State of Original Research for Marketing 2018

In a study of nearly 700 marketers, we explore how organizations publish research to tell high-impact stories.
How marketers tell stories with data

As we look at marketing in 2018, we know it is more difficult than ever to get attention. The data shows that what worked five, two, even one year ago is no longer effective…except for a few things, such as original research.

But we wondered: Is original research underused because it’s considered too complex or time-consuming? Could it be the next frontier for many marketers?

We surveyed nearly 700 marketers, exploring if they publish research, the types of research they undertake, how satisfied they are with the results, and whether they plan to reinvest. The results show us that original research holds a lot of promise, but there’s still a lot for marketers to learn.

We look forward to helping marketers create and do more with original research in the months and years to come.

For more granular research findings, visit http://mantisresearch.com/survey-based-research. And to see our study methodology, turn to page 19.

Steve Rayson
Founder, Buzzsumo

Michele Linn
Co-Founder, Mantis Research
What do we mean by “original research”?

We’re not referring to market research, customer research or competitive research. We want to understand how marketers develop research studies with the purpose of publishing results to their websites or other channels ... all in an effort to get attention, leads and subscribers.

Examples of original research for marketing include: industry benchmarks, salary guides, “State of” reports, analysis of public or private data to look for trends, etc.

OVERVIEW OF KEY TERMS

PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY RESEARCH:
Primary research is any research based on new data you gather, such as from original surveys or interviews. Secondary research is research based on existing data. For example, analyzing third-party data in a new way to extract insights.

THIRD-PARTY DATA VS. OWNED DATA:
When marketers analyze datasets to extract original insights, they may choose third-party data, such as public datasets or licensed data, or they may choose to examine internal, “owned” data, such as user data.
“Original research is the most powerful format for content. It’s crazy that more people don’t do it.”

ANDY CRESTODINA | Co-founder | Orbit Media | @crestodina
1 in 2 marketers publish original research

Has your marketing team created and published original research in the past 12 months?

- TOTAL AVERAGE: 47%
- B2B: 35%
- B2C: 48%
- B2B AND B2C*: 47%

*Businesses that serve both B2B and B2C customers

B2B marketers are significantly more likely to use original research than B2C marketers.
“Organizations that take on original research can accomplish a great deal, for content marketing and beyond. Obviously, research creates opportunities for thought leadership in a field. It’s also an opportunity to generate content that can be ‘recombinant,’ in not only a research report, but also in a blog post, Powerpoint presentation, speech, infographic, video, etc. Beyond ‘just’ the content part, research can also reveal new opportunities, in the marketplace or for the product, that can drive a business forward or generate PR value, or gain traction with influencers.”

REBECCA LIEB  |  Co-founder | Kaleido Insights  | @lieblink
Survey-based research more common than secondary research

What type of original research are you publishing?

- Survey-based research: 58%
- Analyzing owned data (e.g., owned technology platform or user data): 54%
- Analyzing data from third-party sources (e.g., BuzzSumo, Google Analytics, Zillow, etc.): 42%
- One-on-one interviews: 36%
- Analyzing data from public/government sources (e.g., US Census Bureau, environmental data): 29%

While surveys are the most popular option, investigating owned data is a close second. Tech companies were most likely to use owned data as research (66% do so).
Those who use research are satisfied with results

Marketers say research is a strong performer. Fifty-six percent report it has either exceeded expectations or met the majority of expectations.
“Publishing research has worked extremely well for us. I believe the keys to success are:

- Complete and utter dedication to letting the data tell the story. We never let our preconceived biases influence the conclusions.
- Focusing our efforts on high-value research about current hot topics.
- Doing studies that others have not done before.
- Patience. You don’t publish one study and suddenly everyone loves you. You need to do it on an ongoing basis for a while.”

ERIC ENGE | CEO | Stone Temple | @stonetemple
More than 9 in 10 marketers plan to conduct original research in the next year

Do you plan to conduct additional original research in the next 12 months?

- **92%** Yes
- **8%** Unsure
- **1%** No

The vast majority of those using research have plans to conduct additional research in the coming 12 months—a sure sign that research is working well for them.
Half of those **not** using research plan to invest soon

[Those who do not use research]
Are you considering using original research for content marketing in the future?

- **49%**
  - Yes, in the next 12 months
- **19%**
  - Yes, but we need more than 12 months
- **32%**
  - No

BuzzSumo | Mantis Research | 2018
“The biggest value is in producing something that is both unique and beneficial to your customers and prospects—it presents your brand as an authoritative voice within your market and gives people a reason to seek you out. Great research also attracts backlinks more than any other kind of content, which in turn boosts your domain authority.”

RACHEL HABERMAN | Content Marketing Manager | Skyword Team-focused benefits
Website traffic and social shares are the top marketing benefits reported from original research

What **marketing-focused** benefits have you seen because of original research?

- Website traffic: 74%
- Social shares: 63%
- Mentions from media, PR, influencers, bloggers, etc.: 56%
- Leads (i.e., information about potential customers): 50%
- Backlinks to your website: 49%
- Subscribers (e.g., new subscribers to email, blog, etc.): 36%
- Improved search rankings: 36%
- Share of voice: 23%
- Comments on post: 22%

How well is research performing? While marketers say they’re satisfied with the results of publishing research (see page 7), the reported benefits on a metric-by-metric basis are still modest — perhaps a sign that there’s more to learn about how to amplify research for stronger results.
Research give marketing teams a reliable supply of editorial ideas

Research is a wellspring of ideas to fuel the content engine... greater than 2 in 3 report they get more ideas and higher-quality ideas from original research.

What team-focused benefits have you or your team realized because of original research?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More content/editorial ideas</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-quality content/editorial ideas</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to learn more about our customers and prospects</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BuzzSumo | Mantis Research | 2018
“Our State of Agile Marketing research has been a virtual gold mine for subscribers, backlinks, and real money-in-the-bank clients. In our CRM I’ll see someone has downloaded the report, and within a couple of days (sometimes a couple of hours!) I’ll see that same someone requesting a call to talk about becoming a client. There’s a clear correlation between reading the report and being ready to make a purchase.”

ANDREA FRYEAR | President and Lead Trainer | Agile Sherpas | @AndreaFryear
Marketers doing too little with research

What types of content do you produce from your original research?

- Blog post(s): 77%
- Infographics: 55%
- A PDF of the results: 54%
- Social sharing assets: 48%
- Static charts: 46%
- Articles on other websites: 42%
- Gated landing pages: 31%
- Press release: 30%
- Video: 21%
- Interactive graphics: 20%
- Ungated landing pages: 20%
- Printed research mailed or handed out in person: 19%
- Online quiz or assessment: 10%

Blog posts are the most common way marketers share research; beyond blogging, marketers aren’t using consistent content types—a sign perhaps that marketers aren’t capitalizing fully on their research investment.
“Before I search for a dataset, I validate the topic is interesting. Don’t try to force uninteresting data to be interesting. Once you have a topic, you have three options for getting data: Using your company’s data (my personal favorite); getting data from an external source like Amazon Web Services public datasets; or manually gathering data from multiple sources (such as 3rd party review websites).”

NIEL MALHOTRA | Founder | Growista | @nielmalhotra
Marketeters struggle with challenges related to data and story

**TOP CHALLENGES FOR SURVEY-BASED RESEARCH**

1. Getting responses; reaching an adequate sample size
2. Designing the survey
3. Identifying the best stories to tell from the results
4. Finding a good list of people to survey
5. Developing additional assets to extend the reach of the research
6. Visualizing data

**TOP CHALLENGES FOR SECONDARY DATA RESEARCH**

1. Verifying quality of data
2. Finding interesting/useful data sources to study and analyze
3. Identifying the best stories to tell from the results
4. Cleaning the data
5. Visualizing data
How Marketers Create and Publish Original Research in 2018

BuzzSumo and Mantis Research surveyed 698 marketers from around the world in January and February, 2018.

- Slightly more than half (53%) of respondents work in B2B, 16% work in B2C, 26% work in companies that serve both B2B and B2C, and 5% came from government and non-profit.

- Most respondents came from the US (50%); the other most highly represented regions were Europe (24%) and APAC countries (8%).

- Nearly a third (32%) work for agencies (advertising & marketing), followed by technology (20%) and professional services & consulting firms (13%).

For more granular research findings, visit https://mantisresearch.com/state-of-original-research-for-marketing-in-2018/.

For more detailed information about survey demographics and methodology, contact survey@mantisresearch.com.

Methodology
Where to go from here?

When we began this project, we wanted to take a deep dive to understand how marketers use research, and where they’re most likely to need help. If you want to learn more about original research for content marketing, consider these options:

- **Ultimate Guide to Publishing Survey-Based Research for Content Marketing**
- **From Simple to Ambitious: 6 Types of Original Research Projects for Marketing**
- Find data for analysis by topic or domain by visiting [app.buzzsumo.com](http://app.buzzsumo.com).
- Learn more about using BuzzSumo: [academy.buzzsumo.com](http://academy.buzzsumo.com).

**About BuzzSumo**

We help people create the best content. BuzzSumo offers instantly accessible insights from 5 billion indexed blog posts and articles. Our customers are content marketers, publishers, public relations experts, and bloggers.

**About Mantis Research**

We help marketers tell data-driven stories. Mantis offers the full spectrum of research services—from research strategy and data science, to data journalism and visualization. Follow us @mantisresearch.