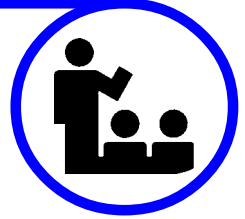


Marketing Researchers



Occupational Brief Title Codes:

- D.O.T.: 050.067-014
- G.O.E.: 11.06.03
- S.O.C.: 19-3021
- O*NET™: 19-3021.00
- N.A.I.C.S.: 541910
- H.O.C.: ISC

Occupational Subtitles:

- Coders
- Compilers
- Interviewers
- Questionnaire Writers
- Research Analysts
- Research Managers
- Statistical Clerks

Work Classification Based Related

D.O.T. Occupations:

- Psychologists
- Sociologists
- Urban and Regional Planners

Interests Based Related

G.O.E. Occupations:

- Investment Analysts
- Personal Property Assessors
- Risk and Insurance Managers

Skills Based Related

O*NET Occupations:

- Insurance Sales Agents
- Public Relations Specialists
- Real Estate Sales Agents

Noteworthy Quote:

"We try to capture accurate information in a given area so that people who sell products can understand their potential customers better. Our specialty, for example, is the healthcare field. We identify where physicians practice, what their specialty is, and what services they offer, so that people with healthcare products to sell can target the right professionals. To find our information we design our own surveys, we contact people, and we do lots of Internet surfing. In this work, logical skills and familiarity with computers are vital. We deal with lots and lots of data."

—Chris Wolfkiel, Vice President of Market Research, SMG Marketing Group, Chicago, Illinois

Marketing researchers (ˈmar-ket-ing ˈre-search-ers) gather information that companies use to make decisions about their products and services.

Today, businesses usually are not in direct communication with consumers. For this reason business and industry employ marketing researchers. Marketing researchers use tools such as statistical analysis packages, surveys, focus groups, and new product tests to help achieve success for a product. In the customer/consumer field, marketing researchers focus on the wants and needs of individuals who buy and use products and services. In the industrial marketing field, on the other hand, marketing researchers view businesses and government as consumers and study their current and future needs. In both areas, research professionals organize their findings in written reports, and lay out their conclusions, recommendations and possible alternative courses of action, in a formal presentation.

With a knowledge of what the customers want, why they want it, and the price they will pay for it, manufacturers, service providers, and distributors can improve products, arrange effective sales and distribution networks, and make decisions for the future.

Work Performed

To find out how well a product or service is selling, or might sell, marketing researchers devise methods and procedures for obtaining the data they need. They often design surveys and questionnaires; conduct telephone, personal, or mail and online interviews; and sometimes offer free product samples to assess consumer preferences and indicate current trends.

Generally, the work of these professionals falls into two categories: quantitative marketing research and qualitative marketing research.

Quantitative marketing research estimates the view points of a population by providing estimates of percentages or averages. This research usually employs large samples and takes small amounts of a respondent's time. Telephone, mail, door-to-door, Internet or Web surveys, and in-home product or service use studies are all used in quantitative research.

Qualitative marketing research yields an in-depth understanding about an issue by focusing on a small number of people. Since these people are interviewed in-depth, interviews tend to be longer and are often open-ended. An outline of discussion points, rather than a questionnaire is often used. This type of research also tends to be conducted in person, either in focus groups or one-on-one interviews, although the Internet is a growing means to accomplish qualitative marketing research.

Valuable market research must be organized step-by-step. The steps include studying the company or producer that wants information from consumers about its products or services; designing a study to get current information; gathering the information; and presenting conclusions drawn from the research data.

Research managers and **research analysts** design marketing research studies and work out the details. They first analyze secondary data such as a

company's sales records, its competitors, and the consumer or industrial market that uses the product or service the company offers. Then they design a research study to help address specific marketing issues and management concerns. They design questionnaires and mail, telephone, or Internet surveys for interviewers to use. They decide on the number and location of the interviews to be conducted, and then analyze the returns and results. They make sure the work of others is accurate and completed on schedule.

Questionnaire writers decide what questions will bring out the desired facts. They write questions in the format best suited for the survey. Questionnaires for telephone or face-to-face surveys differ from those for mailing to business owners or to homeowners.

Interviewers gather data by talking to consumers by telephone, or face-to-face. They follow a scripted format to ask people questions about their views on a product or their opinion on a service. They record the answers on an interview form or questionnaire.

The completed questionnaires go to **compilers** who check the forms for consistency, errors, omissions, and incomplete answers. When the answers are in different units of measurement, the compilers change the answers to a standard measure so that **coders** can record the data. Coders assign a number to each question and answer. Sometimes coders run data entry machines that transfer data directly to tape. **Statistical clerks** compute the data according to statistical formulas and make charts and graphs from the survey data.

Finally, marketing researchers analyze the statistics compiled from the survey. In the numbers they can spot trends. They can detect consumer buying habits, brand preferences, where consumers live, or perhaps an uneven product distribution pattern that might affect sales.

Marketing researchers then write a report giving major findings and suggestions. They may also draw up charts and graphs, and give oral reports of their conclusions, findings, and recommendations.

Management then can use the information to make decisions on the promotion, distribution, design, and pricing of company products or services. Or it might consider adding new lines of merchandise, opening new branches, or diversifying company operations in other ways.

Marketing researchers do not restrict their work to consumer surveys. A consumer survey is just one source of information. From data internal to the company, they can get sales records for certain regions. They can learn the extent to which advertising affects sales. From census data, they may discern the ethnic makeup, income, and educational background of a target market.

Marketing researchers may also work as specialists in advertising and promotion analysis. In this work they conduct research to measure the effects of an advertising campaign or of a single commercial. They design and

direct research studies to determine how the target customers like a new product or a new package design.

Marketing researchers who do industrial research serve companies that sell to other businesses. They may, for instance, find ways of using both old and new raw materials to serve industrial needs.

Working Conditions

Most marketing researchers work in offices. Interviewers may work outdoors or in shopping malls. They may conduct interviews by telephone. Some go from door to door. Research assistants may collect data in libraries. They may gather, code, and tabulate data in an office. Managers and analysts work with others to plan surveys and analyze the results of projects. They also travel to confer with clients or to check on the progress of research studies in test localities.

Hours and Earnings

Most marketing researchers work eight hours a day five days a week. Field interviewers may work evenings and weekends interviewing people in person or on the telephone. When a project is in progress, marketing researchers and staff may work long hours to meet a deadline.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2003, marketing researchers earned an average of \$54,830 a year. Earnings ranged from a high of more than \$104,170 a year to a low of less than \$30,500 a year. It is common for marketing researchers with experience in executive positions to earn \$150,000 a year or more. Earnings vary widely with education, experience, and geographic location.

Like other professionals, marketing researchers receive fringe benefits that include vacation and sick leave, health and life insurance, and pensions.

Education and Training

Many companies require their marketing researchers to have at least a bachelor's degree in business administration, with an emphasis on marketing. There is a strong preference for job seekers with a master's degree for special work in marketing research, statistics, research methodology, or computer science. To meet this demand, a handful of universities have started offering a graduate degree in marketing research. They include Santa Clara University, University of Georgia, Southern Illinois University School of Business, Bernard M. Baruch-City University of New York, University of Texas-Arlington, and University of Wisconsin-Nielsen School.

High school students should prepare for their college career by taking business courses, social science, English, and mathematics. Summer or part-time jobs in retail sales are valuable experience. College courses helpful for a career in marketing research include accounting,

mathematics, statistics, and economics, among others. Accounting is helpful in understanding distribution costs and profit measurements. Mathematics and quantitative methods are useful for dealing with market relationships, survey percentages, and tables. Statistics is important to understand sampling, and research design issues. Economics deals with the laws of supply and demand. Buyer behavior and psychology courses will help marketing researchers understand why consumers buy, what they buy, and when they buy. Sociology courses cover social influences, such as status symbols, on the consumer. A strong background in computers is useful because computers do much of the tabulation and statistical analysis in marketing research. Marketing researchers should also have or acquire a knowledge of the products of the companies for whom they conduct research projects.

Licensing, Certification, Unions and Professional Societies

The American Marketing Association (AMA) is the largest and most comprehensive professional society for marketers, consisting of 38,000 members worldwide in every area of marketing. The AMA's Marketing Research Division is made up of more than 13,000 professional members of AMA who indicate research as one of their interest areas in marketing.

The Marketing Research Association (MRA) has a membership of about 2,600 individuals who design, administer, or analyze marketing research studies mainly from data collection agencies. It publishes a newsletter, a marketing research business series, and an annual Research Service Directory. Training manuals, videotape training programs, and other educational resources related to data collection are also available. Twelve chapters nationwide provide education, networking and problem solving at the regional level.

Other professional societies include the Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO) and the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF).

Personal Qualifications

Marketing research requires an orderly, analytical, inquiring mind and logical thought processes. Researchers should be detail-oriented and accurate. Patience and persistence are necessary qualities since marketing researchers may spend long hours on independent study and problem solving.

At the same time, they must be able to work well with others. Good communication skills are a necessity. Marketing researchers usually work on a research team with statisticians, motivational research specialists who design survey questions, pollsters, interviewers, and a variety of others. An interest in people, tact, and a pleasant personality, are all important assets.

Where Employed

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2003, about 153,000 marketing researchers were employed throughout the United States. They work for manufacturers, retailers, some wholesalers, trade and industry associations, marketing research firms, advertising agencies, and governmental and private nonprofit agencies. These firms may have one researcher or a hundred. The size of the marketing research staff depends on the firm's information needs.

Large corporations are often in or near large metropolitan areas such as Chicago and New York, but jobs are available in most cities. Many small industries or companies contract with marketing research firms to analyze their markets.

Since competition is most lively among companies that market consumer-packaged goods, these organizations are major employers of marketing researchers. Advertising firms are other major employers. They do media and audience research to learn the impact of television, radio, and the press on product sales. However, in our customer dominated global economy, all businesses have a need for marketing research to help them compete effectively.

Public officials and government agencies use marketing researchers to gauge public interest. Even hospitals use them to find out how to serve the public better. Consulting firms use them to gather and analyze data for a wide range of projects, and university research centers also employ marketing researchers.

Employment Outlook

Employment of marketing research analysts is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2012, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Some job openings are likely to result from the need to replace experienced workers who transfer to other occupations, retire, or leave the labor force for other reasons. Other openings will come from new positions being created as the profession expands. In our newly emerged economy, information is now a key resource. The need for marketing researchers will increase as companies work to expand their markets, and as consumers become better informed.

Entry Methods

Colleges have placement services to help students find jobs. College graduates may find their first job as an assistant or trainee on the marketing research staff of a large company. The marketing research trainee is usually assigned such responsibilities as editing and coding questionnaires or collecting data from libraries, company files, or trade journals. With increased experience, the marketing researcher takes on responsibilities for coordinating interviews, analyzing survey data and writing reports.

A good way for students to get a head start is to take a part-time or summer job as an interviewer during summer vacations or outside school hours. This experience is useful for all marketing researchers.

Marketing research entry level positions are commonly found at the assistant market analyst or assistant product analyst level. Because of their technical nature, many entry level positions are targeted for MBA graduates, although prior experience and training may improve an undergraduate's chances.

Those with a graduate degree in marketing research and skilled in quantitative techniques and their application to marketing should have the best prospects. Related work experience and an advanced degree in marketing or a closely related field are also assets for job applicants. Those with only a bachelor's degree but with a strong background in mathematics, statistics, survey design, and computer science, may find work as assistants to marketing research professionals.

Advancement

As marketing researchers become more skilled they may take charge of a single project. Later they may head a marketing research department. Exceptional individuals may become executives, such as vice presidents of marketing and sales. Since marketing researchers learn a great deal in their work about other branches of their employing firm, some move on and up to other departments.

As a rule, however, few marketing researchers go from the bottom to the top in one company. Advancement for marketing researchers may mean changing employers. Marketing researchers can, and often do, advance in both rank and earnings by moving from one firm to another several times in the course of their careers. The prospects of advancement for experienced marketing researchers are very good.

For Further Research

Advertising Research Foundation, 641 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10022. Web site: www.arfsite.org

American Marketing Association, 311 South Wacker Drive, Suite 5800, Chicago, IL 60606. Web site: www.marketingpower.com

Council of American Survey Research Organizations, 170 North Country Road, Suite 4, Port Jefferson, NY 11777. Web site: www.casro.org

Marketing Research Association, 1344 Silas Deane Highway, Suite 306, Rocky Hill, CT 06067-1342. Web site: www.mra-net.org

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