FIFTH EDITION

THE PRACTICE OF
MARKET RESEARCH

From Data to Insight

Pearson

Yvonne McGivern

The Practice of Market Research

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Supporting resources

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For instructors
- An instructor's manual that includes a list of Industry Insights and boxes, suggested solutions to questions and exercises in the book, and teaching notes.
- A set of PowerPoint slides from the book.

For more information please contact your local Pearson Education sales representative or visit go.pearson.com/uk/he/resources

Foreword

Events worldwide, especially those as shattering as the global Covid pandemic, have thrown the need for understanding people and their behaviours into the spotlight. Decision makers are questioning their accepted beliefs and are increasingly risk averse in taking decisions.

Research in this latest period of turmoil has become critical to the C-suite and the government as well as charities and other stakeholders. Clients are seeking to test assumptions and choices in a radically different environment.

In this context the need for assurance of the research which is increasingly underpinning difficult decisions is even more vital. Research is evidence that is relied upon, so it has to be reliable. The stakes are increasingly high, with individual reputations and the reputation of the sector at stake.

Our clients and suppliers are demanding data competence with the ability to distil complex merges of data sources, both continuous programmes and ad hoc projects, into a single motivating narrative. They are asking for agility and creativity. Above all they are seeking trustworthiness.

The British painter, LS Lowry famously painted 'matchstick men'. Some have said this was easy. However, his simplicity was overwhelmingly based on a very sound technical expertise in drawing, which he studied at art college. Great simplicity comes from sound understanding.

If trust is important, then training and qualifications are the foundations on which trust is based. These need to be rigorous, relevant and contemporary, fit for helping people sort out the fast-changing challenges of the twenty-first century.

Around the world, people are increasingly taking MRS qualifications in recognition of these issues. MRS has been delivering core and advanced qualifications for over 40 years and is the global leader in this area. As our world internationalises, the importance of globally recognisable and transferable accreditation and qualification grows. There are researchers in over 40 countries who have studied for an MRS qualification, and many of the world's largest global research suppliers have incorporated MRS qualifications into their graduate professional development programmes.

The MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice qualification, developed by MRS, draws on best practice across the profession, and is designed for those who have just entered or are seeking to enter the research profession, working in the areas of commercial market and/or social research. This fifth edition of *The Practice of Market Research: From Data to Insight* is most timely; it has been comprehensively updated to reflect the changes in the MRS Advanced Certificate syllabus providing candidates with the ideal foundation as they undertake their studies.

Best wishes for your journey in becoming a qualified, professional Researcher.

Jane Frost, CBE
CEO
The Market Research Society (MRS)

About MRS

The Market Research Society (MRS) was established in 1946 and represents providers and users of market, social, and opinion research, insight, data analytics and business intelligence.

With over 600 Company Partners, MRS is the world's largest association for research organisations. MRS has individual members in over 60 countries and has a diverse membership of individual researchers within agencies, independent consultancies, client-side organisations, the public sector and the academic community.

MRS promotes, develops, supports and regulates standards and innovation in areas from market and social research to data analytics on an evidence-based consultancy. MRS regulates research ethics and standards via its Code of Conduct. All individual MRS members, Company Partners and International Affiliates agree to self-regulatory compliance with the MRS Code of Conduct and commit to the highest research and data standards.

MRS is the leading global supplier for research professional development offering comprehensive research training, qualifications and CPD to professionals all around the world. It is also the only awarding body in the UK for vocational qualifications in market and social research.

To find out more about MRS activities visit the MRS website: www.mrs.org.uk.

Preface

The aim of this book

This book provides a comprehensive, straightforward account of the practice of market and social research that is both easy to read and easy to understand.

Who should use this book?

This book provides a thorough introduction to the practice of market and social research. It is suitable for undergraduates on research methods or research skills courses, and is suitable for undergraduates and postgraduates on courses where there is a requirement to complete a research project or dissertation. In addition, research practitioners will find it useful as a reference text and source of information and ideas on both method and practice.

The book was also designed with the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice in mind. This is a vocational degree-level qualification that follows the research process from problem definition to reporting the findings. It aims to help candidates to develop a wide range of research skills. The book covers the syllabus for this qualification.

New to this edition

In preparing this new edition changes have been made to the structure and content to reflect changes in practice and methods and in the ethical, legal and regulatory context in which research operates. The changes are also in response to changes in the syllabus of the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice, and in response to customer feedback. In brief, in terms of structure, there are now six sections: Introducing Market and Social Research; Planning and Designing Research; Secondary or Existing Data; Qualitative Research; Quantitative Research; and Bringing It All Together. In terms of content, all chapters have been updated to reflect changes in practice and methods and the language used to describe them, and to provide better explanations of areas that students find difficult. One such area is that covered in Chapter 4 where there is greater explication of the link between understanding the business problem and defining the problem to be researched. Other topics which have significant new content are Chapter 8 on sources of existing data, which includes an expanded section on databases and data warehouses; Chapter 9 on the evaluation of those sources; and Chapter 18 which covers data mining and data analytics in much greater detail than the previous edition.

Revised Chapters 1 and 2 on the practice of market and social research

These chapters have been updated to reflect changes in what market and social research involves and the context in which it is operates.

Revised Chapter 3 on types of data and research

This chapter has been revised and updated to include a section on big and small data and unstructured, semi-structured and structured data.

Revised Chapter 4 on the business problem and the research problem

This chapter has been revised to include greater emphasis on identifying and understanding the business problem and defining the research problem. It covers material relevant to designing a project.

Revised Chapter 8 on secondary or existing data

This chapter has been updated to reflect changes in the sources and types of secondary or existing data.

Revised Chapter 9 on using and evaluating secondary or existing data

This chapter has been updated to cover the use and evaluation of data that were not originally collected as part of a research project.

Revised Chapters 10, 11 and 12 on qualitative research

These chapters have been revised and updated.

Revised Chapter 13 on quantitative methods of data collection

This chapter has been revised and updated.

Revised Chapter 15 on designing questions

This chapter has been updated.

Chapter 18 on data mining and data analytics

This is a new chapter that expands the material that was covered as part of a previous chapter.

Chapter 19 on managing and reviewing a project

This chapter has been updated and material on reviewing a project that was previously in the chapter on communicating findings is now here.

Chapter 20 on communicating findings

This chapter has been updated and new material added on insight management.

Ethical and professional practice: the MRS Code of Conduct

Where relevant material on the rules and guidance set out in the MRS Code of Conduct have been updated and new material added.

Industry Insights from real-life research projects

In the previous edition, most chapters contained case studies drawn from real-life research projects. In this edition these have been replaced by shorter Industry Insights, although a few of the old case studies remain and are relabelled as Industry Insights. The aim of the Insights is to show research in action and to illustrate and/or provide examples of the techniques and practices covered in the chapter. They aim to demonstrate why research was done with an outline of how it was done. They serve to illustrate the usefulness and value of research, and how it relates to and addresses the business or decision maker's problem. Finally, many highlight innovative approaches to research practice – from design through to dissemination.

Distinctive features

Methods and practice

The book is unusual in that it covers research methods *and* the practical tasks involved in planning and running a project. Few other textbooks do this. For this reason the book is particularly valuable to practitioners as well as students. There is comprehensive coverage of the following:

- Research design
- Sampling
- Use of existing data
- Qualitative data collection techniques including ethnography and semiotics
- Quantitative data collection including online methods

- Questionnaire design
- Qualitative data analysis
- The basics of quantitative data analysis
- The basics of data analytics and data mining.

An entire chapter is devoted to the analysis of qualitative data, a topic which few other market research texts cover in any detail.

In terms of the practical tasks involved in setting up and running a project and bringing it to completion, there is comprehensive coverage (with examples) of the following:

- how to start an ethical review
- how to do a literature review
- how to prepare a brief;
- how to write a proposal;
- how to manage a project – including how to brief interviewers, how to prepare a coding frame, how to write a data processing specification;
- how to prepare and write a report;
- how to design and give an oral presentation;
- how to evaluate research findings

Real-life Industry Insights and examples

As noted above, throughout the book there are examples of research in action, most new to this edition. They cover a wide variety of sectors and topics in market and social research. On the market research side there are examples of research on well-known brands from the arts, media, telecommunications, financial services, retailing and fast moving consumer goods sectors including the BBC, Channel 4, Sky TV, AA, Asda, Asahi, Chivas Brothers, Centrica, Formula One, GlaxoSmithKline, Gousto, IBM, innocent smoothies, InterContinental Hotel Group, PayPal, Penguin Random House, RBS, Royal London, Tesco, Three, TfL, Twinings, Unilever, and Volvo. On the social research side there are examples of research for government and charities on complex social issues including the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-social behaviour, HIV/AIDS, exclusion from school, teenage pregnancy, cancer support and leaving a legacy to charity.

In addition to the Industry Insights, there are examples of the key documents and outputs of research. These include examples of a brief; a proposal; project timetables and costing grids; a sampling summary; discussion and interview guides; questions and sections of questionnaires; interviewer briefing notes; findings from pilot studies; a coding frame and list of extractions; an analysis specification; charts and diagrams; a checklist for preparing a report; and examples of key bits of a report – an abstract and summary, conclusions and recommendations.

Clear structure

The book is structured largely to follow the research process (and to follow the structure of the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research syllabus). The first section contains three chapters by way of introducing market and social research.

The first chapter sets out what research is, its value and its limitations. Chapter 2 describes the research process, the roles within it and the ethical and legal framework within which it operates. Chapter 3 introduces different types of data and research. The next section is about designing and planning research. The first chapter in this section, Chapter 4, deals with understanding the business problem and defining the research problem. Chapter 5 covers research design. Chapter 6 is about how to write up a research brief; and Chapter 7 is about how to prepare a research proposal. The next section is about existing data: Chapter 8 covers sources of existing data and Chapter 9 is about using and evaluating existing data. The next section is on qualitative research and contains three chapters: Chapter 10 on methods; Chapter 11 on aspects of doing a qualitative project including sampling and designing a fieldwork guide; and Chapter 12 is about analysing data from a qualitative research project. The next section deals with quantitative research. It contains six chapters. Chapter 13 focuses on quantitative methods of data collection; Chapter 14 is on sampling; and Chapter 15 is on designing questionnaires. The next three chapters, Chapters 16 to 18, are devoted to analysis of quantitative data, including so-called 'big data'. Chapter 19 looks at aspects of managing a project and reviewing the findings. Chapter 20 deals with communicating the findings.

Superb pedagogy to aid learning

Each chapter opens with an **Introduction** which summarises the aim of the chapter. A list of **Topics covered** is then presented. Next, there is **Relationship to MRS Advanced Certificate Syllabus,** a useful tool that shows how the material in the chapter relates to the MRS Advanced Certificate Syllabus.

At the end of the chapter you will find **Chapter summaries**. These help to reinforce the main points made in the chapter, and are useful as a revision tool. **Exercises** at the end of each chapter are designed to test the reader's knowledge and understanding. Each chapter ends with **References** and **Recommended reading** which provide more detail on the topics or issues covered in that chapter. Finally, at the end of the book, is the **Bibliography**.

Supplementary resources

A range of support materials, including suggested solutions to the questions and exercises in this are available for lecturers.

Guide to content for MRS Advanced Certificate syllabus learning outcomes

The Research Context	Learning outcome	Source of most relevant content
Topic 1		
Understanding the research context and planning the research project	Evaluate the usefulness of research to a given setting	Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4
	Identify and define the problem to be researched and the associated research objectives within a given setting	Chapter 4
	Identify the information needed to address defined research objectives	Chapter 4 and Chapter 5
	Plan and/or evaluate a research brief for a given research problem	Chapters 4, 5 and 6
	Plan a research proposal for a given research brief	Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 (also Chapters 2 and 3 and Chapters 8–15 and Chapters 16–18)
	Develop plans for the appropriate use of resources (people, time and money) during the delivery of the research project	Chapter 2 and Chapter 19
Topic 2		
Guiding Principles: Validity and reliability	Apply the concepts of validity and reliability and/or their qualitative equivalents as appropriate throughout the research process	Chapter 1, Chapters 4 and 5, Chapter 9, Chapters 10 and 12, Chapters 13–15, Chapters 17 and 18, Chapters 19 and 20
Ethical principles	Identify relevant ethical principles and apply them appropriately throughout the research process	Chapters 2, 3 and 4, Chapters 6–20

Topic 3		
Selecting the research design and planning the approach	Identify and evaluate possible research designs	Chapters 3, 4 and 5
	Select the most appropriate research design and justify that selection	Chapters 3, 4 and 5
	Evaluate sources of data and select the most appropriate	Chapters 3 and 4, and Chapters 8 and 9
	Identify and evaluate a range of data collection methods	Chapter 10 and Chapter 13
	Select the most appropriate data collection method/s and justify that selection	Chapter 10 and Chapter 13
	Plan all aspects of the data collection including fieldwork and the design of the data collection tools	Chapters 10 and 11, Chapter 13, Chapter 15 and Chapter 19
Topic 4		
Selecting an appropriate sample	Identify and evaluate possible sample sources	Chapter 11 for qualitative research and Chapter 14 for quantitative research
	Identify and evaluate possible sampling approaches and techniques	Chapter 11 and Chapter 14
	Create a suitable sampling plan and plan its implementation	Chapter 11, Chapter 14 and Chapter 19
Topic 5		
Analysing and interpreting data and reporting findings	Identify and evaluate possible suitable approaches for the analysis and interpretation of data	Chapter 12, and Chapters 16–18
	Create a suitable analysis plan and plan how to implement it	Chapter 12, and Chapters 16–18
	Identify and evaluate the usability of research findings	Chapter 1 and Chapter 19
	Identify and evaluate the suitability of different approaches for the reporting of research findings	Chapters 16, 17 and 20
	Select the most suitable approach for the reporting of findings and justify that selection	Chapter 20

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Yvonne McGivern
Summer 2021

Part One
Introducing market and social research

Chapter 1
Research, data and insight

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give you an overview of research, what it is and why it is done. It is a practice that involves gathering, analysing and interpreting data to inform decision making. It is about data at one end and insight at the other. We look at definitions and uses of research in business and society, its value and its limitations.

Topics covered

- What is research?
- The context and use of research
- The value of research
- The limitations of research.

Relationship to MRS Advanced Certificate Syllabus

This chapter is relevant to Topic 1: Understanding the research context and planning the research project; and Topic 2: Guiding Principles: Validity and reliability.

What you should get from this chapter

At the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- understand the nature of research; and
- recognise the value and contribution of research and its limitations.

What is research?

Research is about enquiry; it is about systematic observation or investigation to find things out. It is the process by which we produce evidence or knowledge about the world. It is founded on scientific methods, which are in turn supported by philosophical principles about the nature of knowledge and how we construct that knowledge.

What is sometimes called 'pure research' is research undertaken to gain knowledge or understanding of something without having in mind a specific application of that knowledge or understanding. 'Applied research' is the term given to research undertaken to gain the knowledge or understanding or insight needed to address a specific need. In this book we focus on the practice of applied research. Applied research involves questioning, observing, listening to people, gathering data and analysing and interpreting gathered and existing data in order to build information and knowledge that can be used to enable, inform, communicate, persuade, design, develop, improve and predict. From here on, we'll refer to applied research simply as research.

From data to insight

It is likely – almost certain – that research has played a role in nearly every aspect of your daily life: for example, in the design of your phone, the apps on your phone, the services you avail ourselves of, the things you buy, and in how your country works, its policy and its laws. An organisation needs to make a decision – a well-informed decision – about how to invest its limited resources to best effect. A well-informed decision relies on good quality, relevant, timely information or evidence. That information or evidence starts out as data. Data are 'observed or recorded facts' (Allen, 2017). Data relevant to the decision are brought together, processed, analysed and interpreted in the context of the decision facing the organisation. In other words, as a result of 'work' done on the data – with an end use or purpose in mind – the data become information. The work done has brought the data together in 'actionable assemblies' (Allen, 2017). These 'actionable assemblies' should provide the decision-maker with the information and the insight needed to make a decision.

Industry Insight 1.1 contains examples of the role played by research, data and insight in organisations in the commercial sector and in the charity sector.

Industry Insight 1.1

The role of research, data and insight

The commercial sector
Nick Rich is vice president, global market and consumer insights, at InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG). It is present in 100 plus countries and owns more than a dozen hotel brands including Holiday Inn, Kimpton, Hotel Indigo, Crown Plaza and InterContinental Hotels & Resorts. The focus of the global insights group is mainly on strategy and brand. The team mantra is knowledge for everyone. Marketing is the number one partner but the aim is to focus on the whole business. Rich points out that everyone in IHG needs to know about the customer. An insight group that delivers business-critical information is vital

because the company operates in a hugely competitive sector. The insight team has to be switched on to short-term requirements and performance and be able to see what future needs will look like. This is important because it takes time to build hotels in a new place and refurbish existing ones if tastes change.

Source: Adapted from Gray, R. (2018) 'Inside knowledge', *Impact*, 21, pp. 56–60. Used with permission.

The charity sector

Oxfam was founded in 1942 to help alleviate the suffering of civilians caught up in conflict. Today it is a global federation with 19 affiliates working in more than 90 countries. It aims to help people hit by disaster and it campaigns for action to tackle the root causes of poverty. Tina Trythall is head of insight at Oxfam GB. 'The insight function at Oxfam is about putting the audience and market understanding at the heart of public support, staff engagement, communications and marketing strategy. We are ensuring our supporter and public engagement strategies are based on this audience understanding. It is about identifying who to target, who the audience is, to achieve our objectives. What do they know, think and feel about Oxfam?' 'Know, think, feel and do' are the four watchwords at the heart of the Oxfam insight strategy.

Source: Adapted from Gray, R. (2018) 'Insight into charity campaigning', *Impact*, 20, pp. 44–8. Used with permission.

Professional research practice

The practice of research to acquire and analyse data and turn them into insight is a professional activity. The Market Research Society, MRS (www.mrs.org.uk), is the UK professional body for research, insight and analytics. It was founded in London in 1946 with 23 members. At the time of writing it has 5,000 individual members and over 500 accredited Company Partners in over 50 countries. It estimates that around 64,000 professionals work in the research, insight and analytics sector in the UK in around 4,000 enterprises, according to *Research Live Industry Report* (2021), with a worth of around £7 billion. MRS published its first Code of Standards in 1954. In the most recent version, now called the Code of Conduct (2019), MRS defines research as:

> the collection, use or analysis of information about individuals or organisations intended to establish facts, acquire knowledge or reach conclusions. It uses techniques of the applied social, behavioural and data sciences, statistical principles and theory, to generate insights and support decision making by providers of goods and services, governments, non-profit organisations and the general public.

This definition – with its references to applied social, behavioural and data sciences – gives you an idea of the underpinnings of professional research practice and the contexts in which it is used – goods, services, governments, non-profits – and so an idea of its reach. This is further illustrated in how MRS describes itself: as an association for 'everyone with professional equity in market, social and opinion research (whether you use it or provide it) and in business intelligence, market analysis, customer insight and consultancy.'

ESOMAR (www.esomar.org), established in 1947, is another important research association: 'a diverse community of 40,000+ data, research and insight professionals from 130+ countries'. Like MRS, it promotes the value of research and data and offers ethical and professional guidance to its members. In its *International Code on Market, Opinion and Social Research and Data Analytics* (2016), ESOMAR defines research as:

> the systematic gathering and interpretation of information about individuals or organisations.

So the practice of research is informed by a wide range of disciplines. These include anthropology, sociology, statistics, economics, geography, linguistics, psychology, neuroscience and artificial intelligence. Other disciplines contain skills transferable to work in the research sector including languages, history, policy studies, computer science and engineering.

You'll see that both MRS and ESOMAR refer to the use of techniques from data science, and both organisations make reference to (data) analytics. The application of data science and analytics in a market and social research context has come about because of the increasing size, speed and complexity of the data we create and the availability of the means to store and analyse them. Such data are often referred to as 'big data'. It is a term that is now in widespread use. Diebold (2019), who used it in a conference paper in 2000 on statistics and econometrics, believes it was first used by John Mashey and others at Silicon Graphics Inc. in the mid-1990s. Diebold credits Weiss and Indurkhya (1998) as the first significant academic reference (in computer science) and Douglas Laney at Gartner for 'enrich[ing] the concept significantly' in an unpublished research note in 2001. The term is used to describe the huge quantities of digital data that are continuously generated and 'seek[ing] to be exhaustive and fine-grained in scope, and flexible and scalable in their production' (Kitchin, 2014). boyd and Crawford (2012) see it as 'in many ways, a poor term' given that size is 'not the defining characteristic'. They point out that some of the data classed as 'big data' (they give Twitter messages about a particular topic as an example) are not as big as datasets that were not thought of as 'big data', for example census data. We look in more detail at definitions and ways of describing big data in **Chapter 3**.

If there is 'big data', then there must be 'small data' (Kitchin, 2014). Kitchin quotes Miller (2010), describing 'small data' as data 'produced in tightly controlled ways using sampling techniques that limit their scope, temporality and size'. Kitchin acknowledges that while small data 'may be limited in volume and velocity, . . . they have a long history of development, with established methodologies and modes of analysis. . . [and] small data studies can be . . . tailored to answer specific research questions and to explore in detail and in depth . . .'.

The practice of research now encompasses 'big data' projects including data mining and analytics as well as the more traditional 'small data' studies using qualitative and/or quantitative methods. The fundamental skills of the research practitioner – how to do research that produces actionable insight – have not changed, however. The researcher must be able to understand the problem that the research and the data are to address; formulate research objectives; design a project that will deliver the required data; analyse and interpret those data in the context of the problem; and communicate the findings in a meaningful way in the context of the problem. As Moon (2015) notes, 'the knowledge, skills and influence of the researcher are becoming increasingly important in the quest to draw meaningful insights from the growing sea of Big Data'.

With the size, complexity and speed of big data there have, of course, been changes in data storage and access infrastructure, as well as processing and analysis technology, and so in developments in the skills associated with these. Most prominent among these are skills related to the broad field of data analysis: data capture, storage, access, processing, cleaning, transformation, analysis and display. It is these skills that the professional bodies allude to when they mention data science and analytics.

These have always been important – indeed essential – research skills. However, as John Tukey noted in 1962, '. . . data analysis . . . must adapt itself to what people can and need to do with data'. Tukey foresaw that the influences on the development of these skills were 'accelerating developments in computers and display devices [and] the challenge, in many fields, of more and ever larger bodies of data [and] the emphasis on quantification in an ever-wider variety of disciplines'. From the examples in this book you'll see that the practice of market and social research – which at its heart is about learning from data – has adapted, and is continuing to do so. As far back as 2016, Christina Jenkins, Global Research Team Leader within GSO Insights, LinkedIn, reported in a debate entitled, 'Who will succeed in the new era of data discovery', that among market researchers on LinkedIn's member database, an increasing number were adding skills such as coding, Python, R, SQL, and Hadoop, as well as what Jenkins terms 'whole-brain thinking' skills such as business strategy, strategic planning, leadership and management. A study conducted by Cluley et al. (2020) shows evidence of changing roles and work practices to accommodate use of digital data.

Market, opinion and social research and data analytics

Both ESOMAR and MRS refer to market, opinion and social research and, as we have noted, to data analytics. It is important to know to what these categories refer in order to understand the context in which research is used.

Market research generally refers to research activity conducted in the business and commercial world: to explore, discover, test, verify, measure, explain, and/or understand goods, products, services, organisations, consumers, and relationships between these. Those working in market research draw on a body of knowledge found in business studies (including business environment, business practice, business strategy, business process, business communication, business technology) and marketing (including product design, new product development, branding, packaging, pricing, sales, advertising and promotion, competitive strategy, segmentation and customer satisfaction). The term 'market research', however, is not as common as it once was. An analysis by Nunan (2016) found that although the term is 'well established as an industry definition' few of the leading research firms use it to describe their core activity. Instead the descriptions they use include 'research, data and insight', 'business intelligence', 'consumer insight', 'market insights', 'strategic insight' and 'analytics', among others. Despite changes in the market research marketplace, researchers 'are still around and are proud to be called "researchers"' (Flores, 2016). Cluley et al. (2020) in a study of 44 market research practitioners found that 20 had a job title that included 'research' ('researcher' or 'research manager'); other titles included 'product manager', 'brand executive', 'insight director', 'narrator' and 'project engager'. Raben (2015), quoted by Flores, notes that whether in the business of 'consumer guidance', 'insights' or 'marketing intelligence', all of these disciplines are grounded in research.

Opinion research is the application of market research techniques to gather information on opinions about political issues. For opinion researchers, the body of knowledge they draw on includes political science and psephology. **Social research** generally refers to research conducted to explore, discover, test, verify, measure,

Industry Insight 1.2

What's in a name?

At WPP, a large marketing services organisation, what was once called market research or consumer insight is now described as 'data investment management', according to its CEO at the time, Sir Martin Sorrell. It has, he notes, '. . . always been about gathering and interpreting information, but the internet has created a new, ever expanding universe of data, the sheer volume and complexity of which demands ever more sophisticated approaches, tools and techniques . . . Data collection and analysis is nothing unless it produces insights . . . Unearthing and communicating valuable insights remains the core purpose . . . the toolkit the researcher can use to find insights has expanded . . . '

Source: Adapted from Sorrell, M. (2016) 'Digital, data and globalisation', *Impact*, 12, pp. 37–8. Used with permission.

explain and/or understand the nature of social phenomena, of groups, of organisations and of people, of the social world. Social researchers draw on knowledge from sociology, anthropology, criminology, history, linguistics, psychology and social policy.

Data analytics is a term used to describe the analysis of raw data. It is a process that includes preparing, visualising, analysing and modelling raw data to provide knowledge and insight. You may also see it referred to, depending on the question asked or the output, as descriptive analytics or predictive analytics. The raw data may be 'captured data', that is data gathered via a process designed to gather data, or it may be 'exhaust data' (Kitchin, 2014), data that are a by-product of some other data generation or capture process – think of the data generated by our daily interactions with digital technology.

What distinguishes a market researcher, an opinion researcher, a social researcher or a researcher using data analytics is the area in which they apply the findings or insight, and their knowledge and expertise in the domain in which they apply it, the context rather than their general research skills set. They should have many of the same core skills. However, each is likely to have some specialist skills related to the type of research they do, and/or to the type and scale of data they use, besides their knowledge of the domain or substantive area in which they work.

Whatever area you work in, the process – the way in which a research project is structured and run – will be largely the same. It involves defining the problem to be researched; designing and planning the research; gathering, generating and/or selecting the data; processing and analysing and interpreting the data; communicating the findings; and applying what you have learned to the problem under investigation.

The context and use of research

'Market', 'opinion' and 'social research' are broad terms for a rich variety of research conducted in many different contexts. Market research, for example, contains within it several fairly distinct categories of research characterised either by the type of participants involved (consumer research or business-to-business research); the subject

matter of the research (advertising research or product development research or audience research or customer satisfaction research); and the location of the research (international or domestic research). We look at some of these in more detail below, and there are examples throughout the book.

Consumer research

Consumer research, as its name suggests, is conducted among consumers – individuals and households. The purpose is usually to understand consumer behaviour, attitudes and opinions in relation to products and services and the marketing activity that surrounds them. Many of the Industry Insights in this book could be classed as consumer research projects.

Business-to-business research

The purpose of business-to-business (or B2B) research is usually to understand the behaviour, attitudes and opinions of those businesses involved in marketing and selling products and/or services to other businesses. The sorts of populations from which samples are drawn include those in commercial and retail organisations (e.g. members of the c-suite of executives – CEOs, Chief Operating Officers, Chief Information Officers, Chief Technology Officers, Chief Financial Officers, and so on – IT managers, procurement officers, human resource managers); professional practices (e.g. dentists, lawyers, surveyors); opinion formers and opinion leaders (e.g. politicians, community leaders, journalists, bloggers). Getting access to members of B2B

Industry Insight 1.3

Consumer research

Chivas Brothers, owned by Pernod-Ricard, produces alcoholic drinks. In 2018, it planned to launch a new single malt Scotch whisky called Allt-A-Bhaine. Before the launch the brand team wanted to build confidence in the new offering among the company's internal stakeholders and it wanted to secure a marketing budget for the launch of the whisky in Australia. To do this they needed to test the brand concept, profile its potential consumers, identify key occasions for which those consumers would associate this new single malt, and get a robust estimate of the whisky's potential sales volume in its first three years after launch. They hired insights agency, Skim, to conduct an online quantitative survey of 1,200 whisky buyers in Australia. This survey tested the concept, provided profiles of potential buyers, measured the impact of awareness of the new single malt on buyers' choices and examined the best price to charge for the whisky. The agency gave the client feedback on reaction to the name of the whisky, the visual appearance of the bottle, the taste and the pricing. Pernod-Ricard Australia gave the agency three years of sales data on the whisky's expected competitive set. The agency analysed both the survey data and the sales data and were able to predict how many cases of the new whisky would sell every week for three years after its launch.

Source: Adapted from McQuater, K. (2019) 'Distilling data', *Impact*, 25, p. 15. Used with permission.