

yourmembership[®]
.com

INDUSTRY TRENDS
**INTRODUCTION TO METHODS
OF MARKET RESEARCH**

Introduction to Methods of Market Research

Written by the Association Laboratory

The optimal market research process incorporates several different methodologies designed to balance the strengths and weakness of each method with the resources of the association.

A specific market research methodology is designed to balance the following:

- Data quality
- Direct costs
- Professional fees
- Timeframe

The methodology should take an approach that is replicable, manageable and as economical as possible given the research objectives.

Survey Methodology

Six basic steps are involved in the development and execution of a research study:

- Finalize specific survey objectives, resources and constraints The purpose of this step is to clearly identify and agree upon the primary tasks to be accomplished, timeframes and responsibilities. Further discussions of research goals and any potential concerns or challenges are also addressed at this time.
- Determine data collection methods There are several types of data collection methods commonly used by associations. Each type of research has distinct advantages and disadvantages.

Types of Research

Qualitative

Qualitative research is a loosely used term. It means that the research findings are not subject to quantification or quantitative analysis. Qualitative research is usually used to help the association understand the in-depth motivations and feelings of a target audience. Qualitative research is also used to increase the efficiency of quantitative research.

Quantitative

Quantitative research is research subject to mathematical or statistical analysis. Common forms of quantitative research include mail or online survey instruments. Quantitative research allows the Association to specifically test precise concepts.

Common Research Tools

The following is a brief description of common research tools.

Focus Groups

A focus group is a group of eight to twelve participants who are led by a moderator in an in depth discussion on one particular topic were concept.

Paper (mailed) Surveys

Paper surveys are instruments that are mailed to the target audience. This method is one of the most common research tools for associations. Paper surveys can be used to collect a wide variety of information. The greatest disadvantage of paper surveys is the cost for paper, postage and data entry.

Online Surveys

Online surveys are similar to paper surveys but are administered via the Internet. The capabilities of the online format allow for a more robust data collection instrument and faster turn around time without additional expenses for paper and postage.

INDUSTRY
TRENDS

Introduction to Methods of Market Research

Written by the Association Laboratory

INDUSTRY
TRENDS

Telephone Surveys

Telephone interviews can be used for both qualitative and quantitative research. Commonly, members of a particular audience are contacted and lead through a structured or semi-structured interview process.

Determine sampling plan The sampling plan outlines who will be included in the research study. Depending on the research objectives and size of the target audience the association can survey a sample of the target audience or conduct a complete census.
Execute the development and implementation of the survey instrument

The development and implementation of the survey instrument varies by method but there are some common steps.

- Develop a list of initial questions tied to the research goals
- Determine question and response format
- Decide question wording
- Establish questionnaire flow and layout
- Evaluate the questionnaire and layout
- Obtain approval from all relevant parties
- Implement survey
- Collect, edit and enter research data

After a specific cut-off date, all returned data is compiled, edited and prepared for analysis.

- Analyze and report research findings

Recommendations from a marketing study commonly fit into three areas: descriptive, diagnostic and predictive.

- The descriptive function includes gathering and presenting statements of fact.
- The diagnostic function is where data or actions of a particular target market are explained.
- With the predictive function, the association answers questions to allow them to best take advantage of opportunities as they arise in the ever-changing marketplace. A good market research study helps the association balance these three areas to provide the highest quality and most useful information for decision-making.

About the Author

Association Laboratory is a national consulting firm that specializes in the research and development of marketing and organizational strategy, including professional development, for associations.