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Abstract
Given the focus of the special issue, the present paper combines both the academic and the practitioner perspectives to highlight several issues and emerging trends that will shape the role of marketing research in the new millennium. These include a redefinition of the marketing researcher, the on-going nature of marketing research, qualitative research, quantitative research, international marketing research, Internet marketing research, and ethical issues in marketing research.

The growing importance of marketing research

As we have stepped into the new millennium, marketing research, or market research as it is also called, is becoming more and more important for companies facing intensifying competition. This trend is firmly in place and marketing research is expected to experience continued growth as long as competitively driven economies of the world expand (Honomichl, 2000; Barnard, 1999).

Two principal reasons are cited for the continued growth of marketing research. First, the speed of business has increased due to the diffusion of computers, digital technologies, and telecommunication devices (Friedman, 1999). Such advances have enabled firms to be more responsive to customers through flexible manufacturing, and reduced cycle times in channel operations. Instant communication has become a prerequisite to developing a viable market (Moncrief and Cravens, 1999). Although always important, marketing has assumed new significance in the organization, as the costs for misreading signals from the marketplace become increasingly steeper. As the detector and interpreter of signals and clues from the marketplace, marketing research has a critical role in providing "the voice of the customer" to management (Malhotra, 1999a; 1999b; Barabba and Zaltman, 1991). Advances in technology have enhanced the scope, effectiveness, and efficiency of marketing research leading to its increased use (Donnellan, 1995).

The second reason for continued growth of marketing research is the implicit imperative for global operations as the end of the Cold War has brought a new international system of globalization (Friedman, 1999; Wylie, 1995). As citizens of the world are increasingly aware of consumption opportunities elsewhere, the demand for political, judicial, and delivery systems has increased in a corresponding manner. Although it has a lingering presence on the world scene, nationalistic protectionism has lost much of its pallor. With more open markets, international competitors have moved into more markets of the world. At the same time, competition has become more global, flat or declining birth rates in developed countries of the world have rendered many product categories in developed countries as saturated. As a result, the markets for products in developing and newly developed countries (such as Mexico, Brazil, and South Korea) continue to expand as these countries have only recently experienced relative prosperity leading to an expanded middle class. Thus, many of the multinational companies (MNCs) based in developed countries are seeking to penetrate these developing markets. Marketing research can provide essential knowledge to management teams of firms entering new markets (Kotabe and Helsen, 1999).

Despite the potential value of developing a market orientation (Kohli and Jaworski, 1999), and effectively utilizing marketing research, realizing these goals proves to be elusive for many firms struggling to become "learning organizations" (Slater and Narver, 1999). While the perceived high cost of commissioning research appears to keep many firms from initiating marketing research (Elliott and Jobber, 1995), deploying marketing research is a complex process for the best of firms (Menon and Varadarajan, 1992). The purpose of this article is to illuminate emerging issues and trends in the marketing research field as we enter a new millennium. In this way, we hope to boost the

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efforts of practitioners contributing to organizational learning.

In this article we highlight several issues and emerging trends that will shape the role of marketing research in the new millennium. These include a redefinition of the marketing researcher, the on-going nature of marketing research, qualitative research, quantitative research, international marketing research, Internet marketing research, and ethical issues in marketing research (see Table I). More academic state-of-the-art reviews have been recently published by the authors elsewhere (Malhotra *et al.*, 1996, 1999). Given the focus of the special issue, the present paper combines both the academic and the practitioner perspectives[1].

A redefinition of the marketing researcher

Who is a marketing researcher? Who in the organization does marketing research? In the

Table I
Emerging issues and trends in marketing research

Marketing researchers will participate more and more in marketing decision making
Managers will participate more and more in marketing research
More and more marketing research will be undertaken as an on-going business operation
More marketing research problems will be addressed based on secondary data alone
The building of large databases that combine internal customer data with information available externally will gain momentum leading to increased use of database marketing
More marketing decisions will become automated
More interpretive research methodologies (such as ethnography, and grounded theory) will be employed
More integrated use of qualitative data with computer-driven analysis techniques will occur
Data analysis will make greater use of artificial intelligence procedures such as artificial neural networks and genetic algorithms
Marketing research has assumed a truly international character and this trend is likely to continue
Potential for global marketing programs will be assessed through multi-country marketing research
The use of secondary data in international marketing research will continue to grow
The emergence of transnational segments will lead to greater standardization of international qualitative research
Multi-country telephone surveys will be conducted from a single location given the increased availability of ethnic interviewers locally
Attitude scales will become more widely used in cross-national research
Sampling methods used in cross-national studies will increase in sophistication making greater use of probability techniques
Data analysis procedures and techniques will become increasingly standardized in international marketing research
Project management for multi-country studies will become more of a distinctive skill area for research agencies
Use of bulletin boards, Web interviewing and chat rooms will be increased in exploratory research
The importance of the Internet as a source of external secondary data will continue to grow especially in the realm of competitive intelligence
Organizations will increasingly use intranets to boost access to internal secondary data
More qualitative research will be conducted on the Internet
The Internet will be increasingly used for observation
Internet surveys posted at a Web site will increase in popularity
Interactive downloadable surveys will become more feasible and attractive with advances in technology
The Internet will become a useful vehicle for conducting causal research
Sampling potential respondents who are surfing the Internet will become more meaningful
Marketing research reports will be routinely published or posted directly to corporate intranets
Due to the partnering relationship, ethical conflicts between the client and the researcher will become less of a concern
Greater attention will be paid to the rights of the respondents
Disguising versus disclosing the true purpose of the research will become more of an issue
Ethical issues related to observing and recording the behavior of respondents will gain in importance
The comfort level of the respondents during data collection will receive more attention
The use of overly long questionnaires and sensitive questions will become a greater concern
Privacy will emerge as a primary concern for consumers
Preserving the anonymity of respondents will be a greater concern in business-to-business research
The marketing research industry will become aggressive in positioning itself as distinct from selling
Codes of ethical conduct will receive more emphasis and significance

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last century of the past millennium, the marketing researcher was a well-defined individual with certain qualifications and a set place in the organization. A commercial firm with an in-house marketing department had a clearly designated group of individuals who served in this staff function. Note that marketing research was a staff function and not a line function. Other than the interface in specific marketing research projects, marketing researchers had little interaction with marketing managers and did not participate in marketing decision making. Likewise, external providers of marketing research had little interaction with marketing managers. However, as we have moved in to the new millennium, this line of demarcation between marketing research and marketing, and thus the distinction between marketing researchers and marketing managers, is becoming thinner and thinner.

Marketing researchers will participate more and more in marketing decision making. The speed of business, the flood of information provided by the new technologies previously mentioned, and flatter organizational structures are driving this trend. In short, managers need help in processing more issues without the help of mid-level managers. The marketing researcher is accessible and is informed about these issues; therefore managers increasingly involve them in decision making. Managers want well-reasoned recommendations on the course of action to take, not just information about the issue or descriptions of possible courses of action.

"Anyone who tells you they have a 5- or 10-year plan is probably crazy," said Hewlett-Packard Co. CEO Lewis E. Platt. "This is the age of scenario planning. You need not only speed, but agility" (Coy, 1999).

In light of recent concerns by marketing researchers about the limited impact of marketing research in the past (Mahajan and Wind, 1999; Schmalensee and Lesh, 1999; Gibson, 2000), the blurring of the boundary between line managers and the staff should be welcomed by researchers as an opportunity to boost the actionability of research. However, this opportunity has an implicit cost in terms of more risk and more stress for researchers. In this riskier environment, marketing researcher directors must become more adept at winning in the competition for internal resources (Adams, 1999).

As the line and staff boundary blurs, marketing managers are becoming increasingly more involved in marketing research. In some organizations, for example, the United Parcel Service, marketing and other managers are rotated through the marketing research department. Conversely, it is also possible for marketing researchers to move out of the marketing research department and serve in marketing and related functions, such as planning. In yet other organizations, for example Coca-Cola, marketing research is now housed in brand management, and the global brand manager has the responsibility for marketing research for her/his brand. This leads to a natural integration of marketing research and brand management with several managers and or researchers working on specific projects (Malhotra, 1999a)[2].

In real-time marketing situations, the "make and sell" paradigm has shifted to one characterized by "sense and respond" (Bradley and Nolan, 1998). Dell Computer Corporation is one of the leaders in allowing consumers to design their own products from a menu of attributes, components, prices, and delivery options. Such an interactive, online system has been called a "choiceboard" (Slywotzky, 2000). Choiceboards have been estimated to be involved in 30 percent of commercial activity in the USA by 2010. "Sense and respond" will also be evident in new product development. Online panels of "virtual customers" will help guide engineers' efforts during the design process, instead of merely evaluating designs after prototypes have been produced (Hauser, 1998). In this way, the boundary between engineers and marketing researchers will be blurred, also.

This trend toward making marketing research as more of a line function, rather than a staff function, is likely to continue and even accelerate in the near future where "sense and respond" will increasingly characterize firms' approach to business. Thus, the traditional marketing researcher in a commercial firm narrowly focused on the production of presentations and reports for management will become a rare breed. The transition of marketing researchers to researchers cum decision makers has already begun. Indeed, some of the most effective researchers of customer satisfaction are not only participating in decision making, but also are deployed as part of the team to implement organizational changes in response to customer satisfaction surveys (Schmalensee and Lesh, 1999)[3].

The availability of better decision tools and decision support systems is facilitating the transition of managers to researchers cum decision makers. Senior managers can now directly access internal and external secondary data from the microcomputers in

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their offices, analyze them, and make decisions. Thus, managers are acting more frequently as marketing researchers. As a consequence of these two simultaneous transitions, the line of demarcation between marketing researchers and marketing managers is becoming thinner and thinner. In the new millennium, good marketing researchers will be good marketing managers and vice versa. If either fails to do so, they will both be swept away by sudden unanticipated shifts in the marketplace, as consumers become increasingly empowered to choose new ways for their lives through rising incomes, technology, and information access. Thus, Malhotra (1992) coined the term "marketing research myopia" as a too narrow definition of who in the organization does marketing research[4].

Marketing research as an on-going operation

Another paradigm shift is that more and more marketing research will be undertaken as part of normal on-going business operations, rather than in response to specific marketing problems or opportunities (Struse, 2000). In the past, much marketing research, particularly custom marketing research was undertaken in response to specific marketing problems or opportunities. For example, a firm faced marketing problems, such as loss of sales or market share, price undercutting by a competitor, inadequate distribution, lack of product appeal, or ineffective advertising. On the other hand, it may have faced an opportunity, such as the potential for a new product introduction or expansion into a new market segment. A traditional approach to the research process was followed which began with a definition of the marketing research problem, formulation of a research design, analysis of secondary data, development of a questionnaire and the collection of primary data, data analysis, and report preparation and presentation (Malhotra, 1999a).

Under the new paradigm, marketing research will be part of normal business activities. This will be true for secondary data obtained from syndicated sources as well as primary data collected by the firm. Firms like Procter & Gamble routinely obtain UPC scanner data of weekly sales for a wide range of product categories. These data, whether obtained from secondary or primary sources, become a part of the decision support system (DSS) of the organization. The diffusion of DSS technology incorporating sophisticated, yet easy to use, models, analytical techniques, and user-friendly software, is making it possible for managers to analyze data in several different ways and conduct what-if analyses. As decision support systems become more pervasive and user-friendly and managers become better trained in information handling, this trend will accelerate.

More and more marketing research problems will be addressed based on secondary data alone. In the past millennium, collection of primary data was an integral part of the marketing research process. However, as we progress into the new millennium, this need not be the case. This will be made possible due to the extensive nature of secondary data available over the Internet, from business, government, and syndicated sources. This will include single-source data. Single-source research follows a person's TV, reading, and shopping habits (Aslo and Nafria, 1997). After recruiting a test panel of households, the research firm meters each home's TV sets and surveys family members periodically on what they read. UPC scanners track their grocery purchases. For background, most systems also track retail data, such as sales, advertising, and promotion. Thus, single-source data provide integrated information on household variables, including media consumption and purchases, and marketing variables, such as product sales, price, advertising, promotion, and in-store marketing effort. The availability and use of such data will greatly increase (Abe, 1997). Another manifestation of this phenomenon is the building of large databases by combining customer transaction records with secondary information available from external sources in order to practice database marketing. Database marketing is also likely to grow as it enables efficient targeting at a microscopic, even individual, level (Palmquist and Ketola, 1999).

Qualitative research

Interpretive methods

More human-oriented research methodologies, such as ethnography, will be employed to understand nascent and emerging consumer issues. Many daunting issues facing researchers concern emotion, metaphor, nonverbal communication, and visual imagery (Zaltman, 1997). Not only do customers represent their experiences internally in these ways, but managers do, as well. It is no surprise then to observe a marked increase in marketing researchers'

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utilization of alternative qualitative research techniques, such as ethnography (Fellman, 1999). Some advertising researchers report that the nuggets for advertising inspiration are more difficult to come by these days as consumers in focus groups increasingly tend to use lingo from advertising ("full-bodied taste") instead of reporting their more genuine responses (Ono, 1997). Ethnography involves observation techniques, and in-depth interviewing in consumers' natural settings (Fellman, 1999). Developed as a methodology in anthropology and sociology, ethnography projects can take several years to complete. "Blitzkreig ethnography" where researchers invade consumer settings for an overnight, or two-week observation excursion has been criticized for its disregard for the development of the social scientist's most valuable research instrument – the social scientist's abilities for insight and for interpretation of meaning (Costa, 1998). Veteran ethnographers report such insights and understandings only begin to coalesce in their consciousness after spending a minimum of three months in a field setting. Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Motorola, Xerox, and McDonald's have all hired social scientists to help them figure out how consumers use products (Takahashi, 1998). The imperative for global operations has also moved researchers at Kodak and Polaroid to view customer experiences through the eyes of those from other cultures (Fellman, 1999). Increased use of innovative qualitative techniques, such as ethnography, is expected in the coming years – not as a replacement for traditional qualitative techniques, but as a supplement.

In all qualitative methods, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. In interpretive methods to qualitative research and especially when an inductive approach is used, such as in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1986) or critical realism research (Bhaskar, 1978), this role for the researcher is amplified. The unrelenting demands for extended periods of iterative cycles of data collection, reflection, and analysis will likely keep newer approaches to qualitative research beyond the direct involvement of corporate researchers and managers. While consultants in these humanistic methods can be used, the benefit of having more insightful researchers participating in the ongoing dialogue among management decision makers will be lost unless firms develop more intimate relationships with external researchers. These external researchers who are deliberately immersing themselves in the experience of the firm's customers over extended periods of time will be highly regarded as consultants by innovative marketing groups. The alternative for organizations would be to structure field assignments for researchers ranging from six months to two years.

Fornier and Mick's (1999) article entitled "Rediscovering satisfaction" is a useful exemplar of grounded theory research for understanding the costs and benefits of taking an inductive approach. In this study, the researchers re-examined status quo conceptualizations of customer satisfaction through a series of three sets of interviews. In the exploratory phase, four interviews, a focus group on technological possessions, and several interviews with consumers at a car repair center were conducted. In the first set of interviews comprising the core of the data collected, two long in-home interviews (ranging from 90 minutes to three hours) were conducted longitudinally with 16 informants. Fornier and Mick collected data in a second set of interviews with 13 persons and/or families intercepted at consumer electronics retail stores as they purchased a technological product for themselves. Informants were interviewed in their homes three times from 90 minutes to three hours: within 24 hours of purchase (but prior to product usage), six to eight weeks after purchase and again six to eight months later. One author took responsibility for an interview series with the same informant. Illustrating the demands of such grounded theory research, all interviews were conducted by the two authors.

The insights Fornier and Mick (1999) derived from their grounded theory approach suggest satisfaction is more evolutionary and socially oriented than previously thought. The studies' results suggest multiple satisfaction models operate in the satisfaction process and are mediated by product, person, and situational factors. A technologically-oriented company such as Intel, Nokia, or Sony would gain precious insights into what situational factors could be most influential for customer satisfaction by sponsoring such grounded theory research. The value of the inductive approach used by Fornier and Mick (1999) is evident in the surprising findings they presented about a topic regarded by many traditional researchers both in academia and in industry as mature. In this way, a fresh perspective was brought to a frequently researched topic of theory because the researchers were not driven by prior conceptions. We expect increased use of such approaches embodied by grounded theory as

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marketing managers seek new answers to old issues.

Postmodern marketing research

Interpretive research procedures such as those used in grounded theory research, critical theory, semiotics, hermeneutics, or phenomenology, and historical analysis must be considered distinct from postmodern marketing research (Brown, 1998). While researchers espousing methodological pluralism would include interpretive research in the realm of science, the unbridled relativism inherent in much postmodern research challenges would challenge many such pluralists. While interpretivists would take an epistemological position that knowledge is objective (and in some situations most readily perceptible through interpretivist methods), the postmodern would take the position that knowledge is subjective, and that meaning is undecidable.

In the realm of applied research, a postmodern approach is illustrated by Gladwell's (1997) presentation of how "cool-hunters" go to urban neighborhoods of New York City to spot nascent fashion trends for youth. According to coolhunters featured in Gladwell's piece, observational research must be delicately pursued because the true innovators in such fashion want to stress their individuality. For those who are "cool", doing what the others do is unpalatable, such as completing field survey forms. The circular and self-referencing logic seen in other postmodern works is illustrated by the following three rules of coolhunting:

1 discovering cool makes it take flight;
2 cool can only be observed;
3 by those who are cool.

Postmodernism is in many ways a rebellion against science and brings with it a denial of absolute truth (Leffel, 1996). It is not surprising that the roots of postmodernism were first nurtured in the humanities – where art – not science is the focus. Literary analysis techniques have been used by postmodern researchers in close readings of a variety of "texts" to discern assumptions and meanings not readily evident (Brown, 1999). While postmodernists may quickly suggest that research methods themselves can bias results, some postmodernists go on to declare that any misreading is inevitable and useful. If artistic interpretation is placed on an equal level with traditional research interpretation, such an assertion is more understandable. Postmodernists would readily make this placement of the relative value of science and art. In fact, Belk (1986) has suggested that "one can learn more ... from a reasonably good novel than from a 'solid' piece of social science research".

While traditional researchers might perceive that industry has no time for art, this too needs to be rethought. On the whole, advertising creatives comprise one group in the business world who share the postmodern mood, and its rejection of traditional survey methodology. While probably not sharing the postmodern mood, managers comprise another group who employ art (Levitt, 1963), or technique (O'Shaughnessy, 1992). In short, industry must have time for art, because forms of art are being employed by key contributors throughout the realms of business on a daily basis. In realms that rely on instinct or art, postmodern researchers will likely have a role in the future. While we have already mentioned the fashion industry, the filmed entertainment industry seems well-suited for postmodern research as artistic inspiration and understanding of cinema audiences have always been essential ingredients for producing commercially successful films. These are not trivial industries – the US filmed entertainment industry alone earned about $12 billion in foreign revenues in 1997 and is one of the leading export sectors of the US economy (Valenti, 1999). We further posit that postmodernist research will likely lead researchers to re-examine the assumptions researchers bring to each step of the research process.

Computer-assisted qualitative research

More integrated use of qualitative data with computer-driven analysis techniques will occur. Free-response data from open-ended questions on surveys can be content analyzed with neural network modeling of text using the CATPAC software tool (Moore *et al.*, 1995). CATPAC methodically scans a text document and builds neural networks based on the grammatical classification of words and syntactic patterns of language it has in its memory. If a word is in the scanning window of seven words, its "neuron" is activated (Green *et al.*, 2000). If two or more neurons are active at the same time, the connection between them is strengthened. Conversely, connections between words can diminish if they have not been recently reinforced. At the end of its processing, CATPAC moves its matrix of strength of word connections into clustering and multidimensional scaling programs for visualization of the spatial relationships among words. In addition, ethnographers' software tools, such as ATLAS/ti (SCOLARI, 2000), and NVivo (Richards, 1999) allow

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sophisticated coding of text, visual images, audio recordings, and streaming video. In addition, these tools also boost theory development through the construction of conceptual modeling diagrams. Therefore, we expect that such tools will see increased applications in a growing trend of analyzing qualitative data using sophisticated techniques.

Quantitative research

Technologies such as data warehousing enable data mining by capturing and managing tremendous amounts of data (Jackson and Wang, 1994). Server-based computers and inexpensive data storage have allowed businesses to capture more and more information about their transactions. In business-to-business marketing, where often the firm knows the customer, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems such as those constructed with software from SAP, Inc. allow compilation of customer histories. These histories can then be accessed by sales and marketing personnel to help in shaping marketing programs. For example, a sales person with dozens of lines of packaging materials can identify which lines of product a customer has not been ordering even though orders of such product would be beneficial to the client. In short, the ERP system can serve as a tool for learning about customer consumption habits and we expect their use to grow.

Applications for data mining in both business-to-business and consumer marketing settings are growing (Bacon, 1999). We will see increased applications in segmenting markets, targeting customers, developing new products, discovering cross-selling and up-selling opportunities, managing customer churn, detecting important changes in customer behavior, and discovering patterns in satisfaction and tracking studies.

The use of data mining in the automated discovery of intriguing patterns in a database that have a profit-making potential for a firm is expected to grow. Induction techniques for discovery, such as neural networks or genetic algorithms, are well-suited for discovering relationships and patterns from data. Neural network models are useful in marketing contexts, which are fast-changing, such as predicting customer attrition, or direct mail response. While these models do not explain the results they produce (leaving the analyst with a black box), direct marketers who are sending millions of pieces of mail would likely find the slight improvement in response offered by such models as economically attractive.

Two types of learning can be undertaken by artificial neural networks (ANN) (Warner and Misra, 1996). In supervised learning, a back-propagation algorithm is used where both the independent and dependent variables are provided to the network (Fassino, 1997a). Instead of solving the relationship between independent and dependent variables as in regression or conjoint analysis, the neural network is trained. Such "supervised learning" is achieved by systematically adjusting each of the weights for linkages variables of the data set (nodes) until estimates of the dependent variable closely match the actual values of the dependent variable. Supervised learning networks provide an analytic option in contexts where conjoint analysis, discrete choice, regression, time series forecasting with ARIMA models, discriminant analysis, CHAID, or logistic regression would be used (Fassino, 1997b). Neural networks can also be used for "unsupervised learning" when the network must learn to recognize patterns within the data (Fassino, 1997c). Such pattern recognition is useful in segmentation and perceptual mapping contexts where cluster analysis, factor analysis, multidimensional scaling, or latent class analysis would be used. As researchers become more familiar, we expect to see increased used of ANN models in these contexts.

Genetic algorithms (GAs) are used to solve prediction and classification problems and to construct decision rules similar to those obtained from decision-tree models (Peacock, 1998). The GA is a model of machine learning which derives its behavior from a metaphor of evolutionary processes in nature where genetic material is shared between two members of a species and outcomes (regeneration or termination) occur (Heitkoetter and Beasley, 1995). A GA is particularly useful in solving poorly structured problems because it attempts to find many solutions simultaneously. It is best suited for running on a data set with a small number of relevant variables. Perhaps, such a data set might be derived from a larger original data set using decision-tree modeling. In this way, a tandem use of machine-based tools would be appropriate. We expect that marketing researchers will be increasingly called on to deal with problems that are fluid and vaguely defined. Therefore, genetic algorithms will see a lot more applications than in the past.

Along with the increased use of data-driven modeling, modeling which is not entirely data-driven will be employed more frequently.

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Latent class analysis is one of these partially data-driven types of modeling and allows researchers more precision in estimating model parameters (Choi *et al.*, 1998). This increased precision is obtained because systematic consumer heterogeneity is detected at the segment level.

Latent class models can detect this heterogeneity without specifying any particular bases for segment-level analyses beforehand. For example, probability of choice can be modeled given a set of independent variables collected on customers in the last year regarding price discounts used in the last year, number of giveaways accepted, number of marketing telephone calls received, and number of mailings sent.

In the first step, the latent class model would offer goodness-of-fit statistics on a variety of solutions. The researcher would select the best fitting solution (perhaps, a three-class solution). After the classes are uncovered, the coefficient parameters and the probability of individual membership would be estimated using an E-M algorithm procedure. The researcher would then examine the parameter estimates of each of the three classes for the independent variables. In this way, the probability of choice for each latent class (segment) can be better understood, as well as the relative importance of the independent variables for each segment.

Without the latent class approach, segment-level heterogeneity would not be detected using an aggregate modeling approach, such as conventional regression or logit modeling. As markets become more fragmented, and as sophisticated databases more readily capture this fragmentation, the appropriateness of using a modeling approach that is partially data-driven will increase. Unlike "black box" approaches that are exclusively data-driven, repeated use of latent class modeling should lead to theory development, as segments become better understood by researchers.

In concluding this section, we expect that more marketing decisions will become automated. This represents a shift from marketing decision support systems to marketing decision automation (Bucklin *et al.*, 1998). As data become more available, analysis techniques become more powerful, and models become more refined, managers will be enabled to shift more of their attention away from short-run, tactical issues to long-run, strategic ones concerning innovations and new market selection.

International marketing research

With the globalization of markets, marketing research has assumed a truly international character and this trend is likely to continue. In 1999, the 50 largest research agencies earned 39 percent of their revenues outside of the USA (Honomichl, 2000). Of these 50 agencies, 42 conducted international operations in 1999. By comparison, only 32 were involved in international operations five years earlier in 1994. Overall, the USA accounts for only 39 percent of the marketing research expenditures worldwide. About 40 percent of all marketing research is conducted in Western Europe and 9 percent in Japan. Most of the research in Europe is done in Germany, the UK, France, Italy, and Spain (Honomichl, 1998).

Conducting international marketing research is much more complex than domestic marketing research (Cavusgil and Das, 1997). Different methodological issues confront the cross-cultural researcher, as well as different practical considerations, such as the legal aspects of conducting research, and the culture's norms about sharing opinions with strangers (especially negative opinions). We now discuss some of these issues and trends.

The viability of global marketing programs will increasingly be assessed through multi-country marketing research studies. While conducting international marketing research, it is important to realize that given the environmental differences, the research design appropriate for one country may not be suitable in another. Before defining the problem, the researcher must isolate and examine the impact of the self-reference criterion (SRC), or the unconscious reference to one's own cultural values. For example, orientation toward time varies considerably across cultures. In Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, people are not as time conscious as Westerners. This influences their perceptions of and preferences for convenience foods such as frozen foods and prepared dinners. In developing an approach to the problem, the researcher should consider the equivalence of consumption and purchase behavior and the underlying factors that influence them. A four-step approach to doing this has been suggested in the literature (Malhotra, 1999a).

Given the time and expense associated with the collection of primary data, the use of secondary data in international marketing research will continue to grow. Evaluation of secondary data is even more critical for international than for domestic projects. Different sources report different values for a

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given statistic, such as GDP, because of differences in the way the unit is defined. Measurement units may not be equivalent across countries. In France, for example, workers are paid a thirteenth monthly salary each year as an automatic bonus, resulting in a measurement construct that is different from other countries. The accuracy of secondary data may also vary from country to country. Data from highly industrialized countries like the USA are likely to be more accurate than those from developing countries. Business and income statistics are affected by the taxation structure and the extent of tax evasion. Population censuses may vary in frequency and year in which the data are collected. With the proliferation of the Internet, international secondary data will become more available and accessible. The need to systematically evaluate these data before using them will become even more crucial. A systematic approach to evaluating the quality of such data has been suggested by the authors (Malhotra *et al.*, 1998).

Qualitative research

Because the researcher is often not familiar with the foreign product market to be examined, qualitative research is crucial in international marketing research. In the initial stages of cross-national research, qualitative research can provide insights into the problem and help in developing an approach by generating relevant research questions and hypotheses, models, and characteristics that influence the research design. Thus, qualitative research may reveal the differences between the foreign and domestic markets. Focus groups can be used in many settings, particularly in industrialized countries. The moderator should not only be trained in focus group methodology, but should also be familiar with the language, culture, and patterns of social interaction prevailing in that country. The focus group findings should be derived not only from the verbal contents but also from nonverbal cues like voice intonations, inflections, expressions, and gestures. The size of the focus group could also vary (Greenbaum, 1996). For example, in Asia seven respondents produce the highest level of interaction among group members. In some countries, such as in the Middle or Far East, people are hesitant to discuss their feelings in a group setting. In other countries such as Japan, people think it is impolite to disagree with others publicly. In these cases, depth interviews should be used. Moreover, qualitative data that are generated should be interpreted in the context of the culture. As the new millennium rolls, we expect that the emergence of transnational segments, such as the global teenagers, will lead to greater use and standardization of international qualitative research.

Survey methods

The feasibility and popularity of the different survey methods vary widely. In the USA and Canada, the telephone has achieved almost total penetration of households. As a result, telephone interviewing is the dominant mode of questionnaire administration. The same situation exists in some of the European countries such as Sweden. However, in many of the other European countries, telephone penetration is still not complete. In developing countries only very few households have telephones (Cox, 1996; Huang, 1998).

In-home personal interviews are the dominant mode of collecting survey data in many European countries such as Switzerland, newly industrialized countries (NICs), and developing countries. While mall intercepts are being conducted in some European countries, such as Sweden, they are not popular in Europe or developing countries. In contrast, central location/street interviews constitute the dominant method of collecting survey data in France and The Netherlands (Han *et al.*, 1994).

Because of low cost, mail interviews continue to be used in most developed countries where literacy is high and the postal system is well developed: the USA, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and The Netherlands, for example. In Africa, Asia, and South America, however, the use of mail surveys and mail panels is low because of illiteracy and the large proportion of the population living in rural areas. Mail panels are extensively used only in a few countries outside the USA, such as Canada, the UK, France, West Germany, and The Netherlands. However, the use of panels may increase with the advent of new technology. Likewise, although a Web site can be accessed from anywhere in the world, access to the Web or e-mail is limited in many countries, particularly developing countries. Hence, the use of electronic surveys is not currently feasible, especially for interviewing households, although this is expected to change in the next decade (Grosh and Glewwe, 1996).

No questionnaire administration method is superior in all situations. The use of computer-assisted methods and mail panels depends heavily on the state of technological development in the country. Likewise, the use of mall intercept interviewing is

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contingent on the dominance of shopping malls in the retailing environment. The same is true for e-mail and Internet surveys, which rely on access to computers and the Internet. Another very important consideration in selecting the methods of administering questionnaires is to ensure equivalence and comparability across countries. Different methods may have different reliabilities in different countries (Tse, 1995). In collecting data from different countries, it is desirable to use survey methods with equivalent levels of reliability, rather than the same method. In concluding our discussion on survey methods, we note that Internet surveys posted to a Web site will become increasingly common not only in international business surveys but in consumer surveys as well.

Measurement and sampling

Attitude scales will become more widely used in cross-national research as consumers become more educated and experienced in responding to marketing research questions (Kumar, 2000). From the viewpoint of the respondents, nominal scales are the simplest to use, whereas, the ratio scales are the most complex. Respondents in many developed countries, due to higher education and consumer sophistication levels, are quite used to providing responses on interval and ratio scales. However, it has been argued that opinion formation may not be well crystallized in some developing countries. Hence, these respondents experience difficulty in expressing the gradation required by interval and ratio scales. Preferences can, therefore, be best measured by using ordinal scales. In particular, the use of binary scales (e.g. preferred/not preferred), the simplest type of ordinal scale, has been recommended (Malhotra, 1988). This trend toward using simple but reliable measures that can be easily translated into multiple languages and cultural contexts will continue to gain momentum, as determining cross-cultural equivalence of scales poses special challenges (Mullen *et al.*, 1996)

Sampling methods used in cross-national studies will increase in sophistication. Implementing the sampling design process in international marketing research is seldom an easy task (Malhotra *et al.*, 1996). Several factors should be considered in defining the target population. The relevant element (respondent) may differ from country to country. In the USA, children play an important role in the purchase of children's cereals. However, in countries with authoritarian child-rearing practices, the mother may be the relevant element. Women play a key role in the purchase of automobiles and other durables in the USA; in male-dominated societies, such as in the Middle East, such decisions are made by men. Accessibility also varies across countries. In Mexico, houses cannot be entered by strangers because of boundary walls and servants. Additionally, dwelling units may be unnumbered and streets unidentified, making it difficult to locate designated households.

Given the lack of suitable sampling frames, the inaccessibility of certain respondents, such as women in some cultures, and the dominance of personal interviewing, probability sampling techniques are uncommon in international marketing research. Quota sampling has been used widely in the developed and developing countries in both consumer and industrial surveys. Snowball sampling is also appealing when the characteristic of interest is rare in the target population or when respondents are hard to reach. For example, it has been suggested that in Saudi Arabia graduate students be employed to hand-deliver questionnaires to relatives and friends. These initial respondents can be asked for referrals to other potential respondents, and so on. This approach would result in a large sample size and a high response rate.

Sampling techniques and procedures vary in accuracy, reliability, and cost from country to country. If the same sampling procedures are used in each country, the results may not be comparable (Saeed and Jeong, 1994). To achieve comparability in sample composition and representativeness, it may be desirable to use different sampling techniques in different countries. When conducting marketing research in foreign countries, statistical estimation of sample size may be difficult, as estimates of the population variance may be unavailable. If statistical estimation of sample size is at all attempted, it should be realized that the estimates of the population variance might vary from country to country. Thus, the sample size may vary across countries. In the past, it has been difficult to implement probability sampling techniques for reasons cited earlier. However, this will change as the development of required infrastructure will allow greater use of probability sampling. Also, the greater use of telephone and Internet survey methods will facilitate the use of probability techniques in international sampling contexts.

Data collection, analysis, and reporting

Given the complexity of cross-national fieldwork, project management for multi-country studies will become more of a

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distinctive skill area for research agencies. The selection, training, supervision, and evaluation of field workers are critical in international marketing research (Malhotra *et al.*, 1996). Local fieldwork agencies are unavailable in many countries. Therefore, it may be necessary to recruit and train local field workers or import trained foreign workers. The use of local field workers is desirable, as they are familiar with the local language and culture. They can thus create an appropriate climate for the interview and be sensitive to the concerns of the respondents. Extensive training may be required and close supervision may be necessary. As observed in many countries, interviewers tend to help the respondent with the answers and select household or sampling units based on personal considerations rather than the sampling plan. Finally, interviewer cheating may be more of a problem in many foreign countries than in the USA. Validation of fieldwork is critical. As we look to the future, the decrease in the cost of international calls and the availability of ethnic field workers locally, will make it feasible to conduct multi-country telephone surveys from a single location. This, along with the use of Internet surveys, will greatly facilitate international fieldwork (Semon, 1997).

Before analyzing the data, the researcher should ensure that the units of measurement are comparable across countries or cultural units. For example, the data may have to be adjusted to establish currency equivalents or metric equivalents. Furthermore, standardization or normalization of the data may be necessary to make meaningful comparisons and achieve consistent results. The data analysis could be conducted at three levels:

1 individual;
2 within-country or cultural unit; and
3 across-countries or cultural units.

The similarities as well as the differences between countries should be investigated. When examining differences, not only differences in means but also differences in variance and distribution should be assessed. All the commonly used statistical techniques can be applied to within-country or across-country analysis, and, subject to the amount of data available, to individual-level analysis as well. Data analysis procedures and techniques will become increasingly standardized in international marketing research (Peterson and Malhotra, 1997).

Report preparation may be complicated by the need to prepare reports for management in different countries and in different languages. In such a case, the researcher should prepare different versions of the report; each geared to specific readers. The different reports should be comparable, although the formats may differ. Most marketing decisions are made from facts and figures arising out of marketing research. But, these figures have to pass the test and limits of logic, subjective experience, and gut feelings of decision makers. The subjective experience and gut feelings of managers could vary widely across countries necessitating that different recommendations be made for implementing the research findings in different countries (Mitevska and Meyer, 1997). As discussed in the following section, the Internet will become a common medium for distributing marketing research findings and reports globally.

Internet marketing research

The World Wide Web (WWW or Web) is the dominant component of the Internet and many use the terms Web and Internet synonymously. The Internet is transforming the way marketing research is being conducted. Fueled by the Internet, the network era is exploding bringing about more sweeping change than the advent of the personal computer (Bradley and Nolan, 1998). The technological infrastructure being created will enable rich, individualized telecommunication between marketers and individual consumers (Struse, 2000). As the network era ushers in ultimate customization or "one-to-one" marketing, marketing research is adapting to these new technologies. Although online research is estimated to have accounted for 2 per cent of all research spending in 1999, if current growth rates continue, half of all revenue for marketing research agencies would be derived from online research in 2004 (James, 2000). Here we highlight several trends that are expected to accelerate as the new millennium progresses.

Exploratory and qualitative research

Bulletin boards (newsgroups) and Web-moderated interviewing consisting of Internet forums, and chat rooms will be increasingly used for exploratory research. They will be used to communicate with experts or individuals representing the target audience in order to obtain background information and develop an understanding of the research context. Bulletin boards are conducted by inviting respondents to a specific Web site where a

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discussion topic is posted. As responses are made to the question, others can read what has been submitted. Like a "slow-motion focus group", bulletin boards could be useful when a researcher needs to discuss issues with a panel of experts or participants in a beta test.

The importance of the Internet as a source of external secondary data will continue to grow. The Internet will be increasingly used for identifying marketing research information on companies. This includes information on firms that supply specific services, client organizations, as well as competitors, collaborators, and affiliates. Some data that would have been otherwise difficult to obtain, will become easily and quickly accessible through the Net. The Internet gives information on new and current subjects, which are not published yet. Information on the Web is of quality if it comes from original sources and it is current. The utility of the Internet for the market researcher is further enhanced due to the easy accessibility and retrieval of information and easy cross-validation of the information available from several sources (De Ville, 1995).

The current benefits of online secondary research to competitive intelligence efforts of companies have been overshadowed by the potential benefits of online primary research to customer research efforts. The excitement of receiving more rapid feedback from customers has been fanned by research agencies bringing automation to the previously slow and laborious data collection efforts they have offered. The gains of integrating information technologies with survey research practices have been trumpeted many times in recent years (Taylor, 2000). Meanwhile, the undeniable benefits gained from using the World Wide Web to keep abreast of competitor's actions by collecting and analyzing secondary data have arrived with much less fanfare (Dutka, 1999). The competitive intelligence capabilities offered by the World Wide Web will become more pronounced in the international arena as penetration for the Internet increases in countries of the world.

An often-heard claim is that 90 percent of the information an organization needs is in the public domain. If this was true, much time and expense needed to be invested to actually come into possession of such information ten years ago. Five years ago, exhausting searches of the World Wide Web may not have returned much of that mythical "90 percent". Now, more complete information is available on the Web and the researcher now has the power of search agents (also called "bots" or "spiders") which can theoretically compare prices and features across every available retailer on the Internet (Dolan and Moon, 2000). The "90 percent" is now more accessible than ever to the Web savvy researcher and the availability and accessibility of this information will increase even further.

An example of the new sophistication in search agents is the third-party price comparison site called MySimon.com (see also Pricescan.com, Compare.Net, and DealTime.com). Visitors to this site indicate the item of interest, and the search agent scans product and pricing information from a list of hundreds of online sellers stocking the item. Full-color visual images of products can be included in what is returned by the search agent. A recent competitive intelligence project done by an international marketer of fashion watches returned rich information about 12 competitors' image and price positioning in cyberspace. This project not only suggested strategic image positioning for the fashion watch marketer, but also tactical moves in pricing, as well.

The freewheeling atmosphere prevalent in cyberspace currently encourages use of such search agents as these sites are seeking notoriety. However, such search agents were not developed specifically for researchers. (The sites featuring these agents typically earn a commission every time a buyer accesses a merchant site and ultimately buys an item through the search.) In time, researchers will likely develop their own search agents in order to avoid ethical dilemmas as the Web matures. The desire for more customized versions of these search agents will also spur researchers to develop their own search tools.

For those researchers with access to fee-based databases of periodicals, journals, and company-based information, such as ABI/Inform, Dow Jones Interactive, and Lexis/Nexis, background research can be accomplished with new power. For those without access to such fee-based databases, free-access sites remain extremely useful.

The implications of the recent advances in Internet research to managers are plain. Either develop a team that has become well versed in using the tools and resources of the Internet, or make decisions with lower quality information than competitors. Firms failing to do this will have their business models changed from providing valued goods and services to ones providing commodities – if they survive, at all. The good news for small businesses in all this is that the Internet brings them closer to having the rich information formerly available only to

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major corporations with multi-million dollar research budgets. Small firms who capitalize on this opportunity will be led by managers adept as Internet researchers.

Organizations will increasingly use intranets that greatly facilitate the search for access to internal secondary data. The Coca-Cola Company, for example, has developed powerful intranet applications that enable Coca-Cola managers worldwide to search for past and current research studies and a wide variety of marketing related information on the basis of key words. Once located, the information can be accessed online.

More and more qualitative research will be conducted on the Internet. Online focus groups will become commonplace. even the preferred method compared to traditional focus groups for a wide range of scenarios. The Internet enables the researcher to reach segments that are usually hard to access: doctors, lawyers, professional people, working mothers. and others who lead busy lives and are not interested in taking part in traditional focus groups. They offer several advantages including less time and low costs and can bridge the time and distance gap in recruiting respondents. Even individual depth interviews (IDIs) and projective techniques will gain popularity on the Net. The traditional disadvantages of the Internet in responses being less spontaneous, lack of interactivity between/with respondents, and limited group dynamics will be substantially overcome as the Internet becomes a way of life (Edmonson, 1997).

Descriptive and quantitative research

Internet surveys will increase in popularity. One reason is that the cost, in most cases is less than phone and mail surveys or personal interviews, three of the most common types of surveys. Also, the Internet survey is not as inconvenient as the phone call in the middle of dinner. The online survey can be completed in one's own time and place. Quick response time and the ability to target specific populations are also advantages worth noting. As Internet usage becomes more widespread, the disadvantages of this method in terms of sampling limitations and representativeness will be substantially reduced (Shukers, 1996).

Surveys on the Internet can be conducted by way of e-mail, Web sites, or downloading from Web sites. The survey can be included in the e-mail or attached. Web surveys consisting of a long, single page written in HTML are currently accounting for 80 per cent of data collection online (MacElroy, 1999). Click buttons and boxes, and fill-in text boxes are features used in these surveys. Additional programming using CGI (a scripting-language that reads the data into a database when it is received) or HTML can automate the data entry process for such a Web survey. A multiple-page Web survey using fixed-form interactive authoring tools will present questions individually as in a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). A more graphically elaborate version of the multiple-page Web survey can be created using customized interactive programming. Downloadable surveys that shift the computing tasks to the respondent's PC have also been used successfully. Once the respondent downloads software provided by the researcher, a smaller file containing the survey is run on the respondent's computer. The resulting data file from this survey can then be uploaded the next time the Internet is accessed. The additional costs of programming and time required by respondents for downloadable surveys (20 minutes to two hours) make downloadable surveys more demanding to field. However, with advances in technology this situation is likely to change making downloadable surveys more attractive.

The Internet will be increasingly used for observation. The primary observations are being made by the number of times the Web page is visited and the time spent on the page. Further, various other links can be provided by the researcher on the Web page and it can be observed as to which links are accessed more often. This will provide the researcher with important information about the information needs of the individuals and also of the interests of the target segment. The analysis of the links from where the company site is being approached by the individuals will provide the market researcher with the important information regarding the consumers related interests and an in-depth analysis of the link sites will provide information on advertising, image, competitors, consumers, target market demographics and psychographics.

The Internet will become a useful vehicle for conducting causal research. Different experimental treatments can be displayed at different Web sites. Respondents can then be recruited to visit these sites and respond to a questionnaire that obtains information on the dependent variable. Thus, the Internet will provide a mechanism for controlled experimentation, although in a laboratory type of environment.

Sampling potential respondents who are surfing the Internet will become more meaningful as such samples will increasingly approximate populations of interest as the penetration of the Internet increases. More

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and more industries will meet this criterion. In software, computers, networking, technical publishing, semiconductors, and graduate education, it is rapidly becoming feasible to use the Internet for sampling respondents for quantitative research, such as surveys. Sampling on the Internet will also become practical for many non-computer-oriented consumer products. Extensive pre-recruited pools of respondents will be more frequently used to approximate probability sampling. Such panels will be recruited via mail and personal contact not via the Internet. Panels such as these already exist and have millions of potential respondents from just about every country in the world (Decision Analyst, 2000). Such techniques will further enhance the generalizability of Internet research findings.

Reporting

Marketing research reports will be routinely published or posted directly to the Web on locations that are protected by passwords or on corporate intranets. These reports will incorporate all kinds of multimedia presentations including, graphs, pictures, animation, audio, and full motion video. It will be easy to integrate these reports and findings to become a part of the decision support system.

The benefits of intranets are not only increased organizational learning, but also enhanced productivity for the corporate marketing researcher. Once reports are posted to an intranet, the corporate marketing researcher no longer has to directly field queries from managers throughout the organization who become interested in the results of specific studies. Time on the phone briefing such managers declines precipitously. In this way, the marketing researcher is freed to be more forward-focused, instead of repeatedly disseminating the same information to different managers (Calahan, 1998).

Ethics in marketing research

Marketing research has often been described as having four stakeholders:

1 the marketing researcher;
2 the client;
3 the respondent; and
4 the public.

These stakeholders have certain responsibilities to each other and to the research project. Ethics issues arise when the interests of these stakeholders are in conflict and when one or more of the stakeholders are lacking in their responsibilities (Malhotra and Miller, 1999). Ethical issues are best resolved by the stakeholders behaving honorably. Codes of conduct, such as the US Marketing Association code of ethics, are available to guide behavior and help resolve ethical dilemmas. We discuss some of the common ethical dilemmas encountered at the various stages of the marketing research process.

The researchers must ensure that the research design utilized will provide the information needed to address the marketing research problem that has been identified. The client should have the integrity not to misrepresent the project and should describe the constraints under which the researcher must operate and not make unreasonable demands. Longitudinal research takes time. Descriptive research might require interviewing customers. If time is an issue, or if customer contact has to be restricted, the client should make these constraints known at the start of the project. Finally, the client should not take undue advantage of the research firm to solicit unfair concessions for the current project by making false promises of future research contracts (Malhotra and Miller, 1996). Partnering relationships between clients and researchers will become the norm in the future, helping to resolve such ethical issues.

Given the limitations of secondary data, it is often necessary to collect primary data in order to obtain the information needed to address the management decision problem. The use of secondary data alone when the research problem requires primary data collection could raise ethical concerns. Such concerns are heightened when the client is being billed a fixed fee for the project and the proposal submitted to get the project did not adequately specify the data collection methodology. On the other hand, in some cases it may be possible to obtain the information needed from secondary sources alone, making it unnecessary to collect primary data. The unnecessary collection of expensive primary data, when the research problem can be addressed based on secondary data alone, may be unethical. These ethical issues become more salient if the research firm's billings go up, but at the expense of the client (Peterson, 1996). Given the extensive nature of secondary data that will be abundantly available, these issues will become more salient in the future.

Qualitative research

When conducting qualitative research, ethical issues related to the respondents and the general public will be of primary concern. These issues include: disguising the

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purpose of the research and the use of deceptive procedures, videotaping and recording the proceedings, comfort level of the respondents, and misusing the findings of qualitative research.

All indirect procedures require disguising the purpose of the research, at least to some extent. Often, a cover story is used to camouflage the true purpose. This cannot only violate the respondents' right to know but also result in psychological harm. To minimize such negative effects, the respondents should be informed up-front that the true purpose of the research is being disguised so as not to bias the responses. After completing the research tasks, debriefing sessions should be held in which the respondents are informed about the true purpose and given opportunities to make comments or ask questions. We expect that greater attention will be paid in the future to avoid deceptive procedures that violate respondents' right to privacy and informed consent, for example, allowing clients to observe focus groups or in-depth interviews by introducing them as colleagues helping with the project (Malhotra and Miller, 1998).

An ethical dilemma involves videotaping or recording the focus group or the depth interview. Video or audio-taping the respondents without their prior knowledge or consent raises ethical concerns. Ethical guidelines suggest that respondents should be informed and their consent obtained prior to the start of the proceedings, preferably at the time of recruitment (Robson, 1991). Furthermore, at the end of the meeting, participants should be asked to sign a written statement conveying their permission to use the recording. This statement should disclose the true purpose of the research, and all people who will have access to the recording. Participants should be given an opportunity to refuse signing. The tapes should be edited to completely omit the identity and comments of the respondents who have refused (Stafford and Stafford, 1993). We expect that in the future codes of ethical conduct will stipulate such practices.

Another concern that will receive more attention is the comfort level of the respondents. During qualitative research, particularly in in-depth interviews, respondents should not be pushed beyond a point so as to make them uncomfortable. Respect for the respondent's welfare should warrant restraint on the part of the moderator or interviewer. If a respondent feels uncomfortable and does not wish to answer more questions on a particular topic, the interviewer should not aggressively probe further.

Quantitative research

The marketing research industry will become more proactive and aggressive in positioning its undertaking as distinct from selling. Branding techniques will be incorporated more frequently, such as announcing to respondents that the research project is "CASRO-approved", or "meets the standards of ESOMAR". The use of survey research as a guise for selling or fundraising is clearly unethical. Another ethical issue that is salient in survey and observation research is respondents' anonymity. Researchers have an obligation to not disclose respondents' names to outside parties including the client. This is all the more critical if the respondents were promised anonymity in order to obtain their participation. The client is not entitled to the names of respondents. Only when respondents are notified in advance and their consent is obtained prior to administering the survey, can their names be disclosed to the client. Even in such situations, the researcher should have the assurance that the client will not use respondents' names in the sales effort or misuse them in other ways. Researchers should not place respondents in stressful situations. Disclaimers such as "there are no right or wrong answers, we are only interested in your opinion" can relieve much of the stress inherent in a survey (Nelson and Kiecker, 1996).

Ethical issues related to observing and recording the behavior of respondents will gain in importance. Often the behavior of people is observed without their knowledge because informing the respondents may alter their behavior. However, this can violate the respondents' privacy. One guideline is that people should not be observed for research in situations where they would not expect to be observed by the public. However, observing people in public places like a mall or a grocery store is only appropriate if certain procedures are followed. Notices should be posted in these areas stating that they are under observation for marketing research purposes. After the data have been collected, the researcher should obtain the necessary permission from the respondents. If any of the respondents refuse to grant permission, the observation records pertaining to them should be destroyed. These guidelines should also be applied when using cookies on the Internet. Cookies are small bits of information about a user's previous access to a single Web site. These cookies are created by the Web site's programs and stored in a user's browser (Bowers, 1998, 1999).

Several ethical issues related to the researcher-respondent relationship and the

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researcher-client relationship will have to be addressed in questionnaire design. Of particular concern is the use of overly long questionnaires, asking sensitive questions, and deliberately biasing the questionnaire. Respondents are volunteering their time and should not be over-burdened by soliciting too much information. The researcher should avoid overly long questionnaires. Sensitive questions deserve special attention. On one hand, candid and honest responses are needed to generate meaningful findings. On the other hand, the researcher should not invade respondents' privacy or cause them undue stress. Finally, the researcher has the ethical responsibility of designing the questionnaire so as to obtain the required information in an unbiased manner. Deliberately biasing the questionnaire in a desired direction – for example, by asking leading questions – cannot be condoned. Also, the questionnaire should be thoroughly pretested before fieldwork begins, or an ethical breach will have occurred (Vitell and Ho, 1997).

The researcher has several ethical responsibilities to both the client and the respondents in the sampling process that will become increasingly important in the future. Pertaining to the client, the researcher must develop a sampling design that is appropriate for controlling the sampling and nonsampling errors. When appropriate, probability sampling should be used. When nonprobability sampling is used, effort should be made to obtain a representative sample. It is unethical and misleading to treat nonprobability samples as probability samples and to project the results to a target population. Researchers must be sensitive to preserving the anonymity of the respondents when conducting business-to-business research, employee research, and other projects in which the population size is small. When the population size is small, it is easier to discern the identities of the respondents than when the samples are drawn from a large population. Sampling details that are too revealing or verbatim quotations in reports to the client can compromise the anonymity of the respondents. In such situations, the researcher has the ethical obligation to protect the identities of the respondents, even if it means limiting the level of sampling detail that is reported to the client and other parties (Akaah, 1997).

Future directions in ethics

As clients become more sophisticated, they will increasingly participate in marketing research decisions along with the researchers. This will occur as researchers participate more in marketing decision making, as discussed earlier in the paper. This blending of the roles will lead to more openness, communication, and understanding, minimizing the ethical conflicts related to the researcher and the clients.

Greater attention will be paid to preserving the rights of the respondents. The invasion of respondents' privacy has already become a burning issue (Nowak and Phelps, 1997). For example, the use of telephone surveys is being threatened by legislation. About half of the states in the USA have introduced bills to regulate unsolicited telephone calls and the remaining are considering similar legislation. A California law, designed to limit eavesdropping, makes it illegal to listen in on an extension, and this might limit supervisory monitoring of telephone interviewers. In the network era, the individual consumer's power position among the stakeholders will improve so that marketers will increasingly rely on consumers' permission to offer them goods and services online (Godin, 1999). This development will heighten consumer's concerns about privacy in this world of online transactions. Such concern will become a critical issue in the future of online business. Consumer advocates believe that consumers will ultimately own and control their own historical profile of activity with businesses (Clemons and Bradley, 1998). In this setting, consumers would have the ability to bring their profile to any online exchange opportunity. In this way, the consumer's first visit to a virtual store will be as satisfying as a repeat visit. However, the control over consumer information will confer such significant influence over consumer activities that the struggle over who captures, controls, owns, and uses consumer information will be a titanic one. If the issue of privacy for individual consumers cannot be satisfactorily resolved for consumers, government regulatory intervention could be likely.

One way in which this dilemma will be resolved is by the marketing research industry voluntarily adopting practices and codes of conduct that show a greater respect for the rights of the respondents and general public. We expect to see codes of conduct receive more emphasis and significance. While several national marketing and marketing research associations have ethical guidelines, a truly international code of marketing research ethics is lacking (Armstrong, 1996). However, such a code should emerge in the near future. For example, ESOMAR, the European Society for

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Opinion and Marketing Research (www.esomar.nl), has a detailed and comprehensive code of ethical research behavior that could be used as a starting point for formulating a more global marketing research code of ethics (O'Boyle and Dawson, 1992).

Conclusions

As we step into the new millennium, the field of marketing research holds great promise. In this paper we have attempted to combine theoretical and practitioner perspectives to identify the issues and trends pertinent in the new millennium. We also want to conclude on the same note, the need to blend these two perspectives. For the promise and the potential of marketing research to be realized, it is crucial that the gap between academic and commercial marketing research be bridged. This can occur by academic researchers examining substantive issues that are managerially relevant. Simultaneously, applied marketing researchers must realize that marketing research should be grounded in theory. Theory enables us to meaningfully interpret and integrate the findings with previous research. Thus, a cross-fertilization of academic and applied research is needed. We hope that our paper will provide an impetus in this direction.

Notes

1 For a historical discussion and an assessment of marketing research see McTier Anderson (1994), Silk (1993) and Bass, F.M. (1993).
2 For the strategic role of marketing research see Hagel and Rayport (1996; 1997).
3 For the relationship among information processing, marketing decisions, and performance see Erdem and Swift (1998).
4 For the role of marketing research in marketing management see Balasubramanian (1996).

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