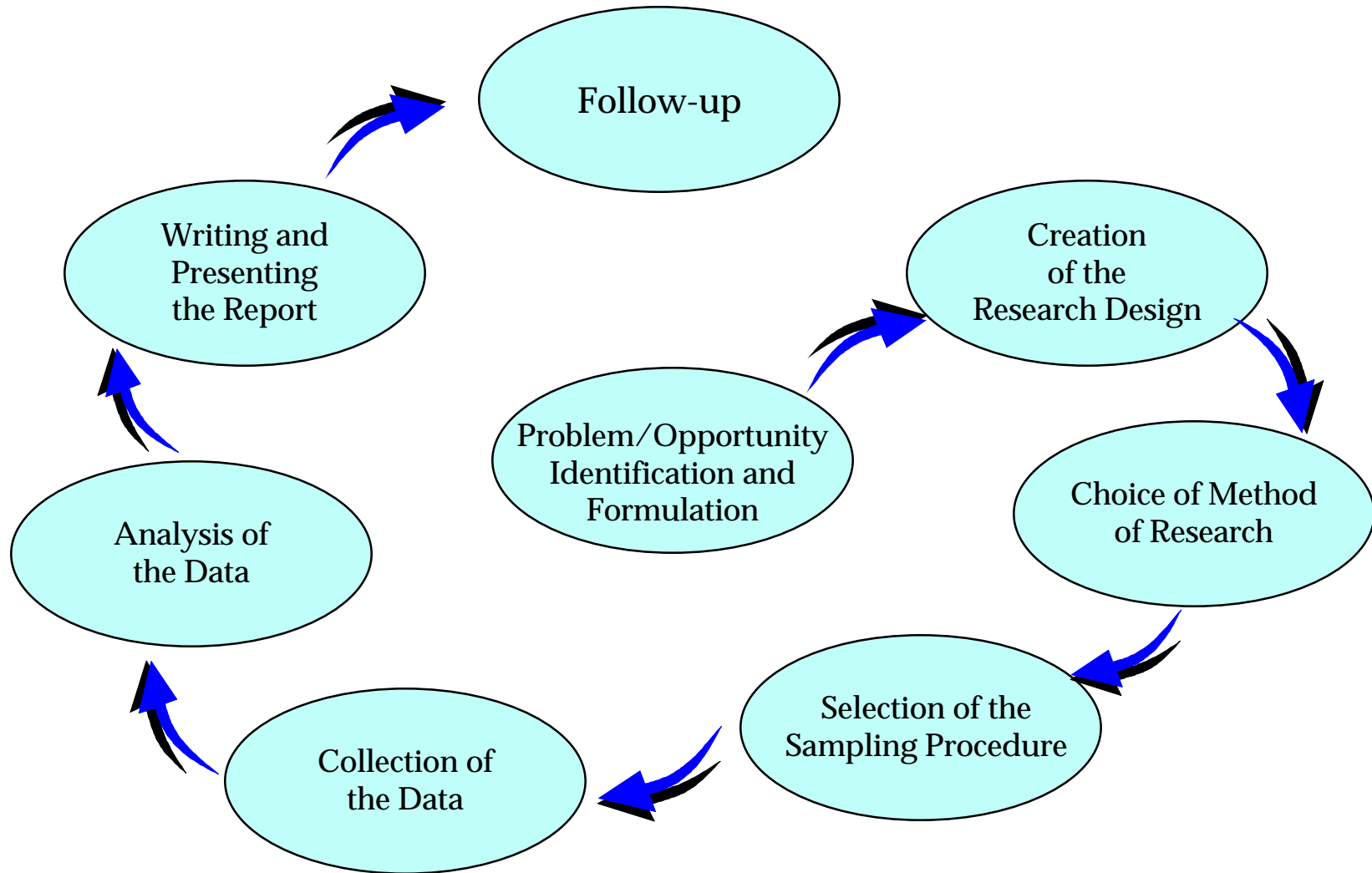


Link between the decision process and the research process

The Marketing Research Process



I. SPI Objective:

To increase the market penetration of plastic containers to 20 percent by 1990.

II. Courses of action:

- A. Develop and implement a marketing program to maintain or improve the acceptance of plastic containers in markets where plastic now dominates.
- B. Develop and implement a marketing program to expand the acceptance of plastic containers in markets where plastic has a low or moderate penetration.
- C. Develop and implement a marketing program to enter new markets currently dominated by paper, paperboard, glass, or metal.
- D. Develop and implement a marketing program to work actively with manufacturers of new products.

		MARKETS	
		NEW	EXISTING
PRODUCTS	NEW	D	B
	EXISTING	C	A

Rationale for the Study The purpose of this study is to identify and characterize packaging markets and screen these markets as to their potential for penetration by plastic containers. The high-potential markets identified through this study will be further screened in the study of consumer acceptance.

Research Objectives

1. To compare current and potential packaging markets with regard to dimensions indicative of market potential.
2. To categorize packaging markets as to the degree of plastic container penetration.
3. To evaluate the high-potential markets in terms of the compatibility of packaging requirements with existing production and material capabilities.

Information Needs

1. Rank container markets by number of containers used per year. Illustrate trends over the past five years.
2. Classify markets as to the most likely plastic manufacturing process (thermoforming, injection molding, spin welding, or blow molding).
3. Classify markets by proportion of containers that are paper, paperboard, glass, metal, and plastic. Illustrate trends over the past five years.
4. Rank container markets by retail price of the product. Illustrate trends over the past five years.
5. Rank container markets by proportion of retail price represented by packaging costs. Illustrate trends over the past five years.
6. Rank container markets by magnitude of packaging cost increase or decrease resulting from a change to a plastic container.
7. Classify markets as to the degree of fit with existing production and material capabilities -- high, medium, and low fit.
8. Calculate the plastic container manufacturer's break-even volume for each market. Determine the proportion of market penetration required to break even for each market. Rank the markets or proportion of market penetration required to break even.

Rationale for the Study It was the opinion of the research firm that demonstrating consumer acceptance or preference would be the critical factor in influencing a manufacturer to use a plastic container, in the absence of an unfavorable cost differential or excessive distribution problems. Consumer preference for a plastic container over existing packaging would provide strong evidence for a potential sales increase resulting from a change to a plastic container. In addition, understanding the underlying characteristics of the plastic container which cause this preference would be useful in developing a promotional program directed to manufacturers. The same information would be useful to manufacturers in developing a promotional program for trade and consumer acceptance.

Research Objectives

1. To determine which container markets have the greatest consumer acceptance of plastic containers.
2. To determine the characteristics of plastic containers which represent advantages compared with paper, paperboard, glass, and metal containers.

Information Needs

1. Identify the characteristics or attributes which differentiate alternative packaging materials.
2. Determine the importance of packaging attributes in container markets.
3. Determine consumer preference for alternative packaging materials in container markets.
4. Identify the characteristics of packaging containers which influence consumer preference.
5. Determine which attributes of plastic containers represent important selling points.
6. Determine the characteristics of the ideal packaging container.
7. Determine the likes and dislikes of consumers regarding current packaging containers.
8. Determine what suggestions consumers have for packaging improvement in container markets.
9. Determine which markets have the most inadequate packaging and whether plastic containers represent an improvement.
10. Determine consumer attitudes toward ecological aspects of packaging materials, specifically plastic.
11. Determine consumers' perceptions regarding the cost of alternative packaging materials. Do some containers have a "high price/high quality" image?
12. Determine the nature of the trade-offs consumers will make in selecting a brand/package. How large a price increase will be accepted for a superior packaging form? How much will a lower price offset packaging deficiencies?
13. Determine the characteristics (demographic, life cycle, usage rates) of con.....?

The Marketing Problem versus the Marketing Research Problem

A distinction should be made between the *marketing* problem and the *marketing research* problem.

Marketing Problem

General
Decision oriented
Diffused, Multifaceted

Marketing Research Problems

Specific
Data oriented
Sharply focused

Examples of the Relationship between Decision Problems and Research Problems

Decision Problems

Develop package for a new product

Increase market penetration through the opening of new stores

Increase store traffic

Increase amount of repeat purchasing behavior

Develop more equitable sales territories

Allocate advertising budget geographically

Introduce new product

Research Problems

Evaluate effectiveness of alternative package designs

Evaluate prospective locations

Measure current image of the store

Assess current amount of repeat purchasing behavior

Assess current and proposed territories with respect to their potential and workload

Determine current level of market penetration in the respective areas

Design a test market through which the likely acceptance of the new product can be assessed.

Developing the Research Focus

