

Guidelines for Data Collection and Analysis: Considerations for Informed Marketing in a Globalized World

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EDITORIAL



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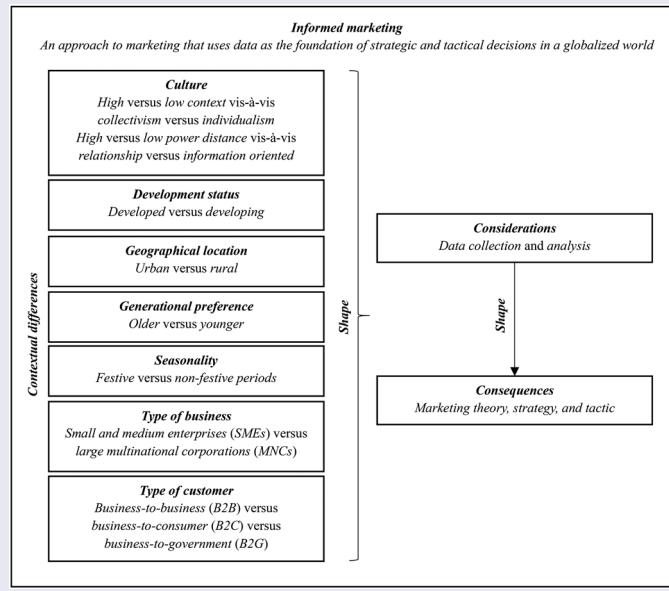
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ABSTRACT

Informed marketing rests on strategically leveraging (collecting, analyzing, and interpreting) data in marketing decisions. This article emphasizes that a one-size-fits-all approach to data collection and analysis is generally ineffective in a global context, creating a persistent challenge for marketing professionals who operate across varied cultural, economic, and regulatory settings. Seven contextual factors—*culture, development status, geographical location, generational preference, seasonality, type of business, and type of customer*—are identified. Guidelines focus on adapting data-gathering techniques to cultural norms, balancing advanced research methods with budgetary realities, and segmenting responses based on geographic, demographic, and psychographic attributes. Through this article, marketing professionals from academia (scholars) and industry (practitioners) stand to gain clearer direction on how to harness data more effectively in a dynamic, interdependent global marketplace, thereby sharpening their ability to make sound marketing decisions under differing contextual demands.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



KEYWORDS

Data; data collection; data analysis; informed marketing; global marketing; international marketing; culture; development status; geographical location; generational preference; seasonality; type of business; type of customer

Introduction

The global environment and the imperative of well-informed decisions

Despite growing concerns about de-globalization (Madhok, 2021; Witt, 2019), the global economy remains deeply interconnected. Nations continue to trade, invest, and collaborate across borders, though some firms may occasionally reduce or withdraw from international markets (Lim & Mandrinos, 2023; Mandrinos & Lim, 2023). Even in these cases, the default is still a global setting in which transnational exchange is the norm rather than the exception (Mandrinos et al., 2022). Whether a firm internationalizes for the first time, retreats temporarily, or reenters global markets later (Kafouros et al., 2022), success hinges on the same fundamental principle: making decisions guided by information that is reliable, valid, and trustworthy (Lim, 2025a, 2025b). Without data-backed insights, firms risk misreading consumer or customer behavior, misunderstanding local contexts, and squandering strategic opportunities in a world that, despite periodic contractions or pullbacks, continues to be driven by international linkages.

Informed marketing and its value

Informed marketing is an approach that uses data as the foundation of strategic and tactical decisions in marketing (Sethuraman, 2025). This approach is not simply “analytics bolted onto old practices,” where a firm may install dashboards or data science applications yet continue relying on traditional, intuition-based processes, treating data as an afterthought. Instead, informed marketing (re)shapes marketing from the ground up by integrating data collection and analysis into every step—ranging from setting objectives and understanding customer insights to crafting strategies and measuring impact. At the heart of this approach is the notion of *insight*, which must meet five essential criteria: (1) it is a definitive statement rather than a mere hypothesis or hunch; (2) it relies on theoretical or empirical evidence rather than personal opinion; (3) it addresses present or future contexts, providing foresight rather than hindsight; (4) it delivers a fresh, meaningful perspective beyond what is already known; and (5) it holds the potential to spur actionable decisions (Sethuraman, 2024).

The *value* of informed marketing emerges from its necessity, importance, relevance, and urgency. First, the *necessity* of informed marketing arises from the explosion of information available through digital channels, customer feedback, and real-time market monitoring. Otherwise, failing to harness these signals (i.e., engaging in “uninformed marketing”) can lead to costly missteps and wasted resources. Next, the *importance* of informed marketing lies in how it aligns a firm’s offerings with shifting competitive landscapes and market needs.

Otherwise, firms risk being outmaneuvered by rivals who better leverage data. Moreover, the *relevance* of informed marketing is evident in light of two significant forces in the modern business environment: (1) *availability of abundant data*, which is ‘big’ in terabytes and petabytes, ‘omnipresent’ across touchpoints, and ‘omnipotent’ when correctly leveraged; and (2) *proliferation of tools* (e.g., artificial intelligence, blockchain, cloud computing, internet of things) that can efficiently collect, store, and process this data—otherwise, relying on outdated or simplistic assumptions about unfamiliar markets can lead to subpar outcomes. Finally, the *urgency* of informed marketing must not be underestimated, as the early detection of market changes *via* real-time intelligence is critical for organizational agility. Otherwise, guess-based or delayed responses can erode a firm’s competitive advantage, especially in today’s disruptive, volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (DVUCA) marketplace (Lim, 2023).

Theoretical foundation and practical legitimacy of informed marketing

Several established theories explain why informed marketing is an essential organizational capability. *Dynamic capability* explains that firms succeed by continuously sensing and seizing emerging opportunities while transforming their internal resources to maintain fit with external conditions—activities that hinge on accurate, timely data (Teece, 2007; Torres et al., 2018). Likewise, *market orientation* emphasizes that firms outperform rivals when they consistently gather and disseminate market intelligence to coordinate strategies (Shoham et al., 2005; Zhou et al., 2009). Similarly, the *resource-based view* underscores that sustained competitive advantages emerge when firms develop distinctive resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and well-organized (Barney, 1991), and in today’s environment, data assets and analytics capabilities can constitute such resources (Madhala et al., 2024). Thus, informed marketing sits at the intersection of these lenses, turning raw data into actionable insights that strengthen the sustainability of a firm’s strategic position.

Informed marketing also builds on a spectrum of data-centric concepts such as data-driven marketing (Rosário & Dias, 2023), marketing analytics (Basu et al., 2023), and marketing intelligence (Karami & Hossain, 2024). The push for more potent analytical approaches is reinforced by trends in research and development (R&D) worldwide. For example, Sarrico (2022) highlights the steady increase in doctoral-level attainment, suggesting a growing pool of specialized analysts and researchers prepared to drive advanced marketing insights. In addition, Ahmed et al. (2023) observe that industry has taken the lead in shaping artificial intelligence (AI) research, indicating that the private sector—not just academia—is

propelling data-focused innovation. These movements align with global initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9.5, which calls for boosting scientific research and upgrading industrial technologies to foster inclusive innovation. The United States (U.S.), for instance, has steadily increased its R&D expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP)—from 2.27% in 1981 to 3.59% in 2022—demonstrating sustained investment in knowledge creation and technological development (U.S. National Statistics for the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, 2025). This impetus is further underscored by the U.S. government's recent announcement of a \$500 billion investment in AI infrastructure, referred to as the Stargate Project (CBS News, 2025), highlighting an unprecedented commitment to cutting-edge R&D. Against this backdrop, global marketing remains a multifaceted endeavor: it not only demands cultural and regional awareness but also depends on rich data to drive product adaptation, pricing strategies, place selection, and promotional choices across diverse markets (Powers & Loyka, 2010). Informed marketing is thus a natural evolution, equipping firms with the insights needed to navigate international complexities while staying ahead of shifting customer and competitive dynamics.

The need for guidance on informed marketing

Our engagement with marketing professionals in academia and industry indicates that many grapple with the practical steps needed to build genuinely informed marketing strategies despite having a clear sense of its immense benefits and strategic imperatives. Some remain unsure of how to pinpoint differences and mitigate risks in data collection when working across varied cultural, economic, and regulatory landscapes. Others struggle to select the most suitable data analysis methods or interpret findings in ways that clearly clarify contextual distinctions and deliver actionable recommendations to inform real-world decisions. This article addresses these challenges by offering pragmatic guidance on various considerations regarding data collection and analysis for informed marketing, drawing on the 3Es adapted from Kraus et al. (2022): marketing *expertise*, marketing research *experience*, and global market *exposure*.

This article, however, is not intended to serve as a toolbox of data collection or analysis techniques—details of these can be found in existing guides on qualitative (Lim, 2025a) and quantitative (Lim, 2025b) research. Instead, this article highlights the central considerations that marketing professionals should consider when collecting and analyzing data in different contexts, along with options that can be adapted to diverse realities. Since the guidelines herein are intended to inform a global audience, considerations and examples are approached from an international perspective, which positions this article as a complement and supplement to

more comprehensive toolbox-oriented methodological guides (Lim, 2025a, 2025b) while answering the call for improving theory-reality fit in a globalized world (Homer & Lim, 2024). Through this approach, this article endeavors to deliver a roadmap for developing informed marketing insights, which, in turn, enables marketing professionals to make judicious strategic and tactical decisions in a world that remains globally interconnected despite periodic shifts in economic or political conditions.

Guidance for informed marketing

The challenges outlined in the opening section underscore the practical realities that marketing professionals must address when pursuing data-driven strategies in a global world. Marketing initiatives are rarely implemented in a homogeneous context—cultural, economic, and regulatory conditions can vary considerably, influencing how data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Given these complexities, the discussion moves to the fundamental considerations that shape informed marketing in diverse settings. This discussion begins with contextual differences, followed by data collection and analysis considerations—these are also summarized in Table 1.

New research is frequently justified on the claim that “context matters,” yet the specific context dimensions are not always spelled out with precision. To shed light on this issue, this article introduces seven contextual differences—*culture*, *development status*, *geographical location*, *generational preference*, *seasonality*, *type of business*, and *type of customer*—that can shape data gathering and interpretation. The following subsections examine each dimension in turn: high versus low context vis-à-vis collectivism versus individualism, high versus low power distance vis-à-vis relationship versus information orientation, developed versus developing countries, urban versus rural settings, older versus younger generations, festive versus non-festive periods, small and medium enterprises versus large multinational corporations, and business-to-business versus business-to-consumer or business-to-government contexts. Each subsection emphasizes why these attributes matter and how they can be addressed in data collection and analysis. These insights build on the theoretical and practical foundations in the preceding sections, thereby translating high-level overviews into concrete steps for achieving genuinely informed marketing decisions across international markets.

Culture

Marketing efforts often assume that all customers respond similarly to the same prompts. Yet, cultural differences can drive substantial variation in cognition, emotion, and motivation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), as well as attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Hofstede, 1980, 2001).

A recognized cultural dimension distinguishes high-context from low-context cultures (Hall, 1976, 2000). In a high-context culture, messages depend heavily on

Table 1. Contextual differences and considerations for data collection and analysis.

Context	Contextual differences	Considerations for data collection	Considerations for data analysis
Culture: High versus low context vis-à-vis collectivism versus individualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-context cultures or collectivist societies are often more hesitant about direct criticism to avoid conflict, as the emphasis is on implied meanings, non-verbal cues, group harmony, interdependence, and shared responsibility. In contrast, low-context cultures or individualist societies often prefer direct exchange of information and explicit communication as the emphasis is on personal initiative and self-reliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In high-context cultures or collectivist societies, participants may hesitate to voice criticism for fear of harming group cohesion. Anonymous surveys or open-ended questions can encourage more candid responses. In low-context cultures or individualist societies, direct questioning and rating scales often yield forthright feedback but avoid creating unintended group pressure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In high-context cultures or collectivist societies, watch for underreporting of negative feedback. Consider that reluctance to criticize may mask genuine opinions. In low-context cultures or individualist societies, results are often more direct. However, be mindful of potential extremes in self-expressed preferences. Segmenting responses by cultural orientation can help identify patterns driven by group harmony versus personal expression.
Culture: High versus low power distance vis-à-vis relationship versus information oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High power distance or relationship-oriented cultures accept hierarchical structures, respect authority, and discourage open dissent. In contrast, low power distance or information-oriented cultures encourage egalitarian participation, direct exchange of facts, open communication, and reliance on clear data to guide decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In high-power-distance or relationship-oriented cultures, one-on-one interviews or carefully structured group sessions help mitigate underreporting of dissatisfaction. In low power distance or information-oriented cultures, open discussion and challenges to authority are common; focus groups can yield diverse opinions but require skilled moderation to handle conflicts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In high power distance or relationship-oriented cultures, evaluate whether positive feedback reflects genuine satisfaction or deference to authority. In low power distance or information-oriented cultures, disagreements may represent healthy debate rather than fundamental discontent. Comparing subgroup responses within the same cultural setting can help distinguish between genuine preferences and polite acquiescence. Analysts in developing regions may need additional support or training in advanced statistics and data interpretation.
Development status: Developed versus developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple benchmarks define development status, including human development indicators, income per capita, and institutional quality, whereby developed countries often have stable funding and robust infrastructure. In contrast, developing countries typically face budgetary constraints and limited specialized expertise and technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced equipment like eye trackers or scanner systems are realistic in developed countries where funds and technical know-how are accessible. Collaborations with better-funded teams can fund advanced tools, but local training and oversight are crucial to ensure correct usage and compliance with regulatory frameworks. Favorable exchange rates for developed countries can make fieldwork more affordable if conducted in developing countries, but strong local collaboration is required to prevent cultural misunderstandings. Where resources are limited, carefully designed surveys or structured interviews can yield high-quality data if thoughtfully managed sampling frames and ethical safeguards are observed. In both developed and developing countries, ensuring participants' awareness of how their data will be used, along with respect for cultural norms, remains paramount. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even when advanced analytics are possible, local acceptance and operator skill should be confirmed to avoid misinterpretation of results or marginalizing those unfamiliar with complex technology. Virtual sessions can help external partners jointly interpret findings, ensuring that cultural nuances and regulatory requirements are respected.
Geographical location: Urban versus rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban areas typically feature high population density, diverse retail formats, and seamless connectivity, whereas rural areas are more dispersed and often have lower or weaker infrastructure resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For urban areas, online surveys, mobile apps, and digital loyalty programs can yield quick insights. Careful segmentation of different urban subgroups (commuters, students, retirees) helps avoid aggregating dissimilar populations. For rural areas, face-to-face interviews or phone surveys often work better than broadband-dependent methods. Travel schedules and localized recruitment help include underrepresented communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For urban areas, results may reflect a variety of subcultures; thus, cluster analysis or segmentation by attributes can identify meaningful differences. For rural areas, data might indicate low usage of digital channels, but this could be an infrastructure issue rather than a lack of interest. Including non-digital purchase or open-ended responses in the analysis can produce more reliable insights.
Generational preference: Older versus younger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older cohorts ("digital immigrants") may prefer traditional channels, hold long-standing brand loyalties, and engage in stable shopping patterns, whereas younger cohorts ("digital natives") generally adopt emerging technologies, explore new brands, and respond strongly to digital promotions, yet, over time, generational disparities might diminish due to market forces and shared priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For older adults, face-to-face interviews, pen-and-paper surveys, or telephone surveys often foster higher comfort and completion rates among those less familiar with digital tools. For younger adults, mobile apps, quick online forms, or social media polls engage tech-savvy respondents but risk excluding younger participants with limited connectivity. Offering multiple modes of participation can broaden representativeness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing data separately by generational cohort highlights critical differences; for example, brand switching may appear erratic among older adults yet be a standard practice for younger ones. Tracking younger consumers over time uncovers whether current behaviors persist as they age. Recognize that advanced technologies and omnichannel retail can reduce age-based distinctions, emphasizing universal preferences.

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Context	Contextual differences	Considerations for data collection	Considerations for data analysis
Seasonality: Festive versus non-festive periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Festive periods—such as cultural celebrations or major holidays—often trigger heightened demand, emotional investment, and time-bound promotions, wherein the length and intensity of these festivities vary widely by tradition. In contrast, non-festive periods may reveal “baseline” behaviors, free from the immediate influence of cultural or holiday-related pressures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep surveys brief or use quick polls/promotional materials that resonate with holiday sentiments during festive seasons. Factor in that many individuals have limited time or heightened emotions during celebrations, reducing willingness to complete lengthy surveys or interviews. Plan data collection around the cultural or religious norms shaping each festive event (e.g., understand typical gift-giving timelines). Utilize in-depth interviews or more comprehensive questionnaires, as time constraints and emotional intensities are reduced. Capture baseline or reflective perspectives that may remain masked during festive spikes. Coordinate data collection across different festive and non-festive windows for comparative insights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare festive data against non-festive data to isolate short-term holiday-driven shifts from longer-term patterns, thus identifying which patterns endure throughout the year versus those that surge briefly. Combine insights from multiple non-festive periods to understand year-round trends and better estimate demand outside peak holiday windows. Employ a multi-phase strategy, collecting and analyzing data before, during, and after celebrations to pinpoint transitory spikes versus structural behaviors. For cross-country studies, account for back-to-back or overlapping festivities that may skew aggregated results if not correctly delineated (e.g., consecutive public holidays).
Type of business: Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) versus larger multinational corporations (MNCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMEs often operate with tighter budgets and fewer staff, making lean, targeted research methods more viable. In contrast, MNCs can leverage extensive resources and cutting-edge tools but must align strategies across multiple units or regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMEs customize queries by using lower-cost methods such as personally administered email or phone surveys, localized focus groups, or existing customer databases. MNCs possess greater reach to run large-scale initiatives (e.g., scanning data from multiple retail chains) and can invest in advanced analytics solutions to capture diverse market information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMEs can depend on essential statistical software or spreadsheet tools, often supplementing quantitative findings with managerial intuition to make sense of observed trends. Many of these software packages are open-source and can therefore be accessed and used free of charge. MNCs can pursue sophisticated in-house data teams and systems. However, a purely top-down approach can yield generic directives that fail to address local market realities, and thus, balancing centralized analysis with decentralized insights can preserve context-specific relevance.
Type of customer: Business-to-business (B2B) versus business-to-consumer (B2C) versus business-to-government (B2G)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B2B often features multi-tiered decision processes, whereas B2C centers on individual or household preferences, while B2G involves public accountability and regulatory frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For B2B, in-depth interviews or key-informant surveys with multiple stakeholders (procurement, finance, operations) can capture a wide range of priorities. For B2C, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and surveys can gather data on consumer behavior, such as brand perceptions and choices. For B2G, government procurement data, tenders, and official documents often supply baseline information, while formal request-for-proposal (RFP) processes may shape data requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For B2B, employ multi-attribute decision models or layered segmentation to address diverse stakeholder goals (e.g., each may weigh cost, quality, or brand differently). For B2C, segment data by demographics or psychographics to highlight consumer subgroups, wherein advanced techniques like clustering can uncover hidden patterns in large sample sizes. For B2G, align analytics with regulatory demands (e.g., meeting compliance or transparency standards) and interpret results in light of public accountability and legislative requirements.

implied meanings, non-verbal cues, and shared backgrounds (Hall, 1976). These conditions often align with collectivist norms of group harmony, interdependence, and mutual responsibility (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Triandis, 1989). In contrast, low-context cultures lean on direct exchange of information and explicit communication rather than on implied understanding (Hall, 1976, 2000). These cultures typically parallel individualistic norms, emphasizing personal initiative and self-reliance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Triandis, 1989). The general view is that many Asian countries, together with parts of Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East display these high-context, collectivist qualities, while much of North America, Western Europe, and Oceania leans toward low-context, individualistic patterns. This distinction matters for data collection because individuals in collectivist or high-context cultures may hesitate to strongly

criticize a product or service, given concerns about confrontation or harm to group cohesion. Anonymous surveys or open-ended questions can help reduce these inhibitions and encourage more candid responses. Whereas, in individualist or low-context cultures, direct questioning and rating scales often prompt forthright feedback, though it remains important to avoid imposing even an unintended sense of group pressure.

Another key cultural dimension is high versus low power distance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). High power distance cultures are often relationship-oriented, where hierarchical structures are widely accepted and authority is respected to foster and maintain good relationships, whereas low power distance cultures tend to be information-oriented, where direct exchange of facts, open communication, and reliance on clear data to guide decisions are emphasized (Cateora et al., 2009). A

frequently observed pattern is that many societies in Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa follow higher power distance norms, whereas Western nations often exhibit lower power distance tendencies. Such contrasts have direct implications for data collection and analysis. In particular, high power distance or relationship-oriented cultures can inhibit open dissent when an authority figure is present, leading to underreporting of dissatisfaction or skewed responses in focus group settings. One-on-one interviews or careful structuring of group sessions in which participants are assured confidentiality can mitigate these issues. In contrast, low power distance or information-oriented cultures encourage egalitarian discussions and challenges to authority, which can enrich the range of insights gathered. During data analysis, attention to cultural orientation or power distance is crucial, as divergent response patterns might reflect genuine preferences or deference to social hierarchy. Comparative checks within the same culture and consideration of each culture's overall acceptance of authority can distinguish between deeply held views and polite agreement offered to avoid conflict.

Development status

Though no single global institution provides an absolute definition of “developed” versus “developing,” several benchmarks are commonly used. Human development indicators—education, longevity, and living standards—represent one set of measures (United Nations Development Programme, 2025). Income per capita serves as another yardstick, with organizations such as the World Bank classifying countries as low, lower-middle, upper-middle, or high-income (World Bank, 2024). Institutional quality shapes a country’s profile, including governance and regulatory effectiveness (Uddin et al., 2023). In combination, these factors create a spectrum in which developed economies often benefit from robust infrastructure, substantial human capital, and sophisticated governance. In contrast, developing economies may face more limited resources and less consistent institutional support (Cavusgil et al., 2020).

Structural disparities tied to development status affect the availability, accessibility, affordability, and adoption (Lim & Weissmann, 2023) of research tools. Advanced technologies such as eye-tracking (Ladeira et al., 2024) or scanner systems (Lu et al., 2013) are typically more feasible where funding, digital infrastructure, and stakeholder familiarity are readily available. Conversely, developing economies often must contend with budgetary constraints and limited access to specialized expertise and technology for data collection and analysis, which can hinder the deployment or maintenance of these advanced methods. Crucially, limited resources need not translate into lower-quality insights. A combination of appropriate sampling techniques, tailored data collection

methods, and sensitivity to local realities can uphold rigor while remaining ethical and equitable. Still, large-scale or highly technical approaches may prove less viable if local institutions lack the training, confidence, or financing to maintain them. In such circumstances, external sponsorship (e.g., teams from developed countries purchasing hardware for local partners in developing countries) can help secure advanced tools. However, this solution requires thorough training and ongoing coordination to ensure that technology is neither misapplied nor underutilized—mainly if local stakeholders are unfamiliar with the instruments or subject to regulatory constraints that differ substantially from those in developed economies.

Research teams from developed countries can find fieldwork in developing countries cost-effective due to favorable exchange rates, which lower labor, materials, and participant remuneration expenses. Yet, inadequate collaboration with local partners can lead to cultural missteps or logistical oversights, reducing data validity. In addition, advanced analytics solutions—such as machine learning or real-time dashboards—should be tailored to the prevailing data environment. Although participants need not be tech-savvy if trained researchers operate the equipment, acceptance by local institutions, compliance with data protection standards, and clarity about the data’s intended use are crucial. Ultimately, upholding ethical considerations, representativeness, and validity remains paramount, regardless of whether a project unfolds in a well-resourced developed country or a resource-constrained developing nation.

Geographical location

One-size-fits-all strategies are often employed when focusing on certain regions (Daniels, 1987; Dion & Sitz, 2020), yet geographical location can significantly affect the practicality of data-driven marketing initiatives. Our collective experience indicates that urban areas typically offer a higher density of consumers, diverse retail formats, and greater digital connectivity, making it feasible to collect granular data through online surveys or loyalty programs integrated into point-of-sale systems. In contrast, rural settings may pose logistical hurdles: access to high-speed internet can be limited, travel is more time-consuming, and populations are more dispersed. These realities influence the choice of data collection tools and how the data is interpreted.

Data collection in rural locations can rely on face-to-face interviews, telephone surveys, or methods that do not require constant broadband connections. This approach can help capture perspectives from hard-to-reach groups who might otherwise be excluded from online samples. In urban environments, mobile app-based or social media polls can yield faster turnaround times and reach a more significant number of respondents

with minimal cost. However, collecting and analyzing data from urban populations without considering the potential overlap of multiple demographic groups—commuters, students, retirees—may lead to misleading interpretations if these subgroups are not properly segmented. Similarly, analysis of rural data demands an understanding of local cultural norms, community ties, and infrastructural constraints; these factors can cause seemingly low demand in specific categories (e.g., e-commerce) that reflect limited connectivity rather than disinterest.

Generational preference

Differences between older and younger generations can, but do not always, help explain variations in consumer behavior such as brand loyalty (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016), media consumption patterns (Gao, 2023; Lissitsa & Laor, 2021), and purchases (Nwobodo & Weissmann, 2024). Older cohorts, frequently labeled “digital immigrants,” may possess longstanding brand allegiances, rely more on traditional advertising channels, and exhibit relatively stable shopping routines. In contrast, younger cohorts, often called “digital natives,” tend to embrace emerging technologies, explore novel brands, and respond differently to promotional stimuli—particularly those delivered through digital platforms (Dorie & Loranger, 2020; Lim et al., 2024). Nonetheless, some scholars suggest that as digital commerce and omnichannel experiences become more prevalent, generational distinctions in consumer responses often diminish, with individuals across age groups converging around shared priorities such as information quality, personalized services, and positive shopping habits (Nwobodo & Weissmann, 2024; Whalen et al., 2024). This apparent paradox underscores the complexity of generational influences, reminding us that while age-related traits can matter in certain areas, market forces may unite consumer behavior over time. It is also essential to recognize that generations shift over time, and behaviors observed in younger consumers today might evolve or persist as they move into later life stages (Lim et al., 2023).

Data collection efforts should match the communication preferences of each generational group. For older adults, face-to-face interviews, pen-and-paper surveys, or telephone surveys may be more comfortable, ensuring that the format does not alienate those unfamiliar with digital tools. Younger respondents, by contrast, might prefer mobile apps, quick online forms, or social media polls. While online survey platforms such as Google Forms and Qualtrics have gained popularity for their convenience and ease of questionnaire design, an overreliance on these methods risks under-sampling individuals who lack consistent internet access or comfort with digital technology—even within the same generation. To address these variations in data coverage, analysis should then segment results by generational cohort to uncover

patterns that remain hidden in aggregate data. For instance, brand switching could be interpreted as inconsistency among older groups yet appear entirely routine among younger cohorts. Moreover, longitudinal tracking can reveal how emerging behaviors in younger consumers evolve—either stabilizing or shifting—as they transition into different or later life phases.

Seasonality

Seasonality can create substantial fluctuations in consumption and engagement. Festive periods—such as cultural celebrations or major holidays—often trigger heightened demand (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005), emotional investment (Wojtyńska & Skaptadóttir, 2020), and time-bound promotions (Keller et al., 2019). These spikes are typically short-lived and heavily influenced by cultural norms, traditions, and religious practices, as festivities vary in length and reflect specific community values. For instance, Chinese New Year activities can stretch across 15 days in many regions. In contrast, Christmas observances in Western contexts often peak on December 25, with a shorter lead-up and follow-on period. Non-festive periods may reveal baseline consumer behavior less swayed by seasonal factors, providing a different vantage point for marketers seeking stable, year-round insights.

Data collection during festive times should account for emotional intensity and time constraints. Many individuals may be less inclined to complete lengthy interviews or surveys amid holiday stress yet may respond favorably to brief polls or promotional material that capture festive sentiments. In non-festive periods, in-depth interviews or longer surveys can gather more reflective insights unclouded by seasonal pressures. Therefore, the analysis should segment data into festive and non-festive categories to isolate short-term, holiday-driven shifts from more enduring patterns. For a global outlook, attention to back-to-back or overlapping celebrations is crucial, since cultural and national holidays can coincide or differ widely, complicating cross-country comparisons. A multi-phase strategy—collecting and analyzing data before, during, and after festive events—can help distinguish momentary spikes in demand or sentiment from structural trends in customer behavior.

Type of business

The type of business can determine how marketing research is funded, organized, and implemented. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) may have limited budgets and staff, making lean and targeted approaches to data collection more appropriate. By contrast, large multinational corporations (MNCs) can access extensive resources, invest in cutting-edge tools, and coordinate multi-country projects, yet face the challenge of

aligning data standards and procedures across different units or regions.

For SMEs, primary data collection might rely on cost-effective tactics such as personally administered surveys (e.g., through email or phone), localized focus groups, or leveraging existing customer databases and internal records to tailor queries. Given their wider reach, MNCs can deploy large-scale initiatives (e.g., scanner data from multiple retail chains) and advanced analytics solutions. This difference is also mirrored in the data analysis stage: SMEs often depend on basic statistical packages or spreadsheet software, placing heavy reliance on managerial judgment to interpret trends. Many software programs for statistical analysis, such as R, are open-source and free to use, helping SMEs overcome budgetary limitations. MNCs, meanwhile, can marshal sophisticated data teams and systems, though a purely top-down approach risks overlooking local market idiosyncrasies. Balancing centralized analytics with decentralized insights—ensuring that local contexts remain visible—can address the complexities of multinational operations effectively.

Type of customer

Differences between business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), and business-to-government (B2G) settings can be profound. In B2B contexts, purchase decisions often involve multiple stakeholders—i.e., the buying group (e.g., procurement, finance, end-users)—who may each have distinct priorities (Lim, 2020). B2C transactions usually revolve around individual or household preferences (Lappeman et al., 2024) and can be heavily influenced by branding, promotions, or peer recommendations (Lim et al., 2023). B2G deals, by contrast, are shaped by formal regulations, public accountability, and lengthy approval processes (Hoekman & Taş, 2022).

These distinctions lead to different data collection strategies. B2B research may rely on in-depth interviews with decision-makers, supplemented by secondary data on organizational performance, whereas B2C surveys often use wider distribution channels, such as consumer panels or social media, while B2G projects might hinge on publicly available records or structured proposals subject to formal bidding processes. At the analysis stage, B2B data may focus on multi-attribute decision models, requiring close attention to each stakeholder's concerns, whereas B2C analytics often entails segmenting consumer data by demographic or psychographic traits, while B2G analysis might need to incorporate compliance considerations or legislative mandates. Understanding how these constraints and objectives differ ensures that data-driven conclusions are properly aligned with each customer type.

Conclusion

Data-driven decision-making has become essential in a global marketplace where consumers, businesses, and institutions interact across diverse cultural, economic,

and regulatory contexts (Basu et al., 2023). Informed marketing is a comprehensive approach for those seeking to shape marketing from the ground up by systematically integrating data collection and analysis into every organizational decision (Sethuraman, 2025). This approach ensures that strategic and tactical choices rest on credible evidence rather than assumptions or intuition alone.

Many marketing professionals, however, encounter real obstacles. Some find it difficult to manage risks associated with data gathering across divergent environments while others struggle to select the methods of data analysis most suited to informing actual business decisions. These difficulties require clear, context-sensitive strategies for leveraging (collecting, analyzing, and interpreting) data. A “one-size-fits-all” philosophy has long been dismissed as ineffective (Dolnicar & Grün, 2009; Pelletier et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2024), yet that dismissal lacks impact unless backed by concrete steps for identifying and responding to specific contexts.

This article meets that demand by pinpointing seven contextual differences—*culture, development status, geographical location, generational preference, seasonality, type of business*, and *type of customer*—and explaining how each affects data collection and analysis. The seven anchors presented here structure a marketing strategy responsive to local priorities while drawing on global best practices. These anchors matter because the differences they highlight can drive substantive shifts in how data should be gathered and interpreted. A localized approach to data collection and analysis need not undermine the pursuit of rigorous and robust findings; rather, thoughtful alignment with local conditions enhances the realism and precision of insights.

Data does more than reduce uncertainty. When used judiciously, data aligns organizational aims with customers' needs, delivers fresh perspectives on market opportunities, and strengthens competitive advantage. The discussion suggests that marketing professionals who account for contextual factors will be better positioned to uncover credible knowledge, adapt swiftly, and respond competitively to global market shifts. To this end, this article offers practical guidance on harnessing data effectively across a range of contexts that are typically faced by global marketers. Marketing teams that embrace these recommendations stand to gain the informed perspective necessary for success, regardless of whether they face disruptive challenges or pursue long-term growth strategies.

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