

5 Marketing research process

Marketing research process is a set of steps that are logically related and connected. Regardless aims and objectives of the research, its scope and depth, each research consists of a stage of planning a research study (stage of preparation) and a stage of conducting a research study.

Each stage has a few steps and activities that compose marketing research process. Marketing research process is graphically depicted in figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 shows the development of the research process in the sequence of an overall study development and design. It displays a link between the conceptual part of the study covering problem definition, research questions and objective specifications, development of theoretical framework of the study, and research methodology.

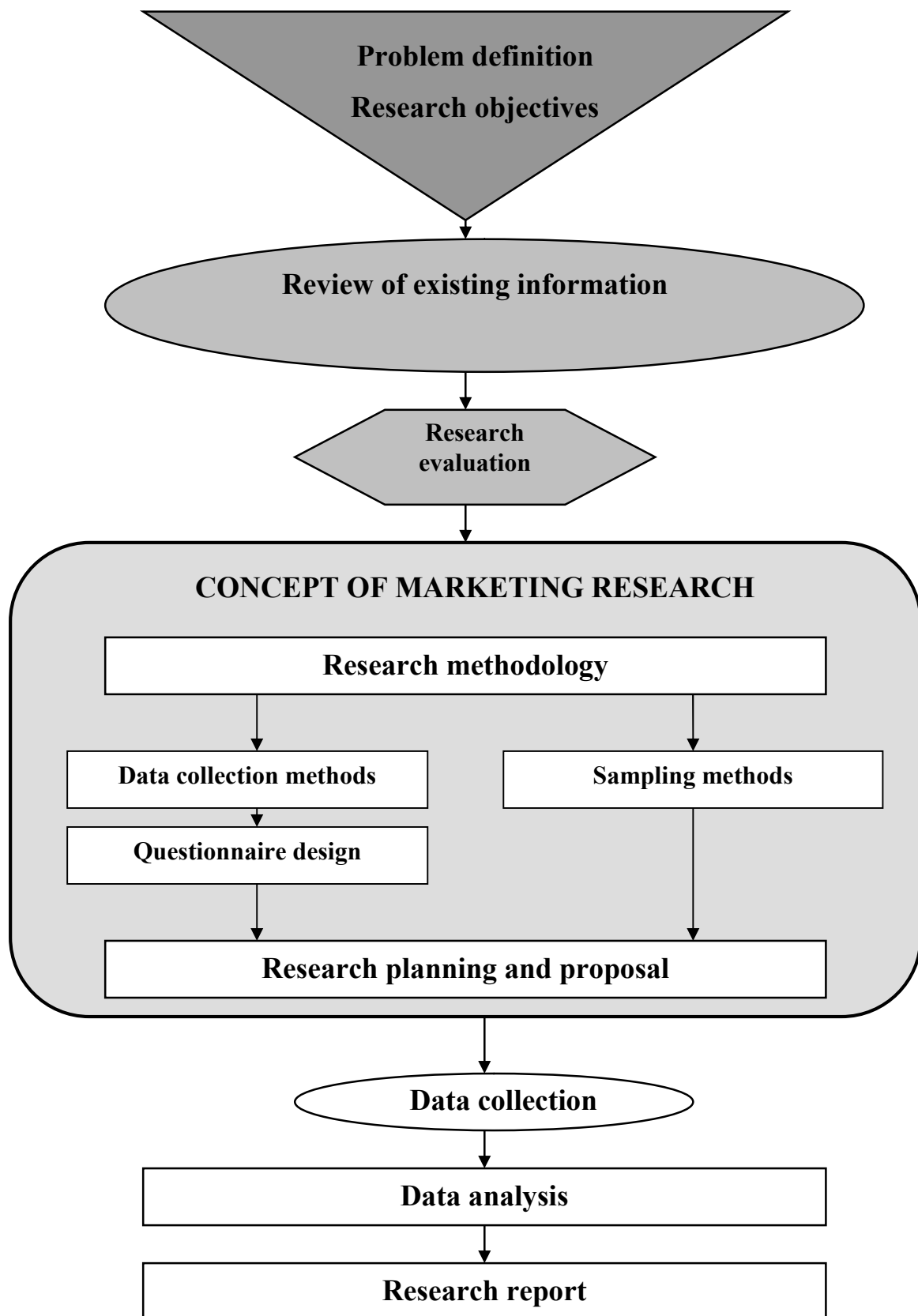


Figure 5.1 Marketing research process

Source: Cooper, Schindler, 2003, p. 61

5.1 Marketing research planning and preparation

The research process refers to research questions, objectives and conceptual framework. It further develops it into research design including methodological approach, research purpose and strategy, methods of sampling and data-collection as well as methods of analysis.

The aim of the marketing research preparation is to create a real condition for its realization. The stage of preparation influences quality and success of data collection to great extent. This is way, one should pay attention to the research process preparation.

5.1.1 Problem definition

In the early stage of marketing research process, it is important to define a problem and specify data that should be collected by the research. Problem definition delineate thematically the area of the research interest, purpose of the research and serves as a groundwork for setting research objectives.

Problem definition can be a result of observation of a situation or process, an output of monitoring or simply there is no need to have the research associated with any problem. The aim of the research can be to explore a certain situation or verify company's business plans and/or intentions.

Problem definition should not be too narrow or too broad, such as "find everything you can about ...". Defining a research problem means to specify reasons why the research should be conducted. It also includes specification of basic variables that the research will deal with.

5.1.2 Research objectives

Research objectives can be set up based on a defined problem. The objectives must be clearly defined as they specify data that should be obtained by the research. Research objectives can be stated as follows:

- as tasks that we want to achieve by the research, e.g. to define..., to monitor..., to identify... and so on.

- As research questions. The research is organized to bring the answers to the questions. For example, is there enough potential customers in the market? How customers perceive (evaluate) our products, or what are customer preferences?
- As hypotheses if research variables can be quantified and statistically tested.

Sometime the research objectives can be set up as a main objective that can be decomposed into a few partial objectives. Along with the research objectives, it is important to state other conditions associated with the research, such as what will be included into research and what will not. This can refer to:

- geographical area that the research will focus on, e.g. the data will be collected from the region of Liberec only, or
- to the extent of the research excluding such areas that will distort research findings, e.g. Prague is not a typical representative city of the Czech Republic.

5.1.3 Review of existing information

Before conducting a field research, it is important to find what is already known. The aim of this step is:

- to find as much information as possible about related topic
- to learn about a research topic
- to better understand the topic of the research.

It may be necessary to undertake some exploratory research into certain aspects of the business to understand the problem and design a research proposal. Review of existing data can bring important information that will save time and money on conducting an extensive field research or it can give direction of the entire research activity.

5.1.4 Evaluation of marketing research cost efficiency

Having stated the objectives and scope of the proposed research, any constraints must be clearly specified since they will affect the nature and methods of the undertaken research. The two most important constraints are time and money. Some methods are more time-consuming than others are. Similarly, the budget available for the research will affect the scope of the research. Costs of the research must be weighed not only against obtained

information, but also against possibly hundreds of thousands of Euros or dollars lost in the result of wrong decision made due to wrong information. The scope, objectives and practical constraints of the research must be carefully considered at this stage of a research project because it is easier to skimp in practice, and one of the most damaging to the final outcome, if not done properly.

5.1.5 Research design - conceptual framework and research methodology

Research proposal design is actually an instruction how to undertake research. It is a work plan that describes the nature of the problem, the population involved, the principal factors affecting the topic of the research (conceptual framework), and the methodologies to be adopted. The conceptual framework of the research includes exploring and defining relationships between variables that appear to be significant in the problem being surveyed. Over a series of stages of development, through refining and clarifying various factors in the problem, a useful model (concept) should emerge. This enables to develop and select hypotheses that are appropriate to the research tasks. The conceptual framework will submit a general outline of the methodology. The methods of collecting the data must also be considered and alternatives compared for their efficiency and likely value to the research.

Research methodology includes:

- data collection methods and techniques, and their advantages and disadvantages
- measurement and quantification of variables by questions and various scaling techniques
- sampling methods and ways of contacting respondents
- methods of data analysis, data evaluation and interpretation.

Figure 5.2 outlines the process of marketing research in regards of the problem definition, research objectives, conceptual framework and their link to the research methodology. It shows the development of the research process in the sequence of an overall study development and design. It displays a link between the conceptual part of the study covering problem definition, research questions and objective specifications, development of theoretical framework of the study, and research methods design. The relationship between the macro and the micro levels of the study and associated surveys as well as their contributions to the study of changes and development of clothing retailing in the Czech Republic, is also outlined.

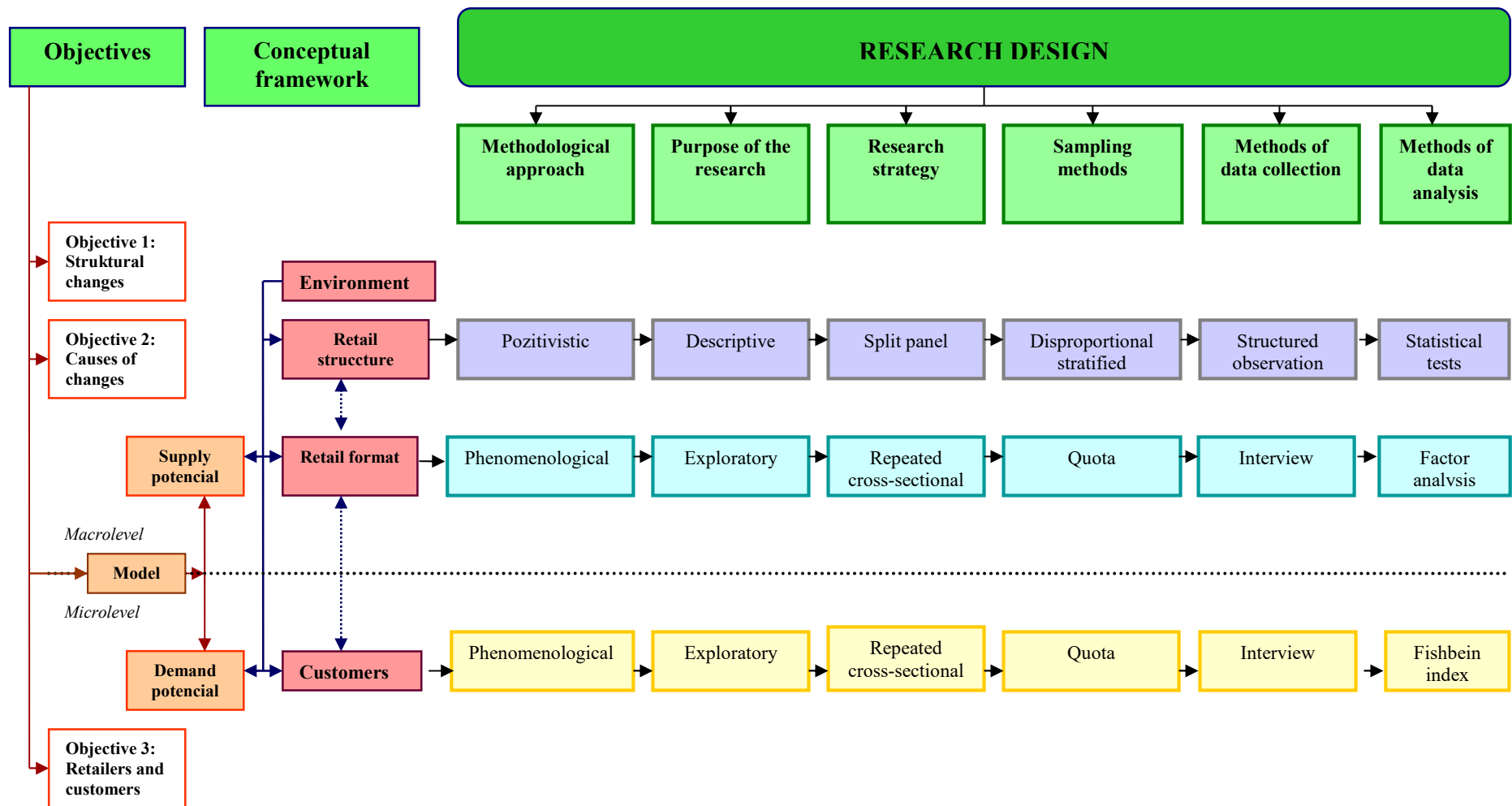


Figure 5.2 The research design

Source: Simová, 2010b

5.1.6 Research planning

The final stage of the research preparation process is research planning. This includes all activities associated with who and how will collect the data, who will provide the data, how and how many respondents will be selected, who will ask the questions, how the answers will be recorded and what will happen to the answers. Besides that, researchers should also consider:

- **technical devices needed to collect the data**
- **costs and budget of the research**
- **time-schedule of the research and personal responsibility for the research activities**
(Simová, 2010).

5.2 Stage of conducting marketing research

The stage of conducting marketing research follows on from the preparatory work and represents the practical data collection and analysis. It includes the following activities:

- **Data collection**
- **Processing and analysing data**
- **Writing a research report.**

Summary

Marketing research process includes a few steps that are necessary to take in order to obtain required data. These steps can be divided into two stages – the stage of research planning and the stage of conducting research. The aim of the first stage is to design and prepare research process for a practical data collection. This includes problem definition, stating research objectives, developing research design and methodology. The final stage of marketing research process includes data collection, data analysis and a research report. All steps are operational in nature, following a logical sequence and various methods and procedures in a simple step-by-step manner.

References:

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