

Six Simple Market Research Strategies for Marketing Planning



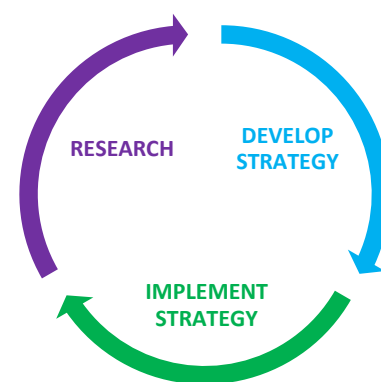
Research → Strategize → Implement → Repeat

All great marketing processes follow this formula. Unfortunately, most marketing people don't have the time or resources to really conduct the 'research' part of the process, and it often gets left on the table.

That's why S2 Research would like to provide you with this helpful guide. Your marketing needs research, and in the following pages you'll find a few practical ideas to get it started. Each method can be implemented right away, so you can quickly start conducting great market research for your next marketing plan or strategy.

Take a few moments to absorb this information. Throughout your read, consider how some of these strategies could yield insights and information that would make your next marketing strategy even better.

We hope you enjoy.



1 Talk to Your Customers

Communicating directly with your end-use customers is an easy, important and often-overlooked strategy for gaining insights for your marketing. When you sit down with your customers, you get to peek directly into their minds, and begin learning how you can give them a better experience in the end.

Start by finding a few of your regular customers, and maybe even some non-regular customers or those who haven't purchased in a while. Go to your phone and email databases, or even try recruiting at point-of-purchase. Ask them if you can borrow fifteen minutes of their time, and sit down to get to know more about them.

From here, it's all about exploring. Ask them open-ended questions about why they chose to purchase from you. Learn about their day, their lifestyle and their goals. Ask them about their jobs, their families, and really connect with them as a person. And be sure to let them do most of the talking.

Repeat this process with a few of your customers, and maybe even consider bringing a few of them together for a group discussion. Take notes, look for commonalities, and start imagining how those things you didn't know about your audience could be turned into a great promotional strategy or even a better purchasing experience that makes them excited to come back for more.

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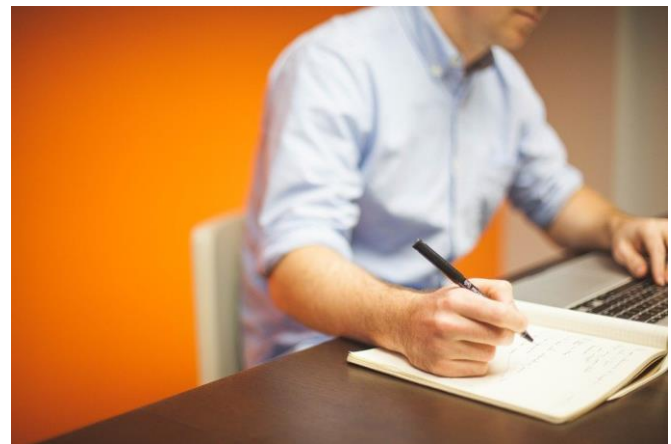
2 Observe and Take Notes

How often do you sit back and examine how your customers are engaging with your brand? If it's been a while, you'll definitely want to give yourself a refresher when you're putting your new marketing plan together.

If your business is in retail, sit in a discrete area and watch how your customers engage with your products and services. If you work online or in B2B, look at the history of their interactions with your brand. Everything, from how they found your business, to how long it takes them to make a purchase, and all in-between is relevant to your marketing.

Pay attention to how your customers seem to feel about their experiences with your brand too. Were they able to navigate your sales process easily? Were they able to locate a product quickly, or did it take some time? When everything was all said and done, did it appear their buying journey was as simple and effective as possible?

Observe the situation, start brainstorming how you can make it better, and you'll be amazed how engaging your new marketing plan will become.



***“Research is creating new knowledge.”
-Neil Armstrong***

3 Read Everything

Reporters, bloggers, educators, researchers and more are constantly publishing new information, insights and articles on nearly every industry and audience out there. Take advantage of this wealth of information by reading, reviewing, and summarizing as much as you can.

Industry and trade publications are a great place to start. Almost everything, from food and beverage, to consumer-packaged goods, to travel and entertainment, has a periodic publication being delivered that's filled with trend information, audience habits and more. Invest yourself in these, and absorb the information.

Marketing journals, websites and more, meanwhile, are also regularly publishing information on buyer behavior, marketing tactic effectiveness, audience demographic and psychographic information – essentially, everything you could ever want to know to build a research-based backbone for your marketing plan.

Explore the industry in which you do business, and find as much information as you can from the experts. Write all of your findings into notes, compare what you've learned from each article, and start imagining how the information you've discovered can influence the direction you take your upcoming strategy.

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4 Brainstorm with Your Team

Every member of your team is a database of knowledge about your industry. You all live it and work it every day, and those experiences provide a great sounding board for marketing decision making. But what many marketers often forget is that not all team members have the exact same databases of knowledge, and this diversity presents a great market research opportunity for marketers.

Each member of your business carries unique experiences with your customers, your products and your processes. They use this knowledge to better navigate their own paths in the industry – how to speak to customers, how to engage with products, and how to anticipate future needs.



Take advantage of these insights by brainstorming with your team. Start by bringing everyone in your business into a room to pick their brains. Learn how they communicate, how they determine solutions, and how they feel about the industry as a whole. Are there challenges they're concerned about? Are there better processes they've envisioned? On an A through F scale, how would your team members rate your customers' most common experiences?

Use your team's collective knowledge as a part of your market research strategy. With these experiences combined, you'll have a wealth of insights to help you formulate a more strategic marketing plan.

5 Measure Results and Ask Why

Most marketers set goals for their marketing strategies early in the year. A revenue figure, a press clip count, a total number of impressions and clicks, and so on. At the end of the year, those same marketers measure their results, and either celebrate or wallow depending on results.

What many marketers often forget, though, is to ask 'why' their results ended up the way they did. Why did one PR pitch work and another fail? What went wrong for the creative in a failed A/B digital test? What made an out-of-home advertising campaign over or under perform?

The answers to these questions and similar ones is an extremely effective market research strategy to help guide your future planning. It allows you to examine what worked and why, as well as the inverse, to make better decisions about future tactics in your strategy.



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“Advertising people who ignore research are as dangerous as generals who ignore decodes of enemy signals.”

-David Ogilvy

6 Analyze Public Data

There’s a reason why data scientists, market researchers and Excel enthusiasts everywhere preach the importance of data analytics. Analyzing the numbers behind your customers can yield a huge amount of audience information – how they make decisions, how they view your industry, and how they’re changing over time. And, fortunately for marketers, many amazing data-sets are already available to help!

The U.S. Census, for instance, has datasets and data analysis tools available directly on their website. Marketers can use this combination now to quickly understand how much of the economics and social structures have changed in various markets over time.

The Pew Research Center, another incredible source for information, provides datasets covering media and Internet consumption, demographic and sociographic-related attitudes and beliefs, global attitudinal information and more.



There’s also plenty of industry-specific data sources as well. In the healthcare industry, for instance, websites like HealthData.gov and Medicare.gov provide hundreds of sets of information on healthcare spending, insurance, common ailments and treatments, and prescription drugs.



There’s power in numbers. When you’re able to take some time to analyze, average and extract just the right insights from that information, you can learn an entire story about your audience that’s pivotal to the success of your next marketing plan.

A list of open and available data sources can be found in the Appendix of this document.

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7 Bonus Strategy – Conduct A Pre-Mortem

We may have promised six market research strategies, but here's an extra-helpful seventh to get your marketing even more fired up – conduct a pre-mortem.

Picture this: It's almost game time, and you've got your marketing plan ready to go, filled and fueled with excellent insights from your market research phase. Before you put your plan into motion, though, gather your team, take a few minutes, and pretend for a moment that your entire strategy failed.

That's right, with your marketing team by your side, imagine yourselves six months from now, and your marketing strategy did not work. Now, ask yourselves 'why'?

Was the creative correct? Was the media plan mapped poorly? Did the PR messaging miss the mark?



Most importantly, did your actual strategy follow the insights you learned in your market research phase?

The pre-mortem allows you to analyze your finished project against your research, so you can perform one final, important check on your strategy before sending it to market. Often, this tactic yields a few solutions to problems marketers didn't even know they were going to face. Those are the final tweaks that separate good campaigns from truly great ones.



Add market research insights into your next marketing strategy.

Free consultations are available to readers of this white paper.
Contact S2 Research today.

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“I believe in innovation, and that the way you get innovation is to fund research and learn the basic facts.”

-Bill Gates

About S2 Research

S2 Research is a Las Vegas-based market research firm that was started with marketers in mind. We’re experienced strategists who are fluent in research – or maybe it’s the other way around. We speak data, and we craft messaging. We do complex analyses, and we deliver creative actions. We assist brands in unlocking ideas, we help agencies deliver their top creativity, and we work with marketers to build groundbreaking strategies.

We’re the secret weapon, the cheat code, the playbook and the muse – and we base it all in market research insights.

Whether you’re rooted in advertising, public relations, media, social, grassroots, direct marketing or a blend of any and all, we’re sure you’ll be amazed when you see how insightful market research can make your marketing even better.

To have greater marketing, you need greater insights. S2 Research was founded to fulfill that need.



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Matt Seltzer

Market Research & Strategy Consultant

Matt started S2 Research because he recognized a need for marketers and market researchers alike. Fluent in both research and strategy, he saw that **‘the head was not talking enough with the hand’** and wanted to serve as an effective translator between the two worlds.

A life-long fan of great marketing, Matt has overseen award-winning work at ad agencies and individual brands across travel and tourism, gaming, hospitality, consumer goods and services, for-profit education and commercial real estate. He holds degrees and certifications in marketing, organizational psychology, data analysis and data visualization.

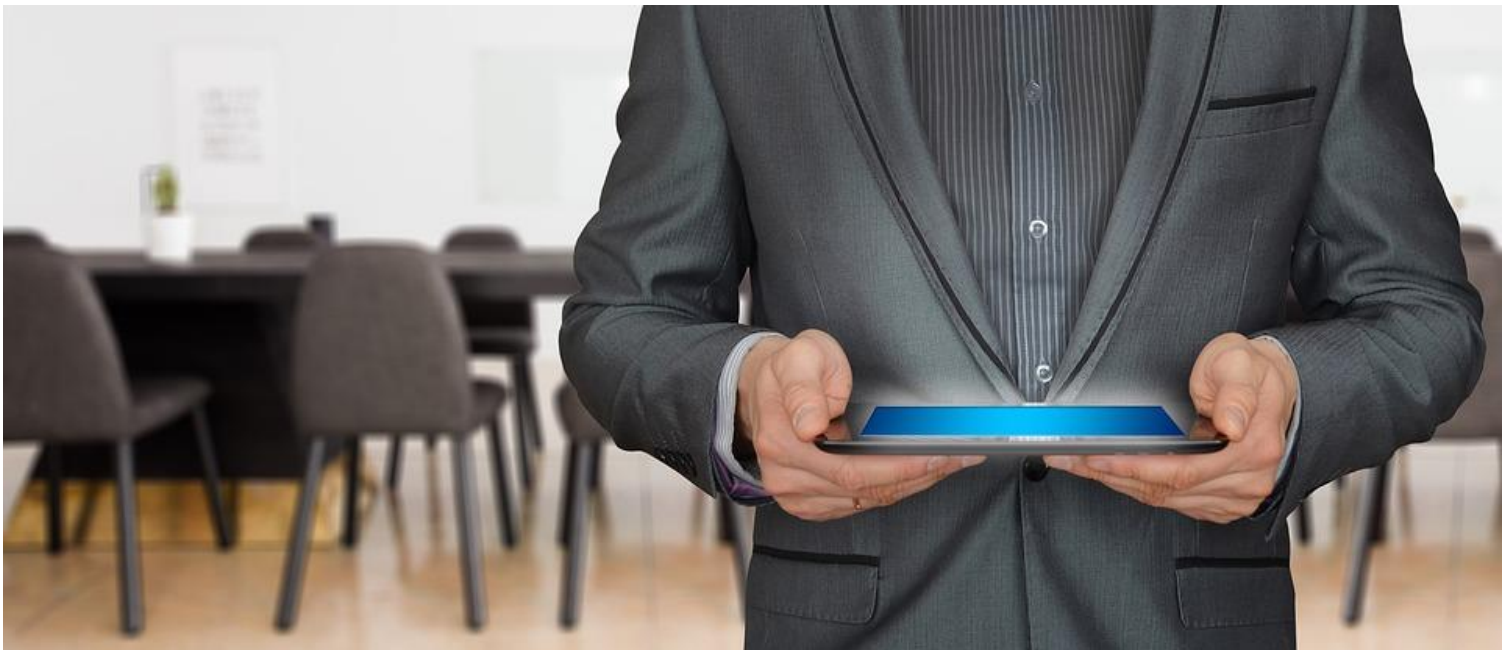
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Appendix

Selected list of open and available data sources.

- U.S. Census: <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets.html>
- Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewresearch.org/download-datasets/>
- HealthData.gov: <https://healthdata.gov/search/type/dataset>
- Medicare.gov: <https://data.medicare.gov/>
- Data.gov: <https://www.data.gov/>
- Kaggle: <https://www.kaggle.com/datasets>



**Contact S2 Research for a complimentary
strategic market research consultation.**