

Assessment 1B

Data Evaluation

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Existing secondary data, such as the data collected by a government entity like the Australian Bureau of Statistics, can be extremely useful to marketers. While this data may be insufficient on its own, the information it offers can be a starting point in determining what further research needs to be conducted or additional primary data collected, to make informed insights about a target market and for delivering data-driven solutions to specific business problems.

However, while existing data may offer many advantages and various benefits to marketers, in that it is usually readily available and often inexpensive to acquire, it is important to understand that these datasets that have been collected for another primary purpose can also have their drawbacks and limitations, with regards to the relevance, accuracy and bias of the data that has been collected. This is particularly apparent in the study of minority groups within a population and of significant consequence is the collection, analysis and evaluation of data representative of indigenous peoples that the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues considers to be a “topic of primary importance” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2004) with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) reaffirming the rights of Indigenous Peoples around the world to access and control data about their Peoples, territories, lifeways, and resources (Davis, 2016).

To address the ethical considerations and practical implications surrounding the use of existing indigenous data, that poses problems in an increasingly complex business environment, the conceptual framework for the design, review and conduct of market research that has been established in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, in conjunction with the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research that guides responsible research practices, is further supported by guidelines developed for the ethical conduct in researching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities. These guidelines define a set of six core values, that as implemented principles in cultural diversity and social justice, ensure indigenous data sovereignty is practised so that responsible data-driven decisions are made, through the application of agreed indigenous data governance standards.

Spirit and integrity

The ongoing continuity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ spirit throughout time and the inheritance of their culture through the generations, from the past to the present and into the future, is the core value that is most important to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Marketers should both recognise and respect this uniquely Australian significance, that is shared by all of Australia’s indigenous Peoples, by demonstrating their professional integrity through the processes that they apply to the collection and use of indigenous data, adopting an ethical methodology that exhibits a considered understanding of this principle and the other five values of relevance to the priorities, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Cultural continuity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples preserve their culture by maintaining the bonds between people, their environment and with respect to their spiritual domains. These bonds play a critical function in the social lives of Australia's indigenous people, contributing to both their shared and enduring individual and collective identities. When using existing data from secondary sources, marketers should seek to establish an appropriate balance between their individual and collective differences, by understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are too often recognised only for their collective identity within the Australian population, when in truth their individual identities are actually more nuanced and reflect the full demographic diversity of the different people from the many nations that inhabited the continent prior to colonisation.

Equity

As a nation, we are only just beginning to come to terms with the shame of the inequity that has been suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, caused by the discrimination and marginalisation that came with colonisation. In the past, research has too often been done 'on' rather than 'for' or 'by' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities (Lowitja Institute, 2021). To be ethically fair and just as we now move forward, marketers must appreciate indigenous data as not only a valuable resource, but as intellectual property not to be exploited. The insights arrived from the information derived should ideally be of benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, as the collective memory, shared experience and inherited wisdom that can be gained from within their existing data is ultimately the sovereign right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine how this knowledge is used.

Reciprocity

Being the traditional owners and custodians of the land and the sea, the flora and the fauna, as well as the benefits derived from these ecosystems and its biodiversity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people might place greater or lesser value on the various returns from the use of their existing data than marketers necessarily will. To be ethically acceptable, the merit of any data-driven insights must have due regard for the welfare, beliefs, perceptions, customs and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, by marketers identifying any potential consequences that could result from their findings and through respectful discussion in mutually beneficial relationships with indigenous people and communities, develop strategies to address these unintended impacts wherever possible.

Respect

Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and societies, respect reinforces and strengthens dignity, promoting trust and cooperation among people. It acknowledges the rights of others to hold and express different values, norms and aspirations to our own and the awareness of how our beliefs, attitudes and behaviours can sometimes contribute to these differences between people not being seen but ignored. To use indigenous data ethically,

marketers must respect the privacy, confidentiality and cultural sensitivities of the people it relates to and they should also verify that the source of any existing secondary data was gathered voluntarily from its participants, who were fully informed, gave their consent freely and understood why the information was being collected.

Responsibility

Caring for Country, to maintain harmony and balance within and between the physical and spiritual realms, is a shared responsibility central to Australian indigenous culture. At its core, causing no harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities or to all that they value, is the principle that marketers with the appropriate qualifications, competence and experience, need to apply when using existing indigenous data. Analysis should be conducted honestly, in the search for knowledge and understanding, to deliver data-driven insights that can establish or enhance the capacities, opportunities or outcomes for advancing the interests, welfare or wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

These data sovereignty and governance protocols are not necessarily exclusive to indigenous Australians; the application of these principles within a similar conceptual framework can be equally extended to the ethical professional practice of collecting and evaluating data relative to other population segments, target markets or groups of people stereotypically seen as “all the same”, such as ethnic minorities with a shared religion or the GLBTQIA+ community counted collectively for any individual sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

All too often today, whether it be when applying for a job, giving customer service feedback at a retail store, looking to rent an apartment at a real estate agency, taking out a loan from a bank or simply entering a competition for prizes, sensitive questions around identity, ethnicity and origin are asked in an apparent attempt to better understand an individual within a collective. However, understanding the conceptual framework for the design, review and conduct of market research that should apply not only to all research conducted in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities but equally applied to all people as a whole, it is evident that to capture this type of information in these pursuits is not only unnecessary to the knowledge that is sought but to even ask questions about a person's identity in such a manner is unethical, as the answers given should bear no influence on the decisions to be made from the information that might be derived from the data collected.

References

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