**AS Business Studies: Primary and Secondary Market Research**

[Primary market research vs. Secondary market research: a comparative analysis](http://www.startupdonut.co.uk/blog/2009/12/primary-market-research-vs-secondary-market-research-comparative-analysis)

[Market research](http://www.marketest.co.uk) is an essential part of any business plan, whether a fledgling business or a multinational organisation. Knowing that there is a sustainable market for your product and understanding what your audience expects from you is vital to a successful business launch. [Market research](http://netetude.co.uk) can generally be split into two categories; primary and secondary, and during this article I will explain both and discuss their respective merits and appropriate uses.

**Secondary Research**

Secondary research makes use of existing data from whatever sources are available. There are government censuses, Mintel surveys, and many private market research agencies that allow access to their data; some of it for free. It can be hugely advantageous, especially as a place to begin. Secondary research more often than not, proves to be a solid base on which to develop your own primary research. It plays the same role as research in general does to your product launch, and should be seen as just as vital. Also, this is of course far cheaper and generally quicker than creating your own research from scratch.

**The negatives**

The other side of that coin is that you have neither picked the panel to suit your exact needs, nor the questions. It is feasible that you can find some research somewhere that corresponds to what you are trying to achieve but it will almost certainly require some tweaking, and will not necessarily be the people you wish to interrogate; the use of qualitative research designed by someone else will almost certainly make the target specialised away from your goals. Another main issue with secondary research is that by the time it reaches you it’s often outdated; markets change so quickly in business that the only way to be truly current is through new research. This is not to rubbish the quality of secondary research.

**Primary Research**

Primary research is, essentially, the creation of your own research, whether a question that you ask to your friends and family or a survey put together alongside an agency and administered to a wide panel. Primary research will instantly let you feel more in control of your project; and that is the exact position you will find yourself in. You choose the questions and select your panel through qualitative research, allowing you detailed responses from individuals. You decide how, when and where your research is administered. You can ensure that your research is focussed: the number of participants and their backgrounds, the number and nature of the questions, the amount of time that your survey is available. This is the most accurate way to research a market sector that is specific to you and your product.

**The down side**

It is of course, more expensive, whether financially or on your time. If performing primary research alone it will take a lot of time, refining and will need some experience in producing quality questionnaires. It will also take time for your questionnaire to be completed if you don’t have direct access to a ready panel. Most of this can be avoided by using an agency, but at a cost higher than performing your research alone.

**So what’s the best option?**

Neither type of research will take you to your goal alone; however, a combination of the two will give you all the information you need. Using primary research alone, without first seeing what has or has not worked for other companies and possibly missing out on important data from research that you couldn’t afford to perform yourself, is likely to lead to irrelevant questions or missed opportunities. At the same time, relying solely on secondary research is likely to leave you with answers that are vague or inappropriate to your specific audience. The two compliment each other well, and when used in conjunction will give you a well rounded and accurate portrayal of the needs and opinions of your market sector