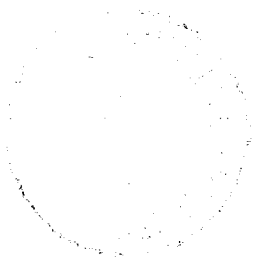




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**SWP 36/89 A CONCISE OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS
TO BUSINESS MARKETING RESEARCH**



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BUSINESS TO BUSINESS MARKETING RESEARCH**

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Introduction

In today's increasingly competitive environment, organisations are far more aware of the need to understand their buyers' requirements and hence provide a better service than their competitors. It is rare to find a market which does not have several suppliers and because of supply-demand characteristics, any supplier (be they manufacturer, distributor, service consultant) who fails to recognise the importance of fully satisfying their customer will soon see their business decline. Successful organisations are those who understand both their customers and the factors that influence their customers' businesses. Armed with this information, suppliers are then able to reduce the inherent risk in their decision making.

This objective collection of information, analysis and recommendation of actions, i.e. marketing research, is increasingly being sought by decision makers. With the growing demand for marketing research, more decision makers are seeking an understanding of marketing research. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to explain the marketing research process to those who come into contact with marketing research, but who are not marketing research specialists. By enhancing users understanding of the topic it is hoped that they will feel more confident with market research reports and be better able to use these when making decisions.

The paper is written in a question and answer format that reflects the sorts of questions normally asked by non-specialists. This means that the reader with some appreciation of this subject does not necessarily have to read all the prior questions before focusing upon the question(s) that they are particularly interested in. For the novice to this subject this paper has been structured in such a way that perusal of most of the questions and answers should give them an insight into the full domain of marketing research.

The paper opens in a general manner by clarifying what is meant by marketing research and broadly outlines how it is undertaken. The structure of the paper then follows the stages that market research projects progress through.

What is marketing research?

Marketing research is the systematic and objective collection and analysis of data about problems relating to the marketing of goods and services, undertaken to increase the likelihood of the most effective marketing action being implemented. It is systematic in the sense that a series of stages are gone through in the marketing research process, as this paper later shows. Using a computer analogy, if a short cut is taken in a program and part of the computer routine is omitted then the user will find little of value in the output. Likewise if the researcher takes a short cut during the marketing research project and, for example, only

interviews those buyers who were at their desk when telephoned, an inaccurate assessment of buyers' views would result.

A market researcher comes to a problem with an impartial and open mind and would design a market survey in such a way that it should provide an unbiased perspective. The data collection process would be based upon a combination of examining published reports in libraries, interviewing people or observing particular types of behaviour (e.g. how a manual is used prior to operating a machine). By employing a market researcher, rather than the company's sales staff, the data collected is less likely to be subject to internal bias.

Having collected the data, the market researcher would then add value to this through analysis. For example, if the market researcher had gone through several published reports to find the size and long term trends in a market, he may find conflicting estimates of market sizes along with missing trend data. By talking directly with the writers of the various reports and, also with those closely involved in a particular markets, he may then be able to resolve any discrepancies and omissions in the data.

A report would then be prepared for the client, in which the researcher would add further value to the analysis by recommending what action the decision maker should consider on the basis of the report. Frequently the market researcher will give a verbal presentation to the commissioning client and marketing implications are usually explored in some detail during the presentations.

Marketing research is a central feature of effective marketing which enables organisations to identify opportunities and threats and hence provides guidance on the most suitable course of action. By fully understanding the buying process and those factors that have an influence on the purchase decision, organisations are able to use marketing research reports to develop their marketing offering in such a way that they best match their capabilities with market needs.

Is there a difference between business to business and consumer marketing research?

There are subtle differences between business to business marketing research and consumer marketing research, but the same marketing research process is employed and the marketing research techniques are similar. The subtle differences occur for a variety of reasons.

Firstly, in business to business marketing there are many parties involved in a buying decision, while in consumer marketing each purchase decision usually involves only one or a few people. Consider a computer manufacturer who buys in electronic chips which are designed to a particular specification. The selection and evaluation of possible suppliers

would be decided by a group from a variety of departments (e.g. production, quality control, engineering, purchasing, marketing, finance) and the influence of any one department would vary during the buying process (e.g. engineering may be particularly vocal during the early period of selecting possible suppliers, but at the negotiation stage purchasing and finance may play a more dominant role). By contrast, in consumer markets the purchaser tends to be the person who will consume the item or, alternatively, there may only be a couple of key influencers (e.g. the mother and her children when buying breakfast cereals). Thus while both the electronic chips and breakfast cereal manufacturer would approach representative samples from their respective markets to evaluate buyers responses to a change in their products, the electronic chip manufacturer would have to be far more concerned with who they are going to interview.

Secondly, business to business marketing is characterised by complex products or services, usually involving larger cash spends than in consumer markets and, even when they are low unit cost items, the buyer has a considerable amount at stake if there is a problem with the product or service. For example, if a car manufacturer second sourced low unit cost bolts for their car production and received a delivery of bolts whose dimensions exceeded the specified tolerance range, unless a further delivery could be rapidly arranged the car production line would soon stop. The marketing research implications are that for business to business research the interviewers need to be more educated and have a background that enables them to quickly understand the product or service under investigation and to confidently discuss technical issues with managers from different departments. In consumer marketing research, interviewing can usually be undertaken by interviewers who do not need a technical or financial background.

Thirdly, in business to business marketing, the number of buyers for a product or service tends to be much smaller than in consumer marketing. Sampling practices would still be used in both types of marketing research, but in business to business research it would be more common to undertake surveys based on a smaller number of interviews.

Fourthly, managers in business to business marketing are aware of being in competition with other suppliers and thus to get a group of competing managers together to explore their reaction to a new product or service (i.e. a group discussion, see "what are the main types of business to business marketing research?") is more difficult than in consumer market research and may prove a more taxing technique to employ.

However, while having noted why there are some differences in marketing research techniques, as a consequence of marketing characteristics, it should be stressed that the marketing research stages that projects pass through and the techniques are still very similar.

What information can marketing research provide?

The variety of information that can be provided includes:

Size of the market, suppliers of this market, market shares, imports, exports, trend data
Profiles of purchasing organisations and competing suppliers (e.g. turnover, number of employees, locations, etc).

Understanding the buying process (e.g. who is involved in the purchase decision, what is their influence, what are the choice criteria, etc)

Products supplied to a particular market, pricing policies, distribution channels being used, promotional activity

Attitude of buyers and users towards different suppliers

Identification of factors influencing buying/usage (e.g. economic, political, technological, environmental) and subsequent integration to forecast future activity

Buyers/users reactions to new or changed company marketing activity (e.g. product development, pricing, different distributor network, promotional plans, customer service plans, corporate image, etc)

Acquisition and merger information

These topics outline those areas where marketing research can be of value and while this is not exhaustive (e.g. also used in undertaking employee satisfaction surveys) it should provide a flavour of marketing research's capabilities.

What are the main types of marketing research?

(i) Ad hoc versus continuous marketing research.

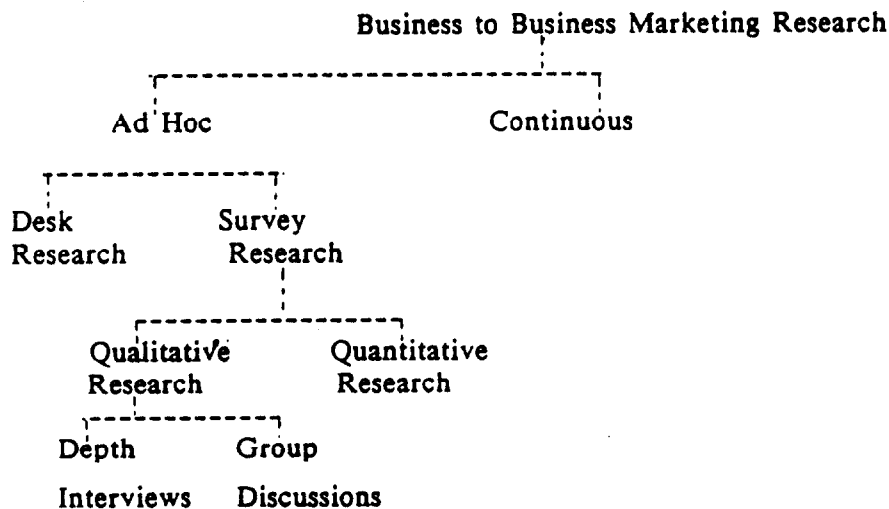
At the broadest level one can distinguish between two types of marketing research. When an organisation has a "one off" type of problem it will embark upon ad-hoc marketing research; in other words when a unique problem has occurred that should not repeatedly need information, this broad category of research is appropriate. Examples of situations where ad hoc marketing research is most appropriate include: why are sales of this product declining?, is the new computer manual seen as being better by programmers?, what would be the effect on our sales if we changed to a different distributor?, what do buyers think of the new

corporate campaign?, with the change in exchange rates how price competitive are we now seen to be in our overseas markets?

But organisations will also need to take regular monitors of markets and because they are using the same approach on a regular basis, this is referred to as continuous marketing research. For example on a regular basis all car manufacturers in the UK submit their monthly production figures to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), who in turn produce regular statistics about the UK car market. Another example would be a panel of distributors selected by a research agency, who agree to let interviewers audit their sales and stock records on a regular basis. By using a representative panel of distributors, the marketing research agency is then able to gross up the sales data and produce regular reports.

A considerable amount of work is required to set up a source for continuous marketing research and this is usually done by an Industry Association or marketing research agency, who charge a not insignificant fee for this very useful data. Consequently this type of information tends not to be widely available through public libraries.

Within this broad dichotomy of marketing research typologies one can further distinguish between other types of research, as shown below



(ii) Desk research versus survey research

The least expensive source of marketing research information can be obtained by going through internal company records or using commercial libraries and checking to see what published information already exists, ie undertaking desk research (sometimes called secondary research). With the increasing number of computer data bases (eg Textline, Datastar, etc) an alternative way is to interrogate regularly up-dated abstracting services to identify published reports.

The limitations with desk research are that the data may be out of date, or may not be sufficiently specific for the user. Should this be the case (or worse still, there be nothing published) survey research (occasionally called primary research) may be undertaken. This will be an original market investigation which will be tailored to the needs of the decision maker. It will usually involve a sample of buyers/users being interviewed (eg using a questionnaire to assess food processors' views on a new packaging process). The result of the survey will usually remain confidential to the organisation commissioning the survey.

(iii) Qualitative versus quantitative research

The problems facing the decision maker may be concerned with identifying buyers' motivations, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions towards a product or service and a large number of the questions may focus around "why?" and "how?". He may later seek quantification about these views, but might know so little about buyers reactions that it would be difficult to write a questionnaire. In these circumstances qualitative research is most appropriate.

This type of research is based upon a low number of interviews with key respondents. The interviews are unstructured (usually tape recorded) and last at least an hour. A highly trained interviewer (usually with some training in psychology) will have a list of topics to cover, but will let the respondent lead the discussion, within the framework of the topic guide. As the respondent starts to express views, so the interviewer will encourage the respondent to elaborate on these, and by letting the respondent lead the discussion, they enable the interviewer to better understand their reactions.

If the decision maker understands the questions "why?" and "how?", but seeks replies to "how many?", quantitative research will be undertaken. A representative sample of respondents will be identified from a knowledge of the market's composition. This sample will be approached and, using a structured questionnaire, data will be collected. Depending on the sample size, this will usually be computer analysed and a report presented showing the

proportions of respondents who express certain views or exhibit different types of behaviour.

(iv) Depth interviews versus group discussions

Qualitative research can either be undertaken using depth interviews or group discussions. With depth interviews the interviewer would normally undertake these unstructured interviews with about 10 key respondents (each lasting about an hour), and by then playing back the tapes, or reading the transcribed interviews, they would be able to prepare a report.

Alternatively, between 6 to 8 respondents would be recruited and together they would discuss a particular topic for about an hour, keeping within a topic guide. By the end of 4 group discussions the interviewer would have sufficient understanding to write a report. Group discussions rely upon individuals' comments sparking off others, enabling the full spectrum of ideas to be uncovered. It requires a highly skilled interviewer who discreetly keeps the discussion within the terms of reference of the topic guide and yet ensures that group dynamics enable all views to be expressed. Given the diary constraints of managers, the administration to convene group discussions is considerable

What steps does a marketing research project follow?

As mentioned earlier in this paper, marketing research is a systematic procedure and it progresses through a series of stages. All projects start with a briefing, and unless the researcher is fully briefed about a particular problem, the decision maker will be ineffective in terms of any marketing activity based on the marketing research. A thorough exploration of the management problem is required and often the meeting with the researcher helps clarify precisely what the problem is. The researcher will press for more specific objectives than generalities such as "tell us as much as possible about the market for widgets". They will also need to know what the likely implications of any decisions may be, since this will help structure the project (particularly so when sampling).

A proposal will then be prepared and would normally cover:

- the background to the study
- what marketing objectives are to be satisfied and hence what the purpose of the research is
- how the study will be undertaken
- what topic areas will be covered
- who and how many respondents will be interviewed
- a timetable and costs

Once the proposal satisfies the client and the study commissioned, data will be collected. This would start by undertaking desk research and if insufficient material is available, survey research would follow. If the problem is concerned with "how?" and "why?" qualitative research would be most appropriate, but if "how many?" quantitative research would be employed. In the latter instance a sample would be selected, a questionnaire prepared and a few interviews undertaken to check whether there are any problems with the questionnaire (ie a pilot survey). The interviews would be completed and the data then computer analysed to produce tabulations for each question. The computer output would be analysed and a report prepared which may be presented orally to the client (depending upon the agreement in the proposal). Recommended actions will be described and the researcher will usually be available for advice as the decision maker implements the survey findings.

Can we do marketing research ourselves or do we need consultants ?

It is frequently the case that organisations undertake their own marketing research projects, particularly when there is an in-house researcher. Where such an expertise exists, desk research and survey research is normally organised through the in-house researcher. However, where these skills do not exist, the organisation should consider whether it is wise to let an inexperienced department (eg marketing or sales) undertake a project. Some of the questions that should be asked include:

- are we competent in undertaking this task?
- will the study be seen to have internal credibility and be viewed as impartial?
- do we have the resources to do this ourselves and could we do the work within a realistic timetable?
- will we be able to gain sufficient confidence from respondents for them to talk candidly about this issue?
- is it cost effective for us to do this ourselves?

After considering these questions the organisation should be better able to decide on the way forward.

How do we choose marketing research consultants?

The Industrial Marketing Research Association publishes an annual directory which lists business to business market research consultants. This can be obtained from their offices at 11 Bird Street, Lichfield, Staffs, WS13 6PW (0543 263448). The Market Research Society also produces a directory of market research consultants but this has a bias towards consumer marketing research (175 Oxford Street, London W1R 1TA, 01 439 2585).

Particularly for large studies, it is not unusual to seek competitive tenders from several marketing research consultants, but it is wasteful to go beyond three. Besides considering the contents of the proposals, some of the other issues to take into account when selecting consultants are:

- Their previous experience, eg do they have a good track record? Have they worked in this area before?
- Agency personnel, eg do we get on with them? Are they respected researchers? Are we seeing just the chief while its the indians who are doing the work?
- Size of agency, eg are they financially sound? Will they deliver on time? Are they sub-contracting?
- Prestige of agency
- How well do they understand our company and our problem?
- How much are they charging?

When doing desk research, what sources are available

There are a variety of good sources that may hold published information as shown below:

(i) Commercial Libraries

There are some good commercial libraries, particularly in the major cities, which hold many useful publications. For example in London there is:

- The City Business Library, 106 Fenchurch Street
- The Science Reference Library, 25 Southampton Street, Chancery Lane
- The Statistics and Market Intelligence Library, 1 Victoria Street

(ii) Academic Libraries

The major Business Schools hold marketing data, eg Cranfield School of Management, Manchester Business School, London Business School, Warwick University.

(iii) Professional Institutions

Libraries managed by some of the following organisations may be of value to the researcher:

British Institute of Management, Institute of
Marketing, Advertising Association and Institute
of Practitioners in Advertising

(iv) Commercial Organisations

Major stockbrokers and banks collect a large amount of information for their own purposes, and may make some of this available to their clients.

Some companies (eg Frost and Sullivan) specialise in producing market assessments. Companies specialising more in company reports (supplemented with market overviews) include Jordans Industrial and Financial Surveys, ICC Business Ratio Reports, Keynote and Extel. Companies House (City Road, London) holds microfiches of company reports.

(v) Government

The government is a major collector of information and publishes data through HMSO Publications. To facilitate matters somewhat, it produces a guide outlining the data that it publishes.

(vi) Computerised databases

There are a large number of computerised databases that abstract market information. As a charge is made for each minute of connect time, it is wise to ask a librarian who has experience of the various databases to undertake a computer search. This is an extremely rapid means of searching to see which reports exist, but the skill lies in selecting the best database and using the most appropriate search instructions.

How can we find out more about why companies purchase in a particular manner?

As earlier indicated, this needs to be more subtly resolved by qualitative research using either depth interviews or group discussions (see earlier sections "qualitative versus quantitative research" and also "depth interviews versus group discussions"). At the briefing session the qualitative researcher will work with the client to clarify what issues need covering and what ideas the client has about why suppliers respond in a particular manner. A topic guide will then be produced by the qualitative researcher that broadly lists the key areas to explore with respondents.

As a small number of interviews will be undertaken, it is crucial that key respondents be identified and recruited. Using an unstructured questioning procedure, the interviewer will encourage respondents to describe their buying of a particular product/service and explore in some detail influencing factors. After a couple of depth interviews, the interviewer will start to formulate tentative hypotheses about why certain buying behaviour is exhibited and during further interviews these hypotheses will be revised and further tested. The questioning needs to be open-ended and the technique relies upon encouraging respondents to become as frank as possible. It necessitates the interviewer listening carefully to the respondent, and allowing the discussion to progress through topics in the order the respondent mentions them (rather than in the order on the topic guide). A considerable amount of skill is required to run these unstructured interviews.

Through the detail in which any particular topic is explored, a considerable amount of information can be collected about why buyers respond in certain ways. The findings from these types of studies can then be assessed amongst a much larger sample using quantitative research.

Should we use depth interviews or group discussions?

Due to the considerable administrative difficulties of getting 6 to 8 managers together and then overcoming the problem of them being withdrawn, for fear of saying too much in front of possible competitors, group discussions tend to be less popular than depth interviews in business to business marketing research. They have the advantage of producing more spontaneous responses and being cheaper to complete than the same number of depth interviews.

Depth interviews allow individual decision making sequences to be explored, suffer less from managers being reticent and do not have the problem of over dominant individuals trying to monopolise a group discussion. They are, however, time consuming, costly and are sometimes incorrectly interpreted in terms of "how many" by decision makers.

If we do a quantitative survey, who do we interview?

As earlier noted (see section "Is there a difference between business to business and consumer marketing research?"), the researcher needs to be fully aware of which parties are interested in the product or service under consideration. If the researcher has to assess medical practitioners' views about a new surgical tool, he would need to do some exploratory interviews to find out what type of surgeon would be most likely to use such a tool, whether usage would be more likely in specialist clinics or general hospitals and what role medical

technicians play (eg servicing and cleaning the surgical tool). Only when the market researcher fully understands the parties who have some involvement with the product or service can he start to plan a sampling procedure.

How do we select a sample of respondents?

To interview all those respondents who have an influence on the buying/usage of a product or service can prove to be very expensive. Statistical sampling theory shows that if certain procedures are followed, a representative sample of the buyer/user group can be selected and, while introducing a small sampling error (that can be calculated) a considerable cost saving can be achieved, while at the same time ensuring valid data.

An experienced market researcher would be able to decide upon the sampling procedure to employ. Depending upon the marketing problem, the sampling procedure would broadly speaking be either random sampling or quota sampling. In the case of random sampling the researcher would first need to identify a sampling frame, ie a list describing the population from which a sample could be selected. Thus if a manufacturer wanted to evaluate airport managers' views about a new means of displaying flight information to passengers in departure lounges, they would need to obtain a list of all the airports in a particular country. From some earlier calculations, the research would have decided upon the required sample size and then randomly select this number from the sampling frame. This sampling technique is statistically extremely sound and reduces selection bias, but has the disadvantages that sampling frames are sometimes difficult to acquire and the process proves expensive when call backs have to be employed to reach respondents not available during earlier calls.

Quota sampling is a cheaper procedure to follow but statistically is less rigorous. It enables the researcher to structure the sample in such a way that the ratio of the different groups making up the sample reflect market conditions. The researcher must first go through company files or published sources to find the profile of the user group. For example an earth moving equipment manufacturer might know that distributors carrying spare parts for their diggers are dispersed throughout England in such a way that 30% are in the North, 45% in the Midlands and 25% in the South. Each of the distributors has approximately the same annual sales level of digger spare parts. Thus if these distributors needed to be interviewed about their views on the level of service being provided, samples would be selected such that 30% of the interviews would be in the North, 45% in the Midlands and 25% in the South.

Within these two broad classes of sampling procedures there are numerous variations that allow the researcher to more realistically represent the market (eg stratified random sampling).

How big a sample is needed?

The sample size is not assessed on the basis of a specified proportion of the population, but instead is arrived at by considering a series of further questions, eg:

- What are the basic characteristics of the population? If there are only 10 buyers, it is realistic to consider approaching all of them. The structure of the population also needs considering. For example if, of the 200 distributors, 20% account for the majority of sales then the sample must reflect this.
- What is the information going to be used for? If a decision is concerned with the colour of the packaging, this may have only a small impact on the company's turnover. But if the decision may result in a major investment programme in a new factory, this clearly has a greater impact on company turnover and hence would suggest a larger sample size.
- What is the budget available? Increasing the sample size increases the precision, but also the cost and some balance must be struck. It should be realised that the error from sampling is inversely related to the square root of the sample size and thus a sample of 800 is only twice as accurate as a sample of 200.

By considering these issues, along with some indication of the accuracy required from the sample, the marketing researcher is able to calculate the sample size.

Who can do the interviewing?

In a quantitative survey the in-house market researcher could do the interviewing if the sample sizes are not prohibitive and if it is felt to be appropriate. Interviewers may alternatively be engaged to undertake the fieldwork. They would need to have a relevant background to ensure that they are able to fully discuss all aspects of the product or service with respondents. Prior to a survey being undertaken, interviewers would need to be thoroughly briefed about the nature of the product or service as well as details of the survey.

How can survey data be collected?

There are a variety of ways in which survey data can be collected as shown below:

(i) **Personal interviews**

This face to face method of data collection is frequently employed in business to business marketing research. Having arranged a convenient date for the interview, rapport can quickly be established enabling the interviewer to administer quite detailed and lengthy questionnaires. Facial expressions can also be used to gauge whether the respondent understands the questions, and hence when it becomes appropriate to provide more detailed explanation or probe the reply more fully. Stimulus material can be shown (eg prototype drawings, trade advertisements, etc) and discussed. One of the disadvantages is the high cost, resulting from the journey time to reach widely dispersed respondents.

(ii) **Telephone interviews**

Telephone interviewing is frequently undertaken and enables widely separated respondents to be quickly and cost effectively interviewed. There is a sense of anonymity introduced in telephone research and interviews can easily be arranged in advance. They are particularly useful for relatively short, structured questionnaires but present problems with noisy and crossed telephone lines, or when stimulus material need to be shown.

Some agencies have set up Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) centres. In these centres the questionnaire is displayed on a computer terminal and the results are directly entered into the computer as the interview progresses. This has the advantages of (a) not letting the interviewer pass to another question until a completed reply has been received (b) the computer programme automatically guides the interviewer through complex questionnaires and (c) enables the results to be available in a much shorter period of time

(iii) **Postal questionnaires**

There is an erroneously held view that low responses will be achieved from postal questionnaires. If insufficient care is taken, response rates may not exceed 10%, however with sufficient planning, response rates in excess of 60% are likely to be achieved. Postal research is best suited to relatively short questionnaires, which contain few "why?" type questions. An up to date list of the name, title and address of each respondent is essential. A covering letter should be enclosed with the questionnaire and a pre-paid, self-addressed return envelope enclosed. The questionnaire should be well presented and the opening questions should appear interesting. A follow-up letter encouraging non-respondents to reply is an effective way of increasing response rates.

(iv) **Observation**

This data collection technique is most useful when the researcher needs to identify how the product is being used. Manuals and packaging instructions can be tested by watching how respondents respond after reading the provided literature.

What are the characteristics of a good questionnaire?

One of the prime issues taken into account is how the survey will be undertaken (see section "How can survey data be collected?"). A postal questionnaire will be designed in a different manner to a face to face questionnaire. A good questionnaire will start off with easy to answer, interesting questions which are unlikely to be regarded as being obtrusive. Sensitive questions should be left to the end of the questionnaire. Unambiguous questions, structured using words familiar to the respondent should be devised. Vague questions should be rephrased and the danger of combining two questions in one recognised (eg "how many widgets did you buy last month?" assumes that widgets were bought last month). Instances where bias appears in questions should be guarded against (eg "do you agree that company X is a good supplier?"). Care must be taken over the order in which questions are asked (eg "Which of these companies making liquid crystal display units have you ever heard of?" followed by "Please tell me the name of any companies making liquid crystal display units" would clearly produce spurious results). Filter instructions should be employed to route respondents past a series of questions that have no relevance to them (eg "Does your company buy these machines or lease them?". Those replying that their company buys rather than leases should then be directed past the questions seeking detail about leasing.)

Only by piloting the questionnaire amongst a small number of respondents can a questionnaire be properly designed to ensure that respondents understand each question and are able to provide the information which can be satisfactorily recorded.

How is quantitative survey data analysed?

If a relatively low number of interviews have been undertaken it is realistic to analyse the results by hand. With larger samples this proves time consuming and instead the data is entered into a computer. The aim of both the hand and computer processed data is to produce frequency tables, showing the number of respondents replying to the different response categories for each question. Where sample sizes are bigger than 30 it is more meaningful to present these frequencies as percentages (eg 40% of office managers bought photocopier machines and 60% leased them). The value of the frequency tables can be increased by cross-tabulating the results from one question against those of another. Thus in the photocopier example by cross tabulating the question on buy/lease with a later question

on the size of the user's company (small/medium/large), it may be possible to identify whether a certain company size is more likely to buy or lease photocopy machines.

Replies to "why?" type questions require the researcher to go through a sample of the questionnaires to formulate a coding frame for each of these questions. This is a list of all the replies to a particular question which is then further presented such that types of replies are identified. Once these response categories have been identified a code from the coding frame is then put against each person's reply and the questionnaires are then processed to show the frequencies of each type of response for a particular question (eg 16% lease photocopiers because of the maintenance provided, 14% because the machines are changed regularly, etc).

Are recommendations provided with survey reports?

It is common practice for marketing recommendations to be provided in a marketing research report. The market researcher's role is to help the decision maker select the best course of action through the collection and analysis of data. The researcher will add value to the raw information by translating it into recommended marketing activity. Furthermore, as the decision maker starts to use the survey results to develop a marketing strategy it is common for them to seek further guidance from the researcher about interpretation and proposed marketing activity.

Do market researchers operate within a Code of Conduct?

Professional market researchers are members of the Industrial Marketing Research Association and/or The Market Research Society. Both of these bodies have agreed a Code of Conduct to which members are bound and which requires them to uphold high professional standards in their work. The Code contains a number of principles for the protection of respondents participating in a survey, eg information provided by the respondent will not be used for any purposes other than research and the confidentiality of such information will be preserved.

How can I contact marketing research associations?

The association representing business to business market researchers is the Industrial Marketing Research Association. It is based at 11 Bird Street, Lichfield, Staffs, WS13 6PW; telephone 05432 23448.

Many business to business market researchers also belong to The Market Research Society at 175 Oxford Street, London W1R 1TA, telephone 01 439 2585.

Both societies annually produce directories listing members and market research agencies. Training programmes in marketing research are organised by both associations who also disseminate information on marketing research techniques.

