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Plug into Big Data (or Small Data) to Round out the Story

By Kris Fischer *(KS&R Principal)*

Leveraging social media, behavioral, transactional or your customer data along with market research results in stronger tactical and long-term strategic outcomes.

There is more market data available today than ever before and KS&R knows to take advantage of opportunities to use it along with market research results to inform business decisions. Sources may include:

- Website analytics
- Social media conversations
- Call center interactions
- Transactional data (client or market based)
- Employee turnover
- Clinical data
- Key performance indicators
- Revenue or sales data
- Existing primary research
- Consumer or account history

The ability to analyze and identify actionable insights, based on any data source (not just survey data) is very exciting. It allows us to use the best possible source(s) to answer business questions and focus research on market factors that cannot be captured elsewhere.

Consider the following example, KS&R recently incorporated behavioral data analysis with a quantitative customer perception study. This allowed us to develop use cases, profile high/low end-users, as well as capture session-based insights (frequency of use, time of day, length of each session) that are difficult to gather self-reported. This facilitated both tactical improvements as well as enhancements to our client's overall marketing strategy.

Benefits to Our Clients

In our experience, integrating other available data sources in a research engagement offers several benefits:

1. **Produce results that are more actionable and directly related to business processes, metrics or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Primary research can be made even more relevant as it is seamlessly integrated with other business decision factors.**

2. **Better understand the relationship between metrics or KPIs and customer satisfaction or perceptions. Formerly flat data is illuminated by additional data that exposes the whys behind it.**

3. **Less reliance on self-reported results. If transactional data is available (and accurate), this approach allows us to address more questions, with greater depth in our research.**

4. **Develop a compelling narrative that thoroughly addresses business questions in your stakeholder's language. This prompts more immediate action, offering greater value to the business.**

Benefit for Respondents

Having profile or behavioral data improves the survey experience for respondents by reducing the number of transactional questions asked. Going back to our earlier example with behavioral data, surveys with users can be focused on reasons for use and how to impact future usage patterns:

✓ *What triggered use of the app/website/ software?*

✓ *How easy is it to use?*

✓ *How does it compare to other apps/websites/ software?*

✓ *What would make it more useful?*

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Our Approach

KS&R has developed best practices for data analytics; our approach ensures a cohesive story that stakeholders can work with, while maintaining data integrity and security.

Accessing the Data

Whether provided by our clients, panels, or other partners, these data sources are often large and fairly complex. Our client teams, Database Administrators and Data Scientists work together to access and link related data sets for analysis. We often work with a point person within our client or partner organizations to ensure that data with all appropriate fields and identifiers is transferred, updated or we're given access to a live feed.

In terms of security, each client that we work with adheres to different data security standards. Our data security policies ensure that each engagement adheres to the most stringent standards.

Build Confidence in the Data

Once we have access to the data, there are a number of questions that we ask to understand and build confidence in the data. The most basic of which include:

- ✓ When and how often is data updated?
- ✓ Is data available at an individual or account/ household level?
- ✓ Are there multiple people included per household/account?
- ✓ What does each data field represent?
- ✓ Does the data make sense, based on what we already know?

Through this process, we often reformat data in a more usable format (categories or averages) and identify inaccurate or new data fields desired.

Build the Story

When data sets can be linked by respondent or account, we do extensive analysis to understand if/when there are meaningful relationships between behavioral or transactional data and customer perceptions. We work with clients to generate hypotheses and prioritize the types of analysis that would be most beneficial based on the business questions at hand.

Even when data sets are not directly linked, we can identify the key learnings and common threads across sources. Any inconsistencies across sources should not be dismissed, as they often uncover data or business performance issues.

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Review the Story with Stakeholders

Reviewing preliminary insights with clients is a critical step in understanding if we have interpreted our client's data in the most useful way and obtaining feedback on potential reactions. This review also informs how results can be effectively communicated to various audiences within our client organizations.

Big data can be flat on its own, but in combination with survey data, research can answer questions about your customer base multi-dimensionally. Data integration breaks down the wall between behavioral data, that provides accurate transactional information, and consumer recalled data, that allows us to understand motivational factors. What results is a clear and concise story that drives action within our client organizations.

About the Author

Kris brings 18 years of client management and research experience with KS&R. She has extensive experience leveraging and integrating data sources into our research engagements.

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