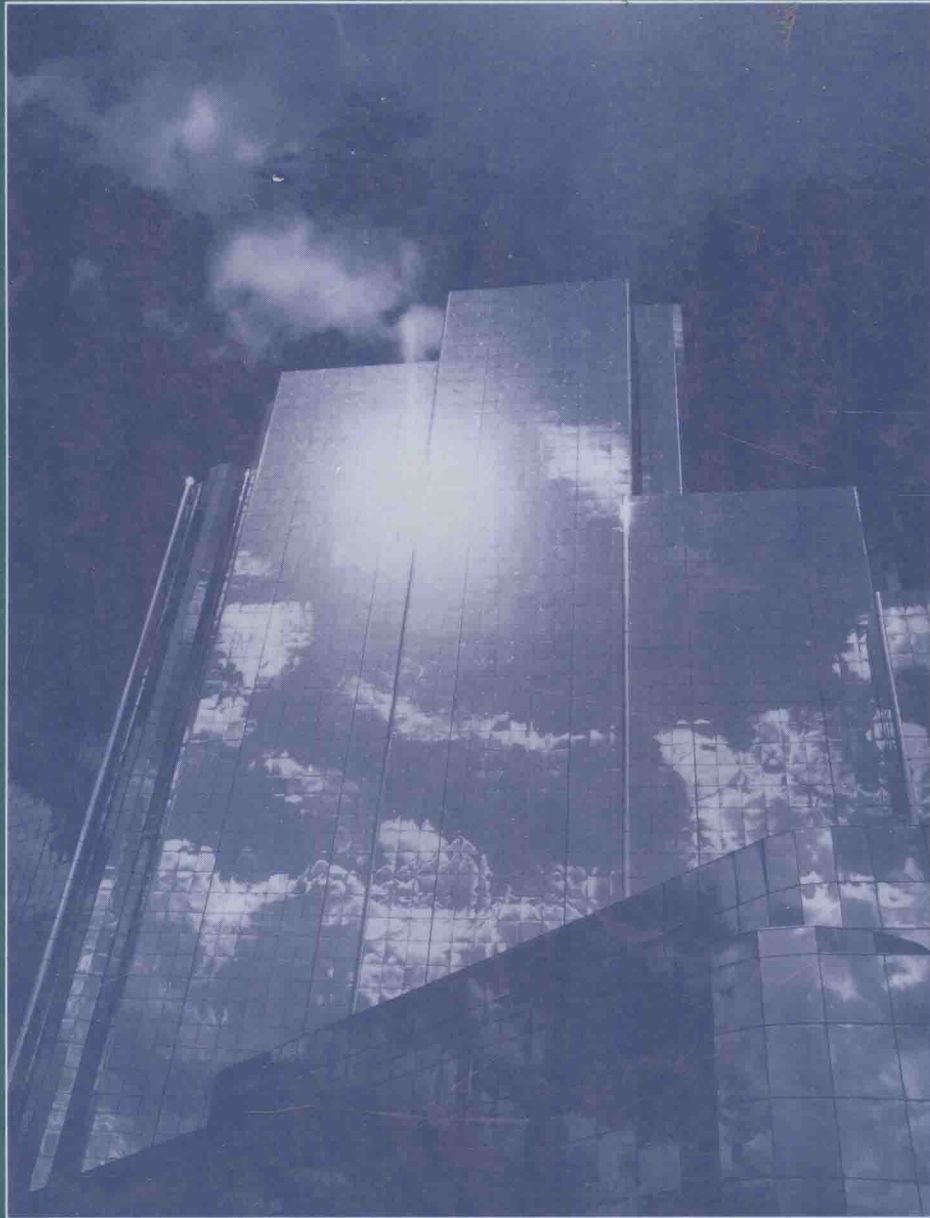


# THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROJECT MANUAL



GLEN R. JARBOE

# The Marketing Research Project Manual

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## **PREFACE**

This manual has been written to help you in conducting a student marketing research project. I have used a project of this type in teaching marketing research for many years and, on many occasions, my students have commented that they have found it to be one of their most rewarding educational experiences.

This manual is designed to guide you, in a step-by-step manner, through a marketing research project. Your project will help you develop and refine a number of skills that can only be acquired by actually conducting marketing research. You will find that this manual will answer many detailed questions that students encounter while developing their project. Often, this type of detail is simply not covered in a marketing research textbook. The manual takes somewhat of a how-to-do-it approach. However, every student project is different and the purpose of the material presented in this manual is to encourage, not to restrain, your creativity.

The manual has been designed around an example of a typical student project. The first few chapters orient you to the project and provide some useful information about finding and choosing a client to work with. In Chapter Three, you will meet Ms. Allen, the proprietor of Apex Dry Cleaning, as a group of student consultants interview her to determine how they can be of assistance. In Chapter Four, you will see how the information from this interview is used develop research objectives and prepare a research proposal. In Chapter Five, you will learn how the objectives in the proposal are translated into an actual questionnaire. Chapter Six will help you in choosing a sampling method and provide you some help in designing sampling plans and procedures.

Chapter Seven will show you how to get the survey data into the computer and will provide you an introduction to two software programs commonly used for tabulating data, SAS (Statistical Analysis System) and SPSSX (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - Version X). Independent discussions will be provided for each program so that you will be able to use either with little reference to the discussion of the other. Computer programs, for both SAS and SPSSX, are provided to accompany the Apex Dry Cleaners questionnaire.

Chapter Eight introduces some of the most commonly used tabulation procedures; frequency distributions and cross-tabulations. It also discusses how to use some of the basic statistical summary measures discussed in your textbook. Chapter Nine will help you prepare a research report. It will show you how to analyze results and translate them into findings, conclusions and recommendation.

Chapter Ten provides a brief overview of several sophisticated multivariate analysis techniques and includes some typical computer statements for using these techniques in either SAS or SPSSX. The final chapter shows you how the skills you have acquired in doing your projects can be applied to other types of marketing research studies.

I believe that you will find this project to be a genuinely rewarding educational experience. You will not only be acquiring and applying new skills, but you will be challenged to think like a marketer. You will also experience, firsthand, the excitement of a career in marketing, whether as a supplier or as a user of marketing research.

It is my hope that this manual has not left too many of your questions unanswered. Good luck!

Glen Jarboe  
The University of Texas at Arlington  
November, 1990

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

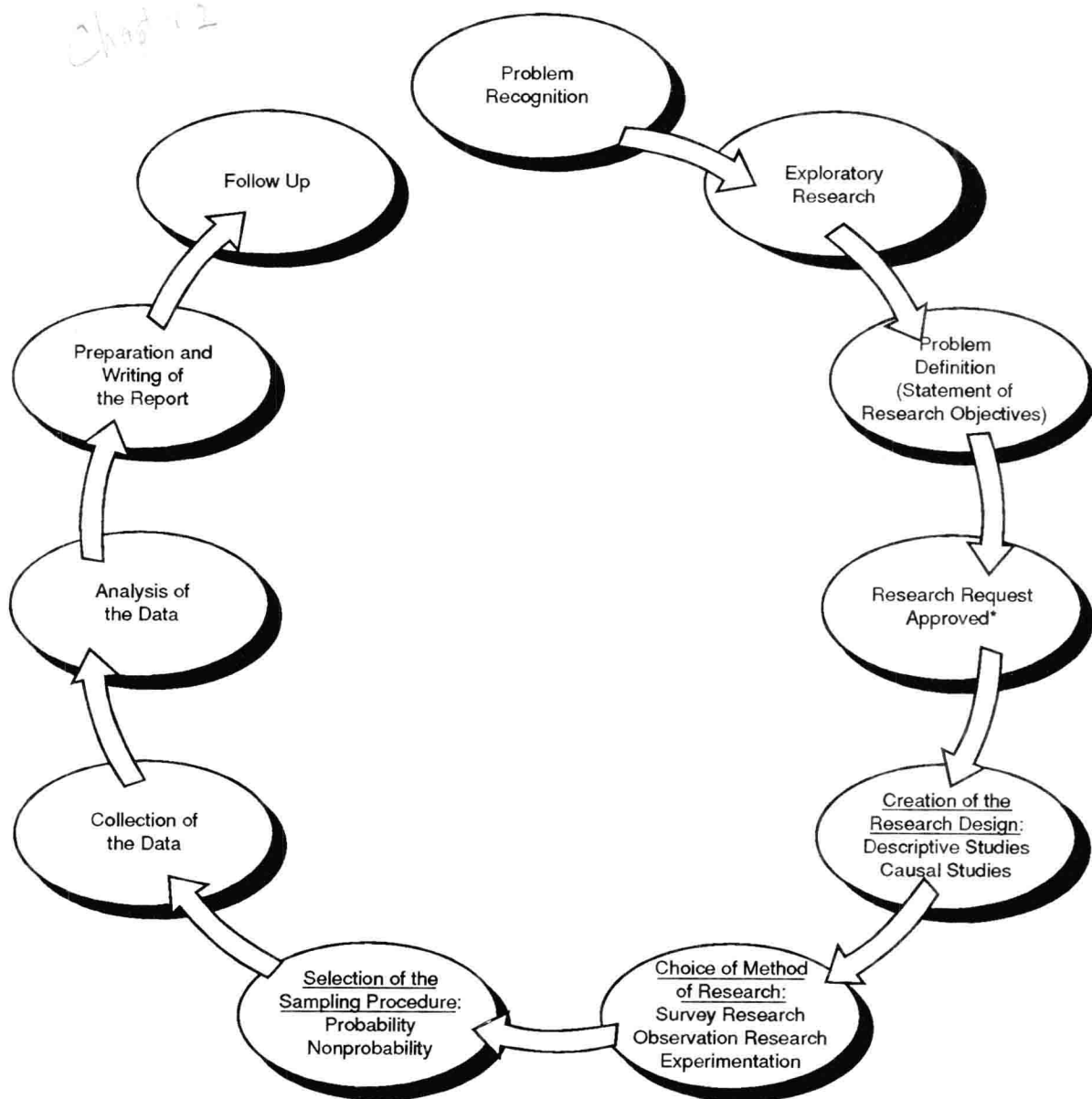
This manual has been written to help guide you through the conduct of a marketing research project. It will require you to use the marketing research process to solve a marketing problem from problem definition to final report. This manual is intended to answer many of the questions that are typically encountered in translating the concepts and ideas you have learned into practical application. It is not likely to answer all your questions. However, it will discuss most of difficulties that students have encountered in conducting projects of this type.

This manual is intended only as a guide. While it has somewhat of a "how to do it" focus, you will find that you must exercise considerable creativity and originality in applying your ideas. You will encounter many questions to which there is no single correct answer. No two researchers or research groups will approach a problem in exactly the same way. Every marketing research project is unique. However, you and your classmates working on different projects may encounter many of the same situations.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT**

You will be completing an entire marketing research project from start to finish. Such a project involves a series of steps that begins with the identification of a research problem and ends with a final report of findings, conclusions, and recommendations. An overview of this process is included in your textbook, and a typical diagram of it is contained in Figure 1.1. You should note that the steps involve the specification of a target population, the development of a method for

FIGURE 1.1 The Marketing Research Process



sampling from this group, and the development of a questionnaire. The process will also involve entering of the data into the computer, running programs to generate tabulations, and analyzing and interpreting these tabulations.

Throughout the conduct of this project, your instructor will serve as an advisor to answer questions not covered in this manual. However, this is *your* project. All of the important steps will be carried out by you and your group. In effect, your team may be thought of as a group of student consultants and, throughout the term, you will be working for a "client," some organization to which you believe you can be of assistance. Your instructor will probably allow you to develop your own list of potential clients and select one of them to work with. If you have difficulty coming up with a client, your instructor may have some ideas. Business people often contact universities with ideas for student projects, and your instructor may know of some. However, the author's experience has been that most student groups can come up with several excellent project ideas without much prompting.

In effect, your student group becomes a small marketing research company. You will gain an appreciation for the value and conduct of marketing research and develop some feeling about this field as a potential career opportunity. While this process will represent a lot of hard work, students often report that it is one of their most satisfying experiences in business school.

### **BENEFITS TO BE GAINED**

**Practical Experience.** The most obvious benefit to be gained from conducting this project is the practical experience you will acquire. Many students find that they do not truly understand the concepts and ideas they learn in the classroom until they are required to apply them in an actual situation. Such a fundamental concept as market segmentation takes on a new meaning when you are required to carefully identify, define, and measure the characteristics of some important customer group(s).

**Satisfaction of Producing a Product.** Students often find considerable satisfaction in doing the marketing research project. This exercise will involve you from start to finish in solving a practical problem. At this point, it may be hard for you to imagine what the final product will be like. However, if your feelings are similar those of other students, you will be proud to see what you have done when it is finished. The final report of your project will truly be a product that you and your research group have created.

**Application of Skills.** This project will require you to apply a variety of skills. Some of these skills may be entirely new, such as designing a questionnaire or using a PC and a computer program to tabulate data. Others may be skills that you began to acquire in other classes but have not applied to marketing problems, for example, using the graphics capabilities of a spreadsheet program to prepare graphs or bar charts.

**Exposure to a Professional Experience.** You may find that this project is as close as you will come during your college career to the experiencing the things that professionals regularly

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encounter. A single course in marketing research is not going to make you a professional marketing researcher. In fact, some universities are beginning to offer entire programs of study for that purpose. Such a program would expand a number of chapters in your textbook into an entire course, for example, questionnaire design, sampling, or data collection. However, the process you experience will be substantially the same. If you aspire to a career as a marketing researcher, you will get the opportunity to experience firsthand the things marketing researchers do. If your career takes you into marketing management, you should benefit significantly through your understanding of the kinds of problems that marketing research can (and can't) help solve, and provide you an increased sensitivity to the difficulty of conducting high-quality research.

In addition, you may find your final report very useful when you begin looking for a career. Most recruiters, while they may not ask for it, are pleased to see examples of your college work. Your transcript tells them something about the things that you *know* as a result of the university experience. Projects of this type help them to evaluate the things that you can *do*.

### **DIFFICULTY OF WORKING WITH OTHERS**

While the benefits of doing this project may be substantial, do not underestimate its difficulty. While some people are naturally attracted to working on projects as part of a group, others take a more independent approach to their education. A project of this type will require you to work with and depend upon others, some of who may not share your level of knowledge and enthusiasm. This is an excellent opportunity to experience the dynamics of working as part of a team.

### **FORMING A PROJECT GROUP**

Your instructor may simply assign you to a project group without regard to your preferences. However, it is likely that he or she may allow you some discretion in deciding with whom you want to work. Typically, a group size of five to seven works well. In order to allow you to focus on the important tasks of research design and analysis, your instructor may expect each student to conduct only a small number of interviews, perhaps twenty or twenty-five. Consequently, groups smaller than five may generate inadequate sample sizes. In larger groups, it may be difficult to ensure the adequate involvement of all the team members. It may also be difficult to reach a consensus on important research design issues.

There are a number of things that you might consider in forming a project group.

1. It would be desirable to have more than one person who has some experience with a word processor. Preferably they would both use the same program, such as WORDPERFECT, MICROSOFT WORD, or WORDSTAR.

*(Author's Note: This entire manual was prepared with  
WORDPERFECT 5.1 using Times Roman and Helvetica fonts)*

2. It would be also be desirable to have one or two people who enjoy using the computer. The SAS and SPSSX programs are easy to learn, even for those with limited computer experience. However, the process is facilitated if one already has a working knowledge of how to use the campus computer facilities. In addition, it would be useful to have a group member who knows how to use (or wants to learn more about) the graphics capability of the PC. This would enhance the appearance and quality of your final report.
3. It is easier for students with similar class schedules to get together for meetings. Some groups may try to include members who live close to school. In a large metropolitan area, students who live in close proximity to each other might want to get together.
4. Some people naturally seek others with whom they feel they can work compatibly, perhaps based upon a previous group experience in another class. This may be an important factor so long as consideration is given to the skills mentioned above.

Appendix 1A contains a brief information sheet that your instructor may ask you to turn in. If some people desire to form their own work group, the sheets should be turned in together. This information sheet will help the instructor to check on the skills inventory in each group or to form groups of students who do not express any membership preferences.

### **GROUP ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP**

On the day when group assignments are made, your instructor may allow you to use the last few minutes of the class period to get together, exchange phone numbers, and plan for your first meeting (the form contained in Appendix 1B provides you a place to record team names, phone numbers, meeting times, etc.). Prior to your first meeting, every member of the group should review this manual to get an idea of what will be involved in the project. At least the first three chapters should be read entirely. Reading the entire project manual would be even more desirable (it isn't all that long, you are going to have to do it sooner or later, and it will give you a better idea of what the course and project are about).

At your first meeting you should appoint (or elect) a team leader and have him or her make this known to the instructor. It will be up to the group to decide on the limits of this person's authority. Optimally, all group decisions will be made by consensus, and this person will simply be the instructor's primary point of contact with the group. However, occasional disputes may arise that will have to be resolved. The group might decide that all such questions will be voted on, or perhaps the group leader will be allowed to resolve them.

One of the most difficult aspects of group projects is getting the entire group together on short notice. It may be desirable to establish a regularly scheduled weekly meeting, for instance, Wednesday afternoon at 3:00 as well as one or two alternative meeting times. (some project activities require group meetings more than once a week). The group (or team leader) may

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occasionally decide to cancel a weekly meeting if it is not needed . Having a preplanned, regular meeting time will allow each group member to schedule other activities around the expected meeting.

Each member of the group should plan to attend all regularly scheduled meetings. This will help to maintain everyone's involvement. It will also ensure that the benefits of group, rather than individual, effort are realized. This is especially important in the early problem-formulation and questionnaire-design phases, as well as in the later analysis and report phases. At the end of each meeting, the activities for the next group meeting should be discussed so that all group members will be prepared.

Some groups try to overcompartmentalize this project. For instance, they will assign one group member to write a section of the research proposal or a few specific questions of the questionnaire. While this may be a useful way to prepare for meetings, the proposal or questionnaire will require a high level of group involvement to ensure that all of its parts are consistent. Stringing together several paragraphs, each written by a different person without regard to the other parts of a research proposal, is almost certain to result in project design that is inconsistent and unworkable. Having each team member write a few of the questions for a questionnaire may result in a survey instrument that is unprofessional and does not flow smoothly.

### **TEAM EVALUATION**

At the end of the term, your instructor may ask you to evaluate the contribution of the members of your group to the project. The instructor may provide you a form or suggest that you use the one contained in Appendix 1C. The form in the appendix requests that you evaluate only the other members of your group. However, you may use the comments section to point out various aspects of your own performance. Often, the instructor will choose to assign an overall grade to the group project and then give separate grades to each individual group member. This would reward some team members for their extra hard work and creativity.

# APPENDIX 1A

## MARKETING RESEARCH PROJECT - STUDENT BACKGROUND FORM

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Team \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Instructor's Use)*

CLASSIFICATION                      Freshman              Sophomore              Junior              Senior              Graduate

MAJOR    Marketing              Other Business              Other

RESIDENCE                                      On Campus      Near Campus      Far from Campus

EMPLOYMENT    None      Part Time      Full Time

ARE MOST OF YOUR CLASSES    Day Night

### FOUNDATION COURSES COMPLETED

Consumer Behavior .....	No	Yes
Psychology .....	No	Yes
Marketing Strategy .....	No	Yes
Information Systems/Management Science .....	No	Yes
At least one semester of Statistics .....	No	Yes
OTHER _____	No	Yes
OTHER _____	No	Yes

### COMPUTER LANGUAGES YOU HAVE USED

BASIC, FORTRAN, or COBOL .....	No	Yes
SAS -Statistical Analysis System .....	No	Yes
SPSSX - Statist. Package for the Social Sciences .....	No	Yes
Other _____		Yes

### OTHER COMPUTER SKILLS

Word Processing .....	No	Yes
Spreadsheets .....	No	Yes
Graphics Programs .....	No	Yes
Other _____		Yes
Other _____		Yes

Have you used a personal computer and modem to communicate with campus computers? ..... No      Yes

Have you performed a survey research project in any other course? ..... No      Yes

Other Information Desired by the Instructor:

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