



James J. Hill Reference Library Guide to Online Market Research

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Market research can be thought of as the study of potential customers for your product or service. Primary market research involves doing the actual data collection, using phone or direct mail surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other research methods. Secondary market research involves the search in secondary sources—such as trade journals or newspapers—for previously published studies or statistics that will address your needs.

What are your information needs?

When you are studying your potential market, a wide variety of information can prove useful. For example, a retail business might want information about the population demographics around its location, or information on its local competitors. Is there a particular demographic group that is more likely to purchase your product? Who are your largest competitors? What are the industry's current nationwide trends? In any industry, articles or reports that discuss consumer preferences, trends, forecasts, or the activities of the competition can be important.

This research guide is intended to be representative, rather than comprehensive. For further resource assistance, consult with one of our Business Information Specialists.

Information Sources

There are a number of possible sources of published market information:

Hill Reference Library

80 West Fourth Street

St. Paul, MN 55102

PH: 651.265.5500

FREE: 877.700.4455

FAX: 651.265.5515

EMAIL: info@jjhill.org

<http://www.jjhill.org>

Government: The Federal Government collects and distributes a wealth of statistical information, such as population and economic census data, health statistics, trade data, agriculture statistics, industry surveys (such as the *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-associated Recreation*), and market reports for specific products and markets. State governments may collect similar or even more detailed data at a statewide level. Is there a government body that oversees or regulates your particular area of interest?

Trade Groups: After the government, the people most invested in collecting market information are generally those active in the industry. Trade associations will sometimes conduct market research studies for the benefit of their members, and frequently will make this information available to non-members as well. You will occasionally find free information on association Web sites (for example, the National Restaurant Association, at <http://www.restaurant.org/research/>.)

Associations may also publish their own trade journal, and disseminate market research within this publication. What trade associations follow your industry? Is there a local branch?



Business Magazines & Trade Journals: These may be published by an industry trade association or by a publisher specializing in a specific industry. Often these publications will conduct surveys or other market research studies, or publish portions of other reports of interest to their readership. What are the key trade publications in your industry?

Commercial Research Organizations: There are a number of companies that specialize in the gathering, packaging, and sale of market research data, such as FIND/SVP, Forrester Research, Freedonia Group, and Frost & Sullivan. As these reports are frequently quite expensive to purchase, they may have limited usefulness for the small businessperson. These organizations may also package specific types of data products, such as the *DemographicsNow* database, which focuses in on consumer demographics. Are there affordable market research reports that cover your industry?

Business Publishers: There are a number of companies that specialize in gathering and publishing business information on a wide variety of topics, from company and industry profiles to consumer spending. Examples of these publishers are Dun & Bradstreet, Standard & Poor's, Gale Group, and CACI Marketing Systems. These publishers may release annual reports, quarterly surveys, or perhaps offer databases that are tailored to your industry. Are there annual reports or databases that focus on your industry?

Consumer Data & Demographics

Use these sources to learn about the demographics of a particular geographic area, or about a specific demographic segment.

American Time Use Survey

Web resource <http://www.bls.gov/tus/home.htm>

The American Time Use Survey (ATUS) measures the amount of time people spend doing various activities, such as paid work, childcare, volunteering, commuting, and socializing. Estimates show the kinds of activities people do and the time spent doing them by sex, age, educational attainment, labor force status, and other characteristics, as well as by weekday and weekend day.

Census FactFinder

Web resource <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

View, print, and download statistics about population, housing, industry, and business. Using FactFinder, you can also find U.S. Census Bureau products; create reference and thematic maps; and search for specific data.

Minnesota State Demographic Center

Web resource <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/>

This Web site provides links to a variety of data covering Minnesota demography, including census data and detailed reports on such topics as housing, population trends, travel, and immigration.

Site Selection Online

Web resource <http://www.siteselection.com>

Site Selection magazine's Web site provides free online access to detailed demographic data covering U.S. states and metropolitan areas. Click on the "area demographics" link to access the state and metro area indexes. Free registration required.

You Are Where You Live

Web resource <http://www.clusterbigip1.claritas.com/MyBestSegments/Default.jsp?ID=20>

Enter a five-digit ZIP Code to find the top lifestyle groups for that neighborhood. Clusters describe segments of the population by predominant demographic and lifestyle features.

Demographics Now

Subscription database

The *Demographics Now* database allows users to uncover the statistical demographic make-up of specific geographic areas, from states and counties down to zip codes, census tracts, and block groups. Users can also specify a custom radius around a specific intersection, then print or download statistics or maps on such market information as age, income, occupation, race, housing, and consumer spending. The database offers five-year projections on many demographic variables. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

Polling the Nations

Subscription database

Polling the Nations provides access to public opinion surveys from the United States and more than ninety other countries, covering a broad range of issues, from sources such as Gallup, Harris, Roper, and more than 700 other organizations. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

SRDS Direct Marketing List Source

Print resource or Subscription database

If you're looking for a targeted list of likely consumers, this SRDS source will put you in contact with the companies that have lists to sell. This publication contains sources, selects, costs, and other valuable information to help you refine your list strategy for your direct marketing campaigns. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this in print or online.

Market Statistics & Industry Data

Advertising Age DataCenter

Web resource <http://www.adage.com/datacenter.cms>

The Ad Age DataCenter provides exclusive advertising and marketing industry data, such as the *Leading National Advertisers Report*, compiled by the Ad Age Research Department. This constantly updated collection includes more than 600 separate charts arranged in the four major categories (Marketers/Advertisers, Media, Agencies, and Salary Surveys).

BuyUSAinfo: Market Research Library

Web resource http://www.buyusainfo.net/adsearch.cfm?search_type=int&loadnav=no

A service of the U.S. Department of Commerce's U.S. Commercial Service, Market Research Library lets you search for Industry Sector Analyses, International Market Insight research reports, and trade organizations. Country Commercial Guides can also be found here. Free registration required.

CenStats

Web resource <http://censtats.census.gov/>

The *CenStats* Internet site provides online access to a number of popular Census Bureau databases, including *County Business Patterns*, *Annual Survey of Manufactures*, *Building Permits Monthly Data*, *Census Tract Street Locator*, *International Trade Data*, *Occupation by Race and Sex, USA Counties*, and *Zip Business Patterns*. You can use the *CenStats* databases to search for specific data sets for specific geographic areas, such as industry and employment data for specific counties. The *CenStats* databases are free and open to the public.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditures Survey

Web resource <http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>

Provides information on the buying habits of American consumers, including data on their expenditures, incomes, and "consumer unit" (families and single consumers) characteristics. The Web site offers a number of ready-made tables, as well as the option to create customized tables.

U.S. Economic Census

Web resource <http://www.census.gov/econ/census02>

The U.S. Economic Census is conducted every five years, and provides a statistical snapshot of the current state of business and industry in the U.S. The 2002 Economic Census provides statistics on establishments, employees, payroll, shipments, etc., within industry segments. Statistics are provided for the U.S. as a whole, as well as by state, and within Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA).

Euromonitor Global Market Information Database

Subscription database

Euromonitor's GMID provides market data for 350 markets in 207 countries, covering a range of consumer sectors, from beer to mobile phones. Historical data is provided for the five previous years, as well as five-year projections, and includes retail volume and retail value, measured in local currency or U.S. dollars. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

Standard & Poor's (S&P) Industry Surveys

Subscription database

The *S&P Surveys* give current, historical, and forecasted information on fifty-two major U.S. industries. Statistics are provided for major companies within each industry, as well as for the industry overall. The individual industry surveys are updated twice a year. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.



Trade Groups and Associations

American Society of Association Executives—Gateway to Associations Online

Web resource <http://www.asaecenter.org/Directories/AssociationSearch.cfm>

This Web site provides a searchable database of Internet links to over 6000 Web sites for associations with an online presence. Associations are great places to look for free industry-specific information.

Associations on the Net

Web resource <http://www.ipl.org/div/aon/>

The Internet Public Library maintains this site, with links to over 2,000 professional associations, industry associations, trade associations, advocacy groups, and other organizations.

Encyclopedia of Associations

Print Resource or Subscription database

The *Encyclopedia of Associations* lists contact information and Web sites for thousands of U.S. and international trade and professional associations, while also describing their particular areas of interest, membership size, services, and publications. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this title in print or online as *Associations Unlimited*.

Business Magazines, Trade Journals, and Periodical Databases

BizJournals.com

Web resource <http://www.bizjournals.com>

BizJournals.com provides full-text access to articles from business journals in over forty U.S. metropolitan markets.

FindArticles.com

Web resource <http://www.findarticles.com>

FindArticles.com is a free archive of published articles back to 1998 from more than 300 magazines and journals. Journals cover a variety of topics, including business and industry.

NewsLink.org

Web resource <http://www.newslink.org>

NewsLink.org includes links to local and international news source Web sites for access to current and archived news stories.

InfoTrac: Business and Company Resource Center

Subscription database

The *Business and Company Resource Center* brings together in a single database company profiles, brand information, market reports and rankings, investment company reports, company histories, and pertinent articles from business periodicals. You can search this database to find detailed information on specific companies, or search the periodicals for information on almost any business topic. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

ProQuest Direct: ABI/INFORM Complete

Subscription database

ABI/INFORM Complete is comprised of the ABI/INFORM Global, Dateline, and Trade & Industry databases. This combination of products, covering different aspects of business information, provides access to scholarly research, as well as articles on businesses traditions and trends, corporate strategies, management techniques, and competitive and product information. International in scope, the database covers over 3,000 titles extending as far back as 1971. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

RDS: Business & Industry

Subscription database

Business & Industry covers over 1,700 trade publications, including business magazines, newsletters, national and regional newspapers, and international business dailies from over 190 countries.

Approximately 60 percent of records are available in full text, and articles are heavily indexed, with a particular emphasis on coverage of marketing issues. *Business & Industry* coverage begins in 1994. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

RDS: TableBase

Subscription database

TableBase provides tabular information on companies, industries, products, countries, and markets, drawn from privately published statistical annuals, trade associations, non-profit research groups, government agencies, international organizations, investment research groups, and from the publications covered by the *Business & Industry* database. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

Company & Competitor Information

An important source of information on companies and competitors is periodical articles. A search of the magazine databases listed above may result in articles that discuss a company's products, officers, financials, or strategy. The sources listed below can provide very specific information on companies, or can be used to create lists of competitors or potential customers in particular geographic areas, providing such basic information such as officers, annual revenues, and "line-of-business" descriptions.

Company Annual Reports Online

Available on the Internet at <http://www.carolworld.com/>

Offers direct links to the financial pages of listed companies in Europe and the U.S. via annual reports. Free registration is required.

Corporate Information

Available on the Internet at <http://www.corporateinformation.com>

With free registration, you can search for company profiles from Wrights, Zach's, Yahoo Finance, and many other publishers. Public companies are typically better-covered than private companies, though coverage is international in scope. You will also find information for industries, countries, and international companies.

Hoover's Online

Available on the Internet at <http://www.hoovers.com>

Hoover's Online provides information on over 11,000 public and private enterprises in the U.S. and globally, including all U.S. companies traded on the New York and American stock exchanges, as well as approximately 1,000 of those on NASDAQ. Free information includes brief overviews, public company financials, and selected web links. Your local library may subscribe to the premium version(s), which offer more in-depth profiles which include history, competitors, financial ratios, historical financials, officers' names and salary information.

Thomas Register of American Manufacturers

Available on the Internet at <http://www.thomasregister.com>

The free-access online version of the *Thomas Register* provides fewer company listings than the print version, but provides quick "keyword" searching by company, product, or brand name, with links to companies' Web sites for online catalogs or ordering. Within a product category, you can limit or search by state.

Dun & Bradstreet's Total Database

Subscription database

The *D&B Total Database* provides addresses, phone numbers, Web sites, officers, annual revenues, and more for over 14 million companies in the U.S. and Canada. The database allows for a variety of search strategies, with printing and downloading capabilities. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

Reference USA

Subscription database

The *Reference USA* database covers over thirteen million U.S. companies, and is searchable by SIC or NAICS code, line of business, geography, and/or sales. Listings for companies include address, phone number, sales, number of employees, line of business, SIC codes and a contact name. Sales and employees figures are listed as within specified ranges, and some records include fax numbers, multiple officers, and links between subsidiaries and headquarters locations. A principal source of information for the database is yellow-page directories from around the country. The database is particularly useful when searching for smaller companies. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

SRDS

Print resources or subscription database

SRDS, including *Business Publication Advertising Source*, *Consumer Magazine Advertising Source*, *Direct Marketing List Source*, *Interactive Advertising Source*, and *Radio Advertising Source*, provides information on advertising rates, specifications, and circulation for publications, broadcasters, and interactive media. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to these publications in print or online.



Market Research reports often contain highly detailed statistics on consumer attitudes, spending, market segments, trends, and more. Access to this type of report is limited by their high cost.

Market Research.com

Web resource <http://www.marketresearch.com>

Market Research.com allows anyone to search for market research reports on an industry or demographic for free. While searching is free, the reports themselves require purchase, anywhere from a few hundred dollars up to several thousand dollars per report. Many reports can be purchased “by the slice”—review the tables of contents to determine if there are individual chapters or tables that may have the information you need.

Market Research.com / Academic

Subscription database

Market Research.com Academic provides full text access to hundreds of highly detailed market research reports, covering business services, consumer goods, food and beverage, heavy industry, and life sciences. Reports tend to be a bit older, but can be very extensive in scope. Full text reports are available on *MarketResearch.com Academic* within twelve months of their release on the MarketResearch.com main site. Summary presentations of newer reports are available as well; look for "MarketLooks." Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

Questions? Consult with a Business Information Specialist!
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