

Background

Overall research aim

To establish how religious/community background, income, age and education have effect on the attitudes towards the Good Friday Agreement.

1.3 Specific Objectives

Using data from the 2001 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, we will

- To establish if there is a demand among the target market for a change in the menu.
- To establish the prices that the target market are willing to pay for particular options/foods on the menu.
- To establish when students are more likely to eat e.g. times, lunch, evening etc.
- To identify the choices that the target market want included on the new menu.

1.4 Research approach

For such research to take place, it is important that sufficient data is collected to establish an overall result. Accurate data will enable these results to be analysed, and improvements for the client can be discussed effectively.

1.41 Secondary Data

Secondary data is necessary in market research, and takes place before the collection of the primary data. The purpose for this type of research is that it avoids repeating work, which may have been carried out by others, and assesses the availability of information so that the assumptions for primary research can be established. Secondary research often reduces the amount of field research and cost.

Secondary data research involves:

- 1) Examining internal organisational sources (e.g. organisational records)
- 2) Finding available external publications, including statistics from government and syndicated resources. (Crimp 4th edition)

A sequence of steps in a secondary data search consists of:

- Specify data requirements
- Determine which data are obtainable from internal sources.
- Seek external sources of secondary data
- Obtain secondary data
- Scrutinise data's validity (evaluate collecting organization, consider objectives of the original survey, appraise methods employed)

- Identify data that must be obtained from primary sources instead (Luck David, 7th edition)

Preliminary research is mainly based upon secondary data, whereby trends and changing patterns are identified within that certain environment. University survey's already completed would enable us to identify student opinion without taking part in primary research.

Secondary data can also be utilised in planning a primary study. Past studies' reports may indicate the questions that should be asked in a new study. In this research programme, information taken regarding students in the UK was extracted, and enabled similar type questions be asked.

Secondary data accessed via library searches, information direct from Antrim Hall, in-house information and on-line database searches offer information which states the possibilities of expanding the availability of such foods within university campuses, emphasising quality throughout. It is important that the client is producing its products to the highest quality, offering the foods, which the customer prefers, at a price they are willing to pay.

- We have obtained a copy of the current menu in the Antrim Dining Hall – to identify the current range.
- We have also acquired copies of all the other food outlets on campus e.g. Food for Thought snack bar, O'Briens etc. to identify what the competition is offering, their price range etc.
- We have gathered some appropriate articles from the Internet as regards students eating habits, canteen prices etc.
- We have gathered secondary statistics based in the UK called the “Student Meals Survey 2002” – which we intend to use as a basis for our research and a starting point for our survey methods e.g. use similar categories in our own survey.

A lot of the information found on the Internet tended to be irrelevant, however it provided us with background material towards student's preference in university regarding food choice. Collegiate presswire provided statistical evidence relating to demands made by students. “67% agreed they would eat on campus more often if the quality of the food was better; in the study, quality was directly related to freshness
ARAMARK

An American study suggested that factors affecting students dining habits consisted of brand image, cleanliness, friendliness, service speed and variety (Knutson Bonnie, 2000)

Taken such secondary data into account, we can determine factors, which may affect the custom in Antrim Hall, therefore when designing the questionnaire for our client, we can take this secondary data and attempt to analyse the student demand as a larger population.

1.411 Problems with secondary data

Although secondary data is important to our study, there are specific problems in relation to it. Problems include

- Lack of availability: As Antrim Hall is a relatively small establishment, based only in the University of Ulster, there is no secondary data which would answer questions specifically for this establishment. Therefore, primary research is crucial to this study.
- Inaccurate data: There may have been errors gathered in this data. Questions such as who gathered the data? What was the purpose of the study? What information was collected? When was the information collected? How was the information obtained? Is the information consistent with other information?

1.42 State of Market

Antrim Hall is the catering establishment for which the research is being undertaken. Located in the University of Ulster, Jordanstown, it provides students with a selection of hot and cold foods. Its competitors O'Briens, Deano's, Carrick dining room, Bentra offer foods in the same location; therefore it is beneficial for management in Antrim Hall to gain competitive advantage over these other establishments.

Through gathering menus from all the catering establishments within Jordanstown, we can identify the choice, prices etc within each. An example of the menu in Antrim can be seen in Appendix 1, however a hot meal such as Chicken curry cost £1.95, with the selection of meals being more limited compared to the Carrick dining room, whereby daily variety is much greater.

In a University it is important that the catering industry provide meals that are satisfactory, yet economical. The customers in this area consist of 8,500 full time students, 4,500 part time students and 3,500 members of staff. Budgeting is crucial in relation to any student; therefore, it is important that improvement of the menu does not result in higher prices. This may deter customers rather than improve market share.

In the field of management, new approaches to understanding and running organisations are being considered. One way of comprehending an organization is to divide it into the key processes and activities that enable it to succeed. Therefore marketing knowledge and competence is essential (Murray 1996)

The company's resources determine the extent to which innovation can occur. If the client wishes to provide an unlimited source of finance, this will increase the amount of options available towards future improvements. However, a limited budget will decrease the amount of market research taken, as it will be too costly for an in-depth study to arise.

Through performing a usage and attitude survey (U&A), it is hopeful that a well-designed survey will generate appropriate data, to enable the client to act on such information, so that the implementation process can begin.

2.1 METHODOLOGY

The method with which we carry out this research is extremely important, as it will determine how manageable the data is to collect, and the level of ease it can be analysed. The methodology section of this report will look at:

- 1 Research objectives
- 2 Research design
- 3 Specific research method
- 4 Sampling

Each of these areas was covered in detail and they will now be talked about in detail to see how they played a part in the methodology carried out for Antrim Hall.

Research Objectives

The research objectives need to be thought about the whole way through the process. They are extremely important as they are what we are trying to achieve and how we go about this will determine if we reach these objectives. The research objectives are:

- 1- To establish if there is a demand among the target market for a change in the menu.
- 2- To establish the prices that the target market are willing to pay for particular options/foods on the menu.
- 3- To establish when students are more likely to eat e.g times, lunch, evening etc.
- 4- To identify the choices that the target market want included on the new menu.

How we justify our research design, the research method and the sample taken will determine if these factors are met.

These are not the only objectives, which are to be thought about. As will be stated later, when we decided to use questionnaires as our survey method. When laying out this questionnaire and deciding on the questions, there are objectives that must be met to achieve the data required. The questionnaire must

- 1- Ask questions which will provide the appropriate information
- 2- The respondent must be motivated by the questions
- 3- The amount of error that is found from the answers must be at a minimum.

2.2 Overall Research Design

Research design is defined as

“A framework or blueprint for conducting the marketing research project. It specifies the details of the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to structure or solve, marketing research problems” (Malhorta 1996)

The aim of the research is clearly to achieve the research objectives outlined above in the most effective and efficient way. Therefore, in order to decide on an appropriate research design, the first decision is to decide what type of research to carry out. There are many different methods of obtaining data. The two main categories are quantitative research and qualitative research.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is research in which the emphasis lies in producing data that is rich in insight, understanding, explanation and depth of information. However, this form of research cannot be justified statistically.

Qualitative research is useful for obtaining information about consumers’ opinions, feelings, likes, dislikes etc.

“Used when a business needs to discover people's motivations and feelings. It is invariably face-to-face, in small focus groups, where people are asked to give detailed answers and opinions. It can generate greater understanding of customers, with the potential to open up to a new audience.” (Duff 2002)

Some of the main methods of qualitative research include depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation etc. This type of research is generally carried out on a small scale. Depth interviews and focus groups are very time consuming and they also require an experienced researcher with excellent interpretive skills in order for the data to be correctly analysed and in an unbiased manner.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative research is completely opposite to that of qualitative in that it provides numerical measurement and statistical predictability that can be representative of the total target population. It provides “numerical data to help predict future trends; market positioning, penetration or potential in comparison to competitors; untapped marketplace segments; performance benchmarks and tracking.” (*Donna C Barson Global Cosmetic Industry new york feb 2003 vol 171 iss 2*)

Quantitative research uses larger samples in order for the data obtained to be representative of the target population as a whole and the main method of quantitative research is questionnaires. However, many qualitative researchers criticise quantitative research methods by arguing that it provides misleading data and that to

understand cultural values and consumer behaviour, intensive field observation or depth interviews are needed. There are many weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research, see appendix.

BIASNESS

Results from research can be biased and as such it is not reliable and valid and therefore, this can have adverse effects on the decisions made by companies on the basis of marketing research.

There are many different types of bias including interviewer bias, interviewee bias, interview bias etc. This can be as a result of how questions are asked, how comfortable respondents and researchers are, first impressions etc. Therefore, as there is a lot of interaction between respondents and the researcher in qualitative research, this type of research is argued by many to generate more biased results than quantitative.

The type of data we are setting out to obtain is mainly quantitative as this will be easier for us to quantify, hence draw conclusions from and make recommendations.

By carrying out quantitative research rather than qualitative it is cheaper and as our target audience will include all students, staff, visitors to Jordanstown etc. that may possibly eat in the canteen, it will prove more effective to use a larger sample as the data obtained will be more relevant and enable us to make generalizations of the target market as a whole. Also, this type of research may prove more effective as a result of the high level of skills needed to interpret data obtained through qualitative methods.

The type of research we used was exploratory research design. This is used to provide insights into a problem, being whether or not the University of Ulster Jordanstown campus needs a new menu introduced in the Antrim Hall to try and cater for more of its customers. We do not have a specific hypothesis to achieve or a precise conclusion we want to meet. This is why we used exploratory research design rather than conclusive.

We outlined our problem in the management decision and overall research aim, and the next step is to identify the remedies for the research problem.

Once we decided upon the type of research to be used, we had to consider an area mentioned within the objective-sources of error. There are various types of sampling error. These are random sampling error, non-sampling error, non-response error and response error. We first of all had to ensure that the sample is a perfect representation of the population. Our perfect sample are people in the university campus who use the cafes, students, lecturers and other people working there.

The questionnaire design, in this case must also be perfect. We read over the pilot questionnaire, and made changes where questions were not clear or too long. Non-response error is if any of the questions are not answered. The questions should interest the respondents, so as they do not skip it. They could answer it quickly, not giving enough details because they did not understand the question. This is response error.

The pilot questionnaire helps to determine the errors, which will occur when it is used.

2.3 Sample

Sample / Census

We will be using a sample in order to make generalizations of the target population as a whole rather than a census as it would be too difficult/impossible to carry out a survey on the entire population of the survey.

Probability/Non-Probability Techniques

The sampling method, which our group will be using, will be a non-probability technique. As our target audience will include all students, staff, visitors to Jordanstown etc. that may possibly eat in the canteen, it will clearly be impossible for us to obtain the names, means of contact etc. of each person in the target audience. Hence, not everyone has an equal chance of being used/picked for the survey and therefore a probability technique would be impossible.

Sampling Method

There are many different types of sampling methods available within the non-probability techniques including convenience sampling, judgement sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling.

In convenience sampling the selection of respondents is left to the researcher. Generally respondents are selected because they happen to be in the right place at the right time.

Judgement sampling seems like a likely sampling method to use for this research as this relies on selecting respondents which we believe are typical and representative of the target population as a whole. However, this type of sampling tends to be used more in industrial market research rather than consumer.

The sampling method, which we will be using will be a combination of quota sampling and convenience sampling. Convenience sampling relies on the researcher using the most accessible population members from which to obtain information, whereas quota sampling is a sample of the population that possess a certain characteristic which is reflected in proportion to the target population as a whole.

In our survey we intend to conduct some of the methods e.g. questionnaires on the mall in Jordanstown by selecting willing passers-by as respondents for the research. This type of sampling is the least expensive and time consuming also, hence convenience sampling. We will also be dividing the sample up by university staff and students at a ratio of 3:1 to reflect the total staff and students at Jordanstown, hence, quota sampling.

2.4 Specific Research Method

As we are using quantitative research methods the best method for us to use in order to obtain the primary data will be in the form of a questionnaire.

The questionnaire will be made up of specific questions that will provide us with the relevant data to fulfill the research objectives such as “How much are you willing to spend on eating out each day in the university?” - hence, providing us with data to fulfill research objective 2.

By using a questionnaire in the research process, quantitative analysis can be carried out by using packages such as SPSS, SNAP or in EXCEL and hence the information will be clear and different variables can be compared to make correlations and ultimately make recommendations to management.

The questions will be mainly closed questions in order to encourage the potential respondents to participate in the survey and focus on specific questions. However, we do realise the need for some open questions in order to obtain any relevant data that we had not anticipated, new ideas etc. Therefore, a couple of these will also be included in the final draft of the questionnaire.

We will be carrying out a pilot survey/questionnaire in order to identify any of the problems with the questionnaire and improve on them. The pilot is essential in order to identify any problems, which we had not anticipated with the questionnaire which in turn is linked to the validity and reliability of the results and response error.

There are many different survey types which we will be able to use in order to conduct the research including telephone survey; computer survey; face-to-face, postal etc. However, we intend on carrying out the survey in the form of a mall intercept interview. This method will enable us to reach the target audience e.g. standing in a prime position i.e. the mall in Jordanstown in order to interview passers-by such as students, lecturers etc. This type of survey method is inexpensive, less time consuming than in-home interviews, will allow us to record the non-verbal reactions, allow us to clarify anything which the respondent does not understand, target specific people, use visual stimuli etc.

2.5 Questionnaire Design

The designing of the questionnaire is extremely important, and there are many factors to be considered within this area.

- 1- Survey objectives
- 2- Data collection method
- 3- Question response format
- 4- Question wording
- 5- Questionnaire flow and layout
- 6- Evaluation of questionnaire (pilot)
- 7- Amend questionnaire
- 8- Prepare final copy
- 9- Implementing the survey

Each of these areas are immensely important and we have already mentioned some of them. The survey objectives were outlined in the research objectives. Once again, the questionnaire objectives are:

- 1- Ask questions which will provide the appropriate information
- 2- The respondent must be motivated by the questions
- 3- The amount of error that is found from the answers must be at a minimum.

Each of these objectives must be met so as the survey is a success and we obtain the appropriate results from the surveys.

We have also stated that the way we will collect the data is from mall intercept interviews, as these are where we can find our target respondents. We want to know all of the opinions of people who use the university campus canteens, their preferred foods, how much they are willing to pay, and any other factors that determine where they eat.

We want the respondents to find it easy to respond to the questions, and for their answers to be clear. Most of the questions are in a yes, no format, for the quantitative analysis, but we also want some detail within this, so there are some questions, which are answered in an open ended way. They can give us the information needed, which cannot be obtained using yes or no answers.

The questions must be clear and worded appropriately, to avoid any confusion or misinterpretation, which was mentioned earlier in sampling errors. We will have open, closed and dichotomous questions. These will mean that every question will be answered easily, not just having to answer yes or no, but being able to give reasons where needed and ticking an option out of the ones which are available. The questions will be clear, and precise, not using any difficult words. It will be in simple language so the respondent is comfortable and answers to the best of their ability. If they did not understand a word, they may be too embarrassed to ask it's meaning, and guess. This could lead to the wrong answer and incorrect data. The questions should also be unbiased or require the respondent to have to think back, especially if they do not have a good memory. An example of this is:

“Do you agree that the Antrim Hall needs to have more healthier options available?”

This is implying that we feel this is correct and so the respondent may also state this as it is implied that it is the right answer.

The layout of the questionnaire should be uncomplicated, starting off with easy questions to ease them into the questionnaire. The questionnaire should flow properly, with one question leading on to another in a way that makes sense all questions asking similar questions being together. One question should lead to another in a way that makes sense, so that the respondent understands the questions.

The pilot of the questionnaire is the next stage of the process. “Pre-testing a questionnaire is an important part of the research effort” (Reynolds 1993). This will identify any questions which are unclear, or do not give the appropriate information. It is also a chance to find out the reactions of the respondents to the questions. They may find some of the questions difficult or not be able to answer them. The pilot will show any of these problems, and it will be altered. This will help in the preparation of the final copy, when all of the decisions have been made, the questions, which will be asked, their structure, how people will answer and the layout of the questionnaire.

The only other area to consider would be how many respondents will be needed and where and when to carry out the survey. This is a very important factor as where you carry out the survey will determine the response. As we want to ask people about what they prefer to eat and how they feel about the café in the university campus the best place to do this is in the mall. Students and lecturers will be walking through the mall on their way to get lunch and this will be the perfect time to carry out the survey.

Once this has been achieved, the next step is to analyse all of the findings, which is an extremely important part of the process.

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2.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Through valuable research, it can be assumed that Antrim Dining Hall, although a popular catering premises, is not using its full potential and resources, to achieve greatest utilization and maximisation of profits.

To do so in an effective manner, it is necessary that the client participate in an effective manner to improve its status, to ensure that the customer is exposed to the best possible choice and variety on the university campus, thorough the use of Antrim Dining Hall. Consequently, the following recommendations have been made in order for the objectives to become successful, hence indicating the market research survey's purpose.

- All day breakfast: From our findings, it is evident that the Antrim diner does not even provide a breakfast menu at all. It therefore may prove beneficial if this become a regular feature. As the opening hours of Antrim Hall are between 11AM and 6.30PM, they could provide an all-day breakfast as one of their options. An all-day breakfast is not offered in any of its competitors, and was a popular motion for improvement from the questionnaire results. Furthermore, the dining hall could also open earlier to provide this breakfast as the lectures for most students commence before eleven o'clock. This would offer the customer more choice and options for their meals.
- More meal deals: Although Antrim Hall provide a number of meal deals such as fish and chips or burger and chips for £3.95, it is recommended that the choice should not be as limited. Foods such as shepherds pie or other hot meals could be on offer to provide the customer with another area of choice. If the customer is offered the same menu every day of every week, this may deter them from purchasing food on a regular basis. Hence, varying the meal deals each week may secure more customer loyalty.
- A choice of oriental foods: Through examining the menu for Antrim Hall, it is evident that a selection of oriental foods are on offer, however, a large proportion of questionnaire responses stated that they were not available even though it had been stated on the menu. By up dating the oriental selection and providing the option daily this would also improve variety, hence customer preferences.
- Improve on the standard/quality of food: The quality of the food was another major factor concerning the target market. Antrim Hall may be concerned that a number of responses returned were not satisfied with this factor. They stated that the food was either too cold/greasy and needed improvement in comparison to other catering establishments. These are issues that the kitchen staffs need to recognise. If the standard is not of the highest quality, the target market will purchase elsewhere.
- Prices should be kept between £2-£4. Although most of the food on the university campus range between these prices, it is important that if any of the

recommendations are initiated, the price does not increase. A rise in price may have detrimental effects to Antrim Hall, with a decline of customer demand.

- Introducing a sandwich bar: Due to a large proportion of people stating that O'Brien's was their preferred food, Antrim may open a sandwich bar, whereby its customers can order fresh sandwiches rather than buy them pre-packed. This may improve market share, and also increase the number of females who eat in Antrim Hall, as often they prefer the healthier option of salads, sandwiches etc.
- On campus meal options: As the Antrim hall closes at 6.30PM, it may be beneficial for the management to aim at customers who are spending a lot of time on the campus, or indeed residing on the campus. Opening and closing times were concerns by the respondents, hence, they could offer specific deals or offer special cards for late night meals to these customers, so long as the food is fresh.

From analysing our key findings, we feel that these recommendations will be effective. Through this marketing research study, we feel that these points may prove to be useful and help achieve the management decision and aims.

EVALUATION

This marketing research project enabled us to research an area that was of interest to our group. This enabled us to work as a team and gather information collectively. We also learnt all the processes and skills that are required to carry out a successful marketing research project. Through illustrating the management and objective decisions we were able to constantly refer to these in order to focus on these objectives, rather than wasting the limited time we had.

Two hundred questionnaires were distributed, which enabled us to gather a significant number of respondents. Although it was a small sample in relation to the number of potential customers on the campus, it was sufficient to gather results to make adequate recommendations.

Through the pilot questionnaire we were able to constantly improve on the questions asked, so that the most specific and tailored answers would be formed. We found this beneficial, because, although we did not find any problems with the questionnaire, respondents found errors in it. When the final questionnaire was distributed we were reassured that all errors were rectified, and the survey was successful.