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Teaching Secondary Market Research through Active Learning Workshops

Wendy Pothier

Introduction

This learning activity is designed to assist marketing students with accessing secondary market research resources during a one-shot library instruction session. This session is designed to work with an upper-level core marketing course (MKTG 752: Marketing Research) where students conduct a situational analysis as part of a semester-long marketing plan project. This chapter focuses on the activities done in the MKTG 752 course but includes discussion on adaptations made for related foundational classes doing similar projects (e.g., MKTG 550, ADMN 585: Topics in Marketing). For both the foundational and upper-level classes at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), the situational analysis requires market research information on the industry, competition, and consumers for the product and company the students are researching.

During this lesson, students will learn the difference between primary and secondary market research by engaging in an icebreaker activity. The remainder of the lesson time is conducted through a hands-on workshop with the librarian working directly with each group on their proposed product and company. Students submit a worksheet to their professor for credit that answers detailed questions with found information from the session.

Planning

Number of participants

These class sessions range between 30–60 students. The students are usually working in groups or teams of 5–6 students, determined in advance by the professor. Since the



students work in groups, there is enough time for the librarian to circulate and work with each group during the session.

Audience

The class audience is undergraduate students, enrolled in a marketing course. Students enrolled in this course are typically juniors or seniors and have already taken a required course that includes an introduction to the library's marketing databases.

Preparation and Resources

To prepare for these one-shot sessions, I create several materials for the students. These materials are a mix of free and paid tools to help facilitate the hands-on activities by serving several purposes. I create a Mentimeter slide presentation (<https://www.mentimeter.com/>) for the opening activity. Mentimeter is free polling software that allows students to interact via their phone, tablet, or laptop. The librarian has a subscription to the paid version through their institution, but I have used the free version with no issues for this activity as well. An example of a final presentation can be viewed at <https://www.mentimeter.com/s/333a19dc2371473b6515c0c6f66f27fd/75f5a1cfcf88>.

With the course instructor, I develop a worksheet to use with the upper-level courses doing the situational analysis project. Students submit it for credit at the end of the session or by the next class period, depending on instructor preference.

I create a LibGuide (figure 24.1) (<https://libraryguides.unh.edu/MKTG752>) for each course, providing the links to the databases and resources that students will use to complete their assignment. The LibGuide aims to help students bookmark the needed databases as well as provide contact information for the business librarian for follow-up help. Typically, I share the guide in advance of the session so that students have a chance to view it in advance. I divide the LibGuide into three areas of resources: company (and competitors), industry, and consumer.

The screenshot shows a LibGuide for 'Marketing 752'. At the top, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'Library > Research Guides > Marketing 752 > Company Information'. Below this is a search bar with the text 'Articles, books, media, and more' and a search button. To the left of the search bar is a navigation menu with four items: 'Company Information' (highlighted in orange), 'Industry Information', 'Consumer Information', and 'Cite Your Sources'. Below the navigation menu is a section for 'Business Librarian' featuring a photo of Wendy Pothier. To the right of the search bar is a section titled 'Resources for Researching Companies' with a list of database links: 'Mergent Intellect', 'Reference USA', and 'Mantaine'. Each link has a brief description of the database's content.

Figure 24.1
MKTG 752 LibGuide.

The databases and resources typically accessed for project completion are

- IBISWorld (paid) (<https://www.ibisworld.com/>)
- Marketline (paid) (<https://marketline.com/>)
- Statista (paid) (<https://www.statista.com>)
- Mergent Intellect (paid) (<https://www.mergentintellect.com>)
- Reference Solutions (formerly ReferenceUSA) (paid) (<https://www.referenceusa.com>)
- US Government Data (free) (<https://www.data.gov/>)

As each student group selects a unique company for their project, other databases or relevant information is accessed on an individual basis with each team during the consultations that occur during the workshop time or in follow-up questions from students after the session. Finally, in preparation, I ask that the students bring a laptop, tablet, or other device to class so that they can participate in the hands-on research workshop.

Description of Lesson/Activity

Goals/learning outcomes

Before the session begins, I consult with the professor on goals and learning outcomes for the session. I also share these goals with the students at the start of the workshop, so they are clear on the purpose of the session, which hopefully emphasizes the importance of participation.

Goals and learning outcomes include:

1. Goal: Students will engage in active learning exercises to increase their understanding of secondary market research and resources.
2. Goal: Students will leave class with data and information sources that will help them complete their situational analysis project.
3. Learning outcome: Students will understand the differences between primary and secondary market research.
4. Learning outcome: Students will learn how to locate and apply secondary research data to complete their situational analysis project.

Time required

The activity takes one full class session, between 50–80 minutes depending on the course day/time slot.

Teaching Outline

At the start of the instruction session, I use Mentimeter to survey students about their opinion on a topic, such as their preferred brands of pizza shops located near our campus. The interactive polling allows all students to participate and engage with the session and material quickly. The survey data informally demonstrate the idea of collecting primary data (see figure 24.2), which is also a component of their semester-long marketing project. I then follow up the survey results with secondary data examples from a library database (usually Statista or IBISWorld, see figure 24.3) for a comparison of how the primary data and secondary can work together to tell a story for a specific market. This icebreaker activity sets the stage for the students to work on their situational analysis assignment for their team's proposed product by thinking about the relationship between secondary data

and primary data. It also allows for a refresher to the library databases (see figure 24.4), which I review with these upper-level course students for 5–10 minutes. This question allows me to focus my review of resources the students do not recall as well or may be new to our collection.



Figure 24.2
In-class poll on preferred pizza locations.

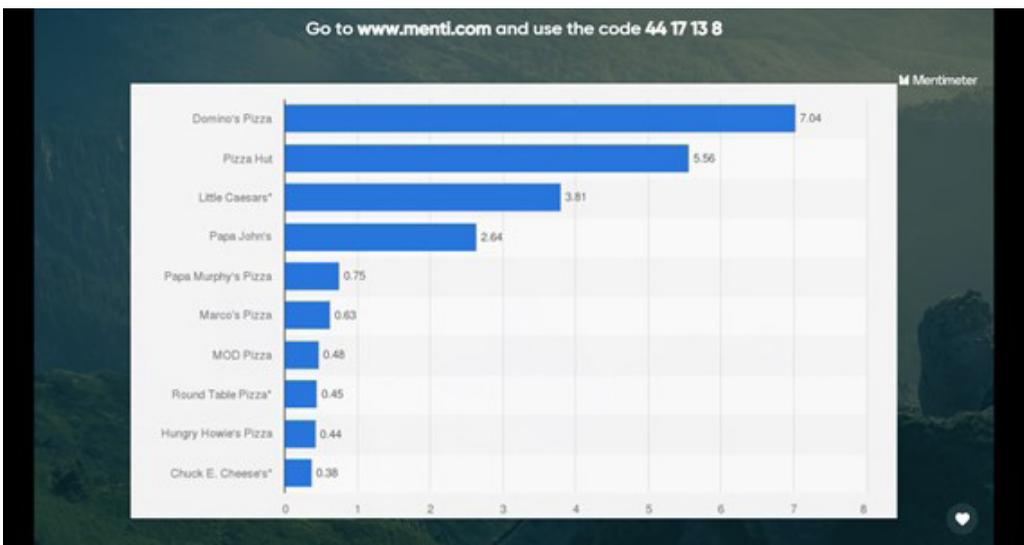


Figure 24.3
Statista snapshot on pizza preferences.



Figure 24.4
Student familiarity with market research resources.

MKTG 752	Secondary Research Workshop	Spring 2019
<p>Secondary Research helps us understand the landscape of a market and the business situation facing a company. There are many tools we can utilize to help locate and analyze this research. Using the tools from the research guide (http://libraryguides.unh.edu/MKTG752) and other resources today, your teams should be able to make a strong assessment of the market trends, as well as company specific data and information. Such information from secondary sources is critical at the earlier stages of marketing research, namely, problem definition and formulation of more specific research objectives.</p> <p>For today's workshop, you team should focus on identifying relevant secondary data to help you with problem definition. Each group will locate at least one source for each category below.</p> <p>Group Name: _____</p> <p>Company Research</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your company/organization? 2. What sources did you use to research information about the company? 3. Please list one article/report/or statistic that you located and explain why it is relevant. <p>Market/Industry Research</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What market/industry is related to your company? 2. What sources did you use to find market information? 3. Please list one article/report/or statistic that you located and explain why it is relevant. <p>Problem definition and formulation of research objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the phenomenon studied? Describe the background of the problem. 2. In your search, can you identify at least three key factors that comprise the environmental context of the problem and might influence your problem definition? 3. After analyzing the environmental context of the problem, how would you define your marketing research problem? What are the research objectives? 		

Figure 24.5
Worksheet example from spring 2019.

The remainder of the session is a hands-on workshop with students working in their assigned teams, using suggested databases and other resources, while the librarian spends individual time with each group. Allowing 5 minutes for the students to get started, I circulate around the room to discuss the students' topics and tailor their resources to their specific needs. This workshop activity addresses the nuances of research tools appropriate for different kinds of companies (e.g., public versus private, local or small business versus large corporate) instead of a lecture-based format that demonstrates the subscription databases.

Questions for the worksheet (see figure 24.5) focus on discovering relevant data for the group's specific company and product and applying the information to marketing decisions within the company. At the end of the session, the students turn in a completed worksheet for each group, which goes to their professor for credit. Some faculty choose to allow students more time outside of the class to finish, if needed, and require the submission at the next class session. The questions for the students are designed together by the librarian and the professor to direct the students in finding resources that will help them complete the assignment.

Transferability

Substitute databases

The databases I use are primarily related to what is available through UNH Library. Marketline Advantage and IBISWorld could be replaced by other market research databases available at your own institution. Statista pulls a lot of content from open data and repackages it into a visualized format. Librarians who do not have a Statista subscription can look to open data sources, such as federal and state government data, including resources like the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). An example of BLS information that students might use in this assignment is "Industries at a Glance," which provides insight into more than 100 US industries (<https://www.bls.gov/iag/>), or "Economies at a Glance," which provides regionally focused economic data (<https://www.bls.gov/eag/>).

Ability to transfer to online or in-person

In fall 2020, I experimented with the ability to transfer the format of the workshop to courses. Mentimeter worked effectively in the online scenario for the icebreaker activity. Using Zoom, I utilized the breakout room feature for the group work so that I could still circulate to each group while they worked on their worksheet. I developed a version of the worksheet that could be submitted online using Google Forms (<https://docs.google.com/forms>). An example of the form I created can be viewed at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdQ3BIca3S_7JEkxVIDPocY-sINXb6_diRPBd_pQwg0p2wLWQ/viewform. After the worksheets were submitted, I exported the students work to Excel and shared it with the professor.

To different class sizes or audiences

Outside of the MKTG 752 class at UNH, ADMN 585 (for business majors) / MKTG 520 (for non-business majors) are both foundational-level classes that do a similar situational analysis project. These courses tend to have a larger audience, typically 60 students who have less experience using the databases than students in the MKTG 752 class. For

these courses, I do the icebreaker exercise to talk about the difference between primary and secondary data and transition into more explanation/demonstration about database resources from their polling topic. With the larger class size, it is difficult to have enough time to break everyone into groups and circulate around the room while they complete a worksheet. Instead, students are asked to answer two questions, usually related to identifying the industry related to their proposed product and sharing a piece of relevant data from one of the databases that will help them write their situational analysis.

