



Fundamentals of Advertising Research



Third Edition



Alan D. Fletcher
Thomas A. Bowers

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Third Edition

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Preface

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Fundamentals of Advertising Research has been used in undergraduate courses in advertising research, advertising management, public relations, and marketing research. In some courses, this text was used as the sole resource; in others, it was supplemented with numerous journal articles. The text was often supplemented by small introductory paperback books on statistical methods and was sometimes used as the focal point of a course featuring heavy use of outside assignments.

At the graduate level, faculty members have used previous editions in courses in mass communication research, advertising research, public relations research, and marketing research. Primary use at the graduate level has been as a supplementary source of information about research techniques and descriptions of major advertising research suppliers. Faculty acceptance indicates that the book can be used in a variety of ways. We welcome your comments, whether or not you adopt the book for your courses.

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Changes in the Third Edition

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The major changes from the second edition are in Part Three: Syndicated Research Sources. Some syndicated companies merged with others or went out of business. Many existing companies changed their methods and reports. In other parts of this third edition, we have added or modified conceptual material while trying to preserve one of the book's strengths—its practical approach and straightforward style.

Chapter 2 gives increased attention to psychographic or life-style research such as VALS. We reorganized and revised Chapter 3 to give greater attention to research as a strategic planning activity. It also includes new sections on controlling research costs and on research ethics. We deleted some secondary research sources from Chapter 4 and added new ones.

New material about the Electronic Media Rating Council has been added to Chapter 11 and about Scarborough Research in Chapter 15. In Chapter 17, the discussions about future developments in advertising research were revised extensively.

A Message to Students

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Experience has shown that most students in an advertising or marketing research course have no intention of becoming researchers. Yet they recognize that throughout their careers, they will be using research supplied by someone else. They realize the importance of being able to differentiate good from bad research.

Many students approach a research course with some apprehension. In undergraduate advertising programs that do not require a research course, some students avoid it altogether. Don't be afraid; *Fundamentals of Advertising Research* is written largely in nontechnical language; it is intended to be readable. According to student evaluations of the first and second editions, a major strength was readability. This has not changed in the third edition. Many students have commented, upon completing the introductory research course, that it wasn't as difficult as they had expected.

Acknowledgments

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We also thank our families for their support: Linda, Susan, Jennifer, Amanda, Pat, Matt, and Lisa.

Alan Fletcher
Tom Bowers
August 1987

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Contents

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Part One **The Nature of Research 1**

.....

1 The Role of Advertising Research 3

- The Growing Need for Research 4
- Applied, General, and Methodological Research 5
- Exploratory and Predictive Research 6
- What Research Can't Do: The Role of Intuition in
 Decision Making 7
- A Caution: Fraudulent Research 8
- Summary 10
- Self-Test Questions 11
- Suggestions for Additional Reading 11

.....

2 The Subject Matter of Advertising Research 12

- Target Market Research 13
- Competitive Activity Research 17

.....

Positioning Research	18
Pretest Message Research	19
Posttest Message Research	19
Audience Research	20
The Relationship Between Message and Audience Research	21
Advertising Research and the Product Life Cycle	23
Summary	26
Self-Test Questions	26
Notes	26
Suggestions for Additional Reading	26

Part Two **Conducting Advertising Research 29**

.....

3 Strategic Planning for Research 31

Situation Analysis	32
Research Objectives	33
Research Strategy	41
Research Tactics	43
Evaluation	44
Controlling Research Costs	45
Research Ethics	46
Summary	49
Self-Test Questions	50
Notes	50
Suggestions for Additional Reading	50

.....

4 Secondary Research 52

Guides to Secondary Research	54
Indexes	54
Periodicals	55
Information About Media	56
Data About Business Conditions	57
Directories	59
Miscellaneous	59
Summary	60

Self-Test Questions 61
Suggestions for Additional Reading 61

5 Sampling 62

Does Sampling Work? 63
Determining Sample Size 65
Sampling Bias 66
Probability Sampling 68
Nonprobability Sampling 73
Summary 74
Self-Test Questions 75
Suggestions for Additional Reading 75

6 Questionnaire Design 77

Nature of the Questionnaire 78
Types of Questions 79
How Question Formats Affect Responses 83
Keying the Questionnaire 84
Obtaining Accurate, Honest Answers 86
Tips on Constructing a Questionnaire 90
Summary 93
Self-Test Questions 94
Notes 94
Suggestions for Additional Reading 94

7 Surveys 96

The Technique 96
Gathering the Data 97
The Problem of Bias 101
Interviewer Recruitment and Training 106
How Qualitative Research Can Simplify Survey Research 107
Summary 114
Self-Test Questions 115
Notes 115
Suggestions for Additional Reading 115

.....

.....

8 Experiments 117

Correlation and Causation 118
Experimental Groups and Variables 118
Experimental Designs 119
Extraneous Variables 122
Laboratory Experiments 124
Field Experiments 126
Summary 129
Self-Test Questions 130
Notes 130
Suggestions for Additional Reading 130

.....

9 Data Processing and Analysis 131

Advance Preparation 131
Tabulating Data 136
Basic Descriptive Statistics 139
Testing for Significance 152
Summary 156
Self-Test Questions 157
Notes 158
Suggestions for Additional Reading 158

.....

10 Writing the Research Report 159

A Frame of Mind for Writing 160
Elements of a Research Report 162
Using Visuals Effectively 163
Summary 169
Self-Test Questions 169
Notes 169
Suggestions for Additional Reading 169

.....

Part Three **Syndicated Research Sources 171**

.....

11 Syndicated Research 173

General Problems with Syndicated Research 174
Problems with Syndicated Message Research 174
Problems with Syndicated Media Audience Research 178
Limitations of Syndicated Competitive Activity
 Research 184
Evaluating Externally Supplied Research 185
Monitoring Externally Supplied Research 187
Summary 189
Self-Test Questions 189
Notes 190
Suggestions for Additional Reading 191

.....

12 Message Research—Broadcast 192

AdTel 192
SAMI-BURKE Selector 197
Gallup & Robinson 200
Summary 202
Self-Test Questions 203
Suggestions for Additional Reading 203

.....

13 Message Research—Print 205

Gallup & Robinson 206
Starch INRA Hooper 207
Readex Readership Research 223
Harvey Research Organization, Inc. 226
SAMI-BURKE Standard Print Test 228
Summary 233
Self-Test Questions 233
Suggestions for Additional Reading 234

.....

.....

14 Audience Research—Broadcast 235

Data Gathering Techniques 236
RADAR 238
Arbitron Radio 239
Arbitron Television 241
Nielsen Station Index 245
Nielsen Television Index 247
TVQ 253
Summary 253
Self-Test Questions 254
Suggestions for Additional Reading 254

.....

15 Audience Research—Print 256

Audit Bureau of Circulations 257
Business Publications Audit of Circulation 259
Simmons Market Research Bureau 262
Mediamark Research 264
Scarborough Research Corporation 269
Summary 271
Self-Test Questions 271
Suggestions for Additional Reading 272

.....

16 Competitive Activity Research 273

Broadcast Advertisers Reports 274
Leading National Advertisers 277
Media Records 291
Radio Expenditure Reports 291
Summary 295
Self-Test Questions 295

Part Four The Outlook for Advertising Research 297

.....

17 Looking Ahead 299

Levels of Technological Change 300
New Media Technologies 300

.....

Current Research Issues Likely to Continue 303
Careers in Advertising Research 304
Summary 305
Notes 305
Suggestions for Additional Reading 306

.....

Appendix A Table of Random Numbers **307**

.....

Appendix B Research Companies and Information
Sources **313**

.....

Index 318

The Nature of Research

As research in product development increases, so does research in all areas of marketing. To compete effectively, marketers conduct research in pricing, packaging, and distribution. And as competition grows and as economic conditions create uncertainty, research in advertising becomes increasingly important.

Properly conducted, research can answer many questions about a marketer's business and the conditions that influence it. Specifically, advertising research can answer questions about the nature of the market, appropriate advertising strategies, message effectiveness, and media audiences.

But no research in marketing, whether it be in pricing, product design, distribution, or advertising, can answer all questions. Typically research reduces uncertainty for the marketer. It can narrow the range of alternative decisions. It can provide effective assistance to the marketer only if it can be conducted at reasonable cost; in some cases the costs of research outweigh the benefits.

In this section, we examine the uses and limitations of advertising research and place it in the perspective of an advertiser's decision-making process. ■

The Role of Advertising Research

- When a major airline introduces a new nonstop flight from Houston to London, the advertising director is unsure of the balance of advertising that should be targeted at business travelers and pleasure travelers.
- The same advertising director must decide whether to conduct a year-round advertising effort or schedule the advertisements in blocks of several weeks' duration throughout the year or during peak periods.
- Later the airline's advertising agency is faced with deciding which of four creative strategies to propose for the pleasure travel segment: The creative director prefers one, the account manager prefers another, the media director thinks yet another one best fits the media plan, and several other people prefer the fourth strategy.

These three decision areas are typical in the marketing of almost any product or service. The problem in each case is to make a sound decision under conditions of uncertainty and risk.

The advertising director's ongoing marketing research shows the relative importance of different segments of the market for air transportation. The director can

learn quickly what percentage of overseas travelers are on business trips and what percentage are on pleasure trips. Data will show frequency of trips by people in each market segment. Data will also show who flies first class and who flies tourist. The manager's strategy may call for allocating advertising dollars according to the relative importance of each market segment.

In determining the scheduling of advertisements, the advertising director can look at data on boardings and on travel planning. Seasonal data on boardings will show peaks and valleys in the popularity of the airline's Houston-to-London service. The manager can easily identify times when business persons and tourists take trips to London. If the manager finds that travelers typically make their plans well in advance of the flight, the manager can schedule advertisements at the time when travelers are making their plans. The manager may find that business travelers and pleasure travelers have two entirely different methods of planning. Advertisements aimed at each market may be scheduled differently.

In determining which creative strategy to propose to the client, the account manager authorized an inexpensive pretest of the four creative strategies. The manager found that two strategies appeared most appropriate for the overall advertising campaign. One, a simple, factual approach, tested best for the business market. The other, which used pleasant imagery of a visit to London, tested best for the tourist trade. Again, research was used to reduce uncertainty.

The Growing Need for Research

As consumer, trade, professional, farm, and business marketplaces have grown increasingly complex, managers have become increasingly reliant on marketing research of all types. Gone are the days when merchants dealt with small markets and could easily monitor the needs of their customers. Gone are the days when merchants could make adjustments in product, pricing, or packaging with relatively short notice and in direct response to comments made by customers. The relationship between merchant and customer could be close, and communication was simple.

Gone too is the sometimes unassailable position of the tradesman or other marketer. Before mass production, producers could sell all they could make. Producers had relatively few direct competitors. And customers may have had little choice but to accept products because there weren't many (or any) others from which to choose. Compared with the marketplace of today, early merchants had little incentive to respond to customer wants, unless it was convenient to do so.

With the growth of the U.S. economy, foreign competition in all areas, and technological change, the marketer of today finds it increasingly important to keep up with change and to find improved ways of competing. Ever-growing competition in the media marketplace contributes to the need for constantly improved methods