

Islands of Data

“Project Archipelago”

An enquiry into the ways in which software and information technology is currently fulfilling the needs of buyers and consumers of research data.

Key findings

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Principal Findings	3
1 The issues and the participants	6
2 Marketing Research in the enterprise	7
2.1 The types of marketing research conducted by the respondents	7
2.2 The changing role of marketing research in the organisation	7
2.3 The 'drivers' to change in marketing research	8
2.4 How marketing research is viewed in the organisation	8
2.5 The strategic use of marketing research	9
2.6 The business metrics that emerge from marketing research	9
2.7 The notion of 'Insight' in marketing research	10
2.8 Marketing Research organisation issues	10
2.9 Educating and engaging marketing research users	11
3 Research and business data	12
3.1 Mixing research with customer data	12
3.2 Evidence of business data supplementing or replacing research	13
3.3 Barriers that exist to supplementing research	13
3.4 The use of 'champions' to facilitate the mix	14
4 Changing demands on the marketing researcher	15
4.1 Changing timescales	15
4.2 Achieving those timescales	15
4.3 Marketing researcher responses to those demands	15
4.4 The impact of those changes on reporting formats	16
5 The systems used by respondents	17
5.1 Technology and software used	17
5.1.1 Examining and analysing data	17
5.1.2 Reporting	17
5.1.3 Dissemination	18
5.2 Specialist or general software used?	20
5.3 Selecting new software	20
5.4 The 'Centre effect' on software choice	21
6 The suitability of technology used	22
6.1 Tool suitability	22
6.2 Tool strengths	23
6.3 Improvements that could be made	23
6.4 The array of potential problems	24
6.4.1 Ease of use	24
6.4.2 Cost	24
6.4.3 Finding the best and using specialists in that role	24
6.4.4 Resistance	25
6.4.5 Who will use software	25

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Principal Findings

Research providing “Insight” and actionable findings

The participants in this study worked in, developed and nurtured ‘research-centric’ organisations. They worked in a context of expected speedier delivery of results and tight budgets. The credibility of a research-centric stance was maintained through delivering more insight or meaning to their research, which they saw as ‘actionable research’

Engagement and Trust – at all levels

They had a passion to engage with decision makers at all levels, especially at a strategic level. This engagement was achieved through: continually informing users about the work they do; educating them about the insight that can be gained from a dialogue between researchers and users, providing them with actionable findings; and enabling them to enquire more and/or make decisions with trust

The importance of good communications

The essence of informing providing and enabling lay in well developed communications plans. Good communications was seen to be founded on strong personal relationships but extended to all forms or reaching out to research users. There was no one way to reach to research users given the huge diversity of user types and their literacy and numeracy skills. However, they were engaged in the process of reaching out by whatever means. The development of a ‘research centric’ culture was paramount to the success of reaching out.

...And education

Hand in hand with good communication is the role of education in enabling users to understand and interpret research findings, and in what research is available. For companies to become more research-centric, a commitment to education is also important in any effort to communicate.

Pressures of times and resources

Respondents are doing much more work than in the past, in some cases with fewer resources, and to do it much faster than before. There is great pressure to provide results and insights very quickly – within a few weeks and sometimes just days. Technology is acknowledged as being the key enabler in making this possible, in several ways: though the use of online research, through electronic communications between research buyers and suppliers, through the use of desktop software for analysis and re-analysis of data. While research budgets are continually squeezed, research managers are having to find creative ways to make their research go further.

The right software is vital but not the silver bullet

Software solutions played a key part in the process of educating and reaching out. Individual software solutions were not hailed as ‘silver bullets’ that resolved all their education and communications needs. However, certain types of software were seen as essential to give insight

and meaning in data, to communicate findings and to a lesser extent, enable users to interrogate data and create their own insight.

Confusion in the market leading to a fear of picking the wrong software

The participants were proactive in their desire to find software solutions that would support their communications plans. They displayed an amount of 'fear' of procuring the 'wrong' software, primarily through a lack of understanding of the potential that lay in software solutions and how they integrate with the array of software they use.

Negative impact of central IT policies and IT/IM departments

In turning for support to source software, implement it, and train users, the participants were reluctant to turn to the central IT or IM (information management) departments. There was much dissatisfaction with the level of support, timeliness of actions and understanding of their needs. As a result, the participants were generally seeking solutions through the skills and knowledge of their teams. The champions to software procurement and implementation were the senior marketing research managers themselves, i.e. the participants.

Making research findings available online a duty

Research and insight managers consider they are duty bound to make their research findings more widely available by using software or by building research delivery tools to allow easier access to be an essential part of their mission. The pressures of time and often having very limited resources to call on means that using software to assist by making results available for self-service means that internal research and insight managers can make the research go further without creating an unsustainable volume of extra work for themselves. There were concerns voiced too, as to how to avoid such demand-led increase in work levels.

...But managed responsibly

However, care is needed to ensure the users are not swamped, that findings can be used safely and are truly accessible – and that the search for meaning in results is not entirely delegated. There is concern that tools to reanalyse data and create new findings which are not validated by someone competent in research or in the limitations of the research project can be dangerous. For some, this remains the role of the researcher or insight manager to perform these analyses, unless the users have the expertise (perhaps acquired through education initiatives) to use analytical tools.

Pressure on cost, but cost *not* the main driver

In selecting software, 'low cost' was not the main driving force. The key factor lay in the 'ease of use', which was an essential element to engaging users with disparate skills. They coped with what they saw as outdated or unsophisticated software because they had the comfort of ease of use, continual engagement and no major training challenges.

Simplicity

Not only for end-users but for researchers too, simplicity, characterised as "ease of use", and "intuitive" software was considered particularly important. However, this does not mean a paucity of features, but an approach which enables users to carry out a range of typically cross-tab oriented analysis without recourse to either specialist technical interventions or expert statistical knowledge. Researchers need to be able to manipulate and reprocess their data, to apply certain statistical tests and share the findings with others. These are not trivial features, but the expectation is that the effort by the user should be trivial.

Data integration difficult – requires champions on both sides

Integrating research data with data from other sources is a Holy Grail for many. The barriers are managerial as much as they are technical: there are issues to overcome in both areas. In practice,

making it work requires a lot of effort and so it is very rarely achieved. A key to success appears to be through building strong relationships with other departments (such as information management or database teams) and finding champions there who have the knowledge of the data and system in order to make it happen.

1 The issues and the participants

This study examines the tools used and best practice in empowering users to use marketing research data, and the barriers to this good practice. It considers the importance of using 'fit-for-purpose' software or technology for analysing and reporting research data and gaining insights. This examination is set in the context of the changing demands and pressures faced by managers who use research data.

In summary the study examines:

- The changes that are taking place in the use of quantitative data and the impact of those changes on the role of marketing research.
- Examine the pressures faced by managers in analysing and reporting results from marketing research data.
- The extent to which the inappropriate technology is being used and any negative impact this has on the use of research data.
- The barriers to acceptance of new software and technology solutions and how these can be overcome.

The study is based on the results of eight in-depth interviews with leading marketing researchers, managing large numbers of projects and budgets in large and complex organisations. The participants are classified based upon three characteristics. In any verbatim responses, these three characteristics will be shown.

Database orientation, the extent of use and sophistication of customer database analytics, i.e. customer database culture vs few database opportunities

Geographical orientation, the extent of the organisations operations, i.e. International vs National

Profit orientation, i.e. profit orientation vs non-profit

2 Marketing Research in the enterprise

2.1 The types of marketing research conducted by the respondents

To set the context, it was established that all respondents have large research budgets (though they were reluctant to give specific numbers) , primarily quantitative research.

'Something in the region of 400 individual projects a year ' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'On the Quant side it's probably, I don't know, 85, 90% of it now probably, it should be probably maybe 75% or something - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

'It's probably more 80% quant, 20% qual' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

All respondents were facing the challenge of having to integrate different data sources and the meaning that emerges from those sources

'Everything: Syndicated, customised, ad hoc, all above research methodologies' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International'

***Everything: so we cope with all the tools and techniques that are available from telephone to on line including ... to groups, workshops, face to face one to ones. It's quite a traditional textbook approach.'* - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International**

2.2 The changing role of marketing research in the organisation

With the growth of customer database analytics and individual customer service culture, some faced a clash with the Market Research Society code of conduct on respondent anonymity when looking at individual responses to their surveys

'I think so long as you're up front with consumers, you're not ripping them off and they know what they're doing and you've told them that, I've got no problem with that' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

'I don't know that consumers really see the difference between being asked to fill in, I don't know, something which is for marketing purposes and something which isn't. I don't think they sit there analysing it, it's the industry creates all the little things of we're a CRM company, we're a research company and we're a marketing company' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

They also noted competition from 'cheaper sources' of research that could ultimately confuse the meaning of 'quality' research

'Anyone can write a survey, anyone can do an online survey, you know you can go and use some of the really cheap survey tools you can get for a few hundred quid on the Internet now and write a survey, if you don't do anything with the results then that's fine, but that's the critical bit actually' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

There was also more engagement (and challenges in that engagement) with those commissioning and using research. This could have been the nature of the participants who were senior figures in their organisations and commercially astute.

'We'll work closely with you to understand your business needs, define your business objectives with you, and the research objectives flow out of that. So we clearly focus on a very planned research process, largely because we need to handle the volume of it and ensure that our spend's being targeted in the right place, ' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Bringing in a more commercially focused market research facility is a challenge for the organisation to get to grips with. It doesn't have a customer centric culture. It doesn't have a research centric culture' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

2.3 The 'drivers' to change in marketing research

There was note of how the competitive environment had become more intense and more consumer focused

'The competitive environment we work in now is, the change of pace in financial services it's been quite astounding in the last few years ' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'What's driving it is the fact that our business partners have already, are already quite a long way down that journey. But we're not up there with them and we're not sharing the journey with them' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

2.4 How marketing research is viewed in the organisation

Marketing research was generally seen as an integral part of decision-making. The culture they worked in was generally pro-research (with the exception of one participant who was struggling to nurture a research-centric culture)

'Very pro research and they actually support research as a means of helping them make decisions' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'We staged an event, we do every couple of years so this year was a one day event, with workshops, dinner in the evening, just to make the whole thing a little bit more special with DVDs and all that sort of thing as well, was hour segments just to give people a good flavour and pictorial thing because death by PowerPoint is the world's worst thing' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

'Pivotal – even at the highest levels. Though research can still be used to validate/prove a pre-existing or desired outcome than truly speak "truth" - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

2.5 The strategic use of marketing research

Given the seniority and commercial acumen of the participants, they engaged with strategists. They saw their work as a part of strategic thinking. They recognised that much of their work applies tactically, but in a research centric culture, the reach is there to support strategic thinking

'In terms of the ad hoc projects, 75% of it is very, very tactical, much to all our disgusts, but that's the way life is. - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Our research gets communicated right up to board level and there is a monthly report which they get to see which seems like a dashboard in terms of the health of the core brands so it certainly has a high profile' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'We take what the strategy is, or strategic decisions, and then say yeah, we want to do some research, or invent this new survey, or track this, monitor this, analyse this, and then inform market research, and then they schedule it in' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'Extends throughout – strongest at a brand and consumer marketing level. Probably influence stronger at the strategic level as opposed to operational – operational in this industry struggles to 'get' research' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

A lone voice that illustrated the strategic impact very well was the extent to which Marketing Research was seen as an investment rather than a cost

'If you asked the chief executive of an organisation is the budget of your research area, is it a 1% £1, for every £1 is that £1 of cost to your business or is that £1 of investment? You're in the cost bit, for me that's you're ticking a box to say you've done it, you're going to use a few bits of it as evidence in your PR or something and stuff, but you're not using it in terms of directionally making business decisions and actually changing things, that's the whole point of it is to help you make decisions which probably are changing your business' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

2.6 The business metrics that emerge from marketing research

This was an area where most are working towards, to strengthen their 'strategic' credentials. There were examples of applications, but these did not amount to anything like the applications in customer database metrics.

'we've got customer satisfaction so our main customer satisfaction survey has reported like that to branch level so in a sense it touches almost every member of staff that works in branches we've got 2,200 of those in many instances there is a link between some of the finest research and the salary remuneration' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'that's where I'd like to be. My chances of getting it here, slim. The need for this organisation to have it, not as great as in other organisations, but it would probably be a very good marker if I could convince the organisation that it would be good for organisational health' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Definitely – but depends at what level of the organisation. Increasingly consumer marketing & brand teams becoming much more accountable in terms of consumer

connections & activity impact etc (more subjective side) as well as more traditional market metrics (from say AC Nielsen Scan/Audit data) etc' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

2.7 The notion of 'Insight' in marketing research

The best way to describe the collective view of this is 'actionable research'. There was debate on what the term actually means and cynicism as to whether it is really different to what has been practised for many years.

A broader perspective was to see it as the ability to fuse together quite disparate sources of information and get meaning - grounded in an understanding of what the business is about.

'I'm a cynic I ignore it. For someone who's been doing this job for the best part of eighteen years it's an overworked wording' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

***'All research should generate insight. Insight management is a different beast. Insight management is appalling. Data from a variety of different sources together and weaving it into a coherent story.'* - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National**

***'What's quite interesting is people's definition of insight. So often insight means analytical and information, but really an insight is something that you can do that will unlock, in retail, unlock the sales opportunity. So it's very rare that a company produces insights, you might get one a year or something like that. Whereas the stuff that I send out often tends to be actionable information.'* - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National**

'Typically the leap to 'actionable implications' resides within the business' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

2.8 Marketing Research organisation issues

If insight is to create 'actionable research', then the quality of individuals who could deliver that was paramount. This was clearly distinguished from the technical aspects of data collection and analysis.

***'Technical researchers, there's loads of them out there, we get a hundred applicants for a job if we advertise. We're interested really how people think, their creative skills, how do they use the research. I can send people on courses to learn techniques. But it's very much a thinking group, we've moved it away from kind of technical project management group, it's about, well, we now tend to think of ourselves as consultants, we're a consultancy to the business.'* - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National**

'We're more about doing the analysis, coming up with recommendations, actionable insights, and sharing that with the retail business to drive change. Whereas sometimes market research will produce reports, but they will just do analytic, it will just be analytical information, standardised reports, that will go to the products management, product team' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

2.9 Educating and engaging marketing research users

This in essence was the mission of all the participants, i.e., to educate and engage marketing research users throughout their organisations. They saw a clear mission and need for a research centric culture - to generate the 'curiosity' that will enable data searching, manipulation and insight.

All respondents demonstrated this curiosity through their leadership.

'we've identified key bits of the organisation that we want to target and we make sure we get close, that we get in on the planning process, and personal relationships, and all the things you need to do. Cos we are a bit of an agency within, a kind of consultancy agency, and we do provide a service, so we have, we look, where would we have maximum impact on the business by basically hawking our wares around to some extent, and then obviously showing we can do a good job' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

***'I have a distinction between being a servant and being a service. You can come to me and say, I want you to do a piece of research on blah, I want it on the 26 November, I want you to interview 300 people and these are the questions. You're treating me as a servant. Now I'm a very expensive servant, actually, and I'm not actually using all my knowledge. Cos actually if you come to me with your business problem, I might say to you, well actually I don't think you need to do that research, cos something was done similar by us or by someone else, or we can do a desk piece of research for you, and actually you're going to save yourself 25 grand and you'll get a better result.'* - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National**

'I think it's the role of the researcher to educate people in are you asking the right questions, is it worth doing the project in the first place and then to help people to interpret what it means at the end, so do, are people are we teach, we're not teaching people to come and tell us we want you to do this type of focus group with these types of people in it, using this methodology, no, come tell us what your business issue is and we'll do the black box' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

'everyone's really, really busy, so it's getting it in front of them, but also trying to potentially if it's important, follow it up, face to face meetings, corridor conversations, have you seen that? Did you read it? All that sort of thing. Or hold a workshop or something if it's really important. But it's all about actionable insight,' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'Building models that answer questions in a context that stakeholders relate with, rather than simply giving metrics and numbers, Selling in the value and application of research ('how to' use, how it will help), Cross-functional involvement & buy-in, Structured workshops that work through the numbers to derive insights that lead to implications and actions – rather than giving the numbers and denying any further ownership' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

3 Research and business data

3.1 Mixing research with customer data

The extent to which this occurs is encapsulated in how 'database orientated' the participants were. In the following instances, research data clearly mixed with research data.

'the classic one is we'll test something slightly contentious in research and consumers will say well if you do that I'll move my bank account with a window nearly cross matched on a database we find actually switching levels are a fraction of what consumers normally tell us they would do' Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'It's part of the same tool kit, one is telling you what customers think, feel and add to the why to what you see on your database, which is great but it don't tell you why, it just tells you a lot of people are doing this that or the other, adding the two together makes something powerful, both of them by themselves are not terribly powerful' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture – National

An example of where the mix worked well was through the use of databases for sampling in survey work:

'you get what I call issues regarding sampling, have we spoken to the right sort of customers so we often try and just check up our database to make sure we've got the right profiles' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

There were ad-hoc attempts to make links - with little evidence of 'joined up' connectivity

'as an organisation our record on this has been patchy, well that's putting a slight, an understatement we have done more in the last three years than we've probably ever done but it's very much ad hoc ' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'The intention is there. The culture might not be there' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'We don't have access to their data, so we don't really know what travellers are doing. So that's the potted history, the context as to why we do a lot of quantitative research.' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'We're starting to do this, but at a more topline, generalised level. Things such as using 2x2 matrixes where financial/enterprise performance is represented on one axis and consumer equity/return on the other – to provide general heuristics / rules of thumb around more integrative success' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

3.2 Evidence of business data supplementing or replacing research

There was no real evidence of supplementing marketing research with database analytics. There was a robust defence of marketing research with a clear appreciation of the nature and benefits of each approach

'Reassuringly from my perspective there's a role for both I think the hard data gives you what you might call the what and where and the how and I guess the way research helps is in understanding the thinking behind the whys, the thinking behind the behaviours' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'More a case of trying to more strongly link consumer metrics to financial metrics to better understand predictive relationships and lead/lag effects etc ' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

3.3 Barriers that exist to supplementing research

The barriers primarily focused on data and database organisation and how marketing research is viewed by those managing databases and IT. Views on the 'Centre' and their competences were a recurring theme which will be further addressed when views on the 'systems used' are tackled.

'Given the number of priorities the bank has to face, often market research has been slightly lower down in terms of using what we call the IT time and space to do this sort of work. Maybe part of our challenge is to convince them of the benefits in doing so, if our database guys have requested a selection for a direct mail company I understand that has priority over any other research analysis.' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'It's a challenge all research is actually putting some sort of cost benefit or cost savings benefit in relation to the research there must be a lot of discussion in terms of how do you measure the value of market research' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'Corporate culture. Competence levels. We don't have the competence, the strengths of competence in depth to really do this properly. We have competent people in the main, but we don't have significant competencies that will enable this to work. The culture stops it working because it's very siloed and quite dysfunctional' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Multiple data warehouses, legacy business systems that haven't been properly integrated, departments working in silos (making integration hard), different stakeholders having different uses/applications for research, no one single 'place' for organising & storing all research (again, integration), etc' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

Again, the issue of resonant anonymity and the ethics of being able to identify and engage with survey respondents emerged. This was seen as a barrier in one organisation, but they were not unduly concerned about it.

'If some one tells you they're pissed off, I aint going to keep it anonymous, I'm going to go and sort it out, so actually dealing with the individual where we've had a customer who's told us they're not happy with something that we actually deal with that and therefore the anonymity will be broken in there because I believe I've got a strong belief that that's really important' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

3.4 The use of 'champions' to facilitate the mix

In one organisation the champion was the Marketing Director. There was no real evidence of them identifying or using a champion. Really their roles as Head of Marketing Research made them the champions and it was up to them to find ways of making it work

'Certainly the director of marketing is a firm advocate of research he uses research but there are other people perhaps less so particularly if it's bad news for us.' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'There isn't one person here who just says, strategic, yeah I want this, you're going to deliver it and I'm going to give you all the support you need, and I'll make it happen. We don't have that.' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

4 Changing demands on the marketing researcher

4.1 Changing timescales

The unanimous view was that results had to be produced quicker, and in many instances for less money

***'There is some greater pressure for shorter timescales around data delivery, though a lot of our growth/opportunity in such a big business remains around better planning and understanding what's coming up so we can be smarter with planning the research solution/outcomes to fit.'* - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International**

These pressures also get passed down to agencies - its from the top and reaches out to all levels of the business

***'We're often placing total demands on our suppliers and I'm sure once they hang the phone up they're probably splashing all sorts of expletives at us'* - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International**

4.2 Achieving those timescales

This links back to the role of engagement and education to shape the expectations of what can be done by Marketing Research and the impact of cutting corners

***'Expectation can often be unrealistic from those outside of research who don't understand the complexity/potential damage overbearing 'change' brings to research outcomes (eg difficulty of comparable over time comparison/benchmarking etc). There is definitely an education role here'* - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International**

4.3 Marketing researcher responses to those demands

Note the connection between informing - educating - providing - enabling

***'it's informing, educating, providing, enabling.'* - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National**

'we're happy to understand marketers' requirements but given the nature of the decision you have to make is it worth sacrificing a bit of time for quality of research. So we do have a department and there's a head of department and myself and two senior managers. We have the I guess the clout, the respect, the fact that they will listen to us and actually take into consideration some sort of half

headed response and to a degree we will reach some sort of compromise somewhere between the terms of you don't want it now but can you wait 72 hours and get something that is a bit better' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

In order to engage with strategic decision-makers, marketing researchers had to anticipate business needs. There needed to be a thorough grounding in understanding the business context and the nature of disparate decision makers

'I've got to educate more effectively and what's possible and what's manageable and what's deliverable. I then got to create a sense of interest and a sense of engagement. At the same time, on a twin track, I've got to start populating the 'shop window' more effectively so that people can access it, they can browse around it and they can say, I'm really interested in what you've done there, can we now have discussion with you about how we get best value from that piece of work.' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Our biggest challenge is trying to structure consistency of research in an organisation facing constant structural and process change' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

4.4 The impact of those changes on reporting formats

The main thinking that emerged here was in their engagement with strategic decision-makers. The focus therefore was on the summary or the focus of projects, and the insight and meaning that emerged.

'It depends a lot on the client as to whether we extend access to data. Most of them haven't got the time for it. They don't want it' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'So in terms of how people are expecting things, more and more people are under time pressure and all that sort of stuff, so a continuous stretch, so it's all about focused and concise summaries, executive summaries, what's the one pager?' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'Interactivity is critical because when a lot of internal stakeholders are not necessarily research savvy and/or overwhelmed by 'content' – selling the interaction and attractiveness of the information is often as critical (if not more dare I say it for some) as the information itself' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

5 The systems used by respondents

5.1 Technology and software used

5.1.1 Examining and analysing data

There were many mentions of the use of SPSS, SNAP, Minitab, Esprit, Quanvert, Miriad and one DataLiberation user. Sometimes these tools were used in combination, in others the focus was on one, especially when they were experiencing difficulties, like getting to grips with SPSS.

'A whole office suite, but beyond that things like SPSS, Minitab, all those sorts of things would be standard tools in the team, although, while I do have a technical expert within the team, much of the really technical end I would farm out, a bit on a job by job basis' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'I've had to build some basic tools in so we got SPSS so at least I can start bringing data in. I don't like SPSS, never have liked it. I'm not a great user of it. I need to do a lot more training before I'm competent in it, but it gives us a tool. ' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'We are using Esprit which is wonderful. But it's not a tool that you'd ever give to an end user, ever' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Quanvert because it's quant data you get that coded up. Quanvert enables you to do the cross tabs and stuff. So we often do Quanvert to get the data out, and the muck around with it in Excel or something, and do the charting and all that sort of stuff, and then to percentages and indices and all that sort of stuff' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'We are working with DataLib with our consumer datasources to take our raw data and consumer models and build automated reports and customised charting outputs (consistent with our models). This has been the biggest gaps I've seen in the market – there's a lot of research companies that can provide you with basic or more advanced cross-tabbing packages or reporting outputs based on direct reporting of your raw/weighted data – but not much out there that can take your research models/frameworks and manipulate the data to then produce customised, business-specific outputs (as we want the model to be represented and presented) – this is where DataLib comes in' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

5.1.2 Reporting

There were lots of creative approaches to try to get the message over. The challenge was to empower users to engage with the reports. This was seen as a challenge, which is where

'education' in many guises comes in. Note the use of the 'story' to connect disparate statistics.

The challenge emerged from the diversity of users many of whom are highly literate and/or numerate. The demand for fully interactive reports was not apparent, with a danger of aggregating data but losing the detail, making the trade-off was the difficult part.

'On fully interactive I don't get a huge demand for that and I think it's researchers finding it interesting rather than marketers who as I say well actually I just want to know whether I should be selling this stuff' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

'You've got ten minutes tell us what the story is and what the impact is? In ten minutes' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

***'We designed reports that you can actually tear, when you're using hard copies, you could tear the cleaning page out and say, give that to your cleaning manager, right? Well it never works, because what happened was the local manager would try and look at all this data and he'd come back and say, I can't cope with all that data. And you say, well it wasn't designed for you to, you just get the pile of stuff, tear that one and give that to him, give that, but it's never, so we're kind of capitalising on that idea as well, to say that with easy software.'* - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National**

'Market researchers churn out loads and loads of reports that don't really answer the question. That's where customer insight comes in, to try and distil it into what are we going to do differently. So there is a danger that you do condense things up and lose a bit of the detail' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'The issue around data delivery formats for us is an extremely key one: (1) the immense diversity of users demands research to be presented and sold in at very different levels; (2) the different roles/functions (and therefore applications of research) within the business demand research to be packaged up at very different levels – for very different ends (brand teams vs category directors vs senior marketing director etc)' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

5.1.3 Dissemination

As noted earlier, researchers saw it as part of their duty and were committed to making results as readily available as possible.

It is important to note that there are some negative connotations of passing the onus onto users of having to search for meaning. The dilemma was that it could be seen to be just as bad as feeding the wrong data or too much data, leading to information overload?

Distribution was seen to be vital. a key part of the process of education, making the output of research something users want to engage in. There were lots of creative examples of how distribution occurs, the formats and software.

It is also important that users are able to know what is available, and make better use of existing research, which requires the ability to search and find as well as to receive or retrieve.

The challenge was how to get users to engage and once that process had developed, more sophisticated formats could be used. There was a danger of just sending out reports in any format, without engagement & dialogue.

There was a good 'sweetshop' metaphor presented by one participant illustrating how they wanted users to engage.

'We've used email, SMS increasingly, and the intranet as kind of core technologies, but as I say, within a package of hard copy stuff. For some people we give this monthly bulletin in hard copy. Some people we give it embedded in an email file. We kind of asked them what they wanted, and they were all things we could easily do. You set it up once and then you just press a button every month' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Don't feel you can go to the intranet site and then give us a ring, and someone will help you, someone will talk to you. it's not. We're absolutely stopping that, but we are empowering them to look themselves. If they want to go beyond that, they can get to the report, they can't get to data. We absolutely cut that off. But that's something that we're now talking about how we handle that, so it's another bit of communication' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'We've produced what I have described as the kind of Financial Times, it's probably more like the Sunday Times Supplement of research reports. It's deliberately a glossy, it's deliberately attractive, targeting the top 250 managers in the organisation, and what it allows us to do is write fairly lengthy articles, so you'll get three and four page articles, it's not titbits of news, cos that's one of the mistakes we were making, we were giving people titbits, and they didn't know what to do with them. We were patronising them, to a certain extent. Plus it gave us the ability to not just report one research study, cos we've done that for our individual client, but through the strategic research team, look across the piece, what related issues are there?' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'In terms of online, producing online reports then yeah we publish online reports on stuff, you know, certain things it's just easier to automate them so any of the tracking studies that all got into the sort of online reporting, so that type of stuff' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

'Vector [a software product], and that's a very useful tool which everybody'll have access to cos it's online ... you just need a password. It allows us to take the data feeds and analyse the information, slice it, dice it, trend it over time, apply filters' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'If you automate stuff and send it in an e-mail, here's the link, click on it, I think what you lose there is the final part of any research thing should be a face to face with whoever commissioned it and the researcher because half of it will be out in the story, not in the detail of it and it's making sure that message is got across so that the interaction, the dialogue is the most important part of the PowerPoint presentation or an interactive solution will not give you the dialogue, it will give you a series of numbers, a pretty graph and if you're really unlucky they'll have cross plugged it in the wrong way and taken a complete misinterpretation of it because that's not their expertise and why should it be?' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

'You just email things out, and it just gets lost in the ether. So we have a, try and act on customer research, customer insight' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'The analogy I use is a sweet shop. We've got a counter, there's nothing on the counter, but on the shelf behind the counter there's some jars. And they got what look like really nice sweets in them. The door's open, but there isn't really anybody serving. Every now and then somebody pops up to serve. Somebody says, have you got something, and I say, well we've got lots of stuff, but it doesn't quite fit that requirement. And they go away and think, you've got stuff in there but we're not quite sure what it is' 'I'd rather bring it to the shop front and I'd rather find the lids off and people can sample and see what's there, make use of it more effectively. But to do that, I've got to have a culture which is research centric and it isn't' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

5.2 Specialist or general software used?

Some researchers had several tools in place and most were making use of more than one tool. It was generally considered that research data required specialist tools and that the market was better placed to deliver these rather than adapting generalist or business intelligence software.

Within research specific software, there is a spectrum of tools, from generalist to specialist, which appeared to be defined according to the level of statistical sophistication. Some tools were tied to the data source, so that in order to interrogate the data, the users had to learn another tool.

SPSS was considered to be too specialist for many users. Tools that contained good cross-tab capabilities and provided some elementary table statistics were considered sufficient for the researchers to use themselves.

'TNS, we buy big, small business tracking stuff and that's accessed on line by a secure link to their website a lot of companies do that, ... that's a virtual analysis tool that you just log in I still go for ... log in and you can run e tabs rather than paper tabs' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'FRS express which is NOP's proprietary' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'We're particularly looking at Quastar products and things like that, where we've perhaps got the analytical aspects of it, but not user-friendly front ends, because technical people have been using them. But they're phenomenally powerful tools, much, much of the work in market research is descriptive statistics, and if we've got specialist stuff, perhaps the, most people might go and use a few t-tests and things, but if you've got really specialist stuff, then we'll bring in specialists. But something like the Pulse stuff, Quastar, things like that, that's as powerful as we want. SPSS is probably overkill, actually we're using a portion of it.' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

5.3 Selecting new software

There was a clear recognition that there are a lot of tools 'out there' for users to interact with data and create their own reports. There was some reluctance to show 'ignorance' (though they are not ignorant) of the nature of the different solutions and their relative merits.

They recognised the trade-off between user friendliness and sophistication - user friendliness works each time if you want to engage and 'train' users. Ease of use, and the ability to be self contained, in the avoidance of needing to call on technical internally or externally, was a very important consideration.

'I'm really, really against developing in-house software. I've done it, it always fails on one level, takes me years and years, costs me far more money than it was intended to do, and it probably won't do, I'm interested in off the shelf products if I can possibly buy them' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'I think a lot of it actually is partly agency generated so we have the means of getting the data online by TNS the solution that most agencies offer' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'There are technology solutions out there. We're maybe not aware of some of them. The one's I'm using are the ones that over the last eight years, we've found being reasonably fit for purpose for what we were trying to achieve, especially on limited financial resources' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

5.4 The 'Centre effect' on software choice

There was not much said in a positive light about centrally managed IT or information management (IM) departments. They perceived big problems if such departments were engaged to help with marketing research software and as such tried to avoid using their 'expertise'. Their experience tends to be that these Centres tend to exert an inappropriate influence in several ways: slowing down the process, making it difficult to justify the MR team's preferred choices, failing to recognise the particular unique needs of handling research data.

'Our IT needs to be agreed and approved by our IT unit guys, there is a process whereby they need to see the kit, test it, the risk assessment in terms of what extent it could compromise us in terms of portals to and from the bank so that can be quite demanding quite time consuming I think it can often take months rather than years to get it signed off so we have to be really sure in our own minds' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'Certainly we have to go through quite a rigorous business case. It's easier if the data's held off site I suspect' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'The IT department are just solutions providers, they don't understand the data or what needs to be done to it in order to create.' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'IT here wouldn't have a clue, they're about procurement and service delivery and all that sort of stuff. It's all right on internal sales data and space data, and that's fine, but when you start taking them into customer data they just couldn't cope, especially if you've got segments on your database as well because you have to create those' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'Important – but can be hard particularly in big corporates, and particularly when time pressures dictate immediate outcomes. I've done a lot of the looking myself based more on an understanding of what we were trying to deliver to the business' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

6 The suitability of technology used

6.1 Tool suitability

"Do you want everybody in the organisation manipulating data and losing its meaning?"

This theme recurred, without the recognition that users could get a different, more relevant or more valid meaning? Data Liberation and TNS crosstabs were given as examples of why they are suitable.

'I don't believe in technology as a driver of what I do, it's one of the tools I use in communication or analysis or whatever it is. That doesn't mean that I'm a Luddite, cos it isn't, but I think it's important to look at it in context, cos one could kind of go, gosh, there's a nice piece of kit, and it sits in the corner for the next goodness knows how long, a piece of software that nobody's going to use.' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'I don't want everybody in the organisation manipulating data, cos they won't, you're not quite sure, have they taken the weights on and off, is their sample big enough to analyse at that level?' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'What I've got are a set of tools that I can deploy quite easily here, across the business in different ways. There are some skill sets that are needed.' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'(Refers to TNS Online crosstabs) You click on the link, it takes you to the online cross tab thing, which has got, it's the online database with a cross tab front end, and you can store reports on there and stuff like that. But we've never really got round to using it fully in order to put more things, other surveys on there.' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'Each tool plays a very different role. For eg, the desktop based cross-tabbing applications great for quick/urgent deep dive project work (eg in depth analysis of brand or channel dynamics). Add on statistical packages like Excel Stat great to take some of this info or respondent level extracts and do targeting statistical analysis off it. DataLib on the other hand are great for reporting our actual research models, which otherwise would be a very manually intensive and painful process to work together and integrate on an ongoing basis. Our own internal insights & innovation generation processes then play an important end role in taking the various outputs and working through to insights platforms etc' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

6.2 Tool strengths

The key strengths lie in the accessibility to different users, the complexity (which could be interpreted as tailored) of analysis, and the ability to by-pass internal IT processes. Again, note the mention of TNS's web-based analysis tools in a positive light, especially as an outside supplier who can manipulate and process data in a tailored manner. Note use of Microsoft Sharepoint and the use of Quanvert and Miriad to bypass IT.

'I suppose accessibility is an obvious one so everybody can access the information you can do your own simple cutting the information without having to go to the agency or try and manually recut it something that would ... of paper tables it allows us to train staff to use and operate one single system rather than have somebody skilled at that and somebody skilled at that and somebody's good at that so you get the consistency and it means that even somebody as clunky as me in terms of IT can do some reasonably straightforward' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'it does allow us to do some more complex analysis which allows us to perhaps mine the data a lot harder than perhaps we wouldn't normally do so' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - International

'we use things like Quanvert and Miriad is because we can bypass internal IT processes and systems.' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

'IT would want to, I don't know the terminology, but they'd want to scope it all out and have the official documents that have a zillion versions and a zillion pages, and they'd stack it all out and tender it, and then cut, then there's the whole thing. Whereas that would just add years to the, am I'm not exaggerating there, probably a year to do the whole thing. So we're going with Quanvert and Miriad, you buy some off the shelf, it's outside of IT, it's my budget, I can do what I like. As long as, all I need from IT is clearance to install the software on my machine it's normally fine.' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

A key strength of 'tools' could be seen as part of the whole context of educating and engaging users. It can work if this whole context is right.

'This guy who specialised in communications helped us to identify the vehicles of communication as a whole package, so we've always really viewed technology as part of that whole package' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Microsoft Sharepoint is brilliant for that, it's simple, you drag it, drop it, we've chosen some categories you can tick to say what the reports in and you can search for it and that's available, it's an Intranet based thing and anyone can access it, so it's that, give people the access, but equally for the researchers don't make it a bloody industry trying to keep this, the library going cos that, for me, is a waste of people's time' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

6.3 Improvements that could be made

Integration of the data and output from many different sources was the big improvement issue. Related to this was the nature and levels of expertise in users.

'Integration – still have too many tools (the negative side of the above!). Means we are often dependent on internal specialists for it all to work – but this can too easily fall over in a day of high staff turnover (inefficiencies)' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

'we're very keen that as long as it can do what Quanvert does and more, and speed things up, then yeah, we're all for it' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

6.4 The array of potential problems

6.4.1 Ease of use

There was concern about the ease of use for any 'sharing' software

'I accept E-Tabs is a really, really conservative option. It will do the job, and that's fine, and there's lots of the simplicity I really like, but there isn't anyone here who would say, have you thought of looking somewhere else. But if that was your only choice then it's not particularly good, in a sense.' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'We don't do anything on the web at the moment because our target audience is still quite a long way away from embracing it' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'Ease and speed of access critical – online is great because in a big business it's a pain having to have users linked to desktop or even network systems. But critical that online system is stable and can allow quick access and interrogation of big datasets' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

6.4.2 Cost

The cost of a good solution was not necessary an issue, though there are pressures to reduce costs overall.

'For me budget isn't a real constraint, it's not budget, if I only needed to find the money, you'd look at enough at prioritising or whatever, you'd find the money, that's, no-one's stopping me spending the money.' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

'We're trying to get smarter about more integrative, single source, linked information to reduce costs while increasing depth of info at the same time.' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

'A lot of our sales data is on an internal intranet based data cube. So you can build cubes of data: sales data, income data, space data, all that sort of stuff. But they'd be quite keen to come and take it down as groups, - something like that would cost millions of pounds, whereas getting a Quanvert licence or whatever would probably cost tens of thousands of pounds or something.' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National

6.4.3 Finding the best and using specialists in that role

Participants found the process confusing, time consuming, and not knowing what is the best solution, they cannot turn to IT for support who they consider don't understand their needs.

'I think it's hard for us to choose appropriate software. I don't intend to go round MRS conferences and listen to Tim Macer giving papers on things like that, I don't really want to have to do that. I want someone to tell me, I don't really, I'm lazy, no, I mean it's not lazy, I'm actually quite interested in it, but I suspect that we get driven to the conservative options, which limits what we can do.' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

***'That's not their (research users') expertise and why should it be? We're not trying to give them all the competences of being a researcher, but equally we are trying to give them enlightenment so they can find shine their own torch lights, but not to the extent that they have to be a professional in research. So it's not about holding back as a black box in research, but it's about that dialogue bringing together, let's have that dialogue, that's the really important part of it.'* - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National**

***'(Talking about TNS Miriad) The first challenge was to find a product off the shelf rather than a bespoke thing, that could merge data together. Now we've got that up and running we've now employed another customer insight manager, that's his job to look at that. So it might be, if he looks at it it might be say oh yeah that's really good, we could transfer everything else onto it.'* - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National**

'Big research companies have their own proprietary research tools – but don't let you use with other info / or their tools are inflexible in applying to other info). You have to look far and wide to see what's out there. Often get most useful info talking to like people struggling with the same issues and seeing what they did' - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - International

6.4.4 Resistance

This issue drew out negative feelings of IT support again and more general points on the resistance to change. Level of support from IT and resistance to change.

'The problem is the IT people have to implement this, and of course there was this massive gap between these, the kind of techy people and the kind of creative people, and I do understand operational things are difficult to do and they probably get their ear bent by everybody in the organisation, it's a very tough life. But it is actually the major, major obstacle of being able to get a piece of software even if you've bought it, to install it could be six months before you can use it. And then you get, and no support' - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National

***'you'd probably get a lot of resistance or kind of like oh my god, it's quite, people are wary of the scale of the job, the transfer to new technology, so not only have you got to think about the investment in a new bit of kit, but it's also the investment in management time to do that migration.'* - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National**

'I don't know how you work with the IT, but would they be supportive in this when you do it?

***No, they would be a spanner in the works.'* - Profit orientation - Few database opportunities - National**

6.4.5 Who will use software

More seen to be of use to researchers and some marketers (depending upon the nature and role of that 'marketer'. Much depends upon the extent of education and engagement between researchers and users.

***'We're actually looking at using software, that we can actually put out at probably a little more senior level, not necessarily so, but identify again who may be able to use it.'* - Non-profit - Few database opportunities - National**

'If you look at the marketers, it depends what you define cos there's a range of disciplines, so are the brand marketers getting more proficient in using data

models to do things, probably not, they've probably got a bunch of data people doing that for them,' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National

'Is it the data people becoming more proficient at research? Well no cos they're good at doing statistical stuff, they're probably not very good at telling stories about what's going on in the psychology of the mind which is where I think the research sits, the important psychology of the mind' - Profit orientation - Customer database culture - National