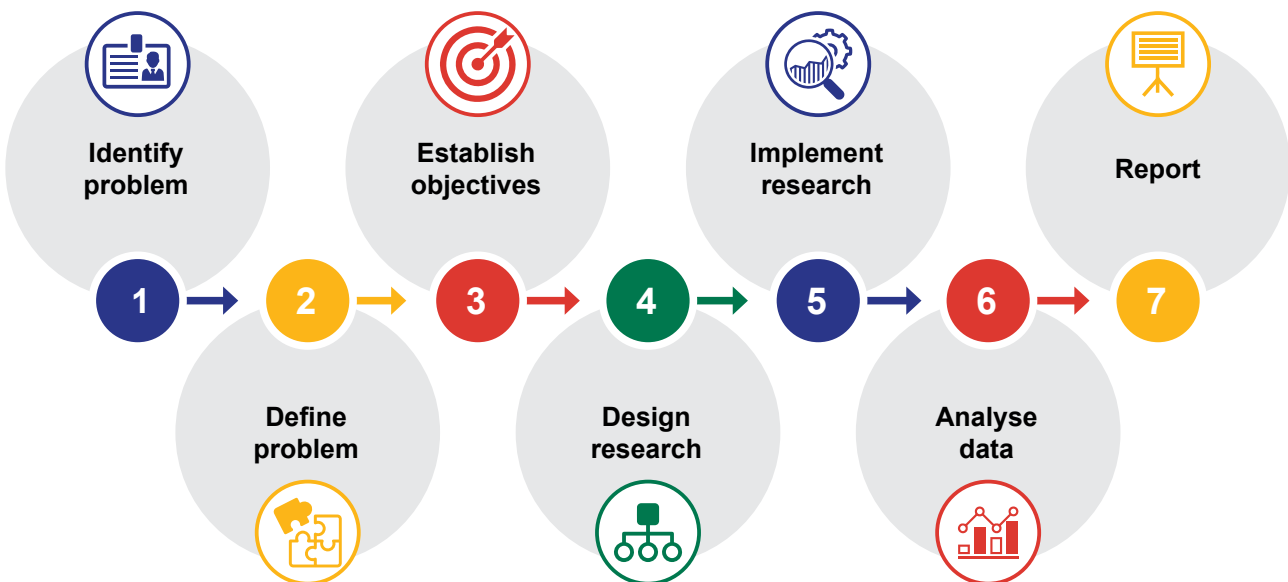
The market research process

Market research involves a series of important activities that contribute to a sound research project outcome. These activities include research planning, budgeting, liaising with stakeholders, and the research process, which consists of several steps. These high-level market research activities can occur concurrently, and the specific approach depends on the problem being investigated. This section explores how these market research activities contribute to the overall success of a research project, and outlines the steps in the market research process.

While there is no set way to conduct the market research process, a market research project should be made up of preliminary research and a formal market investigation. Preliminary research is conducted to determine whether there is indeed a need for further research, and what type of research should be conducted. If further investigation is required, the business should proceed to formal market research, pending feasibility and resource availability.⁵

There are seven steps in the market research process, as depicted in Figure 18.1. The steps start with identifying and then defining the problem. Next, the research objectives must be established and the research itself must be designed. Finally, the research must be implemented, data must be analysed and then reported on. These steps indicate key activities involved in conducting market research. They are not prescriptive, but should be used as a guideline or a checklist to ensure that the research is efficient and successful.

Figure 18.1: The seven steps of the market research process⁶



Research planning occurs throughout the project, and there are various factors that determine how market research budgets are allocated, including company policy, organisational structure and the type of research required. As shown in Figure 18.1, there are several steps in the market research process, but there is no set method for carrying out this process.

The rest of this chapter describes these steps in more detail, starting with the first steps of identifying and defining the research problem.

Identifying and defining research problems

The identification and definition of an appropriate research problem is key to starting an effective market research process. Note that a research problem can also be framed around an opportunity and does not need to be negatively focused (despite the technical term 'problem'). Before conducting a market research study, the research problem is clearly defined and a problem statement (which describes the framework and structure of the problem) is created.

For example, a premium restaurant in an upmarket residential area finds that customers are complaining about service and some customers no longer visit. The restaurant management decides to research customer perception of the restaurant. The purpose of the research in this scenario is to understand why the number of customers is declining. It could be that the actual problem is the quality of service being offered, which can also be identified by investigating the customers' of service or what aspects of the service are cause for concern. There could be many causes for the decline, which is why the research problem must be clearly defined and identified, so that the problem statement can be articulated.

Establishing objectives

Once a research problem is clear, objectives can be formed. The research objectives are the goals that the research aims to achieve. After defining the business problem and articulating the problem statement, the research team must identify the research objectives. The objectives provide clear points that need to be addressed in order to solve the business problem. In order to be effective, objectives should be presented in a SMART format. The SMART acronym addresses the following criteria:⁷

- **Specific:** Objectives need to be clear and concise.
- **Measurable:** Objectives should be quantifiable, so that it is clear if they have been achieved or not.
- **Attainable:** Objectives should not be lofty aspirations beyond reach; they should be feasible, considering the researcher's capabilities and constraints.
- **Realistic:** Objectives should be related to both the budget and the time allocated to the research activity.
- **Time-bound:** Objectives should be achievable within a specified time frame.

Think back to the restaurant example presented earlier. Suppose management wants to understand the quality of service offered to customers. Management must set objectives for the research to be conducted. Research objectives are made up of three main components:⁸

- **Research questions:** These specify the key information needed by management to achieve the research purpose. For the restaurant, one of the questions could be: 'How frequently should the waiters visit the tables?'
- **A hypothesis:** A hypothesis is a supposition or proposed explanation made on the basis of limited evidence as a starting point for further investigation. This supposition provides possible answers to a research question. This can be developed by means of past management experience or previous research. For example, the restaurant's hypothesis may be: 'Customers prefer coffee after their meal.' This hypothesis may be proved or disproved leading to possible further needs for investigation.

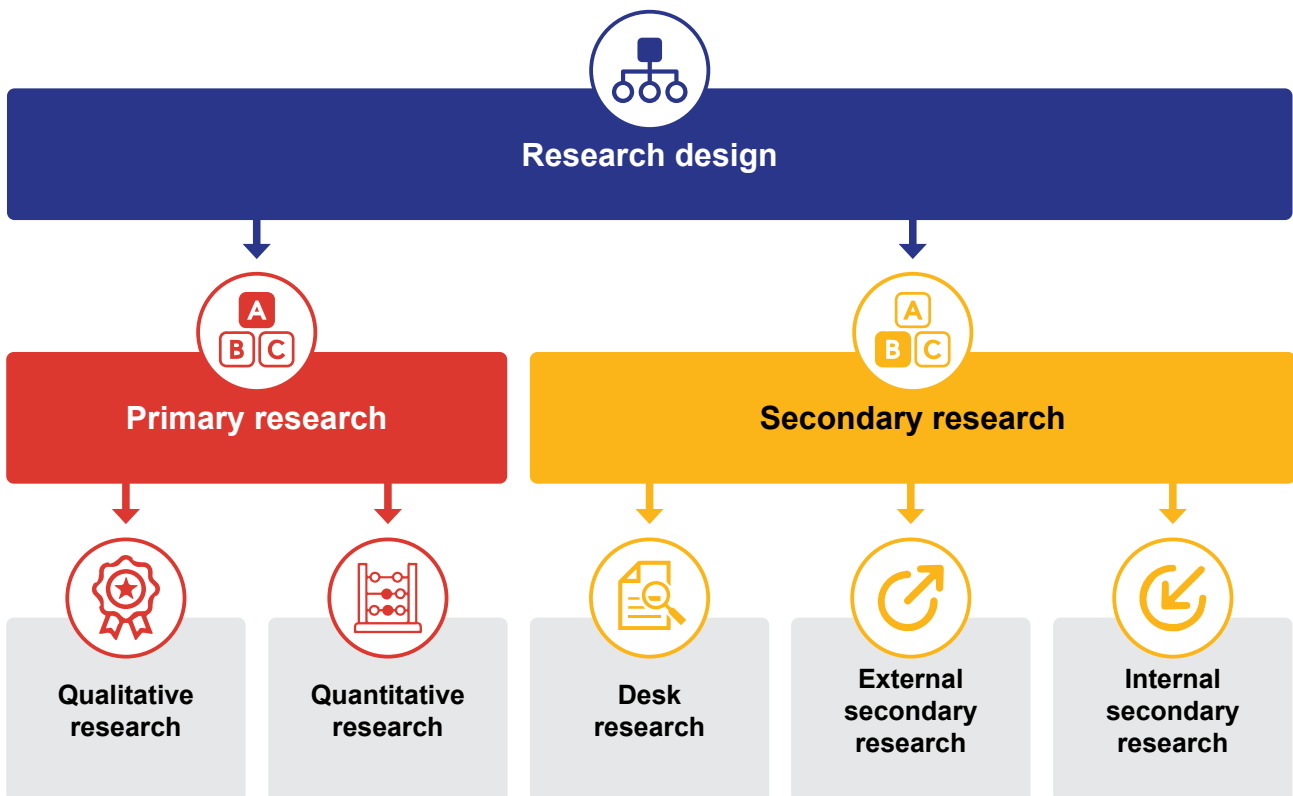
- **The scope and boundaries of the research:** This is the extent of the research. For instance, does the research concern only current customers, or does it also include potential customers? In the restaurant example, management will have to determine if it is going to investigate its current or potential customers' perception of service in the restaurant. This will act as a boundary for the research.

Designing the research

Research designs are often classified as qualitative or quantitative research. Qualitative data is information collected from the investigation of non-numeric information, and refers to definitions, characteristics and descriptions. Quantitative data, on the other hand, is information collected from the investigation of observable objects or elements using statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. In some instances, a hybrid approach, in which qualitative and quantitative methods are combined, is required. Quantitative and qualitative data sources and methods are discussed in more detail below.

The research process explains how the researcher goes about conducting a research study. Before conducting research, the researcher should be able to identify appropriate data sources. Data is often classified according to secondary or primary data. Secondary research can comprise of desk research, internal research and external research, while primary research comprises qualitative and quantitative research, as depicted in Figure 18.2.

Figure 18.2: Overview of market research designs



Secondary research

Secondary research uses existing data that were collected for purposes other than solving the business problem at hand. Secondary data can be collected from desk research, internal research or external research. **Desk research** refers to data that have already been collected and published, such as government reports. **Internal sources** include organisational records (obtained from sales, accounting and other departments). Today many companies have apps, websites, online ordering and loyalty schemes, such as the Pick n Pay, which are invaluable sources of data. **External sources** include information found on the stock market, in journals, trade publications, company websites on the internet, news articles and government statistics. Note that secondary research can also be both qualitative (a literature review) or quantitative (analysing an existing database).

Market research consulting firms are also sources of secondary data, as they conduct research for organisations and industries. Secondary data sources are always the first point of consideration for researchers before spending money, resources and time to collect new data. However, researchers must evaluate the quality and the format of the secondary data to determine whether they align with the overall research objectives. Often, the research problem being investigated will need data that is not readily available, or, if available, maybe need further processing.⁹

Primary Research

If data are not readily available, or not available in a suitable format, the research team may need to collect data by conducting primary research. Primary data refers to information that has been collected for a specific research problem. It provides direct information about an object, event or people. Examples include survey results, statistical data, video and audio recordings. Primary data can be collected through quantitative or qualitative research techniques.

Quantitative research

Quantitative research relies heavily on numbers, measurement and mathematical calculations. Because this methodological approach is more clearly structured, it is typically easier to measure and analyse the information collected. There are a number of quantitative data collection techniques that include:

- **Surveys.** Surveys collect information from selected participants through written or verbal communication. The instrument used to collect the information – a questionnaire – consists of a set of questions aligned to the research objectives that the respondents must answer.
- **Observation.** As the name implies, this method of obtaining quantitative data involves the collection of information about consumer behaviour or events through direct observation. It often entails a systematic recording of data by mechanical devices or human observers.
- **Experiments.** Experimentation entails controlling conditions so that the independent variable can be manipulated to test a hypothesis about the dependent variable.¹⁰ This method allows causal relationships to be evaluated.

Qualitative research

Sometimes research questions are complex and require more explanation. Deeper opinions, attitudes and emotions cannot easily be reduced to simple options on a questionnaire. This is where exploratory qualitative research is particularly useful. Qualitative research is characterised by textual, visual and verbal information, as well as interpretation. Data from qualitative research is exploratory in nature, as it investigates and seeks to understand new and unknown concepts or topics. Qualitative research can be used to generate ideas and concepts for new products or brands, or to indicate product improvements. Qualitative research is conducted through a variety of techniques, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups and projective techniques.

- **In-depth interviews.** An in-depth interview is an unstructured and extensive session in which the interviewer asks the respondent several questions and probes for in-depth answers.
- **Focus groups.** A focus group consists of a moderator and a small group of respondents (usually 6–10 participants) who exchange views on a particular topic. Focus groups are typically used to collect data on consumer attitudes and behaviour, or to test the introduction of new products.

Hybrid research

Each business's research objectives are unique and the research team must select the method that best aligns with these objectives. Given the complexity of certain projects, a single research method may not be sufficient. In these cases, the research team may choose to use a combination of two or more research methods; these can be qualitative or quantitative, or even a mixture of the two. This is known as a hybrid approach and tends to produce optimal project results.¹¹

Case study: Hybrid research

A fictional oral hygiene company, Brushers Inc, launched a new brand of toothpaste that whitens teeth after a week of use. After three months on the market around the country, the company was not seeing the market impact it had anticipated. Instead, the feedback it received was largely negative. In response to this, Brushers decided to conduct in-depth interviews with 10 respondents who were all users of the new toothpaste. Through this qualitative research approach, the research team discovered that users had not been following the instructions on the packaging. Further investigation revealed that there was a strong correlation between respondents who were not fond of the toothpaste and those who did not read the instructions. Upon discovering this, Brushers created an online survey with specific questions regarding the instructions on how to use the toothpaste. The feedback from this quantitative research revealed that the instructions on the bottom of the toothpaste box were not clear or optimally positioned, prompting Brushers to change the positioning of the instructions on the packaging. In summary, this hybrid research approach allowed Brushers to develop critical insights and action meaningful change in its market approach.

Implementation: Sampling and fieldwork

Once the research team has carefully considered the business problem to be solved and which data collection method to use, the team members can begin to collect data from the appropriate respondents. Because it is not feasible to interview an entire population, the research team must decide on the nature and number of people to interview. For example, in a study of spectators' experience of watching a rugby or cricket tournament in a stadium, it would be impossible to interview everyone at each of the games. As such, the research team must select a sample of the population to interview.

Sampling

A sample is 'a subgroup of the elements of the population selected for participation in the study'.¹² In order to select a sound sample from a population, the research team must follow a number of steps of the sampling process.¹³ These steps include:

- **Define the target population:** In research, a population is made up of a number of individuals, entities or items that can become objects of observation from which information can be drawn. The target population is the broad population that the research is interested in. For example, a company may be interested in marketing to rugby supporters. In this case, the target population refers to rugby supporters rather than all South Africans. From the population, specific individuals are drawn as respondents in a study. The target population should be clearly defined in the early stages of sampling.
- **Identify the sampling frame:** At the second stage of the sampling process, there is a list of all sample participants available for selection; this is the sampling frame. It can take the form of a list, population record or index. The actual sample is drawn from the sampling frame.
- **Select the sampling method:** There are two methods for determining the sample unit: probability and non-probability. With the probability method, each unit in the sampling frame has a known and equal positive chance of being selected as a sample unit (for example, randomly choosing a name from a list). Conversely, with the non-probability method, the chance of selecting a specific sample unit is zero or indeterminable; therefore, this method is purely based on the research team's judgement (for example, walking in the street and approaching people to fill in a questionnaire).
- **Determine the sample size:** The fourth step in the sampling process is to determine the size of the sample. When deciding on the sample size, the research team often uses judgement rather than calculations. The team must select a sample size that is large enough to reflect a fairly precise estimate of the population values, but is practical and economical to manage.
- **Select the participants:** Clear guidelines and procedures are laid out for the selection of the sample participants (actual respondents in the research).

Conducting fieldwork

In the final stage of the sampling process, the research team collects data from the designated respondents. It is important to note that several things can go wrong at this stage, and that measures and precautions should be taken to minimise error. Respondents may be unwilling to participate; interviewers may not comply with set procedures and respondents may be unavailable. To avoid some of these errors, follow-up can be done with respondents shortly before to confirm their availability. Another way to avoid errors is to have simple and concise procedures set for the interviewers.

After all key activities have been planned and initiated, it is imperative that the research team consider the practical elements of the research activity. Each research activity has unique characteristics that contribute to its success. There are various factors to consider, including:

- **Resources:** Availability of key elements, such as the necessary funds.
- **Timing:** The length of time you have before you need results. For example, if a campaign is being launched next week, you may not have enough time.
- **Seasonality:** People behave differently at different times of the year, so you need to consider whether this is a factor in your research.
- **Language:** How questions are asked in a focus group or survey should align with the language used by the target audience.
- **Incentivisation:** To encourage people to participate, you should consider offering them a reward of some sort.
- **Community endorsement:** Fieldwork in certain areas requires permission from a community leader.

It is important to note that there are many other forms of research methods and fields of study available to an advanced researcher. Examples of these methods include ethnography, psychosocial research, behavioural economic experiments, semiotics, hermeneutics and econometrics.

Analysing and interpreting data

Once data has been gathered using different research techniques and methods, it needs to be given meaning; otherwise it cannot be converted into knowledge and used to inform decision-making. The value or meaning assigned to the data depends on the research team's interpretation of the results, which refers to using the research findings to transform the data into actionable insights. When interpreting results, market researchers should answer the following questions:

- To what extent do the data support the original hypothesis?
- Is there an alternative hypothesis that provides a more reasonable explanation for the results?
- What new questions have surfaced from the research findings that need further investigation?

Sometimes, during the data interpretation process, important insights are gathered that are not related to the research question but may still be very useful for the company to be aware of. For example, a brand might conduct research on how consumers perceive a food product's packaging, but end up gaining insight into consumers' perception of the taste of the product instead.

Market researchers should be cautious about making generalisations during the data interpretation process. A generalisation is an overarching understanding or notion drawn from the patterns and trends in a representative sample, which is then applied to the wider population.¹⁴ Predictions and generalisations are made for the general population based on observations of the behaviour of a sample group of people, but these generalisations and predictions can only be accurate if the sample is truly representative of the broader population. For example, if only men were interviewed, but the population includes women, it would be inaccurate to claim that the opinions expressed by the sample are representative of the population. If the sample is not representative of the wider population, the results are still valid, but it is important to ensure that recipients of the research are aware that the findings are representative of those questioned, but not necessarily the entire population. Note that qualitative data and data from a non-probability sampling technique cannot automatically be generalised.

The next few sub-sections each discuss different kinds of data analysis and interpretation.

Interpreting secondary data

It is necessary to conduct an analysis of the data collected from all methods of secondary research, as there could be skewed results when inappropriate data is used. Researchers do not always know how reliable or accurate secondary data is when they acquire it, and therefore need to analyse the quality, presentation, usability, content and cost of the data.¹⁵ A sound evaluation of the existing data relies on the researcher's own logic and judgement.

There are a number of factors that a researcher should consider when evaluating existing data:¹⁶

- **Purpose:** As the data were initially not collected for the research problem at hand, it has to be critically analysed to determine its suitability to the researcher's project.
- **Accuracy:** Researchers must always consider the actual measurements used during data collection to determine the accuracy of the data.
- **Consistency:** Researchers must consult multiple sources of data for a given research problem to ensure that the information is consistent.

- **Credibility:** Establishing credibility involves checking the status of a publication and evaluating the quality of the data, as well as the organisation that collected it, to ensure that the information is not fake. However, checking credibility can be difficult when it comes to online resources, due to the volume of information available on the internet.
- **Methodology:** The quality of data is only as sound as the methodology used. Errors in the methodology can result in invalid and unreliable results.
- **Bias:** Researchers must critically assess why the data were originally collected and by whom. Certain publications may exhibit bias towards a particular political or religious agenda, for example.

Interpreting quantitative data

Statistical data are numerical data collected for research and typically take the form of survey and experiment results. After the data have been collected, they have to be captured for analysis. During this step, the data have to be processed and cleaned in order to be converted into meaningful information. For example, some responses may have been recorded incorrectly. If one participant's monthly income was recorded as R180 million when it should have been recorded as R80 000, it would significantly impact the average income of the total sample before being analysed by the research team. There are numerous tools available to market researchers to perform effective data analysis, such as R programming, Tableau Public, Python, Apache Spark and Excel, among others.¹⁷

These tools can be used to summarise and communicate patterns found in the collected data. Before data analysis begins, the market research team must ensure that the statistical data appears in an appropriate format. The team can make use of the following methods to structure the data:¹⁸

- **Data validation:** This ensures that the collected data are valid and accurate. For example, a sample of respondents can be contacted to confirm that they were actually interviewed.
- **Editing:** Editors verify the correctness and completeness of all the answered questionnaires.
- **Coding:** This refers to the process of categorising the data based on the questionnaire responses. Coding allocates numbers to raw data, which can be entered into a computer and arranged to make the raw data readable.
- **Data capturing:** During data capturing, codes must be entered into a data file that is readable by a computer to ensure that the computer can be used for analysis. Several programs can be used to capture data, such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and statistical software like SPSS.

- **Reading raw data:** After the data are collected and captured in a computer, they are imported into an analysis package. Market researchers use various types of statistical packages to analyse data. These statistical packages can include software such as SAS/JMP, S-Plus, Statistica and Minitab, which have the ability to verify and clean data, and check whether they have errors, before converting them into a format that best presents the research results.

In addition to the various tools that can be used by market researchers to conduct data analysis, there are numerous statistical methods that can be used, but are beyond the scope of this book.

Interpreting qualitative data

Qualitative research is usually conducted by organisations that are interested in finding out more about customers' perceptions, sentiments, experiences or values regarding a product or service. The data typically collected from this kind of research can include social media profiles, interview transcripts or survey responses. There are numerous methods to analyse and interpret qualitative data, but thematic analysis is one of the most common methods used by researchers. Thematic analysis offers considerable flexibility when interpreting data because data sets can be sorted into broad themes. However, it is important to note that thematic analysis is subjective and relies strongly on the research team's judgement. There is therefore a risk of missing nuances in the data. Once data have been interpreted, the final step is to report on the findings to the various stakeholders in the research, as discussed next.

Reporting on research findings

After analysing the data, the research team must decide how to present the research findings to stakeholders (for example, a client or manager). This section provides you with some tips on how to choose the most appropriate method for reporting on market research findings, and highlights the skills you need to present and report on findings in an effective manner. The following section details the structure and format that a research report should take.

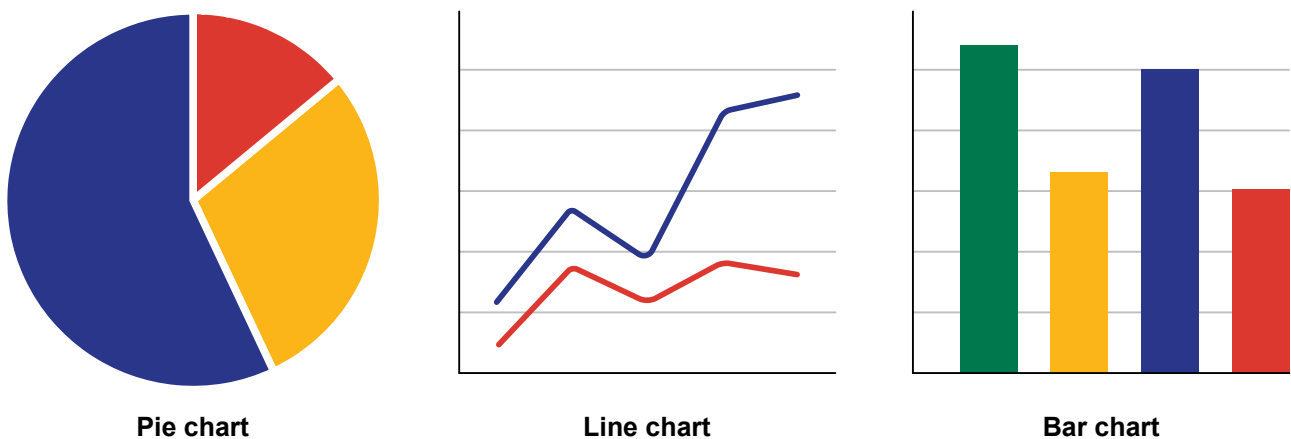
Research report structure and format

The research report summarises the entire research project; thus, its primary purpose is to communicate the market research findings in a simple and understandable manner to the intended audience. In the report, the research team must demonstrate that the problem was investigated thoroughly; they should also communicate the results and any conclusions reached. There is no prescriptive format for a research report, although formatting is often determined by the client or the manager's instructions, the type of research problem or the intended audience.

Data presentation

The presentation of data refers to showcasing the research results in an attractive, comprehensive and useful way so that they can be easily interpreted.¹⁹ It is imperative that the tables and graphics in the report are easy to read, as they portray the actual results from the research. All figures and tables should also be labelled and organised logically. There are many options available for presenting data graphically, but the best option will be determined by the nature of the research problem and objectives.²⁰ The most common graphic representations of data are pie charts, line graphs and bar charts as illustrated in Figure 18.3.

Figure 18.3: Three main types of data representation graphics



Communication and presentation tools

Generally, the conclusions and findings of a market research project are presented in both a written report and an oral presentation.²¹ Findings are presented orally to emphasise and effectively communicate the key findings to the client or manager. Oral presentations also give the client or manager an opportunity to ask the research team questions about the research.²² There are numerous tools, software, applications and programs available to assist researchers in presenting their findings. The research team must consider the nature of the research project and the audience's needs when choosing the approach that will communicate the research findings in the simplest and most comprehensive manner. Research can be presented in written reports, live presentations or through other means like video. Research presentations can use both digital tools (for example, digital presentation software like Prezi) and non-digital tools (for example, flip charts).

With such a wide array of tools available, it can be challenging to decide how best to present research findings. The research team must consider the nature of the project and the individuals who are invested in it to determine what the presentation should look like. Above all, it should convey everything the audience needs to know about the project in a manner that is appropriate for that audience, in terms of formality, language and visualisation.

The changing market research industry

This section explores the more significant changes and trends that have taken place or are currently taking place in the field of market research. Technological advancements and changes in the way that individuals and organisations communicate and store data have resulted in a boom of big data. Big data refers to large numbers of data sets that can be computationally analysed to reveal trends, patterns and associations, particularly relating to human behaviour and interaction.²³ Today, researchers have access to a wealth of information, resulting in an increasing reliance on passive research techniques. Passive research techniques entail collecting information without directly asking respondents any questions.²⁴ For example, some companies track internet usage through cookies and mobile research, while others gather data through loyalty schemes and competitions. Some major changes taking place in market research are the following:

- **Social media mining:** This is a relatively new research technique that has become increasingly popular. Social media as a data source allows organisations to have access to real-time information and enables them to closely monitor customer trends and behaviour.²⁵
- **Gamification:** This refers to applying game-design methods to the design of questionnaires.²⁶ For example, consider a question in an online survey that shows a cartoon panel of venture capitalists judging business ideas, imitating the reality television programme *Dragons' Den*. The survey then invites the respondent to be one of the members of the panel. This type of research design encourages respondents to take part in research activities with an optimistic mindset, which typically results in more detailed responses regarding their opinions, insights, behaviours and attitudes.²⁷ Employing gamification in a research question can generate further interest and a new dimension to the way a respondent views the subject.
- **Reduction in cost:** The relative cost of conducting market research has significantly decreased in recent years, due to faster and more efficient data collection methods.²⁸ This makes market research more accessible to smaller companies.
- **New research roles:** Technological advancement tends to be accompanied by the need for new skills. In some instances, it can result in the creation of tailored roles that specialise in new technologies. Organisational departments are encouraged to adapt not only to new technologies, but also to hyperconnected customers who engage with the world and multitask through smart devices (Harrison, 2016). New roles are being created in organisations as part of adaptive strategies to ensure that data collected from social media and mobile devices are translated into useful and relevant insights.

- **Data collection methods:** New software is constantly being developed for data collection, giving researchers access to new methods, beyond traditional data collection like paper surveys, interviews and focus groups.²⁹ Technology has enabled market researchers to be more focused on what they aim to measure and thereby receive quicker feedback from respondents. These advancements have resulted in research methods that were previously inconceivable; for example, a mood-sensing retail device that personalises the user's shopping experience based on their emotional state. This can be a powerful tool for any organisation that is looking to increase market share and learn more about customers in the retail industry.³⁰
- **Enhanced data analysis:** With large volumes of data available, the ability to analyse data is becoming increasingly important. New technology has made data analytics easier and more sophisticated. Better analytics can help an organisation strengthen its customer relationship management based on better customer insights.³¹
- **Machine learning:** Using specific algorithms, machine learning can transform volumes of data sets about a product or service into actionable information and insights.³²

Like any other industry, market research is affected by various forms of change. However, it is apparent that the most significant driver of change in the market research industry is technology, which has enabled market research to be conducted faster, more efficiently and more accurately. The flipside of these technological advancements is that clients are more likely to demand shorter turnaround times for results, which means that market research firms must be able to meet their deadline expectations. To ensure that a business remains competitive, market researchers must be aware of developments in terms of conducting research, particularly those that are technology-driven.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of market research and consumer insights. The chapter was structured around the market research process and explained each step. First, the formulation of research objectives based on a research problem was discussed. Following this, the research design was explained. This research design also included information about different methodologies, sampling and types of data. The chapter then discussed the implementation of research, analysis and finally reporting. The chapter closed with a few insights into trends in the market research industry.

Acknowledgements

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