

A market researcher gathers primary data for the purpose of solving a concrete problem of marketing research. The process of primary data collection is linked to all stages of marketing research and implies significant commitment of time and resources. Secondary data is collected for the goals, different than the goals of the marketing research in question. Such information can be acquired cheap and fast.

When the problem in question is defined, researcher than starts collecting the information. The natural urge is to immediately start a survey among the qualified respondent groups. However, this must be not the first, but the last method. It would be logical to gather secondary data on the problem during the first stage of the market research. The most important advantages of secondary information are the time savings and low cost of information collection. There are, of course several problems with secondary data, namely: 1) the data is not 100% relevant; 2) the data is not completely accurate. Secondary data must always be verified. To verify it, we must examine the source, the goal of the publication, and the context of the data.

One of the types of primary data that is of interest to marketers is demographic and socioeconomic information about the target market, such as age, education, profession, family status, income and social class. Researchers often compare these parameters with the data at hand to get additional insights into the subject of the research. Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics are often used for purposes of market segmentation. These characteristics are often called the composites of living in the sense that they define the most important people's traits. Some of them, such as age, sex, and level of education can easily be checked. Others, such as social class can be verified only approximately, because these are relative, not absolute characteristics. Income also can be

difficult to measure. Although the amount of personal income in a year is an absolute indicator, in our society money is such a delicate topic that exact figures are very difficult to attain.

Another type of primary data of interest to marketers are psychological characteristics and lifestyle of the subject in the form of individual traits, activities, interests and values. We often classify people by their individual qualities – aggressiveness, superiority, friendship, tolerance, etc. Personality type is interesting to the marketers because it influence the consumer behavior of the target market. Many marketers believe, for example, that the personality type has a direct effect on the choice of retail outlets and products as well as on the reaction to the advertisements. Usually the primary data collected during the research is later analyzed using one of the many personality assessment methods borrowed from the field of psychology.

The lifestyle analysis is based on the assumption that the company can plan more effective strategy to capture the target market if it knows more about the style of its customers. The main focus of such psychographic research is on assessing customers' AIO (activities, interests, and opinions). Although this technique is often very valuable, there are several problems with it. One problem is that customer categories distinguished by AIO analysis change from product to product. This means that every product will need new data collection. Therefore, because these characteristics change from product to product, it is impossible to develop a demographic description of the different groups that could be used in planning new marketing strategies for new products.

There are several ways of collecting the primary data. The basic decision is whether to use communication (qualitative data) or observation (quantitative data).

Communication entails respondent survey to justify certain information using one of the survey methods. The questions can be oral or written and the answers can be given in either form. Observation does not include questionnaires.

The qualitative research allows to understand the problem's environment, while quantitative research enables a marketer to analyze the data using statistical tools.

Qualitative research is an unstructured search method based on the little volume of population. Any marketing research project first must have a qualitative research first, followed by quantitative research. Often qualitative data is needed for correct interpretation of quantitative data. The data collected from qualitative research cannot be final for all of the population. Thus, one of the main principles of marketing research is the supplementary role of the two types of primary data.

During observation the situation in question is being carefully studied and all important facts, actions, and behavior are being noted. An observer can be one or several researches, or an electronic device. For example, scanners in the supermarkets can be used to estimate how many boxes of certain brand of cereal breakfasts is being sold in the supermarket for the particular week.

The choice of basic method of primary data collection calls for several additional decisions. For example, will the research be conducted via mail, telephone or through personal contact? Will the goal of the research be revealed to respondents or will be hidden? Will the questions be open ended or closed ended?

Demographic or social characteristics, lifestyle, views and values of respondent, motivation, and even intentions can be learned using methods of communication. All that researcher needs to do is to ask, keeping in mind that the responses will not be

necessarily true. The observational methods can only give information about behavior and only several demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Our observation is limited to the current mode of action of the research subjects. We cannot observe the past behavior of the person, as well as we cannot “observe” his or her future actions. If we are interested in the history of past behavior or future intentions, we need to have a questionnaire. Certain information about the target market are directly observable, like sex., for example. Some types of primary data are impossible to gather using observational methods. We cannot observe views or opinions, motivation, or person’s knowledge.

Communication methods of marketing research render results faster than observational methods. With communication research methods, researchers will not wait for the results, as when they would use observation. In certain cases it is impossible to foresee when the event will happen to make it suitable for observation. The interval between two events (i.e. furniture shopping) can also be too long to make it feasible to observe.

Although observational methods have certain drawbacks, they have distinct advantages with regard to precision and objectivity. The data which can be verified using both methods are usually being verified more thoroughly by observation, because it does not depend on the respondent’s inability or lack of will to disclose this information. Because observational methods allow registering behavior as is, the data is not influenced by respondent’s memory or emotions.

Observation usually gives a more objective data than communication. Questionnaire is an instance of social contact. The respondent’s answers depend on the

wit of the interviewer. In the observation, the personal characteristics of the interviewer play a far smaller role than in the communication methods.

Works consulted

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