

IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY OF CONDUCTING MARKETING RESEARCH IN THE FOOD PRODUCTS MARKET

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Abstract: The food products market is one of the most dynamic and socially significant sectors of the economy. Rapid changes in consumer needs, growing competition, and the impact of global supply chains require highly accurate and scientifically grounded marketing research. This article examines the methodological foundations of marketing research in the food market and proposes improved approaches based on modern tools, analytical technologies, and digital techniques. Recommendations for enhancing research quality and examples of applied methodologies are provided.

Keywords: food market, marketing research, research methodology, consumer behavior, data analysis, market segmentation, competitiveness.

Marketing research is a key tool for understanding consumer preferences, forecasting demand, and formulating strategic decisions in the food products market. However, traditional research approaches often fail to reflect current trends such as rapid digitalization, increased consumer awareness, and the growing importance of food safety and sustainability. Therefore, improving the methodology of marketing research in the food market is essential to ensure reliability, accuracy, and practical relevance. This article aims to analyze existing methodological gaps and propose modernized approaches suitable for today's economic environment.

Marketing research refers to a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information to support business decision-making. In the food sector, research typically focuses on: consumer needs and preferences; product quality and packaging; pricing strategies; competitive environment; distribution channels; demand forecasting.

The food market differs from other markets due to: high consumption frequency; strong cultural and regional influence; sensitivity to quality and safety issues; short product life cycles; strict governmental regulations. These characteristics require a more advanced research methodology.

Traditional methods provide the basic framework for data collection and analysis. They include:

1. Surveys and Questionnaires. Used to measure consumer satisfaction, brand awareness, and purchasing behavior.
2. Focus Groups. Provide qualitative insights into attitudes, perceptions, and expectations.
3. Observational Research. Useful for understanding real purchasing behavior in supermarkets or farmers' markets.
4. Expert Interviews. Collect professional opinions from producers, retailers, and distributors.
5. Statistical Analysis of Sales Data. Helps track consumer trends and identify seasonality.

Although useful, these methods are limited by subjectivity, small sample sizes, and long data processing times.

Several issues demand methodological improvement: growing data volume and complexity; changes in consumer behavior caused by digital technologies; stronger competition in the food supply chain; increased role of sustainability and food safety; emergence of online and mobile shopping; demand for real-time consumer insights. These developments require an expanded methodological toolkit.

Modern Approaches to Enhancing Marketing Research Methodology:

1. Integration of Digital Tools. Online surveys, mobile applications, and social media analytics allow researchers to collect data faster, more accurately, and from larger samples. Example: Tracking consumer reactions to new products via Instagram sentiment analysis.

2. Big Data Analytics and Machine Learning. Big data enables researchers to analyze vast datasets including purchase histories, loyalty card data, online reviews, and web traffic. Advantages: more detailed segmentation; predictive demand models; personalized recommendations; real-time market monitoring.

3. GIS and Geospatial Analysis. Geographical Information Systems allow analysis of regional differences in consumption. Application: Mapping food product demand across regions to optimize distribution networks.

4. Neuromarketing Techniques. Technologies such as eye-tracking, facial expression analysis, and EEG measurements help identify subconscious consumer responses to packaging, taste, or branding.

5. Sensory Evaluation Methods. Food products require assessment of taste, smell, texture, and appearance. Modern sensory analysis involves: trained panels; standardized scoring systems; hedonic testing.

6. Development of Multi-Method Research Models. Combining several methods increases reliability. For example: quantitative research (surveys, analytics); qualitative research (focus groups, in-depth interviews); experimental research (product testing, A/B marketing experiments).

A modernized, systematic methodology should include the following stages:

- Define research objectives clearly. Identify the exact issue: consumer perception, packaging design, product demand, etc.
- Conduct preliminary desk research. Analyze trends, competitors, regulations, and secondary data.
- Apply multi-source data collection. Combine: online surveys, social media monitoring, retail sales data, sensory evaluation results.
- Use advanced analytical tools. Machine learning, cluster analysis, and regression models.
- Validate results through triangulation. Compare outputs from different methodologies.
- Develop data-driven recommendations. Use dashboards and visualization tools (Power BI, Tableau).

A company planning to launch a new yogurt product may follow this improved methodology:

- Identify consumer needs: natural, low-sugar yogurt.
- Collect data: online survey + supermarket sales statistics + social media analysis.
- Conduct sensory testing: evaluate taste and texture.
- Analyze data: cluster consumers into segments and forecast demand using ML.

- Develop strategy: pricing, packaging design, promotion methods.
- Monitor performance: real-time sales dashboards.

Conclusion. Improving the methodology of conducting marketing research in the food products market is essential for understanding complex consumer behavior and making informed strategic decisions. Modern technologies—big data, machine learning, GIS, sensory evaluation, and neuromarketing—significantly enhance research accuracy and efficiency. A multi-method, data-driven approach allows companies to increase competitiveness, reduce risks, and quickly adapt to market changes. As the food market continues to evolve, continuous innovation in marketing research methods will remain a key requirement for sustainable development.

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