



## The importance of having a written research brief

The written research brief provides an essential framework for managing the internal use of research.

A thorough market research brief is an essential ingredient in the process to achieve the right quality and acceptance of the research outputs.

- The prime aim of producing a written brief is to ensure that the client's information need is clearly defined .
- The brief also forms a common basis of understanding between the internal researcher, the client, and the external consultant.  
It is to important for the internal researcher to arrange a face - to face briefing session that enables both the client & consultant an opportunity to discuss aspects of concern, or that need elaboration.
- Identifying the context within which the project is positioned, and detailing the decisions to be made. The brief may include hypotheses to be tested.
- The brief specifies the type of output required or expected.
- The brief can specify the level of reliability required in the findings.  
Sometimes the client area needs to be forewarned of the data confidence intervals that will apply, given the specified sample sizes intended.
- The brief should specify if there are any particular customer segments to be included . This factor will effect sampling and recruitment matters.
- Sometimes the brief specifies the client's preferred format & structure for the research report.

Finally, a good market research brief should allow flexibility for the external consultant to offer non-research alternatives, and where necessary should stimulate the consultant to be innovative in developing a tailored solution.

In designing research, the consultant needs to discuss and recommend minimum sample sizes suitable for the accuarcy and confidence the client needs, and should



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assess how to best minimise sampling bias. Sample bias is becoming a significant issue for telephone interviews because more & more respondents are too busy to assist, and because answering machines are being used to filter calls.

Prior to actually commissioning new research, there are several questions that the internal researcher needs to address. These form a kind of check - list to improve the usefulness & value of the research.

### **Questions prior to undertaking new research**

<b>IS IT NECESSARY ?</b>	What information is <u>already available</u> ?	Have all <u>stakeholders</u> been consulted ?	What are the <u>alternatives</u> to research ?	<u>Risk</u> & cost of a wrong decision ?
<b>IS IT PRACTICAL ?</b>	Is the request <u>too late</u> ?	Are <u>resources</u> available ?	Can the target <u>respondents</u> be economically reached ?	Can the <u>due date</u> be met ?
<b>HAVE WE CONSIDERED ?</b>	Any delays / <u>barriers</u> ?	What non-research factors are important ?	What hypotheses should be tested ?	Share the costs ?
<b>THE END USES ?</b>	What <u>detail</u> in the results is required ?	Post - research <u>decisions</u> to be made ?	What analysis techniques will be needed ?	

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Clients sometimes request unrealistic due-by dates, and these would invariably compromise quality in the research. The research manager should inform clients, in advance, of the acceptable duration period for standard projects.



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The client or internal researcher needs to be aware of which stage of the product life-cycle, each product being assessed has reached. Accordingly the client and researcher needs to have access to any relevant background reports or information, such as can be found in these sources:

### Sources

### Types of information

Previous research	Performance of comparable products & overseas examples
Suppliers:	Market size and trends, competitive activity & packaging.
Sales & service staff:	Customer requests, & problems.
Competitors:	Advertisements, product features, positioning.
Store merchandising:	Product range, prices, presentation.
Public reports:	Profitability, share price, census statistics.
Magazines & articles:	Market trends, competitive strategy analysis, public opinion.
Industry experts:	Conference papers, proposals, competitor analysis.