STATISTICS IN PRACTICE



Marketing Research: A Voice for Consumers

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We are all consumers. As consumers, we make decisions every day about whether or not to buy products and services and which companies to buy them from. How do consumers make these purchasing decisions? Do all consumers base their decisions on the same motivations and expectations? As a marketing researcher, I use statistics and statistical thinking to understand consumer attitudes and decisions. With this understanding, I help my company determine which types of gasoline to sell, which services to offer at our stations, and how to advertise these products and services to the public. Marketing researchers use statistics to place consumers into only a few groups with similar purchasing motivations and behaviors. For example, there are essentially seven types of gasoline consumers, such as those motivated only by price or only by fuel quality or by speed and convenience. Segmenting consumers in this way allows companies to select the types of consumers they want to target, develop products and services that best meet their needs, and create advertising that appeals to these specific consumers. Marketing researchers also survey the public to keep abreast of trends in behaviors and attitudes. We conduct surveys by phone, mail, and in person across the country every day. These surveys help us monitor how well we are performing, in the public's opinion, compared with our competition. I use statistics to analyze the data from these surveys to gain insight into consumers' minds. These insights help Shell decide what type of fuel we should develop next or what the gas station of the future should look like. Should we offer house calls for fill-ups? Robotic pumps at our stations? It is up to you. You are the consumer and my use of statistics gives you a voice in my company.