



Guidelines on Writing a Market Research Brief

Writing a brief can often be a very challenging and time consuming process – especially for first timers. However it is essential in order to get the best possible solution for your research needs. Below are some guidelines to help clients put together a great brief.

A Great Brief:

- Possesses clarity
- Displays depth of thought
- Provides direction

The bigger the scope of the project and the greater the importance of the outcome, the more time and energy you should invest in developing the brief. Remember, it is not about carrying out some research, but about achieving an outcome.

A brief should contain some, and ideally all, of the following information.

1. Market and Strategic Overview

This helps researchers understand where this project fits in the overall strategy, vision and values, and business objectives:

- Define the market and explain its dynamics
- Major players and key competitors
- Past and current activity
- Target markets
- Factors such as regulations, seasonality, distribution, pricing, communication, etc

2. Background and Role of the Research

This is the most important part of the brief, as it specifies where the research fits in your marketing activity, and more specifically, the types of decisions and plans that will be made on the basis of the research:

- Reasons for the research
- Where does it fit into marketing programme development?
- Which business units does the research impact and who is involved?
- Make sure you identify any constraints on the action you can take as a result of the research

3. Objectives

There are usually two types of objectives that need to be explained:

- Business objective - this is the objective of the marketing project the research is for, it is the overall strategic objective



- Research objective - detailed objectives of what you need to know e.g. attitudes, behaviour, usage expectations, perceptions. Is it to understand, evaluate or explore (more qualitative objectives) or is it to measure, record, or ascertain (more quantitative objectives)

4. Suggested Approach & Research Target(s)

Identify any preferences you might have:

Are there any specific groups or subgroups you are interested in researching?

5. Reporting Requirements

Identify any requirements you might have

- Topline or final report only
- Word report and/or PowerPoint
- Presentations and/or Workshops

6. Timing

Specify any real constraints that exist. However, please be realistic about whether your objectives can be met within that timeframe.

7. Budget

Any indication of budget is helpful, as it helps define the scale of the project, providing some financial guidelines to work within. It also helps researchers to work on providing the best solution within your means.

8. Existing research or other information

Share any other relevant research or information. Often this helps refine how the research is done. It also means that covering old ground can be avoided, and this research builds on what is already known



An example of a research brief may look like this:

1. Market and Strategic Overview

The Post Graduate Taught (PGT) market is becoming increasingly important to Universities both as a tool to foster reputation within the market place and as an income generator. At present there is very little market analysis conducted before a new course is introduced – it is very much dependent upon the resources that are available and also what the academic would like to introduce.

At the University of Edinburgh we would like to change the way this process is managed by introducing market analysis prior to developing a course.

2. Background and Role of the Research

The reason for this research is to allow the market to drive how we introduce courses rather than our own, somewhat more detached opinions. The findings will have a direct impact on how we introduce courses and what information we gather prior to this introduction.

The areas within the University who will be most affected by this change will be the individual schools and academics in charge of introducing the new courses. In addition to this primary audience a secondary audience consisting of college staff and publications teams will be affected.

It is important that the academics are consulted on their preferred way of introducing courses as they may provide the main constraints to the introduction of particular courses.

3. Objectives

Business Objective:

- Our overall aim is to introduce new courses that are well received by potential students and ultimately well attended.

Research Objectives:

The aim of the research will be:

- To identify how potential students choose where to study, both in terms of institution and course
- To prioritise the different elements of this decision process
- To recommend a best practice model of course introduction:
 - Course title
 - Course description
 - Promotion (Mix of media)
 - Prevalence of any additional bespoke information (e.g. Opportunity to discuss the course with a University representative)



4. Suggested Approach & Research Target(s)

It is envisaged that this research project shall be best conducted in two phases:

Phase one – Qualitative.

One on one discussions with academic and college staff

Focus groups with potential students

Phase 2 – Quantitative

Widely distributed quantitative questionnaires to allow robust analysis by a variety of audiences (breakdown by international and home students should be seen as the minimum).

5. Reporting Requirements

A PowerPoint presentation is required

2 physical presentations are also required

6. Timing

The presentation date will need to be before the new University year starts in late September 2007. (roughly 3-4 months in total). A timing structure is required in the Gantt format.

Research proposals should be submitted no later than [10 – 14 calendar days after brief is sent out]

7. Budget

There is £35k available for this project

8. Existing research or other information

The National Student Survey and the International Student Barometer may be useful background research for the winning agency. Both of these presentations will be available upon commissioning.

Contacts:

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