

Section 6:

Guidelines for Marketing Research

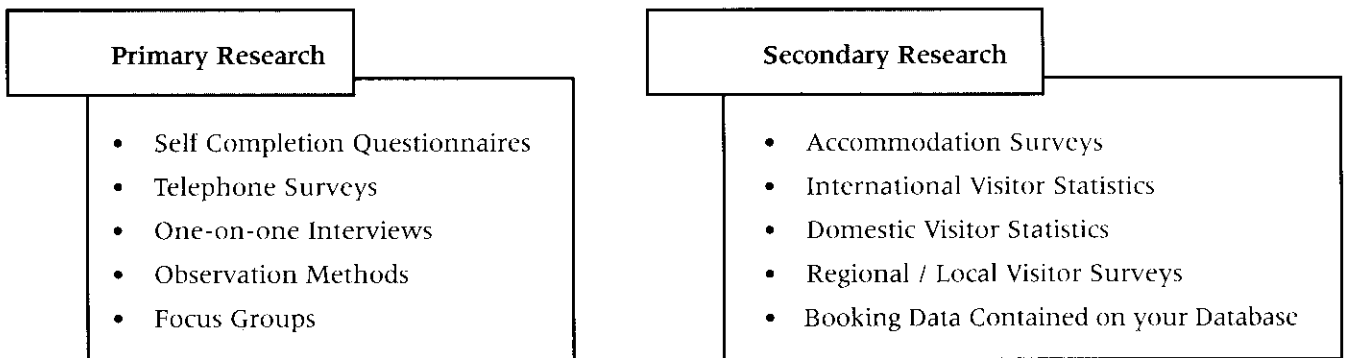
6.1 Obtaining a Domain Name

Marketing research is used to systematically design, collect, analyse, and report data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation, facing a tourism business or organisation.

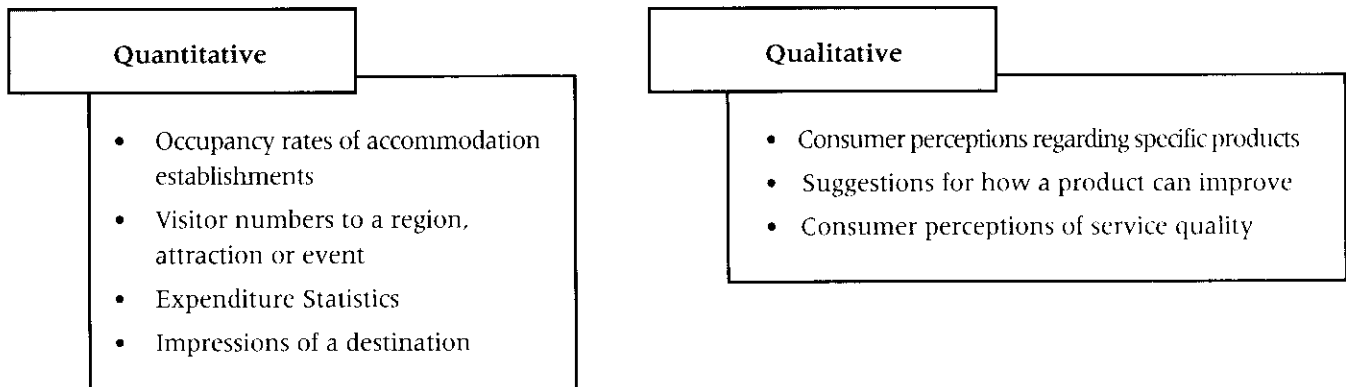
6.1.1 What Kind of Information is Important?

Different tourism businesses will require **different types of information**. There are **two main sources of research, primary and secondary**. **Primary research** is when research is conducted **to achieve your specific objectives**, and is also **often called field research**. **Secondary research** is **information that already exists** and can be **sourced from another party**. Another name for **secondary research** is **desk research**.

Some examples of the types of research are listed below:



The **data** contained in research is defined as **quantitative or qualitative**. **Quantitative** data usually **reflects numbers, percentages and averages**. **Qualitative** research **reflects the perceptions, feelings and thoughts of consumers**.



6.2 Useful Sources of Secondary Market Research

Secondary market information **can often be obtained at low cost** from a range of organisations, for example:

- Statistics South Africa has information with regard to hotel occupancy rates and international arrival numbers and trends. This data is compiled from national surveys.
- Most tourism bodies will have research on file for public use. These institutions are a good place to start with to achieve a broader perspective of the research concerned. These organisations include, among others, Tourism South Africa, Western Cape Tourism and Cape Metropolitan Tourism.
- The Tourism Research Unit at the Cape Technikon regularly undertakes research that is available at a nominal cost. The TRU can also conduct specific primary research for tourism businesses for a fee.



6.3 Conducting your own Primary Market Research

Research can also be **conducted by yourself**, and **need not be expensive**. You can find out a lot about your market **by obtaining information from your current customers**, or by **talking to the type of people** who you want to be **your customers**. Not all market research needs to be formal. Most of the best market research and intelligence is **gathered over years through experience**.

Which questions should I ask?

Your questions should relate directly to the objectives of the research and the information required. For example:

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| 1 | To identify and understand your target markets will require information on customers' demographics and leisure and travel interests. |
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| 2 | To evaluate areas of your product / service that need to be improved and developed, requires questions regarding prior perceptions of your product / service and how the experience measured up to these perceptions. |
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| 3 | To evaluate the effectiveness of various marketing tools and distribution channels requires questions regarding what prompted the consumer to make a booking and their interpretation of the communication piece, for example an ad or brochure. What message did they get from the piece? Was it easy to obtain more information or to make a booking? |
|----------|---|

6.4 Who do I survey and how many?

You should aim to **obtain information from both current customers and potential customers**. When embarking on research with regard to your target market it is **not necessary to interview all the individuals that make up the target market (population)**. Trying to interview all the potential customers of a restaurant would be futile as there could be thousands of people who fit the profile. In this case it is possible to **interview a small section of the population** (potential restaurant customers). **This is known as a sample survey**. If you carry out **a simple survey of your clients**, for instance, it is important to **make sure that the sample** (amount and range of people interviewed) **is representative of the total population** (actual total client base). It must be reasonably assumed that **the individuals interviewed make up a similar but smaller picture of the whole client base**.

If you require **assistance in developing questions**, the **marketing staff at most tourism bodies** should be able to **provide advice**. Or if you need **assistance in understanding the sample size** required, **academic institutions or specialised market research** companies can **provide advice**.

OTHER QUESTIONS I COULD ASK



6.5 Simple Methods

People are usually **willing to provide feedback**, if they know you want **to improve your service**. **Making it easy for the customer** to give you honest, confidential feedback and not asking too many questions **will ensure that you obtain the maximum number of responses**.

Simple methods of obtaining information are as follows:

Questionnaire	Follow up telephone call	Direct mail response	Face to face interviews
Print a self-completion questionnaire on a card or flyer with a maximum of 6 to 8 questions. Leave it in the room and request it be handed in at checkout, or give it to the customer at the end of his/her stay, or experience and suggest they fill it in privately. Ask them to insert it into a box at reception or mail it to you on their return.	A week after the customer's checkout, follow up with a phone call to see if they enjoyed their stay and then ask if they would mind answering a couple of questions to help you improve your service. So as to respect the customer's private time, 3 or 4 questions plus an opportunity for them to provide extra comments, are enough for a phone survey.	Follow up with direct mail to thank the customer for their patronage and include a response card or flyer, which they then mail back to you. This medium allows room for extra questions. Offering a prize as an incentive will encourage customers to answer a series of more in-depth questions.	Face-to-face interviews with repeat customers, with whom you have an established relationship, can give insight into product strengths and weaknesses. It may be worthwhile to engage an independent person to conduct the interviews. Customers may be more willing to talk about the areas for improvement with an independent person.

6.6 How do I formulate questions?

Questions can be formulated in a number of ways and **the format will depend on the objective of the question**.

The following are some different ways of capturing responses:

- **Tick a Box** One response only or multiple selections: Customers select one or a number of answers out of a list. These can be specific responses, or degrees of agreement or satisfaction.

- **Open-ended questions** Customers provide their own verbal response that you record in their words. It is much more difficult to correlate a number of these responses into a definitive result, but sometimes these questions pick up issues which previous questions have failed to touch on. Recurring themes in these answers will provide valuable information.

6.7 How do I compile results?

It is generally best to compile the results **on computer software** such as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, Microsoft Access database or another database programme, **so that you can easily tally up figures and calculate percentages**.

