

Foreword

*To all those who, with passion and enthusiasm,
seek the pleasures of life*

Our goal in designing this book was to write a textbook on marketing research for strategic marketing decisions, from the perspective of potential users of such research.

In fact, we have both spent many years teaching research to students in undergraduate and graduate courses, as well as to marketing managers and research institute operators in specialized training courses. In addition, we have used different methodologies in research projects carried out for various companies and non-profit organizations. This experience has allowed us to identify a feeling of unease—which we share—towards many books on the subject, which show great care in describing the various methodologies and techniques, but pay less attention to their application to typical marketing decisions.

For this reason, in structuring the book, we have chosen to provide a different perspective. We have put ourselves in the shoes of marketing analysts or decision-makers, in the various forms that these figures can take: students who need to learn certain methodologies and apply them in fieldwork as part of their studies; marketing managers who have to select one or more methodologies to help them generate the information they need to carry out market analysis or make a strategic decision; researchers at research institutes who have to design research for a client company. We have therefore defined a structure for the book that meets their needs.

With this book, we aim to provide an updated overview that reflects the evolving market environment faced by marketing analysts and decision-makers, as well as the latest developments in data collection and analytical methodologies and techniques. Unsurprisingly, digital technologies have had the most significant impact on both context and methodology, and are given substantial attention throughout.

The introductory chapter provides some guidance on the reasons that might prompt decision-makers to design and carry out marketing research rather than other methods of generating information. The following four chapters offer a roadmap to help navigate the various options available to them in terms of project design, actors to involve, processes to activate, research and sampling methodologies to select. Focusing on strategic decisions, the subsequent chapters describe research useful for monitoring and estimating the evolution and potential of markets, segmenting them, and defining product and brand positioning.

We would like to add one final observation. In recent years, there has been much talk about analytics on small and big data, and some have gone so far as to claim

that research has lost its relevance in the field of marketing information systems. Nothing could be further from the truth, in our opinion, and everything that has happened during the COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrates this. Apart from the fact that maximum data availability only exists in certain specific sectors, where continuous direct contact with customers generates the data itself, and that the data obtained from web scraping is not comparable with the information that can be gleaned from well-structured and detailed research, there remains the problem of significant discontinuities in behavior patterns, such as those we experienced in 2020 and 2021. In fact, only research can shed light on the consequences of change in these cases, while predictive models, by their very nature, unfortunately work with the “rearview mirror.”

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