

# Why Indian market research is out of touch with reality

A GREAT homogenisation has taken place in the country. Even while a homogenisation of lifestyle is taking place, an individual style is emerging strongly. A brand orientation is sweeping the country and the consumer is becoming conscious of brands even in the case of a product such as rice.

In this changed scenario, market research is moving from one set of marketing tools to another, new strategies are emerging and no longer is research metro or big city oriented. With the expansion of markets, one has to go beyond the conventional limits and explore new centres including small towns and villages.

The concept of 'univers' is not strictly applicable today. The parametres of research are changing with the scope of inquiry widening. Interlinkages between various facets of research are also being found.

Market research today, whatever be its purpose can no longer be just qualitative or quantitative in nature. It has to be a combination of both methods.

Sample size has ceased to be the main criteria. Earlier the numbers were important because a lot of secondary sources of reference were not available. But now sources such as the census and a more wider government and private data base has made this irrelevant.

Today one understands and estimates the market and consumer, while earlier one first estimated and then understood them.

## N BHASKAR RAO



More technological tools of research are used in the West such as a built-in eye on television sets and various other scanning devices, hidden camera's in stores and lots of recording methods in general.

They have more emphasis on a laboratory approach unlike us who concentrate on field research.

Table research and the analytical orientation is missing here. We are not doing enough analysis of field data. Secondary data is not being much utilised and synchronised with field research.

Even though research utilisation in the past five years is better, still user awareness is not enough.

Thus often opinion polls are misused and there is enough evidence to suggest that election poll surveys are based on fudged up data.

Users need to verify from research organisations the methodology applied, how they reach-

ed the conclusion they did and the limitations of the research. For every research has its limitations and this is as important to understand as much as the strength of the research.

I am quite aghast at the Questionnaire approach wherein young students who are unaware of basic research skills are hired as temporary labour and made to fill questionnaires in the name of market research.

The selection procedure for respondents needs to be also carefully looked into and indigenous methodologies need to be adopted.

But I believe the number one pitfall of researchers in India is that they have no larger understanding of the country and of its people in general. Usually they understand the Indian masses in terms of segments. They ignore the knowledge of linkages such as understanding the poverty levels in the country and the development aspect.

I think market research should go with development. We need to question, 'Research for whom?' and for 'What purpose?'

Why should the benefit of research methodologies be only for private enterprise, why not for the public at large. We need to develop a new set of research methodologies for this purpose and in this case I am all for the democratization of research.

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