

PREPARING **A MARKET
RESEARCH**

BRIEF

Sweeney
RESEARCH

Instructions for Preparing a Market Research Brief

When you are looking to conduct a market research study requiring the services of a research company, it is important to provide a thorough research brief. This helps to shape your own thinking around your research needs and ensures that the market research company has a full understanding of your requirements. Ultimately this assists in conducting of a more meaningful and useful study.

There are a number of issues that should normally be covered in a research brief.

1. Background

The background is all about providing context. It's about setting the scene in terms of the market, what you see happening and why you need to conduct research. As a guide, you should cover off...

- What do you already know about the marketplace that is of relevance to the research need?
- How did the research requirement come about?
- What decisions and actions will be taken on the basis of the research results?
- Are there any resources of information which will help the researchers understand the research problem (e.g. articles, advertising, etc.)
- Can we reveal the client name before or during the research process?

2. Business and Research Objectives

The business and research objectives are a tight checklist of key areas of coverage – essentially what the research company must deliver against.

- What are the specific business and research objectives that you wish to explore? (These will form the basis of the content of the research.)
- What is the researcher expected to prepare recommendations for, on the basis of the research?

3. Research Methodology

Primary market research may be **quantitative** or **qualitative** in nature – which one do you need or do you need both? While this is an area that the market research company can advise you on, it is useful to be able to provide your initial thoughts.

Quantitative techniques involve surveying a large number of people (usually online, by telephone, self-completion or face-to-face). The research coverage is governed by a questionnaire. The results provide a robust 'snapshot' of consumer behaviour and attitudes, which are presented as percentages.

These techniques allow a wide breadth of coverage, but are limited by questionnaire length (e.g. telephone interviews should generally be no longer than 15 – 20 minutes to avoid respondent fatigue).

Qualitative techniques involve a much smaller number of people, but we explore issues in more depth. Here, we are looking to explore and understand consumer behaviour and attitudes, rather than providing a statistical data.

The most common techniques employed are group discussions (where up to eight participants are invited to discuss particular issues under the supervision of a trained moderator) and in-depth interviews (which are a one-on-one interview). Group discussions normally last around 1½ hours and in-depth interviews 45 – 60 minutes. 'Lines of Enquiry/Discussion Guides' are developed to direct the discussions.

- What type of research methodology do you think will be required?
- Are there any materials that require inclusion in the research, such as advertisements or merchandise that you would like research participants to react to?

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4. Target Market

Research audiences may be very broad (e.g. a representative sample of the whole Australian population) or quite specific (e.g. teenagers who have bought your brand in the last two to three years). It's important to define your market.

- Should the research be conducted in particular cities/locations?
- Are there any sub-segments that you wish to cover?
- Will you provide contact details of potential research participants or will the research company be required to?

Within the total sample, you may wish to ensure the inclusion of enough people of a certain type to look at their results separately (e.g. a sub-sample of brand buyers)?

It is useful to provide any guidance you may have as to the penetration of the research audience among the wider general public (e.g. market share information for brand) – this assists more accurate costings.

5. Timing

You will need to allow enough time for...

- Preparation of the research materials (typically 1 week)
- Fieldwork (typically 2 – 4 weeks)
- Analysis and reporting (typically 2 weeks).

Remember to consider the timing of any campaigns or events that might affect the research results. The fieldwork may need to be scheduled to avoid such periods.

6. Available Budget

If there are budget constraints, it can be useful to let the research company know, so that their response can be tailored accordingly. Even if only an indicative budget range is envisaged, this will avoid possible waste of time on inappropriate research proposals.

7. Contact Details

- Who is involved in this research study – who will the research results go to?
- Who can be contacted with any queries?
- Where and when should the research company send their response?

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