

Symposium on Information Problems in Chemical Marketing. Introduction*

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The problems of obtaining, evaluating, organizing, and utilizing chemical marketing information are of deep concern, both to the chemical marketing specialist and to the information specialist.

Chemical marketing information possesses two aspects which distinguish it from conventional chemical information. Perhaps the most important is the time value of the information. Market data which were important ten or twelve years ago are now of chiefly historical interest. The second factor has to do with the validity of the evaluation of the data. In most chemical experiments, the investigator is dealing with such large numbers of molecules that the statistical laws are obeyed. In chemical marketing research, however, the "universe" is much smaller, the individuals in the "population" are not necessarily equivalent, and the principle of randomness may not apply. Consequently, the validity of the interpretation of the data depends to a large degree upon the personal skills and astuteness of the investigator.

The problem of where to obtain the necessary information for marketing activities was explored in a symposium of the Division of Chemical Literature on "Literature Sources for Chemical Market Research" at the 121st National Meeting of the American Chemical Society in 1952. The first joint symposium of the Divisions of Chemical Literature and Chemical Marketing and Economics was held at the 130th National Meeting in 1956 and dealt with a somewhat different aspect of chemical literature, namely, the "Preparation of Technical Material for Development, Promotion, and Advertising."

In the present series of papers, given at the second joint symposium of the Division of Chemical Literature and the Division of Chemical Marketing and Economics, we bring the 1952 symposium up to date by reviewing new sources of information which have become important in the intervening years. We also enlarge the scope of the earlier symposium to include the problems of organization and utilization of marketing information and the special problems raised by international marketing operations. We examine an operating system for organizing marketing information, explore a few examples of how information from the field is utilized in marketing decisions, and consider the management viewpoint of information problems in chemical marketing.

We also explore some of the special problems involved in the marketing of U. S. chemical products in other countries, and the marketing in the United States of chemical products produced abroad. When we cross national boundaries, many of our information and communication problems are raised to a higher order of magnitude. The information sources and statistics which are adequate for domestic marketing no longer suffice. In many cases, we find that we are dealing with people of vastly different cultural backgrounds who understand our language only imperfectly, if at all. Their legal and patent systems are quite different from ours. These, and other factors, create special information problems in the export and import marketing of chemical products.

U. S. chemical companies have found means of coping with these special problems. For example, the International Divisions which many companies have established can function very effectively as communication channels for marketing information. Finally, the role played by the various agencies of the United States government in aiding export and import marketing of chemical products is examined.

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