

Researching proposal essay sample

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Introduction:

Norfolk Foods is planning to launch a new powdered formulation for dieters and weight watchers, which is added to milk to produce a nutritious, tasty, hunger-relieving drink that is low in calories. The formulation is already on the market in chocolate and banana flavors, and this newly reformulated chocolate flavor would replace the original chocolate flavor. The Marketing Director at Norfolk, Fred Bench would like to conduct a research to find out what would be the response of the people towards the new flavor. Will the current Norfolk drink users as well as those who are using the nutritious drinks of some other brand, switch to the new chocolate flavor? To study the above, Norfolk Foods will hire Aurora Research on the basis of the proposal it will submit to the client.

Objective:

There are two main objectives of the research. First is to find out the potential market for the following three categories:

- Who will be the potentially new users of the product, i. e. they have never used this product before.
- Those who will be willing to switch to the new flavor from the previous one.
- Third will be the ones who will switch to this brand from other brands.

As the product is still being sold in the market, it has been accepted by the public, but the sales are not up to the company's expectations, the reason for which could be the high price Norfolk charges. So the next main objective

is to find out how consumers feel about the prices Norfolk is charging at the moment and what image the brand is carrying in their eyes. The research has to find out how many consumers have their attachment to the current chocolate flavor and whether they will be willing to switch it with the reformulated chocolate flavor? Is there any kind of emotional or psychological attachment of the consumer to the existing flavors and the product itself?

Research Design:

The objective states that the research company is going to study the willingness and overall reaction of the people towards the product and its existing as well as reformulated flavor. For this, the company can use either survey questionnaires (quantitative research method) or take personal interviews and observe reactions of the target audience (Qualitative method) to gauge their perceptions and attitudes towards the brand.

As Norfolk is a country wide brand, it is not practical to cover just a small area or town for the above study. Due to this, households across the Great Britain will be covered. In this case, it would not only be hectic and time consuming to interview the sampled households but costly also. Survey questionnaire will be a feasible and practical method in such a situation.

Research Method:

The nature of the research and constraints result in a quantitative research method in which the company will conduct survey questionnaire study. In order to study the attitudes and perception of the consumers about the

brand and the product itself, qualitative method is best suited. Due to above mentioned constraints; some open ended questions can be entered into the survey which will give space to the participants to express their thoughts and ideas. The study will be carried out in descriptive way which means no attempt will be made to change behavior or conditions—things will be measured the way they are (Will G Hopkins, 2001).

As Aurora Research uses different methods of surveys to collect the required data, it would be feasible to post the questionnaire to the participants for collecting the desired information. Post survey questionnaires are self-administered by the recipient, which means there is little control over the feedback (Ted Finch, 2004).

The reason behind choosing this form of questionnaire survey is that the questionnaire will contain some open ended questions along with close ended ones. Open ended questions will be required so that the participants can easily express their feelings about the product and its prices. These open ended questions will help the Norfolk gauge the perception and image of their brand in the eyes of the consumer. Post questionnaires are also preferable as the participants will be able to fill it in the comforts of their home in a relaxed mood.

This is necessary as people will take some time gathering their thoughts and fill out the open ended questions. Emailing the form is not recommended as people usually check their emails in their office and don't have much time to fill out a questionnaire. Telephone questionnaire inserts the answers directly to the company's system. In this case, open ended questions can't be placed

as the answers might be re-phrased by the person who is inserting the answers to save time. This can lead to interviewer bias. Interview questionnaire, as mentioned earlier is not feasible due to large sample size, and this method might become expensive as well as time consuming.

Sampling Plan:

Subjects:

The participants can be chosen on the basis of age groups and living styles. There are 2 age groups which will be interested in consuming the product. First the young adults of age group 22-30 which are conscious about their health and do workouts and morning exercise to keep themselves fit. The other age group is 40 and above, who have to keep a check on their diet because of cholesterol, diabetes, blood pressure etc. Their dieticians advice them to have nutritious drinks with low calories to compensate the deficiency of required vitamins and proteins.

Besides the age groups, the other aspect is living style and level of income or earnings, which are important to know as the Norfolk product is priced high than its competitors'. Due to this, the product can be afforded by those households who consume other expensive food products also in their daily lives or either have the purchasing power to afford the brand. As the company will be introducing a new reformulated flavor, the prices can be higher than the previous flavors.

Sampling Method:

The given scenario states that around 70-90% of the house holds across GB gives the basic demographic details to Aurora Research. The company can sort out the primary data on the basis of age groups and income levels first to identify the population which is to be studied. After that, a sample is selected from the identified population. This sample should be the generalization of the entire population which is possible if this population is accurately represented in the sampling frame (William G. Zikmund, 2002).

As the study will be covering the participants across Great Britain, the sample size would be large which can be around 1500-2000 participants. Aurora Research Company will try to cover each area using ‘ stratified random sampling’ while keeping in mind the above mentioned criteria for selecting the subjects. Probability sampling will be done from the target population to get accuracy in the research outcome.

Once the sample is selected, the participants will be sent a survey questionnaire containing both open as well as close ended questions. Close ended questions will be covering the basic details of the participant regarding their age, health conditions, personality profile, daily eating habits and work routines to analyze their life style and identify the prospects for the Norfolk’s new product.

The open ended questions will be covering the qualitative aspect of the study, that is, it will state the questions regarding the perception and attitude of the participants towards the brand and its price. An informed consent will be attached to the questionnaire which will be explaining the

purpose of the research and obtain the consent of the participant for answering the questions.

Data Collection:

According to Diamond, I & Jeffries, J., ' Quantitative research is basically concerned with testing hypotheses derived from the theory and/or being able to estimate the size of a phenomenon of interest'. Keeping this in view, in data collection, the dependent and independent variables are clearly identified. The independent variable in our study will be the age groups and the income levels of the participants. On the other hand, dependent variables or outcome will be their willingness or unwillingness to accept the new edition of the Norfolk's product. As mentioned previously, data will be collected through survey questionnaires.

Questionnaire Design and Requirements:

As the presented scenario shows that participants usually agree to taste or watch, that is simply experiment any new product as a pre-requisite in filling out the survey questionnaire. Before answering the questions of the survey, participants may be asked to try the original chocolate flavor of Norfolk's nutritious drink and grade it on the basis of taste, color, texture etc. They might also be required to point out what they liked or disliked about the drink and what is their opinion about the flavor. These comments will be entered in the questionnaire provided to them for the study.

Questionnaire:

1. Are you usually concerned about your health and weight?

- Yes, a lot.
- Somewhat
- Not at all

2. Is there any kind of nutritious milk drink that you use to fulfill your daily vitamins and proteins need?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

3. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear about Norfolk's Nutritious drink?

4. Have you used Norfolk's Drink before?

- Yes
- No

(If your answer is ' No', skip question 4 and 5, and if your answer is ' Yes', skip question 3.)

5. If your answer is ' No', which of the following keeps you from using it?

- Taste
- Price
- Flavors
- Packaging
- Others (Please specify)_____

6. If your answer is ' Yes', which of the following attracts you towards the product?

- Taste
- Vitamin Complex
- Price
- Flavors
- Packaging
- Others (Please specify) _____

7. Do you like the current chocolate flavor of Norfolk drink?

- Yes
- No

Why? _____

8. Which other brands have you used of Nutritious drinks except Norfolk?

9. Rank the features of a nutritious drink in the order of preference on the scale of 1-6 where 1 is most important and 6 are least important. (You can give same rank to more than one option).

- Amount of vitamins and nutrients in each serving. []
- Taste of the drink. []
- Flavors in which the product is available. []
- Brand image of a product. []
- []
- Affordability and accessibility. []

10. ‘ The price Norfolk charges for its Nutritious drink is higher than it should be”. Rate the statement on the scale below.

Strongly Agree Neutral Disagree

Strongly

Agree

Disagree

11. Would you prefer to switch to Norfolk Nutritious drink from your existing brand if its chocolate flavor is improved?

- Yes
- No

Reason: _____

Data Measurement:

The data is measured on different scales for different questions. Some questions have been left open ended to study the qualitative aspect of the study. In few questions various options have been given to be ticked by the respondent. In question 9, options have been given to rank from most to least important in order to see what a consumer prefers in buying nutritious drinks.

In question 10, Likert scale has been used for a leading statement which the participant is required to agree or disagree on the scale given. This scale will help in knowing what the consumer thinks of the Norfolk’s product’s price. In other questions, categories have been given in the form of ‘ Yes’, ‘ No’, ‘ somewhat’ etc. to categorize participants on the basis of theses responses.

In statistical terms the collected data will be in the form of maximum & minimum values, averages (mean, median, and mode), measures of variability (range, inter-quartile range, standard deviation) etc.

Data Analysis and Presentation:

Editing and Coding of the data:

Editing is done to get the data ready to be transferred to data storage and it ensures completeness, consistency and reliability (William G. Zikmund, 2002). Once collected, coding and editing will be done for the options given. If response to any of the questions is missing, it could either be asked by calling the participant, or can be filled out by the editor on the basis of the previous responses the participant has given for the questions dealing the same matter. In case of open ended questions where one has to give his own opinion or ideas, the categories for a particular question will be made for the most common responses to it among all the survey forms. They will then be coded and tested.

In coding, the interviewer simply gives appropriate codes/numbers to the options to test them (Sunny Crouch, Matthew Housden, 2003). For example, in Likert scale we will assign 1 to 'strongly agree', 2 to 'Agree' and so on with assigning number 5 to 'strongly disagree'. The coding is done for the easiness as well as to identify and classify each answer with a numerical score, or other character symbol (William G. Zikmund, 2002).

For category Questions, Chi-square goodness of fit can be used in order to compare the hypothetical expected values with the observed ones.

Secondly, Z-test is applied to the Likert scale. Multiple options and ranking questions will be presented through graphs, pie-charts and tables. The complete data will be presented in a form of discussion with the supporting graphs showing the outcomes of the study.

Validity and Reliability:

According to Belson (1986), there are 2 viewpoints of seeing the validity of the postal questionnaire. First is to see whether the respondent has filled out the form honestly, accurately and correctly, secondly, whether those who have failed to return the questionnaire would have given the same distribution of answers as did the returnees.

Besides this, a questionnaire would be peer-reviewed so as to ensure whether it is targeting the main problem or not. The survey will also be checked for any ambiguous questions or leading statements, clarity, completeness and reliability of the instrument.

As Aurora Research only uses survey questionnaires as a mode of research, it might not be suitable in certain situations. Like in the case of Norfolk, the qualitative aspects of the problem also comes in where the attitude and perceptions of the consumer must be studied to see what is the image of Norfolk brand in the market. In such a situation, there is a validity threat that the post surveys might be unable to cover the qualitative side of the study and thus, this instrument can become less-reliable for this research.

Ethical Considerations:

Aurora Research will try its level best to remain within the bounds of ethics while conducting its research study. Following ethical considerations will be taken into account and standards will be practiced as it conducts its research study to ensure that the participant's rights are protected.

The participants will be informed about the nature and the purpose of the research and the data collection methods (i. e. survey questionnaire) through informed consent. Consent is entirely voluntary, i. e. it is free from coercion, force and requirement. The participants will also be told of their rights to withdraw at any time they wish. Their right of not willing to answer any specific question will also be respected.

The participants will also be encouraged to ask questions about the procedure. They will be informed that the purpose of the research is not to assess their answers in terms of correct or incorrect. Rather, the objective will be to explore their valuable thoughts and feelings to better understand the image of Norfolk Foods in the consumers' eyes and to gauge their acceptability and willingness towards the new chocolate flavor.

Budget:

As the Aurora Research will be doing a research on a large sample size, heavy costs are likely to incur, but no fix estimation can be given at such an initial stage of the proposal. A time frame can be designed in order to complete the data collection and data analysis with in time. A time slot of three months can be fixed to carry on the study. This time slot is preferable because more time can give a chance to the competitors to come up with

the same product and flavor which can be dangerous for Norfolk in terms of profits and losses. Besides that, the market for such consumer products is usually volatile with new flavors or variants coming in after every 2-3 months.

In the first month, problem statement and hypothesis will be designed and agreed upon with the consent and participation of Norfolk. Target audience will be identified and sampled in the same month. In the second month, Aurora can design the questionnaire and pre-test it to check for validity and reliability of the instrument. After this the questionnaire will be distributed among the sample population. In the third month, the data collected will be organized, edited, and coded for testing. Different statistical tests will be applied on this data with the help of SPSS or Minitab statistical software. The results will be then analyzed and represented in front of the client for decision making.

Limitations

The limitations that would be encountered by Aurora Research are:

Time:

One of the major limitations that is anticipated in conducting the research study is time. The issue which is to be explored is quite sensitive in a way that the study will be covering minute detailed regarding the feeling and reaction of the participants towards the product of Norfolk. Exploring an entirely new and qualitative phenomenon in such a short time period of 3 months will be challenging for the research company.

Communication:

The company can also have communication constraints. It is because the research will be covering the whole Great Britain. It means that Aurora Research will need greater manpower to circulate survey forms among the participants who are scattered throughout the country. In addition to this, the questionnaire collection task, data organization, analysis and follow-up of the respondents require great number of survey distributors who can deliver it on time.

Conclusion:

The above proposal covers all the necessary information which will be required by Fred Bench, Marketing Director at Norfolk, to decide whether Aurora Research should be hired to conduct the study. The proposal includes the possible target audience, sample questionnaire, budgets, limitations, validity and reliability threat, in short, a complete research design which will be carried out by the Aurora Research.

References:

1. Will G Hopkins PhD, 2001, ' Quantitative Research Design', Department of Physiology and School of Physical Education, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand 9001, <http://sportsci.org/jour/0001/wghdesign.html>
2. Diamond, I & Jeffries, J. *Beginning Statistics: An Introduction for Social Scientists*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2001.

3. De Vaus, D. *Research Design in Social Research* . Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2001.
4. Peat, J. *Health Science Research: A Handbook of Quantitative Methods* . Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2002.
5. Sunny Crouch, Matthew Housden, Published 2003 Elsevier ' Marketing Research for Managers', ISBN 0750654538.
6. William G. Zikmund, 2002, ' Business Research Methods'.
7. Robert Niles, ' Data Analysis', <http://www.robertniles.com/stats/dataanly.shtml>.
8. Bob Hilsden, Centre for Advancement of health, Calgary Health Region, University of Calgary, http://www.ucalgary.ca/md/CAH/research/prop_ele.htm.
9. Chris Handley, MS, EMT-P, CPTC, Donor service Coordinator, ' Validity and Reliability in Research'. J. (Ed.). (2001). International epidemiological association. A dictionary of epidemiology (4th). New York: Oxford University Press. http://www.natco1.org/research/files/Validity-ReliabilityResearchArticle_000.pdf.
10. Lock LF, Spirduso WW, Silverman SJ. 1993, ' Proposals that work'. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993.
11. Paul T. P. Wong, Ph. D., C. Psych. Research Director, Graduate Program in Counselling Psychology, May 8, 2002 ' How to Write a Research Proposal', Trinity Western University Langley, BC, Canada.

12. ' Guide to Writing a Research Proposal' University of Technology, Sydney. <http://www.education.uts.edu.au/research/degrees/guide.html>.
13. King, G., Keohane, R. O., Verba, S. (1994) ' Designing Social Inquiry'. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
14. Moskal, Barbara M. & Jon A. Leydens (2000). Scoring rubric development: validity and reliability. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation* , 7(10). Retrieved December 31, 2006 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=10>
15. Laura A. Colosi, 1997, ' Reliability and Validity: What is the difference?' <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/tutorial/Colosi/lcolosi2.htm>