

# James J. Hill Reference Library Guide to Market Research Online

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Market research can be thought of as the study of potential customers for your product or service. Primary market research involves doing the actual data collection, using phone or direct mail surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other research methods. Secondary market research involves the search in secondary sources -- such as trade journals or newspapers -- for previously published studies or statistics that will address your needs.

## **What are your information needs?**

When you are studying your potential market, a wide variety of information can prove useful. For example, a retail business might want information about the population demographics around its location, or information on its local competitors. Is there a particular demographic group that is more likely to purchase your product? Who are your largest competitors? What are the industry's current nationwide trends? In any industry, articles or reports that discuss consumer preferences, trends, forecasts, or the activities of the competition can be important.

This research guide is intended to be representative, rather than comprehensive. For further resource assistance, consult with one of our Business Information Specialists.

## **Information Sources**

There are a number of possible sources of published market information:

**Government:** The Federal Government collects and distributes a wealth of statistical information, such as population and economic census data, health statistics, trade data, agriculture statistics, industry surveys (such as the *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-associated Recreation*), and market reports for specific products and markets. State governments may collect similar or even more detailed data at a statewide level. Is there a government body that oversees or regulates your particular area of interest?

**Trade Groups:** After the government, the people most invested in collecting market information are generally those active in the industry. Trade associations will sometimes conduct market research studies for the benefit of their members, and frequently will make this information available to non-members as well. You will occasionally find free information on association websites (for example, the National Restaurant Association, at <http://www.restaurant.org/research/>.) Associations may also publish their own trade journal, and disseminate market research within this publication. What trade associations follow your industry? Is there a local branch?

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**Business Magazines & Trade Journals:** These may be published by an industry trade association or by a publisher specializing in a specific industry. Often these publications will conduct surveys or other market research studies, or publish portions of other reports of interest to their readership. What are the key trade publications in your industry?

**Commercial Research Organizations:** There are a number of companies that specialize in the gathering, packaging, and sale of market research data, such as FIND/SVP, Forrester Research, Freedonia Group, and Frost & Sullivan. As these reports are frequently quite expensive to purchase, they may have limited usefulness for the small businessperson. These organizations may also package specific types of data products, such as the *DemographicsNow* database, which focuses in on consumer demographics. Are there affordable market research reports that cover your industry?

**Business Publishers:** There are a number of companies that specialize in gathering and publishing business information on a wide variety of topics, from company and industry profiles to consumer spending. Examples of these publishers are Dun & Bradstreet, Standard & Poor's, Gale Group, and CACI Marketing Systems. These publishers may release annual reports, quarterly surveys, or perhaps offer databases that are tailored to your industry. Are there annual reports or databases that focus on your industry?

## Consumer Data & Demographics

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Use these sources to learn about the demographics of a particular geographic area, or about a specific demographic segment.

### ***American Time Use Survey***

Web resource <http://www.bls.gov/tus/home.htm>

The American Time Use Survey (ATUS) measures the amount of time people spend doing various activities, such as paid work, childcare, volunteering, commuting, and socializing. Estimates show the kinds of activities people do and the time spent doing them by sex, age, educational attainment, labor force status, and other characteristics, as well as by weekday and weekend day.

### ***Census FactFinder***

Web resource <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

View, print, and download statistics about population, housing, industry, and business. Using FactFinder, you can also find U.S. Census Bureau products; create reference and thematic maps; and search for specific data.

### ***Minnesota State Demographic Center***

Web resource <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/>

This website provides links to a variety of data covering Minnesota demography, including census data and detailed reports on such topics as housing, population trends, travel, and immigration.

### **Site Selection Online**

Web resource <http://www.siteselection.com>

*Site Selection* magazine's website provides free online access to detailed demographic data covering U.S. states and metropolitan areas. Click on the "Development Alliance – Search Community Demographic Data" link to access the state and metro area indexes. Free registration required.

### **My Best Segments**

Web resource <http://www.clusterbigip1.claritas.com/MyBestSegments/Default.jsp?ID=20>

Enter a 5-digit ZIP Code to find the top lifestyle groups for that neighborhood. Clusters describe segments of the population by predominant demographic and lifestyle features.

### **Demographics Now**

Subscription database

The *Demographics Now* database allows users to uncover the statistical demographic make-up of specific geographic areas, from states and counties down to zip codes, census tracts, and block groups. Users can also specify a custom radius around a specific intersection, then print or download statistics or maps on such market information as age, income, occupation, race, housing, and consumer spending. The database offers five-year projections on many demographic variables. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

### **SRDS Direct Marketing List Source**

Print resource or Subscription database

If you're looking for a targeted list of likely consumers, this SRDS source will put you in contact with the companies that have lists to sell. This publication contains sources, selects, costs, and other valuable information to help you refine your list strategy for your direct marketing campaigns. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this in print or online.

## **Market Statistics & Industry Data**

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### **Advertising Age DataCenter**

Web resource <http://www.adage.com/datacenter.cms>

The Ad Age DataCenter provides exclusive advertising and marketing industry data, such as the *Leading National Advertisers Report*, compiled by the Ad Age Research Department. This constantly updated collection includes more than 600 separate charts arranged in the four major categories (Marketers/Advertisers, Media, Agencies, and Salary Surveys).

### **BuyUSAinfo: Market Research Library**

Web resource [http://www.buyusainfo.net/adsearch.cfm?search\\_type=int&loadnav=no](http://www.buyusainfo.net/adsearch.cfm?search_type=int&loadnav=no)

A service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Commercial Service, the Market Research Library lets you search for Industry Sector Analyses, International Market Insight research reports, and trade organizations. Country Commercial Guides can also be found here. Free registration required.

### **CenStats**

Web resource <http://censtats.census.gov/>

The *CenStats* Internet site provides online access to a number of popular Census Bureau databases, including *County Business Patterns*, *Annual Survey of Manufactures*, *Building Permits Monthly Data*, *Census Tract Street Locator*, *International Trade Data*, *Occupation by Race and Sex*, *USA Counties*, and *Zip Business Patterns*. You can use the *CenStats* databases to search for specific data sets for specific geographic areas, such as industry and employment data for specific counties. The *CenStats* databases are free and open to the public.

### **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditures Survey**

Web resource <http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>

Provides information on the buying habits of American consumers, including data on their expenditures, incomes, and “consumer unit” (families and single consumers) characteristics. The website offers a number of ready-made tables, as well as the option to create customized tables.

### **U.S. Economic Census**

Web resource <http://www.census.gov/econ/census02>

The U.S. Economic Census is conducted every five years, and provides a statistical snapshot of the current state of business and industry in the U.S. The 2002 Economic Census provides statistics on establishments, employees, payroll, shipments, etc., within industry segments. Statistics are provided for the U.S. as a whole, as well as by state, and within MSAs.

### **Euromonitor Passport Markets**

Subscription database

Tracks emerging trends in many international markets. On a daily basis it tracks trends shaping consumer attitudes, opinions, activities and spending habits. Also, comparable market size data for 350 markets and 207 countries. This database contains six years of data and five years of projections. Whether you need to know trends in beer consumption or the fastest growing market for mobile phones, look no further than this unique tool. There are even on-screen calculations to help you analyze the data. Projections and country profiles are also available. Your local public or academic library may subscribe online.

### **Standard & Poor's Industry Surveys**

Subscription database

The *S & P Surveys* give current, historical, and forecasted information on 52 major U.S. industries. Statistics are provided for major companies within each industry, as well as for the industry overall. The individual industry surveys are updated twice a year. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

## **Trade Groups and Associations**

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### **American Society of Association Executives -- Gateway to Associations Online**

Web resource <http://www.asaecenter.org/Directories/AssociationSearch.cfm>

This website provides a searchable database of Internet links to over 6000 websites for associations with an online presence. Associations are great places to look for free industry-specific information.

### ***Associations on the Net***

Web resource <http://www.ipl.org/div/aon/>

The Internet Public Library maintains this site, with links to over 2000 professional associations, industry associations, trade associations, advocacy groups, and other organizations.

### ***Encyclopedia of Associations***

Print Resource or Subscription database

The *Encyclopedia of Associations* lists contact information and websites for thousands of U.S. and international trade and professional associations, while also describing their particular areas of interest, membership size, services, and publications. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this title in print or online.

## **Business Magazines, Trade Journals, and Periodical Databases**

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### ***BizJournals.com***

Web resource <http://www.bizjournals.com>

Full text access to articles from business journals in over 40 U.S. metro markets.

### ***FindArticles.com***

Web resource <http://www.findarticles.com>

FindArticles.com is a free archive of published articles back to 1998 from more than 300 magazines and journals. Journals cover a variety of topics, including business and industry.

### ***NewsLink.org***

Web resource <http://www.newslink.org>

Links to local and international news source Web sites for access to current and archived news stories.

### ***InfoTrac: Business and Company Resource Center***

Subscription database

The *Business and Company Resource Center* brings together in a single database company profiles, brand information, market reports and rankings, investment company reports, company histories, and pertinent articles from business periodicals. You can search this database to find detailed information on specific companies, or search the periodicals for information on almost any business topic. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

### ***ProQuest Direct: ABI/INFORM Complete***

Subscription database

ABI/INFORM Complete is comprised of the ABI/INFORM Global, Dateline, and Trade & Industry databases. This combination of products, covering different aspects of business information, provides access to scholarly research, as well as articles on businesses traditions and trends, corporate strategies, management techniques, and competitive and product information. International in scope, the database covers over 3000 titles extending as far back as 1971. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

**RDS: Business & Industry**

Subscription database

*Business & Industry* covers over 1700 trade publications, including business magazines, newsletters, national and regional newspapers, and international business dailies from over 190 countries.

Approximately 60% of records are available in full text, and articles are heavily indexed, with a particular emphasis on coverage of marketing issues. *Business & Industry* coverage begins in 1994. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

**RDS: TableBase**

Subscription database

*TableBase* provides tabular information on companies, industries, products, countries, and markets, drawn from privately published statistical annuals, trade associations, non-profit research groups, government agencies, international organizations, investment research groups, and from the publications covered by the *Business & Industry* database. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

**Company & Competitor Information**

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An important source of information on companies and competitors is periodical articles. A search of the magazine databases listed above may result in articles that discuss a company's products, officers, financials, or strategy. The sources listed below can provide very specific information on companies, or can be used to create lists of competitors or potential customers in particular geographic areas, providing such basic information such as officers, annual revenues, and "line-of-business" descriptions.

**Company Annual Reports Online**

Available on the Internet at <http://www.carolworld.com/>

Offers direct links to the financial pages of listed companies in Europe and the USA via annual reports. Free registration is required.

**Corporate Information**

Available on the Internet at <http://www.corporateinformation.com>

With free registration, you can search for company profiles from Wrights, Zach's, Yahoo Finance, and many other publishers. Public companies are typically better-covered than private companies, though coverage is international in scope. You will also find information for industries, countries, and international companies.

**Hoover's Online**

Available on the Internet at <http://www.hoovers.com>

*Hoover's Online* has a global database of up to 21 million public and private companies and 28 million executives. Free information includes brief overviews, public company financials, and selected web links. Your local library may subscribe to the Premium version(s), which offer more in-depth profiles which include history, competitors, financial ratios, historical financials, officers' names and salary information.

### **Thomas Register of American Manufacturers**

Available on the Internet at <http://www.thomasnet.com>

Search by company, product, or brand name, and find links to companies' websites for online catalogs or ordering. Within a product category, you can limit or search by state.

### **Dun & Bradstreet Million Dollar Total Database**

Subscription database

Dun & Bradstreet includes coverage of millions of companies in the U.S., Canada, and Internationally. The database may be searched by industry, geography, size of company (employee or sales size) and other criterion such as location type, year established, employment trends, and import/export. Company lists can be downloaded or printed. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

### **SRDS**

Print resources or subscription database

SRDS, including *Business Publication Advertising Source*, *Consumer Magazine Advertising Source*, *Direct Marketing List Source*, *Interactive Advertising Source*, and *Radio Advertising Source*, provides information on advertising rates, specifications, and circulation for publications, broadcasters, and interactive media. Your local public or academic library may subscribe to these publications in print or online.

## **Market Research Reports**

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Market Research reports often contain highly detailed statistics on consumer attitudes, spending, market segments, trends, and more. Access to this type of report is limited by their high cost.

### **Market Research.com**

Web resource <http://www.marketresearch.com>

*Market Research.com* allows anyone to search for market research reports on an industry or demographic for free. While searching is free, the reports themselves require purchase, anywhere from a few hundred dollars up to several thousand dollars per report. Many reports can be purchased "by the slice"—review the tables of contents to determine if there are individual chapters or tables that may have the information you need.

### **Market Research.com Academic**

Subscription database

*Market Research.com Academic* provides full text access to hundreds of highly detailed market research reports, covering business services, consumer goods, food and beverage, heavy industry, and life sciences. Reports tend to be a bit older, but can be very extensive in scope. Full text reports are available on *MarketResearch.com Academic* within twelve months of their release on the MarketResearch.com main site. Summary presentations of newer reports are available as well; look for "MarketLooks." Your local public or academic library may subscribe to this database.

**Questions? Consult with a Business Information Specialist!**  
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