

Assignment 1: Comparative assessment of databases

Eric Duplessis

School of Information Studies, McGill University

INFS 691 – Special Topics (Business Information)

Professor France Bouthilier

October 9, 2025

Detailed Analyses

Frasers Directory

1. Purpose	Frasers Directory is an online directory of Canadian industrial distributors and manufacturers, their products, and news articles about manufacturers, and industries. This database can address BI needs such as: identification of products and suppliers, industry competitors, and industry trends and news. Also uniquely provides direct contact feature to suppliers via email.
2. Currency	Updated irregularly. New articles and listings are added irregularly, sometimes multiple in one day, and sometimes not for a couple weeks. Ultimately, updates are generally very current, with multiple items (news) added per month. It is unclear how regularly new companies are added to the Frasers list, or removed if they are no longer in business...
3. Scope/Coverage	The scope of information is very limited. Company profiles can feature information such as the address, contact info, year of establishment, number of employees, estimated annual revenue, products, and related/featured news articles. One or multiple tags are also featured next to the company name indicating if the company is a manufacturer, distributor, retailer, etc. Companies (aka Suppliers) are identified by categories of products they produce. Not all companies have products featured on their profile on the Frasers site (most don't), and most companies are only associated with two product categories.
4. Authority	Frasers is owned by Annex Business Media, a company that owns approximately 60 media brands to serve Canadian industries with relevant information and resources. Listings are created by users (companies) however, and incur a subscription fee to have the listing available in the Frasers directory. Fees range from \$29 per year (for a profile including only basic company information), to \$5,052 per year (for a profile with products, tags, premium category listings, and news articles). The subscription tiers therefore grant different tiers of authority and advertisement/promotion in this directory.
5. Audience	The audience of this site is open access to global users, but primarily it is primarily business-to-business for Canadian industries and businesses. It is geared towards connecting manufacturers, distributors and retailers.
6. Accuracy	Accuracy is not guaranteed. The company profiles, and their products, information and external links are maintained and reported by the company (subscriber). As per the Terms of Use, companies are not mandated to provide accurate information. Provided links are also purely for the convenience of users. Companies can provide any link, and users are advised to click on links at their own risk. Furthermore, news articles associated with company listings (who pay the premium tier subscription) are written by the editor at Frasers. They are custom written articles, rather than unbiased pieces of journalism.
7. Format	The site is not particularly easy to navigate. While its primary purpose is to provide a directory of company profiles with different industry category tags, its search functionality is limited. Companies are largely found by typing a search by company name, product name, or key words. Results that can appear are company products, company news articles, and company profile listings. However, little to no search filters are provided. Searches cannot be filtered to just products or news, nor by location, company size, annual revenue, or other. A "Refine Search using keywords" option is available, but it is confusing,

	<p>unclear, and unintuitive. Furthermore, a list of “Related Categories” sits beneath it, but clicking one of these shows only suppliers, and no longer products or news.</p> <p>A Products page shows a vertical list of products listed by companies in no particular category or order. A “Popular Categories” menu table is on the left, but clicking on a category takes you to a list of companies in that category and not product listings related to that category. In other words, it is impossible to browse products by category, instead, you have to type a search using key words. The same applies to news articles. You cannot browse news articles by category or filter a search to show only news articles. The website’s architecture heavily limits user searches to company profiles.</p> <p>A Showroom page is also featured on the site, showcasing companies who have a full profile and list of products on the Fraser directory. However, the Showroom also has no search or filter features. Users can only browse the profiles in the arbitrary order in which they are presented.</p> <p>A category index link is featured in the footer of the website, but the index is so large that it slows the page and sometimes freezes the browser.</p> <p>Ultimately, users who know exactly which company they are seeking will quickly be able to retrieve the relevant information. However, the poorly designed navigation and information architecture of the site make it difficult and potentially time consuming to retrieve any other information users may seek.</p>
8. Tutorials	No tutorials available on the Frasers website, or anywhere by Google search.
9. Customer Support	Contact information such as email and phone number are available for the Sales Brand Manager, Group Publisher, and Editor. While these contacts are easy to find, it seems there is no designated contact for customer support. Additionally, Frasers social media accounts are not very active (X and Facebook), except for LinkedIn which shares their news articles as they are published.
10. Cost	Frasers directory is free. There is no cost to access the directory. Costs only exist for users seeking to have a company profile/listing on the website.

Vivintel

1. Purpose	Vivintel is a database that provides statistical information about trends and correlations between particular demographics of Canadians and their consumer activity. It features filterable data from the Study of the Canadian Consumer, a survey that collects data about Canadians' media consumption, purchasing habits and intentions, and lifestyles. It is a powerful tool for addressing business information needs such as helping Canadian businesses understand the potential size of their target consumer audience. If a business knows how many Canadians in a certain demographic engage in particular consumer activities, they will have a better sense of what products they should sell and how to sell them.
2. Currency	The Study of the Canadian Consumer collects data on a quarterly basis, with the most recent survey results coming from the summer of 2025. Survey results go back as far as summer of 2023.
3. Scope/Coverage	<p>The survey data covers approximately 27 topics, ranging from television, radio and internet use, to advertising, personal care, travel, business, groceries, apparel, and more. Each topic can be filtered by demographic dimensions such as geography, age/generation, gender, sexuality, language, education, income, ethnicity, etc. The statistical results of the survey are presented in a cross-table/matrix of numerical values, with each cell showing the sample (actual number of people from the survey), population (size of the Canadian population that the sample represents), the percentage breakdown of a row value by its different column attributes, and the percentage breakdown of a column by its different row attributes.</p> <p>For example, if create a table with coffee drinker status in the rows, and student status in the columns, you can see the percentage of active students who do and do not drink coffee, OR, you can see the percentage of coffee drinkers who are and are not active students.</p> <p>Lastly, an Index value is also featured in each cell of the table, indicating if there is a strong correlation between column and row attributes. For example 24.9% of total survey respondents in summer 2025 said they do not drink coffee. 34% of the respondents who were active students said they did not drink coffee. The index for non-coffee drinkers who are students is 137 (and highlighted) to indicate a strong association between these factors.</p>
4. Authority	Vividata is the company that issues the Study of the Canadian Consumer. They are governed by a "Board of Directors made up of key leaders in Canadian media and consumer goods and services, and a Research Committee consisting of insights specialists from across industries," (Vividata.ca). The quarterly survey results come from online survey respondent samples of 45,000-65,000 Canadians (~200,000 per year).
5. Audience	Vivintel's database is largely targeted towards marketers, media, and agencies. Its high volume of demographic filters make it a strong tool for the marketing industry to understand consumer behaviour and its trends and changes over time.
6. Accuracy	Since the database relies almost entirely on self-reported data from online survey respondents, it is hard to assess the accuracy and validity of the data. Furthermore, different quarterly survey results can feature slightly uneven demographic distributions. In other words, different survey results quarters may feature more, or less, respondents in particular provinces, age groups, income brackets, etc.

7. Format	<p>The database requires a small amount of training and time to play around with to understand its architecture. It is not intuitive, and has a bit of a learning curve. The database's design and interactivity uses what Vividata calls the multi-dimensional isotonic technique. Somewhat like a pivot table in Microsoft Excel, Vivintel enables users to select from a huge set of survey fields (such as drank coffee in last 6 months, intention to purchase vehicle within a year, when tv was last watched, student status, income level, etc) and click and drag them into the rows, columns and base count of a table. The resulting matrix of values displays every combination of values of the compared fields. For example, you can breakdown the results of Canadians who did and did not drink coffee in the last 6 months by their intention to purchase or not purchase a car within the next year. Comparing different fields can reveal correlations, so coffee drinkers could be more, or less, likely to have intentions to purchase a car.</p> <p>The application has two main views, the Table view and the Target view. The Table view was discussed previously. The Target view enables users to create a target audience (a refined sample population based on certain field). For example. Let's say I want to see the data on Gen Z coffee drinkers, by province and student status. Since I know that I want my sample population to be exclusively Gen Z coffee drinkers, I can create this target audience in the Target view, and then apply it in the Table view so that I can breakdown the sample by province and student status in the columns and rows.</p> <p>Ultimately, this database is a powerful and thorough resource for business information, however, new users will require time to learn how to navigate and operate it. The categories of demographics and consumer activities (fields) are well indexed, and a search bar feature allows users to conveniently search for specific fields. Information retrieval can be quick or require a bit of time to parse the data as needed, if users already know how to operate the system.</p>
8. Tutorials	<p>Video tutorials for using the database exist on YouTube, but are provided by Conestoga College and Humber College / University of Guelph. Vividata does not provide their own tutorials and no links on the database are provided either. Tutorials for the database can be found via Google search.</p>
9. Customer Support	<p>The Vividata.ca website has a general phone number and email available in their Contact Us page, but there is no designated customer support contact, and no contact at all listed in the Vivintel application specifically.</p>
10. Cost	<p>Cost is not listed on their website. Institutions and organizations must reach out directly to Vividata to discuss subscription cost.</p> <p>Vividata also offers published reports on various consumer topics however, ranging in price from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.</p>

Statista

1. Purpose	Statista is an online platform that serves a broad range of business intelligence needs through the provision of almost two million general statistics, along with market data and new AI insight tools. Its primary purpose is to make complex data easily accessible and usable for fact-based decision-making. It can support strategic planning, competitive benchmarking, and market forecasting by providing concise, presentation-ready visuals.
2. Currency	Statista maintains a relatively up-to-date database. Since the platform aggregates data from external sources, the freshness of individual datasets depends on the timing of those original publications. Data from industries such as social media or technology may be updated more frequently than that from slower-changing sectors like agriculture or demographics. The company also notes that its market data and forecasts are refreshed at least twice a year, with regular updates to reflect new reports and trends. The platform generally lists the year or date of the data in each chart, which helps users assess its timeliness.
3. Scope/Coverage	Statista hosts data on more than 80,000 topics from over 22,000 sources, spanning more than 170 industries and 150 countries. This breadth allows users to explore trends in areas as diverse as e-commerce, renewable energy, consumer preferences, finance, and health. Statista's specialized tools—such as Market Insights, Digital Market Outlook, and Consumer Insights—allow deeper exploration of specific industries, offering forecasts and breakdowns by demographic factors. Users can view data over time, compare regions, and analyze both revenue and volume data for selected markets. While Statista provides the ability to “drill down” into submarkets or subsegments, it generally presents summarized rather than raw or micro-level data.
4. Authority	Founded in Germany in 2007, the company aggregates statistics from approximately 22,500 sources—ranging from government agencies and trade associations to consultancy reports and academic studies. Its research team employs standardized methodologies and validation processes to ensure consistency and reliability. However, because the platform functions primarily as an aggregator, it relies heavily on the credibility of its sources. As well, access to data sources or original providers can sometimes be restricted to subscribers, which can make independent verification difficult.
5. Audience	Statista's user audience is broad, including business professionals, market analysts, journalists, academics, and students. Corporate users may rely on Statista for market sizing, competitor benchmarking, and trend analysis, while educators and researchers use it as a teaching and citation tool. Journalists and media professionals may benefit more from the ready-made charts, infographics, social media content and videos that can easily be shared and embedded into articles or reports. Statista also offers its datasets as training content for AI tools. It promotes itself as a fact-based database for feeding AI models and reducing AI hallucinations. So machine learning professionals and data engineers may also be part of Statista's audience.
6. Accuracy	Statista seems to <i>generally</i> maintain a high level of reliability due to its use of established and verifiable data sources. That said, they have 22,000+ sources, therefore it's questionable if every source is reliable, and those sources themselves may also be pulling their data from another source. So users must be diligent in tracking the sources to verify it themselves. Furthermore, while

	<p>Statista provides the name of the source and link to it, the link is not always to the full source data. Often it simply links to the source organizations home page. This lack of direct access costs users more time to go and find the source themselves. Sometimes it is a fully downloadable dataset, however.</p> <p>They are also transparent about their internal research methodologies and how they calculate their estimations. Still, modeled and summarized data naturally carry a degree of uncertainty. For example, when aggregating international data, differences in data measurement definitions and sampling methods across countries may affect comparability. For example, crime rates in different countries. Laws and law enforcement are different in different countries, and countries with for-profit imprisonment tend to have higher crime rates. This level of context and insight is not clearly available.</p> <p>As well, primary sources for Canada-specific data seem to be World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), not Statistics Canada or ISED Canada. As a result, Statista is best viewed as a reliable secondary source, suitable for analysis and presentation. Direct consultation of the primary data sources should be considered when conducting rigorous academic or professional research.</p>
7. Format	<p>Ease-of-use is one Statista's largest selling points. Databases statistics platforms can often be overloaded with information and be difficult for users to read and digest. Statista focuses on a very simplified, minimal, one statistic at a time format. This design decision makes the platform easy to understand by the majority of users.</p> <p>Its content structuring and organization are also thoroughly indexed and categorized for content browsing, with groupings of statistics and content ready to be viewed as a pre-made report, while each and every statistic on the site can also be searched and viewed individually.</p> <p>The search feature is also equipped with various filter options to improve and refine results, such as content type, search accuracy, location, industry, publication date, and archived status.</p> <p>Statistics can also be conveniently exported as PDF, XLS, PNG PPT file formats. They also have a strong social media presence on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok, etc. with easily shareable content.</p>
8. Tutorials	<p>Statista's website contains a Help Center with various resources to help guide users in performing various tasks on the site. They also have Webinar section, which includes a Training Hub subsection with video tutorials, allowing users to learn how to navigate Statista. This content was harder to find than the Help Center.</p> <p>The design of the website is strongly user-friendly however, and navigating through pages and reports is quite intuitive. Tutorials don't seem necessary for most users, however, it is a plus that they are offered.</p>
9. Customer Support	<p>Multiple types of support contacts are available on the Statista website, for general, technical, and plans and pricing. Contacts are easy to locate, and available for the US, Germany, the UK, Australia, Singapore, Japan, and India.</p>
10. Cost	<p>Statista features both purchasable content (individual reports), and subscription plans in four different access tiers. Each tier provides the same access as the previous, with added features:</p> <p>Basic (free) – free historic statistics and limited industry and topic coverage.</p> <p>Starter (\$199 USD, per month) – full access to all statistics and unlimited AI prompts.</p>

	<p>Personal (\$599 USD, per month) – Unlimited expert-written reports, analyst insights on trends & markets, country & region reports, and curated data.</p> <p>Professional (\$1,299 USD, per month) – 5 user seats, forecast data to plan 5 years ahead, visual tools to compare global markets, key metrics across 1,000+ industries, commercial publication rights, and dedicated support.</p>
--	--

Pros and Cons

Frasers	<p>Pros: Frasers Directory’s main strength lies in its focused purpose and direct practical value for identifying manufacturers, distributors, and products within Canada’s industrial market. It provides a simple, free-access directory for users to find suppliers and industry contacts, while also integrating news updates that reflect current trends. The ownership by Annex Business Media adds some authority and credibility, and the inclusion of company contact features allows for immediate outreach, making it useful for professionals engaged in procurement, business development, or competitive analysis. The database’s open accessibility is a significant advantage for small firms, business owners and students who need quick, no-cost access to supplier information. The website also connects users to related industry articles, which can provide useful context or background on sector developments. While somewhat dated in design, its content remains focused and relevant to Canadian industries, and its niche scope gives it a clear and specialized role in business research.</p>	<p>Cons: Frasers Directory suffers from poor usability, limited data scope, and questionable accuracy. Company listings are paid and self-reported, which introduces a clear bias toward advertisers rather than a comprehensive, verified directory. The absence of quality control or mandatory accuracy standards undermines trust in the data. Navigation is another major weakness: users cannot filter or browse effectively by category, product, or location, which makes discovery frustrating. Compared with modern databases, the site’s search tools and architecture feel outdated and unintuitive. Furthermore, it lacks tutorials, robust customer support, and modern interactive features that professionals expect. Overall, while Frasers Directory can fulfill basic supplier identification needs, it fails to meet the standards of modern business intelligence tools due to its self-promotional bias, poor search design, and limited analytical depth. In the Top Trending category for news articles, it is also unclear how a story is deemed “trending”. This category just shows the most recent articles written by the Frasers directory editor. Therefore the author may have bias towards what is reported on.</p>
----------------	--	---

Vivintel	<p>Pros: Vivintel stands out as a sophisticated consumer research tool, offering rich data on lifestyle habits, attitudes, and demographics. It excels in its ability to connect behavioral insights with marketing strategy through surveys, and customizable cross-tables. The database's data quality is high, sourced from reliable, continuously updated consumer panels and validated by reputable market research standards. Vivintel's strength lies in its capacity to produce detailed consumer portraits that reveal how people think and act, providing critical intelligence for branding, product design, and audience targeting. Moreover, Vivintel's structured dashboard makes it moderately user-friendly after some training. For organizations seeking to understand motivations behind consumer choices—particularly in Canada—it is a valuable data source.</p>	<p>Cons: The main disadvantage of Vivintel is its exclusivity and cost. Access is restricted to organizations with paid subscriptions, making it inaccessible for individual researchers, students, or small businesses. Its data is also highly specialized, meaning that while it excels at consumer insight, it lacks the flexibility to serve broader business intelligence or industry analysis needs. Users without a background in marketing analytics may find its terminology, survey methods, and interpretation of data challenging. Additionally, since Vivintel data is collected through self-reported surveys, there is always a risk of bias or inconsistency in responses. The platform's scope is also geographically limited to Canadian populations, reducing its utility for international comparison. Finally, the interface, though structured, requires training to use effectively, and tutorials and supporting content are not provided except for two videos on YouTube by third parties (Conestoga College and Humber College - Guelph University). The data also may feel abstract or too granular for general decision-making. Data visualization is also limited to numerical figures, which can cause a visual overload when the table becomes large with many columns or rows.</p>
Statista	<p>Pros: Statista's strengths lie in its intuitive usability, global scope, and visual clarity. It consolidates millions of statistics and forecasts from credible sources across thousands of industries and countries, making it one of the most comprehensive data aggregators available. Its presentation-ready charts and intuitive navigation make it ideal for users who need quick, reliable statistics for reports, presentations, and market assessments. Statista's categorization system, search filters, and export formats (PDF, Excel,</p>	<p>Cons: Despite its broad appeal, Statista's main weaknesses stem from its role as an aggregator rather than a primary data producer. The reliability of its content depends on external sources, and some data may become outdated or inconsistent across regions. Its focus on summarized data limits users' ability to conduct deep or raw analysis, and the lack of methodological detail in some charts can make critical evaluation difficult. Canada-specific data is also often sourced from other international</p>

	<p>PowerPoint, PNG) enhance its practicality for both academic and professional use. Its transparency in sourcing and clear citation of publication dates also reinforce its credibility. The inclusion of tutorials, webinars, and extensive customer support ensures accessibility to users of varying skill levels.</p> <p>As well, Statista is not only a convenient data provider but also a strong teaching and communication tool. Its visual clarity and easy-to-digest design helps users use data for informed decision-making.</p>	<p>bodies, rather than Statistics Canada or other government of Canada sources. While its visuals are user-friendly, they may oversimplify or limit complex datasets, making it less suitable for advanced research or statistical modeling. Cost is another drawback—while some data are free, most valuable reports and insights require expensive subscriptions, often beyond the reach of smaller institutions or individuals. Furthermore, the interface, though sleek, may encourage surface-level engagement rather than deep exploration.</p> <p>In short, Statista is best for quick insight and general market research and industry trend analysis. It is less appropriate for rigorous, source-level research or technical analysis.</p>
--	---	--

Global Recommendations

All three databases—Fraser's Directory, Vivintel, and Statista—offer distinct and complementary strengths, though each has important limitations that should be considered before acquisition. Fraser's Directory is the most straightforward choice, as it is *free* and serves as a practical tool for looking at a sample of Canada's manufacturing and industrial landscape. It enables users to identify and contact manufacturers, distributors, and suppliers across different sectors, making it particularly useful for business students, market researchers, and professionals conducting supplier or competitor analysis. While its usability is weak and its listings are biased toward companies that pay higher subscription fees, the information it provides still has practical value. As a no-cost resource, it offers a foundation for understanding Canadian industry connections, even if it is incomplete and lacks consistent data accuracy. The database is a unique and smart platform, however, and has potential to be a greater resource if the information architecture and web system design are improved to better facilitate navigation and information retrieval.

Vivintel, on the other hand, is a highly specialized tool that offers rich insights into Canadian consumer behaviour. It uses quarterly survey data to explore correlations between demographics, lifestyle habits, and purchasing trends. Its multidimensional analysis capabilities—similar to a pivot table—allow users to uncover detailed relationships between variables such as age, region, income, or consumer habits. This makes it invaluable for marketing and communications research. A drawback, however, is that users may need to examine several different fields to identify correlations in consumer behaviour. Vivintel does not support new and emerging AI and data mining tools which can quickly identify correlations automatically. Ultimately, while Vivintel's learning curve, lack of support, and subscription costs are notable drawbacks, the database's unique Canadian focus and demographic detail justify its acquisition.

The acquisition of Statista, however, depends on institutional priorities and budget. Statista is a globally recognized platform, known for its clean design, ease of use, and visually appealing data presentation. It provides access to an *enormous* range of statistics across industries and countries, making it ideal for quick reference, presentation, and general market context. However, as an aggregator of data from thousands of external sources, it does not always allow users to directly verify the original data. This can raise questions about credibility and consistency, particularly for academic research requiring primary data validation. While Statista's summaries are accurate and convenient for exploratory or comparative analysis, they are less suited for projects that demand raw data or reproducible results. Premium tier subscriptions to Statista may offer more depth and validation on data sources. Premium tier subscribers also have dedicated personal business support for their information needs, and likely data validation. This level of assistance is not available under an institutional license.

In conclusion, Fraser's Directory and Vivintel should both be acquired, as they provide complementary national coverage of Canada's industry and consumers. Statista is also highly valuable but should be considered optional—most appropriate for institutions with the budget and need for fast, presentation-ready data rather than raw statistical precision.

Statista. (n.d.). *Statista: The statistics portal*. Retrieved October 9, 2025, from <https://www.statista.com/>

Vividata. (2025, Summer). [Table showing variables from Study of the Canadian Consumer] [Data set].

Vivintel. <https://vivintel.ca/projects/13845/tables?variableSection=0&waveId=31>

Fraser's Directory. (n.d.). *Fraser's Directory: Canadian industrial supply directory*. Retrieved October 9, 2025, from <https://www.fraserdirectory.com/>