

8 MARKET RESEARCH MYTHS RESEARCHERS NEED TO KNOW

Whether you are managing an existing brand or launching a new product or service, research is a critical part of the puzzle. Sometimes you just need answers before you can proceed. When done correctly, market research can play a key part in helping you predict which of your new business or brand ideas will fly in the marketplace. In today's fast-paced world, companies sometimes reduce or skip the all-important research phases, and move straight to testing or validation, causing more dollars spent on an incomplete or imperfect ideas and extra time spent fixing what's broken later on. Because of this, we want to debunk some of the most common market research myths we hear about from our clients. Here are 8 market research myths researchers need to know before moving forward with their next project.

1 MARKET RESEARCH IS TOO EXPENSIVE

We hear this all the time. The question here is not so much about cost as it is about risk. **As an insights manager, you have a choice to make up front: invest the money now or invest more money later.** What is it worth to know in advance that a new product will likely test well before you spend the money to launch it? Think about how hard it will be to explain to your boss why your new product failed, or why your most trusted brand's market share is slipping, when you could have prevented it with quality consumer insight early on. Remember that market research projects can be tailored to fit any budget, from very small to the rarely generous. Your research partner should be able to work with you to get the information you need at a price point you can afford. Consider the cost of the research in light of the value in up front decision making confidence, proper concept testing and refinement, and products or concepts that have been proven to be ready.

PROTIP:

Launching a new product can cost over \$15MM and involve various teams including supply chain, marketing and sales. Spending a small fraction of time doing upfront research will help get the consumer proposition right the first time, saving time and money.

2 A RESEARCHER COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND MY COMPLEX BUSINESS

PROTIP:

Share your broader business objectives, development plans, and key success criteria with your research supplier so that they can tailor insights and recommendations to your business needs.

A truth is, the researcher doesn't need to understand the detailed complexities of your business. They need to understand research. A good research partner needs to be well versed in the different types of research available to get you the answers you need. Certainly it helps if they know a little bit about your business, and you should provide them with detailed information about your business, your research goals, your market, and your consumer. It can be helpful if they know your industry jargon at some level, but their research expertise is much more valuable to you. **Regardless of the industry, a good researcher can design a study that will deliver against your objectives.** Often, their experience in other categories will give you a much needed fresh perspective on the challenges you face.

3 WE KNOW OUR CUSTOMERS – RESEARCH WOULD JUST TELL US WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW

Do you really know your customer? Do you truly know the motivations behind their purchases? When you hire a good researcher you gain deeper insights into your target consumers. A deeper dive research study can reveal hidden motivations or desires that are not apparent in more superficial interactions like surveys.

Additionally, markets are dynamic – what is true today may not be true tomorrow. Consumers are forever changing how they interact with media, products, technologies, and even their belief systems. It is tough to gauge if you have a pulse on all of that if you aren't actually gaining feedback from them on a regular basis.

PROTIP:

Don't miss out on the nuance that spark the next big idea. You could know your target consumer very well, but how is the continuously changing market affecting their attitudes?

4 WE CAN DO OUR OWN RESEARCH

PROTIP:

Keep that executive idea just that - an idea for exploration, not a trajectory. Use objective 3rd party research to ensure that the consumer is first in all decision making.

There are certainly things you can learn by interviewing your internal networks and friends about your brand, or going on your Facebook page and asking your fans what they think. But there are limits to this "convenience" sampling, as we researchers call it. A good researcher presents themselves as an impartial third party, inviting consumers to tell the truth without feeling like they are talking directly to the brand where they might not be as forthcoming. **It is much easier for a customer to tell a researcher how your brand let them down than it is for them to tell you.** Getting a half-truth from your consumer will not help you get the real answers you need. Researchers are highly skilled in structuring their research studies so that there is as little bias in the data as possible.

5 IT'S EASY TO DESIGN A SURVEY OR CONDUCT A FOCUS GROUP

Not so fast! **Yes, anyone can post an online survey these days, but the old adage holds true; "garbage in, garbage out."** If the survey questions are biased, or the flow is incorrect, your feedback will be compromised. Good surveys use very specific pacing, wording, question formats, moderator probing and answer scales in order to receive valid feedback. And good focus group moderators are highly trained to design discussion guides that encourage consumers to actively participate in the discussion in order to give you a deeper level of understanding and a clear view of their decision making process. Also, a good researcher can use specialized techniques like ethnography, journaling, observation, environment analysis etc., to help better predict what the consumer will actually do once your product or brand is in front of them at the store.

PROTIP:

Partner with an expert that understands your research goals and your specific category! This is your chance to learn how to take your research to the next level!

6 ONLINE RESEARCH IS NOT AS GOOD AS TRADITIONAL FACE-TO-FACE FOCUS GROUPS

PROTIP:

Focus on your specific research design when deciding between in-person or online. For example, preventing group think and ensuring all voices are heard are aspects online capabilities can help with.

The truth is, both are vital within the research world. We agree, sometimes you need to talk to a consumer in a more comfortable setting or those who don't have reliable internet access. In these types of cases, face-to-face research is best and sometimes you just need to observe folks personally to capture specific body language queues while they provide their opinions. **However, the digital revolution has opened a whole new world for market research. It is now possible to field your research faster, for less money.** You can access people across the globe for a single study if needed, and using mobile technology, you can talk to them at the precise situational moment you need (i.e. while standing in front of your endcap display at a retail location). This is a huge advantage over asking a consumer to come sit in a structured focus group room where they are likely to be somewhat less comfortable. Given its advantages, online research is a vital part of today's researchers toolbox.

7 GATHERING LOTS OF DATA IS ENOUGH

In today's world, where everyone has a digital phone, every purchase is scanned, every opinion is posted and tweeted on social media; there is more than enough consumer data available. In fact, there is so much data it is hard to decipher the valuable data from the invaluable data. So how do you slice and dice it? What does it all mean? **Data is only valuable if there is insight behind it that helps you find the right direction.** A good research partner will not only help you access and collect important consumer data, but will also dig deep to discover prescriptive insights that can positively shape your brand.

PROTIP:

Dig into the data! Gather market research from different data angles to foster greater understanding of the full potential of your results.

8 IT'S A CHOICE BETWEEN QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

PROTIP:

Build in time for iterative research. Use qual to understand, and quant to validate. Or quant to prioritize and qual to refine.

Qualitative and quantitative research are meant to complement one another. Quantitative research helps prioritize and screen ideas while qualitative research answer the "why." The combination of the two is very powerful. You can run a large online survey to help you prioritize your new product or concept ideas which will help you understand which ideas merit further attention and focus based on consumer feedback. You can then follow up with a qualitative study that focuses on why consumers like each of those ideas. Qualitative research can dive much deeper into the drivers behind consumer behaviors and purchase intent. This is the difference between someone that might simply like your product and someone that buys your product.

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To learn more about how GutCheck can help you with your qualitative and quantitative research goals, request a demo today!

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