

ISSUES REGARDING THE EFFICIENCY of MARKET RESEARCH IN VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: The paper aims to identify solutions to increase the efficiency of market research, focusing on reducing resources consumption (human and financial). In the first part of the paper, is performed a comparative analysis regarding the effectiveness of a market research conducted by the classical method and one performed in a virtual environment. In the second part of the paper is presented a case study that is based on using online research software in the virtual environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

A company allocates time and consume financial resources for market research because it needs the information, in this respect is necessary that the data collected to be as accurate as possible and useful for decisional process. In order to collect accurate and useful information it is necessary to use methods and techniques of market research as accurate and economically efficient. Starting from this consideration we have achieved in the first part of paper, a research regarding the traditional market studies and those made in virtual environment. Based on the conclusions drawn from completion of theoretical research, in the second part of the work we developed a case study which presents the advantages offered by market research in a virtual environment.

The newest communication environment, Internet, owes its raising publicity to the interaction possibility, to the anonymity it offers, and to the communities that can be created. But, beside the communication channel, Internet is also a research tool very cheap and accessible. The credibility become a problem because on the internet there are not only correct and actualized data, but also information that lost their validity, that have a speculative character or that are really false. [4] In other words, as a research tool, the internet is extremely fast and extremely accurate with a powerful online platform. So, the techniques that are applicable in the online environment have their advantages and disadvantages. [4]

2. COMPARISON THE EFFICIENCY OF RESEARCH IN VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT WITH THE TRADITIONAL

In order to determine the effectiveness of market research in the virtual environment compared to traditional (face to face) we performed a comparative analysis between these two, in terms of activities undertaken and resources. To compare the effectiveness between these two possibilities of research (in real and virtual environment) I took as an example a study that was conducted on a sample of 50 subjects. For a meaningful comparison, it was used Microsoft Project (Figures 1 and Figure 2).

Thus, we can observe that research in the physical environment (face to face) it lasted more than double (15 compared to 6.5 days), and costs almost double compared to the virtual environment (1640 lei compared to 880lei). If the number of subjects would be more than 50, the difference of time and cost grows even more in detriment of research in the physical environment.

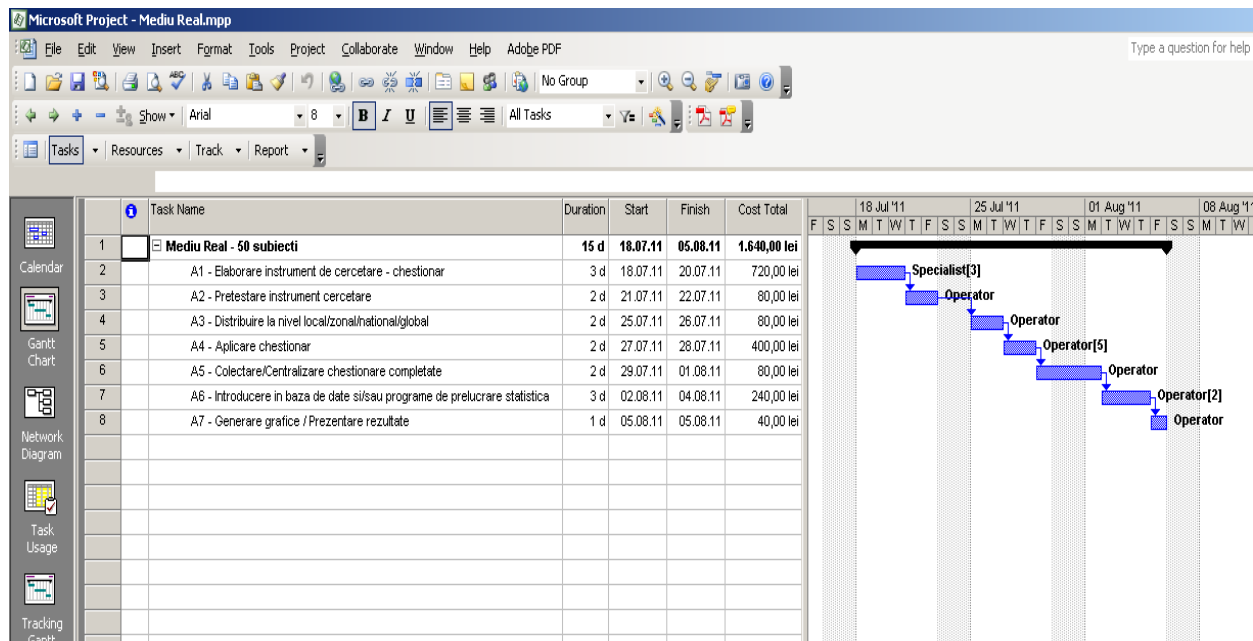


Figure 1. The tasks undertaken and resource allocation for research in physical environment (face-to-face)

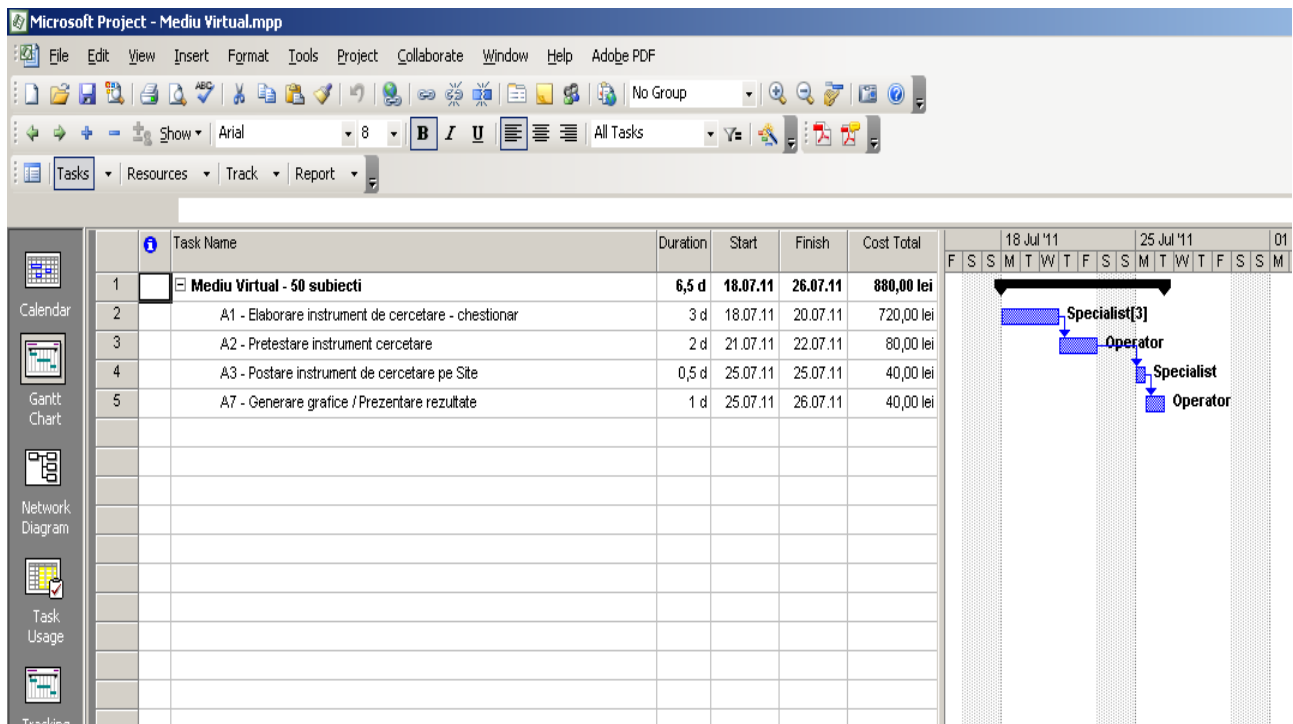


Figure 2. The tasks undertaken and resource allocation for research in virtual environment (Web interface)

After comparative analysis between market research in the physical environment and virtual environment, is clear that market research conducted in virtual environment is more efficient in terms of time to achieve and in terms of resource consumption (human and financial).

3. THE MARKET RESEARCH IN THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT. CASE STUDY.

Market surveys in the virtual environment, through email or the specialized web pages (such as UNIPARK platform), have the advantage of being able to achieve a significant sample in a short time, the Internet is a fast environment and cost effective. In addition, the answers can be processed and analyzed as soon as the questionnaires are filled out and stored in the database.

Disadvantages caused by the online environment, are given by selecting respondents and the identity of those who respond to questions, the Internet not allowing a strict control of the sample, unless it is preselected. A range of research techniques are applicable to online environment and are increasingly used, as the Internet gains popularity for market research.

Operating methodology for market research on a virtual environment platform is presented in Figure 3.

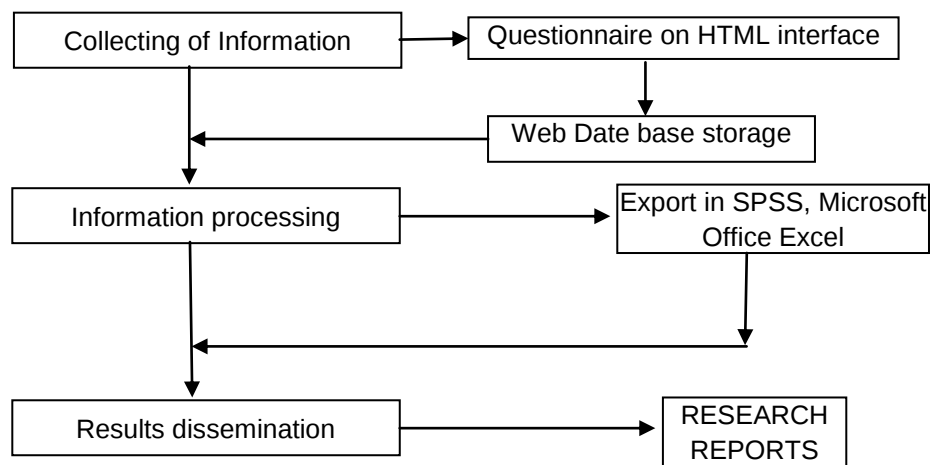


Figure 3. Methodology of the market research in virtual environment [4]

The research tool used consists of a questionnaire applied on a Web interface (figure 4). Answers of the subjects investigated (in number of 21: construction companies from Timisoara) have been stored in a database, thus eliminating the manual input of the data and so has been reduced time to achieve the research, and costs for human resources involved in carrying out of research.

From the database the information may be export by a simple operation, in statistical processing programs (SPSS or Microsoft Office Excel).

In figure 5, is presented the statistical results of the research, directly from Unipark web platform.



 3%

Titlul:

☐ domnișoară / doamnă

☐ domn

Selectați cel mai înalt nivel de educație al dumneavoastră:

☐ Liceu profesional

☐ Liceu

☐ Absolvent de Colegiu Tehnic

☐ Absolvent de Universitate

☐ Studii Postuniversitare / Master

☐ Doctorat în științe ingineresti

☐ Doctorat în științe economice

☐ Altul (vă rugăm să specificați):

Ce funcție aveți în compania dumneavoastră?
Vă rugăm să precizați dacă aveți o funcție de conducere sau lucrați în interiorul unui compartiment:

☐ Funcție de conducere

☐ Lucrez într-un compartiment

La ce nivel ierarhic este localizat postul dumneavoastră?
Vă rugăm să vă gândiți la structura organizatorică a firmei dvs. Unde puteți localiza funcția pe care o aveți? Vă rugăm să încercați să potriviți cât mai bine funcția dvs. cu categoriile de răspunsuri date. Dacă nu vă puteți decide între două răspunsuri posibile, vă rugăm să alegeți nivelul cel mai uzual: selectați un rând de mai jos.

☐ Nivelul 1: de exemplu, Consiliul de Administrație / Administrator

☐ Nivelul 2: de exemplu, Consiliul de management al unui sector, manageri de sector, etc.

☐ Nivelul 3: de exemplu, Filială / Manager regional, etc.

☐ Nivelul 4: de exemplu, Management de Proiect, manager de proiect

☐ Nivelul 5: de exemplu, Management Departamental, șef de compartiment

☐ Nivelul 6: de exemplu, membru în echipă

Figure 4. The questionnaire used in the web platform.

By using UNIPARK online platform, we identified these facilities provided by this:

- Creation and project definition with personal or anonymous questionnaire completion;
- Development of research instrument (questionnaire). By using this platform is possible to use different predefined questions models. This platform provides great flexibility and allows defining of filters to key questions;
- Setting period for completing the questionnaire;
- Enables creation of a database with contact data of the target sample, or can be sent as an invitation and completed ANONYMOUSLY;
- You can monitor statistical data on the stage of questionnaire completion: complete number of responses, number of accesses to the questionnaire, the page number where the subject abandoned the completion of questionnaire;
- Associated of the questionnaire, there is a database to store all the answers, which are subsequently processed statistically. These data can be exported and saved in programs such as SPSS or Microsoft Office Excel

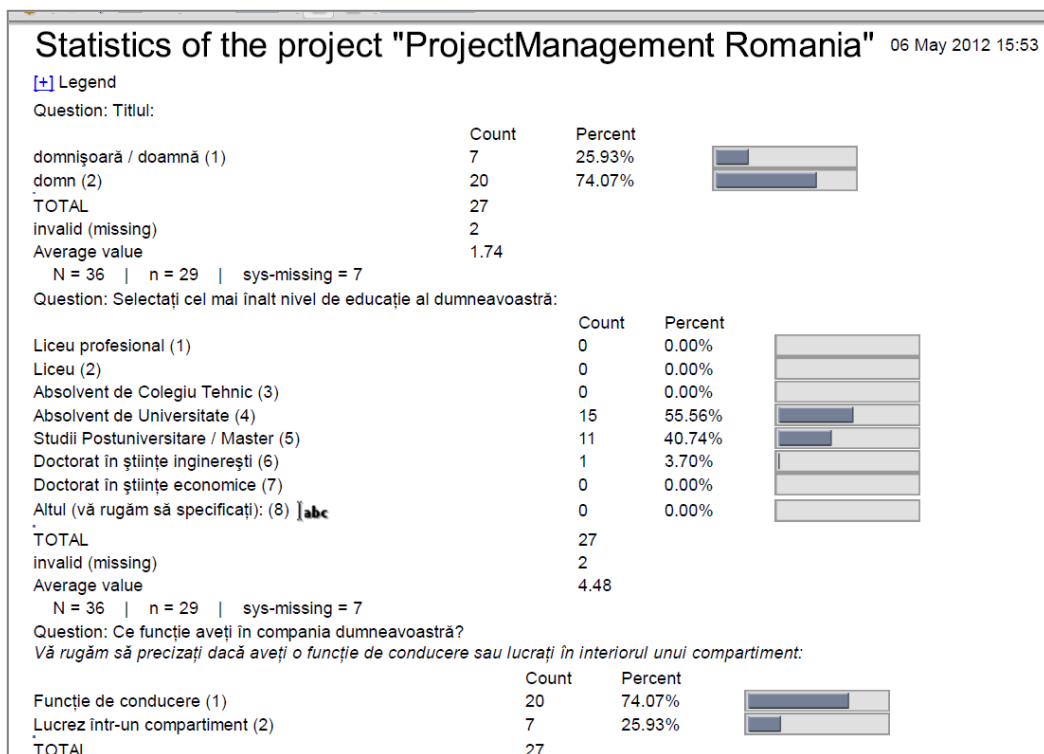


Figure 5. Presentation of data obtained from market research, using platform UNIPARK

4. CONCLUSIONS

The main advantage of market research made in virtual environment is that the time consumption and costs for human resources involved in research development are reduced (for example: interview operators dispersed on a geographical area, human operators involved in entering data in a database).

Market research in virtual environment can be successfully applied especially for the studies that concern products from the industrial area, because:

- On the market Industrial Products customers are less numerous (in compared with customers of mass consumption products);
- Target subjects are known by those who made studies and market research;
- The investigated subjects (in most cases) are interested in responding to requests, because by conducting researches it will find solutions to improve the products and services offered, and they are the direct beneficiaries. In time, such researches will increase the economic efficiency.

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