Glossary of Research Terms

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'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Ad hoc

Single surveys designed for a specific research purpose, as opposed to continuous, regularly repeated, or syndicated surveys.

Advertising Research

Any research into advertising, particularly creative, pre-tests of advertisements and evaluation of advertising campaigns.

Aided recall

Means of helping respondents to remember things by reminding them of events or by prompting.

Analysis

Means of summarising data in a way which aids understanding.

Analysis of variance

A method of allocating the overall variation of a sample statistic to show the statistical significance.

Arithmetic mean

The sum of the observed values of a statistic, divided by the number of observations.

Association

A technique to illicit free or spontaneous association, used in qualitative research. Involves using pictures or words to illicit words or thoughts from the respondent.

Attribute

Used to define differences in data e.g. types and size of business or image statements on a predefined scale.

Awareness

Awareness of brands, products, publications, or advertising campaigns are often measured in ad hoc or tracking surveys. Unprompted (e.g. which newspapers do you read) and prompted awareness (e.g. which of the following newspapers have you read?) are common measures.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Branding (equity) research

Research undertaken to measure the image, profile, strength and value of brands. A brand is a product or service given an identity. See Branding section on Benchmark website for more information.

Base

The base number for establishing percentages of responses is usually shown at the bottom of data tabulations. Normally weighted and unweighted bases are shown, but the unweighted base shows the number of respondents interviewed.

Before/after test

Research undertaken before and after an event e.g brand/product awareness before and after an advertising campaign.

Behaviour

Indicators of what respondents do rather than what they think e.g. purchasing behaviour

Bias

Aspects of survey design which cause the expected value or estimated derived from the survey to differ from the true value. Sources of bias includes interviewer bias, respondent bias, sampling bias, and questionnaire bias.

Break

A sub group used in data analysis e.g. size of organisation, SIC classification.

Brief(ing)

1. A research brief is a document outlining the objectives and background to a research study.
2. Project briefings are undertaken internally within the research team and with the interviewers to ensure they understand the research task.

British Market Research Association (BMRA)

The BMRA is the trade body for the UK market research industry.

Business-business research

Often referred to a b2b research. Market research undertaken with businesses rather than consumers.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Buying intentions

Questions about the likelihood of buying a product.

Buy-response

Questions as to whether a consumer would be willing to buy a product at a number of different prices.

Callback

Another attempt by an interviewer to contact a respondent or a call made by a field supervisor to check that an interview has been carried out.

Census

Coverage of all the individuals/organisations in a population.

Classification

Standard questions usually placed at the end of the interview to record respondent information such as size of organisation, location, industry sector, job title.

Closed question

A question with a limited number of logical answers, such as 'yes' and 'no', as opposed to an open response question.

Cluster

A group of neighbouring individuals/businesses. A geographical cluster of businesses in an area.

Cluster analysis

A type of multivariate analysis which aims to identify groups of individuals which are similar to each other and different to other groups.

Code of conduct

The Market Research Society Code of Conduct consists of a set of principles and rules with which their members undertake to comply.

Coding

The process of allocating codes to open ended responses after completion of fieldwork.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI)

Telephone interviewing conducted with the aid of a computer. Questions are displayed on a computer screen and facilitates the direct capture of responses and automates complex skip and routings of questions.

Computer aided web interviewing (CAWI)

Self completion questionnaires accessible by email or internet browser software. Facilitates graphics, direct capture of responses and automates complex skip and routings of questions.

Concept test

A study designed to test reactions to an idea for an advertisement or a product.

Conjoint measurement

A method of evaluating consumer preferences among product concepts. Respondents rank or choose preferred attributes in a product offering.

Consumer

The ultimate user of a product.

Copy test

Advertising copy used in advertising research, to test how consumers will react to it.

Corporate image

The image of an organisation as a whole rather than the products it supplies.

Correlation

Statistical technique used to demonstrate the level of interdependence between attributes or variables.

Creative research

Research activity to support creation of adverts. Includes pre-tests, communication tests, concept tests, copy tests etc.

Cross-tabulation

A two dimensional table based on the answers of two questions. See Data Tabulations

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Data protection

The Data Protection Act 1984 regulates the maintenance and use of automatically processed personal information.

Data tabulations

Survey data (answers to survey questions) are summarised in data tables showing answers to all questions.

Demographics

Demographic variables e.g. sex, age, marital status.

Depth interview

A face-to-face interview conducted using a loosely structured discussion guide.

Desk research

Desk research is based on the use of secondary data e.g. directories, reports, published information such as trade statistics or periodicals.

Direct question

A question asked directly of the respondent about his behaviour or opinions. Most questions used in structured questionnaires are direct.

Derived answer

Answers derived from the responses of direct questions through statistical techniques.

Disproportionate sampling

Sometimes referred to as disproportional allocation. E.g. Where it is necessary to contain a larger proportion of large businesses from the population than medium or small firms. Larger sample fractions will be used for the large companies.

Employee (Satisfaction) Research

Research undertaken with employees to measure opinions, attitudes, training needs, satisfaction, etc.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Exploratory research

1. Research undertaken where little is already known about the subject. Relatively fast and cheap methods are used such as desk research or a small telephone programme before undertaking a larger research programme.

2. Sometimes referred to when conducting initial qualitative research such as depth interviews and focus groups, before running a large telephone programme e.g. when setting up a customer satisfaction study.

Face-to-face interview

See depth interview.

Factor analysis

A statistical technique to group similar answers from different questions.

Field & Tabulation services

The collection of primary survey data by interviewers, by telephone or face to face. Telephone interviews are usually conducted from a centralised telephone unit, and supervised by a permanent member of staff. The service usually includes producing data tabulations of the results.

Filter

An instruction printed on a questionnaire and used in CATI scripts (see CATI scripts) indicating which questions should be asked next, depending on previous answers.

Focus group

See group discussion.

Forecast

The expected magnitude of some quantity or estimated probability of an event at a future time.

Frequency Distribution

A table showing the number of responses (counts) for a given answer.

Grossing up

Scaling up of the results of a survey to the whole population.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Group discussion

Also known as focus group. A method of qualitative research often used in the exploratory stages of research for testing adverts and testing new product concepts, but also for exploring in depth consumer attitudes.

Image

People's perceptions or impressions of a product, service, or company.

Incentive

An inducement offered to respondents to cooperate in a market research study. They are offered as a matter of course in group discussions. When offered in business to business research incentives are often provided as a gift to charity or a token gift.

Indirect question

See Projective Techniques

Interviewer instructions

Directions printed on a questionnaire and CATI scripts, including for example skips and filters. They are usually printed in bold and upper case to distinguish them from questions.

Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS)

IQCS is a quality standard for interviewing.

Internet research

1. Research concerning the use of the internet or website of an organisation.
2. Data collection via the internet, including email surveys and web based questionnaires. See CAWI

Judgement sample

Sometimes sample is pre-selected for research e.g. a particular business organisation in a small scale business survey and is commonly used in industrial market research. Technically any non random sample is a judgement sample. In these circumstances statistical theory relating to random samples cannot be applied.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Loyalty Research

Techniques to categorise and explore levels of customer loyalty to a product, brand or organisation.

Large sample

A sample is large where normal distribution (Gaussian distribution) applies. This is usually taken to mean a sample of at least 30 and preferably 50. Also see Normal Distribution.

Likert scale

A type of verbal scale where respondents indicate their agreement or disagreement with statements. Sometimes called agree/disagree scales and used to test image and attitude statements. Also see verbal scales.

Market research quality standards association (MRQSA)

Quality scheme applied to all research processes within market research agencies complying with BS 7911. The scheme ensures consistent quality practices in all aspects of research including executive, data processing and fieldwork activities.

Market research society (MRS)

Founded in 1946, the society aims to promote and protect the interests of the profession, and to maintain and improve standards of competence.

Market share

The proportion of a market accounted for by a particular brand or supplier, either in value or volume.

Mean

The arithmetic mean. Also refers to means – mode and median.

Moderator

The leader of a group discussion.

Monadic

A test where a single product is tested.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Market review (sizing) research

Research projects which seek to provide an overall review of a given market including the size, structure, trends and primary participants in the market.

Multi client research

Also referred to as syndicated research, where costs and findings of the research are shared among different sponsors.

Multiple choice question

A closed question with more than two choices.

Multiple regression

A mathematical model in which a dependent variable is represented against independent or predicted variables. Is often used in modelling customer satisfaction or loyalty behaviour.

Multivariate

Multivariate data comprise observations where three or more values are recorded. Multivariate analysis explores relationships between the data.

New Product Development research

Research to support the development of new products/services. Typically includes qualitative and quantitative techniques to test market receptiveness to the product and the level of sales opportunity.

Non response

The proportion of a pre-selected sample where no response is obtained.

Normal distribution

Also known as the normal curve and Gaussian distribution. A statistical frequency distribution of close approximation in large samples. It is used to make judgements about the confidence limits of estimates from random samples, and for tests of statistical significance. Also see Large sample.

Numerical scale

Any scale represented by numbers, as opposed to verbal scales.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Objective

Market research proposals include a set of statements about the information objectives of the study related to marketing or business objectives.

Open ended question

As opposed to a pre-coded question. The answer is recorded in verbatim and usually coded at a later stage.

Ordinal scale

A ranking scale to express preference or agreement (e.g, 1st, 2nd, 3rd).

Overclaim

A tendency for respondents to say they have done something, are aware of something or purchased something more often than is the case.

PR research

The practice of conducting research and subsequently publicising the results to gain publicity about an event, trend or product.

Personal interview

Also known as face to face interview.

Pilot

A pilot survey is a small scale replica of the main survey, carried out before the main survey to identify potential problems with the research design. Commonly used in all telephone surveys to test the sample, screening and effectiveness of the questionnaire.

Population

Sometimes called the 'universe'. Is the aggregate of items (e.g. people, businesses) from which the sample is to be drawn.

Positively biased scales

Verbal scales used in customer satisfaction research may have scales biased towards positive responses in order to differentiate higher levels of satisfaction.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Postal survey

Any survey carried out by post using a self completion questionnaire.

Precoded question

A question where the respondent is required to choose an answer from one or more allowable answers, or where the interviewer is reqiured to code the answer from the available list.

Pre/post

Research conducted before and after a particular event such as a product launch or advertsising campaign.

Pricing research

Any kind of research which aims to show how demand for a product or service will vary with its price.

Primary data

As opposed to secondary data collected by desk research. All survey research collects primary data.

Probe

Non directive stimulus an interviewer uses to encourage elucidation of the original answer or to seek clarification of the answer.

Profile

A description of a group of people or organisations, in terms of age, business type, attitudes.

Projective techniques

Methods used in qualitative research to overcome barriers to communication between informant and interviewer.

Prompt

As opposed to probe, this is any method used to suggest possible answers to the question.

Proportional sample

As opposed to disproportional sample. The sample size of each stratum is proportional to the number in the population within that stratum.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Proposal

A plan for the market research project. Usually includes statement of objectives, details of methodology, approach, timings and costs.

Qualitative research

Research techniques which aims to provide insights into markets or issues rather than to quantitatively measure them.

Quality control

Formal checks to ensure work is properly carried out.

Quota

A statement of the number and types of respondent is required to be interviewed.

Random sample

Sometimes known as unrestricted random sampling and is a method of selecting n items from a population of N items such that every item in the population has an equal chance of selection.

Ranking question

A question where the respondent indicates an order of choice or preference.

Rating scale

A scale used by respondents to rate something e.g. 1-5 satisfaction scale

Readership research

Research usually undertaken for publishing groups of their readership, or readers of particular publications.

Recruiting

Finding and inviting suitable people to take part in group discussion, depth interviews etc.

Refusal rate

The number of people who refuse to take part in the research. Expressed as a percentage of the number of eligible individuals. All surveys should include a measure of the response and refusal rate.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Response rate

The number of completed interviews, expressed as a percentage of the eligible individuals.

Sample (frame)

A part or a subset of a population.

Sample fraction

The sample by each stratum expressed as a ratio against the population.

Sampling error

Also known as standard error. An estimate derived from a sample is different from the true value for the whole population.

Sample size

The number of units (N) in the sample.

Sampling with Probability Proportional to Size (PPS)

A sampling technique used in surveying differing size of constituencies.

Screening

A set of questions used before undertaking the full interview to find and determine eligibility of the respondent. Results to screening questions can be reported to show penetration or incidents of an event or characteristics.

Segment

A part of a market or population.

Segmentation

Division of the market into parts by identifiable characteristics e.g. type of company, user of certain products, etc.

Self completion

A self completion questionnaire is completed by the respondent rather than the interviewer e.g. postal questionnaire, email survey, web based questionnaire.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Semi structured

An interview where many of the questions are pre-determined/structured but open ended. Telephone based semi qualitative interviews is a alternative to qualitative and structured quantitative interviews.

Significance test

A statistical test. See Benchmark Guide to Sampling and Statistics.

Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)

A classification of industrial establishments.

Staff research

See Employee research

Stratification (Stratified random sampling)

When drawing from certain populations the sampler knows something about the population which can be used to improve the sample design. E.g. size or type of business. The principle of stratification is this information be used. The sample is divided into known groups of strata (e.g. by type of business), then selected randomly from each stratum.

Structured

A structured telephone questionnaire sets out the precise wording to be used for the questions and the order of questions. Quantitative telephone research usually uses structured questionnaires.

T test

A test of statistical significance. Is used to compute confidence intervals for whether an observed sample mean differs significantly from the expected value.

Time series

Survey data recorded relating to different time periods. Tracking surveys provide longitudinal data, and allow comparisons over time.

Topic guide

Sometimes called a discussion guide. A list of topics to be covered in a depth interview or group discussion.

'Glossary of Market Research Terms'

Tracking research

See Time series

Trade off analysis

See Conjoint measurement

Variance

A statistical measure of variability or dispersion of a set of numbers. See Benchmark Guide to Sampling and Statistics.

Verbal (rating) scale

Any kind of scale for measuring attitudes or behaviour where answers are expressed verbally as opposed to numerical scales.

Visual aid

Anything which is shown to respondents as an aid to communication e.g. 'map' of a product concept.

Weighting

A technique commonly used to correct imbalances in the demographic profile of the sample. Data tabulations often include weighted and non weighted results.