

Understand export market research

An introduction to research for exporters

Last updated 22 May 2019

Export market research supports successful strategic decisions. Selling to a new market without the right information can cost time and money. Research helps exporters determine:

- which markets to enter and when
- the best routes into a market
- how to position your product or service in your chosen markets
- suitable customers, and any competitors
- barriers to market entry

Before undertaking or commissioning research you should:

- identify clear objectives: detail what you want the research to do
- establish what information is essential to you: define what you need to know, rather than what's nice to know
- know your short and longer term marketing objectives, and make sure they are in line with your market research

Methods of research

Online market research

Also known as desk research, this is usually carried out before any other type of research activity. Online sources are readily available and generally free or inexpensive.

You can carry out research yourself or hire others to do this for you. It's a good way to gather information on things like appropriate markets, customer segmentation and rules and regulations.

Disadvantages of this type of research are that data may be unreliable or outdated, or not directly applicable to your circumstances. [Find out more about online market research.](#)

In-market research

If you've gathered enough data through online research to help you select appropriate market/s for your product or service, the next step should be in-market research, also known as field research.

A country visit will allow you to gather specific information on the market for your product or service. This could be combined with a visit to a trade show or conference, or participation in a trade mission. The data you'll gather in-market should be accurate and up-to-date.

The disadvantages of in-market research are the extra costs involved, and the additional time and effort. [Find out more about in-market research.](#)

Types of research and their uses

Consider what you need your market research to help you do. Is it to plan marketing, get market overviews, find customers, or perhaps all 3? The needs you have will determine what research approach is best for you.

Quantitative research

This gathers information which is numerical and statistical, for example:

- demographics: population size, age breakdown, market size
- costs and pricing

This is excellent for analysis at the macro level - for establishing overviews and identifying trends. It helps with scoping projects and prioritising activities.

Qualitative research

This gathers information which is observable and in-depth, rather than numerical and statistical, for example:

- behaviours and tastes of consumers: what, when and why customers buy
- appearance and quality of competitor products

This in-depth information can support your marketing and communications strategies.