

A Guide to Sources of Market Information and Statistics

Business Information Factsheet
BIF047 · February 2014

Introduction

Finding market information relevant to your particular business idea or sector is a crucial part of both starting up and developing your enterprise. You need to research potential customers, competitors and suppliers, as well as find sources that will help you understand the trends and dynamics within your business sector.

This factsheet provides an overview of some of the main sources of market information and statistical data available and how to access them.

Government and official statistics

A wide range of statistical data and reports is published online by Government departments and other official bodies, and access to these is free of charge.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS)

The ONS provides access to a wide range of statistical information produced by UK Government departments in the form of bulletins, reports and downloadable spreadsheets. Statistics are available across a range of sectors and topics, including business performance, international trade, agriculture, tourism, population and consumer trends.

The ONS Publications Hub enables users to browse statistics by theme and check for new releases.

ONS statistics can be used in business plans to demonstrate whether a market is growing or declining. For example, a childcare business proprietor could quote statistics demonstrating the rising birth rate in the UK as evidence for potential future demand for their service. Such data is useful as it provides a general picture about trends and patterns throughout the UK.

Go to www.ons.gov.uk for further information.

ONS Census data

Data from the 2011 Census for England and Wales covers a wide range of topics, including housing, migration, ethnicity, religion and travel. It is available via the ONS website in the form of tables, statistical releases and analyses by theme. Some data from previous censuses is also available.

Census data is also useful for identifying potential demand for products and services, from specific ethnic or age groups, or people in particular geographical locations. It identifies changing densities of population in geographical areas and reveals patterns of employment

and cultural change. Census data also provides information about the characteristics of specific groups of people, which can be helpful when carrying out market research aimed at identifying or profiling target customer groups.

Go to www.ons.gov.uk/census for further information.

ONS Neighbourhood Statistics

Neighbourhood Statistics is a separate website operated by the ONS, enabling users to search for statistical information by area and postcode, including local authority areas and electoral wards.

Detailed statistics relating to specific geographical areas can be downloaded, together with a summary report for the local neighbourhood. Such information is important to the business-planning process as it enables local patterns to be compared with national trends.

Neighbourhood Statistics also provides a map viewer with a boundary map of the various regions of the UK and a facility to zoom in on street maps. This can be useful when researching areas of the UK that are unfamiliar or at a distance from the user.

Go to www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk for further information.

Statistics for Wales

Statistics for Wales provides access to official statistics and social and economic information about Wales in the form of reports and tables, covering topics such as business, tourism and education. A search tool is available, enabling users to locate statistics by topic and report type.

The information provided is useful as a guide to the issues that the Welsh Government is reviewing (such as older people's well-being and sustainable development), which could provide opportunities for the provision of services.

Go to www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research for further information.

National Records of Scotland (NRS)

NRS, formed when the National Register Office for Scotland (NROS) and the National Archives of Scotland merged in 2011, provides access to statistics about Scotland's population, including information on households, migration, births, deaths and marriages.

Go to www.gro-scotland.gov.uk for further information.

Scotland's Census data

The results of Scotland's Census 2011, which cover topics such as housing, health, education and travel, are available online in the form of statistical releases and tables.

Searches can be made by health board or council area, postcode, and parliamentary constituency or region. There is also a facility to compare search results with other areas, which can be useful when carrying out market research, for example when deciding where to locate a new business.

Go to www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk for further information.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

NISRA provides access to statistics about Northern Ireland's population, including information about households, migration, births, deaths and marriages, and links to figures available from other official bodies. It also publishes the results of Northern Ireland's 2011 Census.

Go to www.nisra.gov.uk for further information.

Department for Business (BIS)

BIS publishes national statistics on business population, construction, further and higher education, innovation, insolvency, science, engineering and technology, and trade union membership, as well as regional economic and employment statistics. These include regular publications such as the monthly English Business Survey (EBS), and occasional publications focusing on specific issues or industries.

EBS data is collated on a regional and sub-regional basis, and the interactive map and tool enables users to compare quarterly statistics using selected variables and to compare the various areas with the national average.

Go to www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-innovation-skills/about/statistics for further information.

UK Trade Info

UK Trade Info is an online resource operated by HMRC's Trade Statistics unit, which provides access to statistical information about trade between the UK and countries both inside and outside the EU. It also features a free tool enabling users to build their own custom data tables, an exchange rate calculator and a search facility providing importers' details.

Go to www.uktradeinfo.com for further information.

Family Food

Family Food is an annual publication produced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), providing detailed statistical information about UK households' food and drink consumption, including levels of consumer spending and geographical comparisons.

Go to www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-food-statistics for further information.

Eurostat

Eurostat produces official statistics for European Union (EU) member countries. Its publications are searchable by theme, including economy and finance, population and social conditions, industry and trade, agriculture, international trade, transport, environment and energy, and science and technology.

Statistical information can be used to compare UK and European figures and the information is especially useful to UK firms considering exporting to Europe.

UK-based users can access the publications at European Documentation Centres (EDCs), which are usually located within universities.

Go to www.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu for further information.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The OECD publishes a range of data about the economic performance of countries, including the UK. Statistics on topics such as international trade, consumer confidence and household spending in the UK can be accessed free of charge.

The OECD also publishes reports, statistics and regular news releases on topics including agriculture, finance, science and technology, and the environment.

In addition, the OECD publishes short news stories covering current issues relating to EU countries, as well as quizzes to test users' knowledge about topics such as tourism, health, and education.

Go to www.oecd.org for further information.

Market research publishers

Some of the most up-to-date market information and statistics is available from commercial research providers, and although a limited amount of material is sometimes available free to view online, most publishers charge for access to full reports. However, many public reference libraries, universities and other institutions hold paid subscriptions, allowing their members free access.

Plimsoll

Plimsoll publishes industry reports based on analysis of individual companies, using data filed with Companies House. As well as industry reports, it is also possible to purchase individual reports evaluating single companies. The reports can provide useful information about trends and performance in a wide range of sectors.

Go to www.plimsoll.co.uk for further information.

Mintel

Mintel is a market research provider specialising in consumer sectors, such as beauty, food and drink, and retail. Mintel's reports cover a number of international markets as well as the UK and are available on an individual purchase or subscription basis. Selected highlights from reports are often published in press releases and blog articles which can be viewed free of charge.

Go to <http://oxygen.mintel.com> for further information.

Euromonitor

Euromonitor is a market research provider covering international markets as well as the UK, across a wide range of industries. Reports on specific industries and consumer trends are available for individual purchase or on a subscription basis. Market research downloads, blog articles and executive summaries of some reports can be viewed free of charge via the Euromonitor website.

Go to www.euromonitor.com for further information.

Datamonitor

Datamonitor is a market research provider covering international markets as well as the UK. Datamonitor publishes reports on a wide range of industries, which can be accessed via a subscription to its Knowledge Center service, or purchased individually. Specialist retail information on trends, markets and competitors in sectors such as clothing and footwear, food and grocery and health and beauty can be accessed via Datamonitor's Verdict service (www.verdictretail.com). News articles are regularly published on the Datamonitor website and can be viewed free of charge.

Go to www.datamonitor.com for further information.

Key Note

Key Note is a market research provider covering a range of major and niche UK markets. Key Note reports can be purchased individually or accessed on a subscription basis, and executive summaries can be viewed free of charge. Key Note also offers a database service, enabling users to research and analyse specific UK companies.

Go to www.keynote.co.uk for further information.

AMA Research

AMA Research is a market research provider specialising in the UK's building and construction sector. Reports are available to purchase individually or on a subscription basis, and summaries are available to view online free of charge.

Go to www.amaresearch.co.uk for further information.

MSI

MSI is a market research provider specialising in UK and European business-to-business sectors, including construction, business services, healthcare and security. Reports can be purchased individually, and include analysis of factors affecting a sector and information on market size. Sample pages and key findings for reports are available free of charge.

Go to www.msi-reports.co.uk for further information.

Market & Business Development (MDB)

MDB is a market research provider specialising in UK business-to-business sectors, such as construction, distribution and publishing. Reports include sections on market size and trends, industry structure and forecasts, and can be purchased individually or accessed via a subscription.

Go to www.mbdLtd.co.uk for further information.

Deloitte

Deloitte provides online access to a range of industry and market reports, as well as press releases and news articles. Sectors covered include consumer business, financial services, manufacturing and hospitality.

Go to www.deloitte.co.uk for further information.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)

PwC also provides online access to a range of publications, including industry reports and consumer surveys. Sectors covered include hospitality and leisure, insurance, retail and consumer, and transport.

Go to www.pwc.co.uk for further information.

Trade and professional bodies

There are hundreds of trade associations and professional bodies, most of which publish reports and statistics on the industry they represent. Access is sometimes restricted to members or subscribers, but many organisations publish research online for anyone to view free of charge.

Go to www.britishtservices.co.uk/associations.htm and www.taforum.org to search for relevant trade associations.

Crafts Council

The Crafts Council publishes regular research and policy reports on the size, nature and overall performance of the craft sector by identifying current trends and emerging business models, as well as providing key statistics and demand forecasts.

Go to www.craftscouncil.org.uk for further information.

Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD)

IGD provides key industry information and regular in-depth research reports across a range of grocery sectors and topics via its subscription-based service ShopperVista. IGD also publishes monthly snapshots, which track shopper trends, chart regional and demographic differences, and provide forecasts of future developments in the grocery sector.

Go to www.igd.com for further information.

Interactive Media in Retail Group (IMRG)

IMRG produces regular research reports on topics such as consumer behaviour, mobile retail, home delivery and international e-retail. IMRG also provides members with access to the latest retail data via an online portal and e-mail communication, which includes sales index data, white papers and a monthly retail sector review.

Go to www.imrg.org for further information.

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)

ABTA publishes an annual Travel Trends report providing statistics and insights into the performance of the travel trade, consumer spending and significant trends. Other reports, publications and articles are available in the Resource Zone section of the ABTA website.

Go to www.abta.com for further information.

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB)

The FMB publishes a quarterly State of the Trade survey, available to download in PDF format free of charge, which monitors workload, employment and costs in the construction industry. News articles, policy publications and 'Master Builder' magazine can also be accessed free of charge via the website.

Go to www.fmb.org.uk for further information.

VisitBritain

VisitBritain's corporate website provides regularly updated tourism statistics for the UK, including market information on inbound tourism. VisitBritain also publishes a quarterly analysis of tourism trends, along with forecasts, reports and market profiles by country on its website. The website also includes a market report search function and the option to sign up to a fortnightly e-newsletter.

Go to www.visitbritain.org/insightsandstatistics/index.aspx for further information.

Tourism statistics are also available from the individual tourist authorities in each of the four UK nations, which publish regularly updated research and statistics. These include figures on domestic and inbound tourism, geographical and regional data, and tourism business confidence.

VisitEngland: www.visitengland.org

Welsh Government tourism research: www.wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/?lang=en

VisitScotland: www.visitscotland.org

Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB): www.nitb.com

The British Retail Consortium (BRC)

The BRC publishes a range of regular reports and briefings on the UK retail sector, covering issues such as retail, e-commerce, footfall and vacancies, and employment. Reports are only available to subscribers, although headline figures are often included in press releases published on the BRC website's media pages.

Go to www.brc.org.uk for further information.

Trade publications and websites

Trade publications are a good source of up-to-date information on a particular market or sector. Many publications make content available online, although this is sometimes restricted to registered users or paying subscribers. To search for relevant trade publications, go to www.tradepub.com.

Publications providing access to market data and reports include the following:

Marketing Week

Marketing Week is a print and online publication providing free access to articles covering consumer trends and market research across a range of industries.

Go to www.marketingweek.co.uk for further information.

Retail Week

Retail Week is published weekly and is available through a paid subscription. It includes data about online and high-street sales, footfall and consumer trends.

Go to www.retail-week.com for further information.

Financial Times

The Financial Times publishes regular articles covering market statistics, sales figures and consumer trends across a range of industries. Users can register for free to gain access to up to eight articles per month, after which various subscription packages are available.

Go to www.ft.com/world/uk/business for further information.

Which?

Which? is a consumer magazine providing product reviews and information on consumer rights. It also carries out consumer surveys and market investigations, which can be a useful source of statistics and information relating to particular sectors. The results are usually available from the 'Press Office' section of the Which? website.

Go to www.which.co.uk for further information.

The Economist

The Economist publishes articles covering market data, economic indicators and industry trends. Users can register for a free account that provides access to three articles per week.

Go to www.economist.com/markets-data for further information.

Hints and tips

- Check what resources are available at your local business or reference library. Library staff will be able to assist you in finding relevant market information and statistics to which you have free access.
- Press releases issued by market research agencies often include summaries of useful statistics, and can be a starting point for further desk research.
- Signing up to newsletters and following relevant trade associations via social media is a useful way to keep up to date with industry trends and developments.

Further information

BIF 1 A Guide to Using a Market Research Questionnaire
BIF 44 A Guide to Developing a Marketing Plan
BIF 107 A Guide to Profiling Your Target Market
BIF 132 An Introduction to Researching Your Competitors
BIF 185 A Checklist for Start Up Market Research

DISCLAIMER While all reasonable efforts have been made, the publisher makes no warranties that this information is accurate and up-to-date and will not be responsible for any errors or omissions in the information nor any consequences of any errors or omissions. Professional advice should be sought where appropriate.

Cobweb Information Ltd, Unit 9 Bankside, The Watermark, Gateshead, NE11 9SY.
Tel: 0191 461 8000 Website: www.cobwebinfo.com