

# Australasian Journal of Market & Social Research

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# AUSTRALASIAN JOURNAL OF MARKET & SOCIAL RESEARCH

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AMSRS recognises the contribution of Associate Professor David Bednall and Deakin University.

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## AJMSR – Editorial

The Australasian Journal of Market and Social Research is entering its next phase. For the last 17 years it has been wonderfully supported by its editor, Professor Les Johnson. This was a remarkable achievement that saw the journal move from its beginnings as a place for industry papers, to one of Australia's leading academic journals in the marketing arena. As an author in the journal, I most appreciated the help and encouragement that Les gave to us all. As a new editor, I now understand just how much he contributed to its success. Thanks to his efforts, the AJMSR is now ranked "B" in the Australian government's excellence in Research Australia (ERA) scheme. This ranking is comparable or in advance of the two other academic journals that report on this amazing industry and its practices. It also ranks in the top half of world journals.

It is worth reiterating what the journal stands for. The overall purpose of the AJMSR is to provide quality, refereed research articles which:

- Focus on methodological issues of interest both to academics and industry practitioners, such as response rates, question and scale design, management of large scale social research studies and data collection techniques;
- Describe new or improved data analysis and measurement techniques which could usefully be adopted by marketing academics and the industry, such as new approaches to qualitative analysis or new approaches to data modelling;
- Explore trends in the practice of market and social research on both the supply and client side; or
- Discuss the history and future of the market and social research industry.

In addition, the AJMSR will provide a discussion forum and invite commentary pieces. Case studies can also be published and will be reviewed

AMSRS is now digitising past issues to enhance access and to allow places like Google Scholar to reference the articles. We are hoping also that one of the major journal databases will pick up our articles, meaning they can be referenced and made available to the world market for academia and industry. We are wanting to set up electronic submission systems to improve the workplace and management of articles.

I am also pleased to announce that our editorial board has agreed to stay on and Les Johnson has agreed to join them.

The AJMSR looks forward to your submissions!

Associate Professor David Bednall  
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# A Test of Five Methods for Recruiting a Radio Diary Panel.

**Mike Brennan, Massey University**  
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## ABSTRACT

This paper compares the response rates and cost effectiveness of five different methods of recruiting radio diary panel members: a mall intercept, telephone contact, a door-knock, a mailed letter with a reply-paid postcard acceptance, and an unsolicited diary mail-out. While the diary mail-out achieved the best overall response rate (32%) it was the least cost-effective. In contrast, the telephone recruitment method achieved a very similar response rate (27.3%) to the diary mail-out, but was the most cost-effective overall, so would be the preferred option. The conventional door-knock was more expensive than the telephone, and produced a substantially lower response rate (18%). Neither the mall intercept nor the mail with reply-paid postcard produced satisfactory results (19.8% and 13.7% respectively). These results indicate that telephoning potential respondents is a more cost effective way of recruiting radio panel members than door knocking, mall intercept or mail.

## INTRODUCTION

Media ratings research depends exclusively on consumer research panels (Robinson 2000; Webster, Phalen & Lichty 2006), so recruitment of these panels is a major undertaking. Running a panel is expensive due to high churn rates and the costs and effort required to obtain a representative sample and to maintain required levels of respondent co-operation. Thus finding a cost-effective method of recruiting panels has become an increasingly important issue for media research, and for radio listening research in particular.

The traditional way of recruiting consumer panels for media research in New Zealand is to door-knock without prior contact (Research International 2001). This is a particularly expensive exercise because, at any given time of the day, a proportion of households will have no-one at home. A significant cost is involved if the selection procedure requires call backs, but even if replacement is allowed, the extra time required to meet a quota is not insignificant. This situation is compounded by increasing societal resistance to having uninvited strangers knocking on doors (Bates 2008). This raises the question of whether there are not more efficient ways of recruiting panel members.

In contrast to New Zealand, in the U.S.A. and some European countries, ratings companies typically recruit media panel members via telephone before either posting out or hand delivering the radio diary (Gunter 2000; Webster et al. 2006); some Australasian media research companies also use this approach. Yet, while a number of studies have compared different methods for conducting surveys (Dillman 1999; Cobanoglu, Warde & Moreo 2001; Manfreda, Bosnjak, Berzelak, Haas & Vehovar 2008), and for recruiting participants for survey research (Weisels & Zimmermann 2001; Venningen 2002; Hellwig, von Heesen & Bouwmeester 2003; Goritz 2004) no published studies appear to have compared methods for recruiting members for media diary panels. Thus it is not clear how door knocking and telephone contact methods compare in terms of recruitment and retention rates, or in terms of cost-effectiveness; or whether either of these traditional methods is better than alternative methods of recruitment, such as mall intercepts or mail.

The four studies cited above which report attempts to recruit panel members (three of which are published in German and reported by Goritz 2004),

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were all recruiting for online panels, and so first required respondents that were connected to the internet. The reported recruitment rates across modes were as follows: Telephone: 41% (Weisels & Zimmerman, 2001), 38% (Hellwig et al. 2001) – among the subset of internet users; Mail: 1% (Venningen 2002); 1.3% (Goritz 2004) – based on the total sample; no data reported for the subsample of internet users. Goritz (2004) compared four modes of recruitment: email, fax, flier and mail. Both Goritz (2004) and Hellwig et al (2003) report that the composition of the recruited sample differed according to mode, but do not comment on the composition of the initial samples. While interesting, these published studies do not provide any useful insight into the effectiveness or shortcomings of various modes for recruiting a radio diary panel.

Mall intercepts would clearly reduce the time required to complete the recruitment, given that potential participants effectively come to the recruiter, rather than vice-versa. However, there is a question of whether those recruited in this manner will actually complete the task. With mail, there are two options available: one is to mail out a media diary, requesting assistance. However, many of these diaries would be wasted due to non-response, so there is a significant expense associated with this approach. An alternative that would reduce this waste would be to mail a request to participate, and provide a postcard to be returned to request a diary for respondents willing to participate.

This paper reports the findings of a study that examined the recruitment rate, the completion rate and the cost effectiveness of five different methods of recruiting radio diary panel members: a mall intercept, telephone contact followed by a mail-out of the diary, a door-knock, a mailed letter with a reply-paid postcard acceptance, and an unsolicited diary mail-out.

## **METHOD**

Respondents were randomly selected from either shopping malls, the telephone directory (for telephone and mail), or a random walk (door knock). All respondents were residents in a single provincial New Zealand town (Palmerston North). The town has a population of approximately 79,000 people fifteen years or older, and is served by 20 radio stations (17 commercial or semi-commercial and three non commercial stations).

Respondents were selected using typical industry procedures for each method. The mall interviews were conducted in two large, busy, central city malls. The interviewer approached the third person who passed by a pre-determined spot, and confirmed that the person was aged 15 or older. For the door-knock, 24 starting points were randomly chosen from the telephone directory. Each interviewer visited every third house to the right of their starting point, using the “left turn rule” where necessary. They asked to speak with the person residing in the household aged 15 years of age or older whose birthday was due next. Eight households were recruited from each cluster. For telephone mode, a sample of telephone numbers was randomly selected from the telephone directory, and the birthday method was used to recruit a member of the household aged 15 years or older. For the two mail groups, addresses were randomly selected from the telephone directory. The letter was addressed to Owner/Occupier, and the person opening mail was asked to pass the letter on to the person at the address aged fifteen years or older whose birthday came next. Up to three call backs were used at different times of the day for the door-knock and telephone modes before the address was abandoned. All respondents were offered an incentive in the form of a prize draw for one of three \$500 cash prizes.

As far as possible, the instructions were equivalent across the five methods. Six interviewers were used for

the door knock, mall intercept and telephone interviews (5 in common). The telephone interviews were conducted on Monday August 29 and Tuesday August 30. The two mail surveys were mailed on Thursday September 1. The mall intercept was conducted on Saturday September 3, and the door-knock was conducted on Sunday September 4. In all modes,

respondents were required to respond within a short deadline and record their radio listening behaviour for one week, beginning the Monday (September 5) following recruitment. The diary was a 12 page A4 booklet.

The sample sizes and responses for the five modes are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sample sizes and responses**

|                          | <b>Door Knock</b> | <b>Mall Intercept</b> | <b>Telephone</b> | <b>Mail + Diary</b> | <b>Mail + Postcard</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| A. Initial Sample        | 378               | 348                   | 319              | 100                 | 182                    |
| B. GNA/Ineligible        | 4                 | 40*                   | 5                | 2                   | 8                      |
| C. Adjusted Sample (A-B) | 374               | 308                   | 314              | 98                  | 174                    |
| D. Non-contact           | 154               | n.a.                  | 130              | n.a.                | n.a.                   |
| E. Adjusted Sample (C-D) | 220               | 308                   | 184              | n.a.                | n.a.                   |
| F. Agreed to participate | 93                | 107                   | 103              | n.a.                | 27                     |
| G. Completed Surveys     | 68                | 68                    | 87               | 32                  | 25                     |

\*Resided outside of a defined recruitment area

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Response Rates

The response rates for the five recruitment modes are reported in Table 2.

Three different calculations for the response rates are considered, as the different modes are not always strictly comparable. For example, it is not possible to determine what proportion of the mail sample was never contacted. Thus the Recruitment Rate (RecR) is the proportion of contacted respondents who agreed to participate (F/E in Table 1), and the Return Rate (RetR) is simply the proportion of delivered diaries that were returned completed (G/F in Table

1). Response Rate 1 (RR1) is based on attempted contact, and uses the initial sample size less identified ineligible or non-contactable respondents (G/C in Table 1).

Response Rate 2 (RR2) is based on actual contacts, that is, initial sample less ineligible, gna's, and non-contacts (G/E in Table 1).

A notable feature of these various rates is the variation across recruitment modes. The traditional door knock obtained agreement to participate (Recruitment Rate or RecR) from 42% of those contacted at home, compared with 35% of those contacted in the mall and only

**Table 2: Response rates**

|   | Door Knock | Mail Intercept | Telephone | Mail + Diary | Mail + Postcard |
|---|------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|
| Recruitment Rate<br>(RecR=F/E) <sup>1</sup> | 42.3       | 34.7           | 56.0      | n.a          | 15.5            |
| Return Rate<br>(RetR=G/F)                   | 73.1       | 65.5           | 84.5      | n.a.         | 92.6            |
| Response Rate 1<br>(RR1=G/C)                | 18.0       | 19.8           | 27.3      | 32.0         | 13.7            |
| Response Rate 2<br>(RR2=G/E)                | 30.9       | 22.4           | 47.3      | n.a.         | n.a             |

Note: 1. The capital letters (C, E, F,G) refer to rows in Table 1.

16% recruited via mail+postcard. The highest Recruitment Rate of 56% was achieved via the telephone.

The highest Return Rate (RetR) for completed diaries (97%) was for the mail+postcard, as might be expected, since these are from respondents willing to complete and return a postcard requesting a diary. However, the actual proportion of the mail+postcard sample willing to participate was very low (16%), and this is reflected in the response rates (RR1, RR2) of only 14%. The return rate for the mail+diary survey cannot be calculated due to the unknown proportion of the sample who did not receive the diary (i.e. non-contacts), thus the mail+diary method is not comparable to the other methods on this measure. The return rate from the door-knock (73%) was better than for the mall intercept (66%), but the best return was from the telephone sample (85%).

Of interest to practitioners is not just the participation and return rates, but the absolute return, and this is reflected in the response rates. If non-contacts are included in the sample (RR1 in Table 2), then the mail+diary method produced the best result (32%), closely followed by telephone (27%). The door knock response rate was considerably lower (18%), was

only slightly higher than the mail+postcard method (14%). Given that non-contacts cannot be determined until after the field-work, this response rate gives the best measure of efficiency, since it is based on the initial sample size. It also provides an indication of the non-response rate, which signals the potential for non-response bias. Unfortunately, all five methods produced such low response rates (16%-32%), there is a high possibility that the radio listening behaviour of respondents is not representative of the population as a whole.

One can also argue that it is unreasonable to include in a response rate calculation, households (or respondents) that could not be contacted. Thus a second response rate (RR2 in Table 2) has been calculated, excluding non-contacts. As mentioned earlier, this measure is inappropriate for the mail mode, as non-contacts cannot be determined.

An examination of the RR2 response rates (i.e., among respondents who had been contacted) shows an interesting difference across the three methods for which this response rate is appropriate (see Table 2). The telephone method produced a substantially better response rate (47%) than either the traditional door knock method (31%) or the mall intercept

(22%), suggesting that, among these three methods, the telephone is the more efficient for recruiting panel members.

### Cost effectiveness

The response rates reported in Table 2 suggest that both mail+diary (md) and telephone (t) are effective ways of recruiting diary panel members, with both methods producing considerably higher response rates than the mail+postcard (mp), mail intercept (mi) or the traditional door-knock (dk) (around 30% vs. <20%). Indeed, the differences between the mail+diary and telephone were not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 (1, n=410) = 0.62, p>.3$ ), and neither were the differences between the other three treatments (dk vs mi: ( $\chi^2 (1, n=726) = 0.28, p>.1$ ); dk vs mp: ( $\chi^2 (1, n=560) = 1.31, p>.2$ ); mi vs mp ( $\chi^2 (1, n=530) = 2.63, p>.1$ )), whereas the differences between each both the mail+diary and telephone and the other three treatments were all statistically significant (t vs dk:  $\chi^2 (1, n=697) = 8.09, p<.01$ ; t vs mi:  $\chi^2 (1, n=667) = 4.74, p<.05$ ; t vs mp:  $\chi^2 (1, n=501) = 11.46, p<.001$ ; md vs dk:  $\chi^2 (1, n=478) = 8.55, p<.01$ ; md vs mi:  $\chi^2 (1, n=448) = 5.91, p<.05$ ; md vs mp:  $\chi^2 (1, n=282) = 12.24, p<.001$ ).

However, the choice of a method also has to consider not just the response rate but the costs involved. In order to compare the costs of the different methods, the data in Table 1 was weighted to determine the sample sizes required to produce a response of 100 diaries. The relative costs of producing 100 completed diaries are reported in Table 3. These calculations are based on the costs reported at the foot of Table 3. In New Zealand, local dialling is free. To generalise these results to a nationwide survey, one would need to assume that telephone interviewers were recruited in each of the six free-calling zones.

What is very clear from Table 3 is that the two mail methods are relatively expensive; the mail+postcard because of the large sample size required to compensate for the low response rate, and the mail+diary method due to the cost of sending a diary to the whole sample. Of the non-mail methods, the traditional door-knock method is more expensive than either mail or telephone. Overall, the telephone method is the most cost effective method by some margin.

**Table 3: Relative Cost Effectiveness of the Recruitment Methods**

|   | Door Knock | Mail Intercept | Telephone | Mail + Diary | Mail + Postcard |
|---|------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|
| Required sample size to achieve 100 panel members | 556        | 504            | 367       | 313          | 728             |
| Non-contacts                                      | 226        | 0              | 149       | n.a.         | n.a.            |
| Diaries sent out                                  | 137        | 155            | 118       | 306          | 696             |
| Surveys returned                                  | 100        | 100            | 100       | 100          | 100             |
| Cost/return                                       | 8.55       | 7.48           | 6.60      | 13.03        | 10.90           |

*Note: Based on costs required to generate a return of 100 diaries. Assuming the following costs (NZ\$): Labour: \$15 /hr, Diaries: \$3.20 each; A4 postage: \$0.90; Letter postage: \$0.45; Telephone calls: local area = free.*

*Interviewing: Door-knock 20 attempts/hr; Mail 30/hr; Telephone 35/hr; Mail processing 100 envelopes/hr; Postcard processing 20/hr.*

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## CONCLUSION

This study compared the response rates and cost effectiveness of five different methods of recruiting radio diary panel members: a mall intercept, telephone contact, a door-knock, a mailed letter with a reply-paid postcard acceptance, and an unsolicited diary mail-out. While the diary mail-out achieved the best overall response rate (32% - based on initial sample less GNA/ineligible), it was also the least cost-effective. However, the telephone recruitment method achieved a very similar response rate (27.3%), and was the most cost effective overall, so would be the preferred option. Neither the mall intercept nor the mail with reply-paid postcard produced satisfactory results, and the conventional door-knock was more expensive than the telephone (\$8.55/return vs. \$6.60) and produced a substantially lower response rate (18% vs. 27.3%).

An important question that needs to be addressed when recruiting respondents is whether the respondents are a representative sample of the population with regards to radio listening behaviour. Because of the sampling frames used in the study, no information about non-respondents is available so it was not possible to examine either response or non-response bias. This is an issue, because there is some evidence that people who agree to participate in media diary panels tend to have different media habits than those that do not (Twyman 1994 p. 90), and it has been suggested that that "lighter listeners tend to be lost to a diary sample if the response rate is low" (Twyman 1994 p.96). While the data cited

by Twyman is dated and North American (American Research Bureau 1965; Bureau of Broadcasting Measurement 1973), this issue clearly requires further consideration. This is an important issue, since a number of researchers have suggested that, since both coverage error and non-response bias ends to vary across survey modes, one way of reducing these is to employ a mixed-mode approach (Dillman 1999; Blyth 2008). Unfortunately, we have insufficient information on our respondents/non-respondents to comment.

Another question that could be asked is whether the results were influenced by the day of the week respondents were recruited (Monday and Tuesday for telephone, Thursday for mail, Saturday for mall and Sunday for door-knock). While there is no evidence to suggest that this was a major issue (interviewing on a Sunday is acceptable in New Zealand), this is a question that perhaps needs further investigation. However, for this study it was considered more important to ensure that the time lapse between recruitment and beginning the diaries was as short as possible for each mode, given the time required to deliver the diaries via mail for the mail and telephone modes, and the need for all diaries to cover the same time period.

In conclusion, given that the telephone recruitment method is easy to implement, produces a relatively high response rate, and is cost effective, this method deserves to be considered as the method of choice for recruiting panel members for radio diary research.

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# Market Research Not Newsworthy, Shock Horror! The Press View of Market Research in Britain and Ireland.

Clive Boddy

## Abstract

Marketers and businesses are acutely aware of their press coverage and continuously monitor what images their brand is associated with. For example, the London Underground service reportedly monitors what the press reports about it (Pring 2007). Like marketers, market researchers have always been concerned with their image and status vis-à-vis other management professionals and, for obvious reasons, with the public at large. It was therefore considered appropriate to investigate the state of the image and positioning of market research, as reflected and portrayed in the popular UK and Irish Press. To this end a review of UK and Irish newspaper reporting on market research was undertaken.

The research found that market research is not often mentioned by the UK and Irish press, at least compared to mentions of marketing itself. Also it was evident that a significant minority (19%) of newspaper and magazine coverage concerning market research was negative in character. Concerns that market research has a negative image in the material world of popular newspapers are therefore not totally unfounded. However, it was noted that positive comment about market research in the press did exceed negative comment by two to one.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite evidence that the British market research industry is successful both within the UK and internationally (Boddy & Croft 2005; Ford-Hutchinson 1997; Boddy & Croft 2006), market research practitioners have long been concerned about how they are viewed by clients, by business managers and by society at large. Concerns are variously that market researchers are not given the same status as management consultants or are given low status in client companies or not listened to as much as they ought to be (Marketing Week 2005). This concern usually goes along with worries over how market research is positioned and marketed by practitioners themselves and by what is communicated about market research by the trade bodies that are or have been associated with it (Valentine 2002; Smith 2005) and about the perceived and actual ethical stance of market research (Day 1975; Krohn 1982). Market researchers are concerned to

make sure, for example, that they are not following fads in terms of the research services that they offer (Boddy 2009a; Boddy 2009b). Market researchers are similarly keen to show that they are using considered approaches to research and methodologies that aim to get at the truth of particular situations (Stokes & Bergin 2006; Smith 2005).

Similarly in the wider discipline of marketing, marketers display a concern about the ethical stance of marketing (Krohn 1982; Singhapakdi & Vitell 1992; Boddy 2010). Marketers also care about what practical experience they believe marketers should have (Boddy & Croft 2007) whether marketing is a moral and ethical force in society (Laczniak 1983; Tenbrunsel 2006; Batory, Neese & Heineman 2005), about how marketing is portrayed and seen by society and whether it is socially responsible (Laczniak & Murphy 2006; McDonald 2006).

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This paper reviews how market research is seen by the popular press to evaluate whether these practitioner and academic concerns over the image and positioning of market research, are justified. Reviews of the marketing and market research literature normally take place by reviewing articles in scholarly journals, such as was undertaken in a study of marketing ethics by Nill and Schibrowsky (2007). However, as the theme of this paper is how market research is portrayed in the real, material world of the popular press, this literature review was made within local and national newspapers and magazines, as visible and influential representatives of the 'material world'. The purpose of the research was to form an initial picture of what the UK and Irish press is currently or has recently been saying about market research.

### **Method**

This was an exploratory methodology whereby seventy recent newspaper and magazine articles from the UK and Irish press, which had the words 'market research' in the headline, were collected via the internet, from academic research databases on the 8th of February 2008, and analysed for content. The data collection was kept to a single day because of limited resources and the date is mentioned so that comparisons can more easily be made in future research against a known research date. The internet as a valuable source of good quality data has already been mentioned by marketing researchers (Croft, Dean & Spickett-Jones 1997) and in the research project presented here it was found to be a quick and convenient way to gather data. Newspapers ranged from; The Sunday Times, through to the (Derby) Evening Telegraph, and included The Sun, The Daily Mirror, The Citizen (Gloucester), The Express and Echo (Exeter), The Evening Herald (Plymouth) and many others in a similar vein. The article content was coded and sorted into categories and the results analysed, described and evaluated.

The data were analysed via a combination of content analysis where a sorting of data along similar lines was made to make the findings easier to describe and a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss 1967a; Glaser & Strauss 1967b; Whiteley 2000; Glaser 2001) where further stages of reflection, conceptualisation, cataloguing, re-coding, linking and re-evaluation occurred. This research is referred to as being qualitative because of its small sample size (Bock & Sergeant 2002) and as exploratory because it is seeking to gain an initial understanding of how market research is seen by the UK and Irish press, on the basis that an initial understanding is better than none at all (Cowan 1994). It is not seeking to be a definitive search of the UK and Irish press on this subject but rather to provide indicative results that may stimulate and point the way to future, more exhaustive studies.

Qualitative research of this nature is reportedly very good for exploratory studies, such as this one, and can produce good understandings, rich insights and insightful new perspectives (Hedges 1998; Skinner, Tagg & Holloway 2000). It was therefore considered to be an appropriate methodology for this research project where little existing material was available to build on or start from (Robson & Hedges 1993). Following Gioia and Pitre, analysis began during data collection and used coding procedures to try and identify patterns and to allow descriptive codes and categories to come out of the data (Gioia & Pitre 1990; Silverman 2001; Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

Analysis included identifying emerging categories and concepts (Ryan, 2000) from the research and then linking these into theories in an iterative (Parry 1998) fashion. In the process of making sense (Corr & Taylor 1996) of the research the researchers looked for negatives (Huberman & Miles 1998), contrasts, comparisons and outlying categories (Woods 1992) in the findings so as to build verification procedures into the research as it progressed.

The most immediate and notable element of the article search, which was made from an internet database's 'UK and Eire reference centre', filtered for newspapers; was that it resulted in only twenty-eight references for articles with 'market research' in the title or headline of the article. This compares with four hundred and thirty-four newspaper references which were found with 'marketing' in the headline, in the same database two days earlier. The indication from this finding is that market research is not deemed to be as newsworthy as marketing is by UK and Irish newspapers. To top-up the sample size a search was also made from the same database's 'UK and Eire reference centre', filtered for magazine articles on market research, this uncovered a further forty-two articles making the total sample size of seventy.

### Building a Code-frame

An initial review of the market research headlines and their associated stories indicated that the articles were neutral, positive or negative in terms of the way they portrayed market research, and could generally be classified as being of a consumer, business to business market research or financial market research nature. This coding and classification was undertaken by a single market researcher reading all the articles and coding them according to the main thrust or theme of the article, and not just by a reading of the headline on its own. A matrix of eighteen response categories was thus structured as shown in Table 1 below and each of the market research articles were assigned to one of the places identified.

**Table 1: The Code Frame of Possible Response Categories**

|                                      |                 | Newspapers | Magazines |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Consumer market research (MR)</b> | Neutral/Factual | 1.         | 10.       |
|                                      | Positive        | 2.         | 11.       |
|                                      | Negative        | 3.         | 12.       |
| <b>Business MR</b>                   | Neutral/Factual | 4.         | 13.       |
|                                      | Positive        | 5.         | 14.       |
|                                      | Negative        | 6.         | 15.       |
| <b>Financial MR</b>                  | Neutral/Factual | 7.         | 16.       |
|                                      | Positive        | 8.         | 17.       |
|                                      | Negative        | 9.         | 18.       |

**Article Orientation  
Towards Market Research**

The largest group of articles in newspapers and magazines (50%) concerned consumer market research, with a further 40% being about business market research and 10% being about financial market research. This is shown in Table 2 below.

A significant minority (19%) of newspaper and magazine coverage as indicated by headline articles involving market research were negative in character,

40% were factual or neutral in character, and a large minority of articles (41%) were positive towards market research. These details are shown in Table 3 below. This means that, in practical terms, for every article about market research that was negative in tone or character, there were two that were positive. This negative: positive ratio of 1:2 compared unfavourably with a negative: positive ratio of 1:6 for articles concerning marketing, found in previous research looking at the same period of time (Boddy 2008).

**Table 2: Article Type**

|                        |              | Total N=70<br>% | Total N=28<br>Newspapers<br>% | Total N=42<br>Magazines<br>% |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>All Responses</b>   | Consumer MR  | 50              | 46                            | 52                           |
|                        | Business MR  | 40              | 32                            | 45                           |
|                        | Financial MR | 10              | 21                            | 2                            |
| <b>Total Responses</b> |              | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>                    | <b>100</b>                   |

**Table 3: Article Orientation Towards Market Research**

|                        |                 | Total N=70<br>% | Total N=28<br>Newspapers<br>% | Total N=42<br>Magazines<br>% |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>All Responses</b>   | Neutral/Factual | 40              | 39                            | 40                           |
|                        | Positive        | 41              | 46                            | 38                           |
|                        | Negative        | 19              | 14                            | 21                           |
| <b>Total Responses</b> |                 | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>                    | <b>100</b>                   |

### Overview of Articles Types Found

An overview of all articles found is summarised in Table 4 below. In a similar exercise looking at the press reporting of marketing, it was notable that of the 100 marketing story title headlines identified in the local press, 17 were related to the various promotional, educational or award giving activities

of regional or area associations of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). Here, looking at market research, no single organisation was mentioned more than twice (which was the MRS) in relation to market research and there appears to be no market research body with the news generating abilities of the CIM.

**Table 4: Article Categories Found**

|                                  |                 | Total N=70<br>% | Total N=28<br>Newspapers<br>% | Total N=42<br>Magazines<br>% |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Consumer market research</b>  | Neutral/Factual | 13              | 14                            | 12                           |
|                                  | Positive        | 26              | 21                            | 29                           |
|                                  | Negative        | 11              | 11                            | 12                           |
| <b>Total consumer</b>            |                 | <b>50</b>       | <b>46</b>                     | <b>52</b>                    |
| <b>Business market research</b>  | Neutral/Factual | 19              | 7                             | 26                           |
|                                  | Positive        | 14              | 21                            | 10                           |
|                                  | Negative        | 7               | 4                             | 10                           |
| <b>Total Business</b>            |                 | <b>40</b>       | <b>32</b>                     | <b>45</b>                    |
| <b>Financial market research</b> | Neutral/Factual | 9               | 18                            | 2                            |
|                                  | Positive        | 1               | 4                             | 0                            |
|                                  | Negative        | 0               | 0                             | 0                            |
| <b>Total financial</b>           |                 | <b>10</b>       | <b>21</b>                     | <b>2</b>                     |
| <b>Total Responses</b>           |                 | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>                    | <b>100</b>                   |

### Consumer Market Research

#### Article Title Headlines

Half of all articles found (50%) related to consumer market research and, of these, a slim majority were positive in character towards market research. Some of

the article headlines that were found are detailed below for reference. Positive comments were to do with the usefulness of conducting market research while negative comments were to do with the inaccuracy or inconvenience of market research.

**Table 5: Examples of Headlines in Each Category**

|                                 | <b>Consumer Market Research</b> | <b>Headlines</b>   |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Consumer market research</b> | Neutral/Factual                 | “So how do I become a market research executive”   |
|                                 | Positive                        | “Don’t knock market research”<br>“Market research may prove vital”<br>“Market research agency of the year”   |
|                                 | Negative                        | “Never say yes to market research: It may come back and bite you”<br>“On average, market research is flawed” |

In the face of headlines such as “On average, market research is flawed” it may be argued that professional research bodies such as the Market Research Society (MRS) or the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) should not only passively monitor the press but actively respond to such negative portrayals and demand a right to reply. As practitioners we know that market research that is conducted by professional market research companies

is, on average, highly accurate and as such is extremely useful to clients and highly valued by them.

Such professional research bodies should at the very least defend market research against such inaccurate stories if not actively promoting a more positive picture of research. Research bodies should arguably make sure that misleading headlines and inaccurate stories about market research are replied to and corrected.

**Table 6: Examples of Headlines in Each Category**

|                                 | <b>Business Market Research</b> | <b>Headlines</b>  |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Business market research</b> | Neutral/Factual                 | “SUV market research”   |
|                                 | Positive                        | <p>“Market research shows there is lots of support”</p> <p>“DIY market research could improve your business”</p> <p>“When running your own business understanding your customers is vital. Success in business and market research go hand in hand”</p> |
|                                 | Negative                        | <p>“Market research firm ready to leave West and axe 250 jobs”</p> <p>“Tech. Market Research: False forecasts and Pretty Graphs”</p>  |

Some of the article headlines that were found in the business area are detailed below for reference. Positive articles stressed the help that market research could give to a business or to business planning. Negative associations in the business articles regarding market research were in the minority but there was still some negative comment to do with things like job losses or inaccurate research as shown below.

**Financial Market Research Article Title Headlines**

Articles headlined as being about market research which were of a financial nature were to do with stories about corporate takeovers or mergers or financial results or the personal career and financial successes of individual market researchers cashing in their shares towards the end of their careers. Examples of such article headlines are shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Examples of Headlines in Each Category**

|                                  | <b>Financial Market Research</b> | <b>Headlines</b>                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Financial market research</b> | Neutral/Factual                  | “Market research”                     |
|                                  | Positive                         | “Market research chief reaps rewards” |

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### **Limitations of the Research**

This research was limited in scope because of time, cost and personnel constraints. It was conducted via a search for the words 'Market Research' in the headline or title of press articles. This delimitation to the research was undertaken for reasons of timeliness, convenience and associated costs. The search will have missed articles about market research that did not have the words 'Market research' in the title and as such it does not represent a complete picture of all press articles about market research. Further research could investigate and clarify the nature and scope of this limitation issue.

### **Conclusions**

The objective of this research was to gain an initial look at the tone and character of press comment about market research in Britain and Ireland. Reflections of market research in the popular press, in UK and Irish newspapers, are mainly factual, neutral or positive in nature and orientation rather than negative. However, 19% of stories with 'market research' in the title portrayed or associated market research in a negative way while 41% of stories portrayed or associated market research in a positive manner.

Clearly articles about market research do have a sizeable minority of negative associations with them. There is little evidence from this research that any single market research body or association in the UK or Ireland is being totally successful in trying to promote positive press articles concerning market research. This compares with the position for marketing itself where the Chartered Institute of Marketing, usually via its smaller regional groups, is associated fairly often with press commentary, usually of a positive nature, about marketing. It may be that the regional MRS groups in the UK require some coaching from the national

Market Research Society in terms of how to get some favourable press coverage about the economic, democratic and other benefits to society of market research.

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