

# SURVEY OF MARKET RESEARCH PROFESSIONALS' EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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## Extended Abstract

According to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, the number of market research analyst positions in the U.S. is more than double the number of advertising, promotions, and marketing manager positions combined (495,000 vs. 225,200 in 2014). In the U.S., the growth rate for market research analyst positions is more than double that of advertising, promotion, and marketing manager positions combined (19% vs. 9%) in the 10 year span between 2014 and 2024. The trend is the same in California, which accounts for 16% of all marketing research analyst positions in the U.S. A similar trend is observed in Southern California, which accounts for eight percent of all market research analyst positions, equivalent to 37,960 positions, more than double the number for the advertising, promotion, and marketing managers combined. Interestingly, it has often been observed that many professionals working in the market research industry do not have an educational background in marketing research. It is more common to see individuals with a background in social sciences hold professional positions in the market research industry. Coincidentally, there are no post-baccalaureate programs in Southern California (except for Ph.D. programs in Marketing), that provides education specifically for marketing research. With limited academic options and professionals' educational background, the marketing research industry's educational needs are not likely to be fully met. Cal Poly Pomona is interested in offering Marketing Research (MR) programs that would cater to the needs of the market research industry. Several feasibility studies have been conducted in the past with samples drawn from the alumni population and undergraduate students of Cal Poly Pomona, enabling us to assess the level of interest in the programs among the campus community. To produce the next generations of market research professionals, Cal Poly Pomona should cater to the needs of the market research industry. Yet, there is not much known about the educational needs of the market research professionals who are currently working in the industry.

Thus, this research is intended to fill in the gap by surveying market research professionals. Another objective of this research is to assess the attitudes towards and intentions to enroll in Cal Poly Pomona's proposed *Graduate Certificate in Marketing Research* Program. Specifically, this research addresses the following three research questions:

- R1: What are the educational needs for the market research industry?
- R2: What are the attitudes towards and intentions to enroll in Graduate Certificate in Marketing Research?
- R3: What is the best method of delivering the education to prospective students?

To this end, we used a *Fundamentals of Marketing Research* certificate class to conduct research as part of the class requirement under the supervision of one of the authors. First, the class conducted exploratory research to understand the industry, competitors, and potential students. Then, a survey was designed to address the three research questions. Since the market research industry is fragmented with multiple professional organizations, we decided to use LinkedIn groups from six professional market research associations (*Marketing Research Association* [MRA], Southern California chapter of MRA, *Pharmaceutical Marketing Research Group* [PMRG], *American Association for Public Opinion Research* [AAPOR], Pacific chapter of AAPOR [PAPOR], *Council of American Survey Research Organizations* [CASRO]) and three *American Marketing Association* chapters in Southern California [Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego]), which all together have 46,200 members. Survey participation solicitation letters were posted in these group sites. Additionally, direct emails were sent to select organizations' listserv (i.e., SoCal MRA, AAPOR, PMRG) with the assistance of the leadership.

One hundred and sixty one market research professionals participated in the survey and provided invaluable information. Participants (Male = 57%) tend to be well distributed across various age brackets, earn relatively high income (over \$150,000 accounts for 23%, the largest category; 52%, making over 90,000), are highly educated (65%, obtained graduate degree), live across the country with 27% of them residing in California and 39% in east coastal states, and tend to occupy leadership roles (i.e., executives [32%], managers [23%], department head [11%]).

Findings of the research provides educational institutions and the market research community with essential information that allow us to design various market research programs tailoring to the needs of the market research industry. Due to the demographic and employment characteristics of the survey takers, the data collected reveals valuable insights into the educational shortfalls of current employees and colleagues in the eyes of the professionals at the management and executive level. Secondly, the survey reveals the professionals' attitudes toward our proposed *Graduate Certificate in Marketing Research* program and their intentions to enroll along with the reasons for their attitudes and intentions. Further, this survey identifies market research professionals' preference for the mode of instruction (i.e., face-to-face, hybrid, and online). This project represents a prime example of the learn-by-doing pedagogy, a hallmark of Cal Poly Pomona's education. Feedback indicates that students learned the most through this practical applied research and that they were better able to internalize the methodological concepts thanks to the project.

References Available upon Request