



MARKET RESEARCH



Target



Survey



Market Gap



Analytics



Statistics



Customer



Trends



Evaluation

Research Strategy

February 2023



Executive Summary

Why do we make decisions?

At the most simplistic level it is to achieve a desired outcome or goal.

We must ensure that key decisions are made with the best available evidence to justify them and to maximise the chance of a successful outcome.

What constitutes evidence?

Evidence can be derived from a range of sources including expert knowledge and experience but this strategy sets out the importance and need for Research and the role it has in providing evidence. Evidence is something we can rely on to guide our decisions and actions and encompasses a number of fields such as data collection & analysis and human engagement. In this context, Research is a mechanism by which we collect the data we need or analyse it to become useful information.

The strategy makes the case for evidence-based management and decision-making and demonstrates how research can be a valuable tool in establishing the underlying evidence base, thus acting as an enabler.

The strategy is framed around 4 pillars; Scientific, Consistent, Professional and Varied and 10 objectives have been identified.

Scientific Approach

First and foremost, market and social research is a science. The type of research, the wording of questions, the timing of a survey deployment, the sample size and population are all factors that differentiate a simple survey from one which is considered “statistically significant” – i.e. reliable and trustworthy. When used to form an evidence base for decisions, we must strive for the most scientific and reliable results employing established processes and procedures. This is particularly true with an expanded use of **experiments** to generate first-hand knowledge which requires the utmost attention to scientific principles.



Consistent Application

A consistent approach to market research ensures the use of best practice, increases the reliability of results and allows for replication at a later stage. Establishing the best form of market research approach for the specific requirement is a key element of this, following a thorough review and understanding of the needs of the project. This can be achieved through **coordination of research** via the centralised Research and Insight team and **continued expansion of the Insight Panel** membership providing a continuity of research opportunity which has been in place since 2018. To be consistent, we must all follow the same principles and embedding evidence-based decision making is a key objective of this strategy. To that end, embedding the **research and evidence-base into all SLT reports for decision** should be considered.

Professional Discipline

Nexus strives for professionalism at all times and the undertaking of market research is no exception. Market research as a science is a professional discipline and a fully managed research programme encompasses a range of activities that require high levels of professional standards. Frontline researchers are ambassadors of Nexus – the Continuous Monitoring Programme results in around 400k face-to-face engagements per year. Personal data collected in surveys must be treated with the highest standards to ensure compliance with legislation and to protect our respondents. A programme of **upskilling** and **professionalisation** along with a Research **Code of Conduct** will set Nexus on a path to potential membership of the Market Research Society.

Varied Methods

Research encompasses a range of techniques and practices and we must use the full range at our disposal to get the best evidence base to enable the best decisions. The creation of a **Market Research Manual** will show the services provided by the Research and Insight team to our organisation. As technology changes, we must also adapt and **embrace new technology** to do new things or do old things better. The existing market research programme is an example of a varied approach utilising multiple disciplines, approaches and techniques and **continuation of the existing research programme** ensures a varied approach.



Introduction

Scope

This strategy sets out an approach for how Nexus undertakes market research to provide actionable insight that enables evidence-led decision making. Travel is a means to an end and it is therefore essential to understand the underlying generators of travel as well as the decision-making processes undertaken when choosing particular methods of mobility.

The core of the strategy is to enable successful outcomes from initiatives and activities undertaken by Nexus by ensuring the evidence-base provides reliable, timely and actionable insight. It recognises that insights gained from engagement are provided to inform and guide decision-making and does not seek to give such insights primacy over other sources of information such as specialist knowledge.

Vision: what will make the difference

Vision

Nexus is committed to informed decision making that is evidence-led. Engagement with the people and communities we serve is a key component in this approach and informs and compliments expert knowledge.

We must understand the changing needs of our communities while balancing expectations with what can realistically be delivered. People are driven by personal experiences, attitudes, perceptions and emotions. As such, public engagement cannot be the sole factor that directs our activity but rather is one that informs it. Understanding the views and feelings of the community allows us to **inform, educate, persuade and reassure** people about the activities we undertake and the policies we adopt. Effective engagement provides us with the knowledge of how best to communicate our activities by understanding the emotions, attitudes and perceptions that underpin the views of our communities.

Planned activity is wanted		Planned activity is not wanted
Inform	and	Persuade
Educate		Then, if necessary, Reassure

Understanding the expectations and needs of our communities enables us to communicate more effectively. Where our activities meet those needs and expectations we can inform and educate people of what we’re doing. Identifying a lack of support for planned activity shows we need to persuade people of the merits of what we’re doing. If persuasion fails, we can reassure people that our activity is necessary. Effective engagement with our customers and communities identifies their needs to enable us to add and design services that are appropriate.

The Nexus Corporate Vision is:

“Making public transport great for our environment, for our economy and for our communities”



In the context of this strategy, this means embedding evidence-based decisions at the heart of what we do to ensure we provide the best possible services and communicate our activities effectively. With this in mind, the vision for this strategy is:

“Nexus will enable evidence-based decisions by creating insight from a scientific and professionally delivered research programme”

Links to other business areas

Market research provides evidence and insight to support business decisions and as a result links to all parts of Nexus. The following definition of market and social research is taken from the Market Research Society Code of Conduct¹:

*“Research is the collection, use, or analysis of information about individuals or organisations intended to establish facts, acquire knowledge or reach conclusions. It uses techniques of the applied social, behavioural and data sciences, statistical principles and theory, **to generate insights and support decision-making** by providers of goods and services, governments, non-profit organisations and the general public.”*

¹ [About MRS | The Global Market Research Society](#)

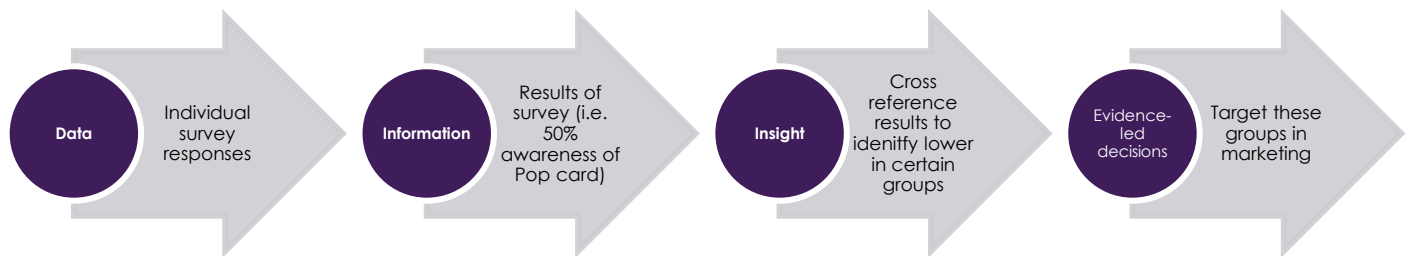
Background

What is Insight from Research?

Understanding something is to have knowledge, or insight, about it. Insight comes from a variety of sources with market research being an essential element which involves a range of activity from data analysis to direct engagement with people.

The path to insight starts with raw data. Data are individual observations which when processed to become useful become known as information. Combining information provides insight that enables better decision-making. Insight derived from research provides a justifiable evidence-base for decisions, identifies areas of strength and weakness and helps demonstrate what is working well and what needs intervention.

The graphic below shows this flow relating to market research engagement.



In this example, a marketing activity is informed by the evidence collected through research. Research is a means to an end in that it should be carried out to support, inform and justify activities taken by others. Business cases, funding bids, marketing campaigns and commercial offerings are just a few examples of these outputs which are underpinned by the strong foundations provided by insight from research.

Benefits of market research



Benefit	Description
Reducing risks	Minimising risks is key for any business and that makes it important to know who our target market is and what their expectations are.
Cost effective	Knowing our target market and their expectations can help save money by not targeting inappropriate recipients. Effective and efficient use of resources is possible by retaining existing markets and understanding the best markets to target.
Helps create plans	An evidence base informs decision making and can be used to directly influence delivery of a project as well as the marketing and communications messaging around it.
Keeps a business relevant	Fresh research can unearth new trends and new markets which allows a business to focus efforts on new customers as well as retaining existing ones. A business which keeps updated to new customers, changing social trends and advancing technology is more agile and able to adapt to shifting customer requirements.
Identifies threats	Research can uncover potential threats to a business such as competition, demographic changes and product appeal. Identifying problems early allows a business to be a step ahead and more likely to effectively deal with the problem.
Making well informed decisions	Businesses that are prepared with information about their market and their competition are in a better position to make decisions. If research has been done, the results can clearly point one way or another when there is a choice to be made. Without research, a business risks making the wrong decision or perhaps not being in a position to have that choice.

An assessment of the size and impact of the UK research and evidence market was commissioned by the Market Research Society in 2016 and undertaken by PwC. It found up to 73,000 FTEs employed in the sector generating £4.8bn in Gross Value Added (GVA), the measure of economic output at a regional level similar. Of this, local government contributed up to 1,800 FTE employees and £144m in GVA².

As at late 2021, the Market Research and Public Opinion Polling industry is estimated to be worth £5.1bn, with a growth rate of 1.7% between 2017 and 2021. This is forecast to increase to 3.8% from 2022 to 2027³.

Benefits of evidence-based management⁴

Evidence-based management (also known as EBM) is a management approach that involves using multiple sources of scientific evidence and results as a means of attaining knowledge. Evidence-based management takes its inspiration from evidence-based medicine, an approach that relies on experimental, carefully tested approaches to treating illness. There is a large and ever-growing knowledge base from the social sciences regarding how to manage individuals and run organisations effectively.

² https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/The_Business_of_Evidence_Final_08102012.pdf



An evidence-based approach to management reduces the potential for irrational thinking, bias, or exhaustion to negatively impact management decisions. Rather than selecting an intervention or strategy based on gut feelings, personal experiences, or popular trends in the industry, an evidence-based manager reviews the published literature on the subject, critically appraises the quality of the evidence, and selects a strategy that is supported by science. This method of decision-making is systematic and requires that a manager familiarise themselves with the work of multiple evidence sources.

A dedicated research function, employing the scientific practices of social research and utilising analytical and presentation techniques, serves to provide decision-makers with the evidence needed without them having to study and interpret anything themselves. Furthermore, a local research function engages directly with the communities served and therefore is better placed to understand its citizens, stakeholders and employees.

³ <https://www.hallidays.co.uk/views-and-insight/sector-report/market-research-industry>

⁴ <https://www.ckju.net/en/blog/benefits-evidence-based-management-nutshell/1246>

Figure 1: Evidence-based management



The EBM doesn't stop at decision-making, it continues to evaluation and monitoring. Human behaviour is difficult to explain or predict, and it is always influenced by a wide range of variables. A manager may not be able to effectively interpret the effects of their decisions or may experience one of the two main biases identified in psychology; confirmation bias where the reviewer focuses solely on data that indicates a strategy was effective and cognitive dissonance where any evidence suggesting an undesirable outcome is discounted.. We all experience bias, which can be conscious or unconscious – so where does EBM and research come in? An evidence-based management approach relies on the scientific method to fairly examine interventions and accurately evaluate their performance.

An EBM approach ensures consideration is given to the best available evidence when making decisions and points to four sources of evidence;

1. Organisational data
2. Professional expertise
3. Stakeholder values and concerns
4. Insights from scientific research

Figure 2: Four kinds of evidence in evidence-based management



Image adapted from www.cebma.org

www.ckju.net 

Market research and scientific analysis provides the foundation for an evidence-based management approach to decision making and is thus an enabler function.

Types of market research

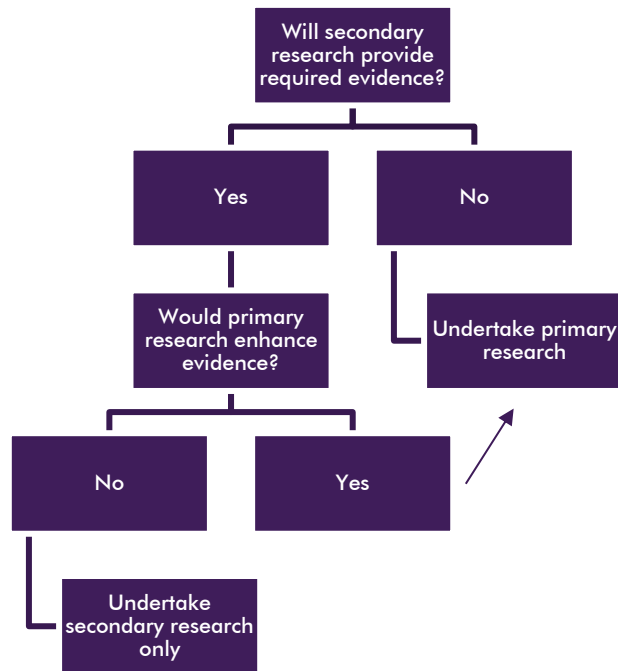
There are two types of market research: primary and secondary. **Primary market research**, also known as field research, is new research that a business undertakes itself. It involves collecting new data and information that has not been collected before. Primary research provides a business with customised research that is specific to its own circumstances. It often uses the business’ own customers to find out information. The principle of primary research is that it is undertaken by the business itself, but this can include specifying and outsourcing the actual delivery to a third-party.

Secondary market research, also known as desk research, involves gathering existing data that has already been produced either internally or externally. Drawing on previous primary research or collating tangible datasets such as financial performance and ticket sales are examples of this. Secondary research is likely either specifically focussed (i.e. a survey with Manchester bus users) or much wider (i.e. government surveys at regional level). In many cases secondary research is valuable and the results obtained can be applied to our own communities and services. In other cases, it can be used to inform and develop new primary research that better reflects the specific circumstances among our customers and communities. However in some cases it is not comparable and an understanding of the applicability of secondary research is essential in ensuring any apparent evidence is applied correctly.



Secondary research is cheaper, requiring the time of analysts to source and analyse the existing datasets, potentially combining with other data sources to provide additional insight. But it is important to differentiate between cost and cost-effectiveness. While primary research is more expensive, requiring a new data collection exercise, it is tailored to our own needs. A solution that works well in some affluent regions may be inappropriate in the more deprived areas of Tyne and Wear. Indeed, this could be considered at a much more local level where the needs and opportunities available to the ultra-urban South Tyneside may differ significantly to the more rural parts of west Gateshead.

When deciding on whether to embark on primary data collection or rely on secondary research only, it is important to balance the time, cost and quality of the two approaches. A simple decision matrix is shown below.



Research approaches & methods

Market research methods fall under **two general approaches; quantitative or qualitative**. Quantitative methods are about quantity in terms of maximising the number of respondents and in the questions being asked. Closed-ended questions that require a respondent to select from a range of defined answer choices provide results which are easily quantifiable – for example 50% of people like Marmite. Quantitative methods provide statistical accuracy that the results obtained from a sample of the wider population do represent that population. This approach tells us the “What” but it’s not as good as uncovering the “Why”.



To gain deeper understanding of an issue, qualitative research methods go into much more detail and are focussed on qualifying findings by answering the “Why” Open-ended free text responses in a survey are an example of a qualitative question while complete qualitative approaches include Focus Groups and one-on-one interviews. As a consequence, sample sizes are usually much smaller and below the threshold to ensure representativeness (i.e. that the results represent the wider population) but they’re more likely to uncover the underlying reasons for an expressed opinion.

So with quantitative research we want to quantify (answering the “What” and “How many” questions and with qualitative research we want to qualify (answering the “Why”).

Often the two approaches would be used in a single research activity and can operate in any order. A qualitative approach carried out first can help define the question and answer options in a subsequent quantitative survey. Alternatively, if results from a survey identify particular views, a follow up qualitative phase can delve deeper into those specific areas.

Within this quantitative/qualitative approach, there are **four common methods of market research; surveys, focus groups, personal interviews and observations**. With observations we refrain from engaging with the people we’re observing as we wish to record actual behaviours – which can sometimes be at odds with what is reported in surveys or focus groups.

Market Research				
Quantitative			Qualitative	
Surveys	Structured interviews	Observations	Focus groups	Unstructured interviews




A fifth approach is **experiments & field trials** where the conditions are properly controlled to identify any impact from an intervention. For example, in converting TVMs to cashless, does it matter which ones we convert? If we don’t know, then an experimental approach may identify the factors most likely to encourage behavioural change. The experimental approach is about controlling or measuring two types of variable. The independent variable is the factor that is purposely changed or controlled in order to see what effect it has. The variable that responds to the change in the independent variable is called the dependent variable. In the TVM example above, we could control the positioning of the converted TVM and measure changes in use to determine the most effective positioning. As the experimental element controls the initial environment and measures the response, it can be used with any of the standard research methods listed above.



Research channels

Within the four common types of research there are different channels that can be used to engage with the participant. The Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected market research activity both as a consequence of social distancing requirements (initially eliminating all face-to-face surveys) and as a result of reduced activity (fewer people meaning quotas could not be met). The shift to online activity for retail and working from home has also occurred with research activity. Focus groups, usually held in-person, have switched to online hosted groups and new tools are emerging with potential benefits for new forms of engagement.

It will be necessary to keep pace with changes in methodological approaches and technological solutions as they develop. Online collaborative tools designed for effective teamwork among people working from home may have innovative applications in market research. It is important to monitor these different types of engagement as they develop to identify any potential new channels of market research.

	 Online	 In-person	 Telephone
Surveys	✓	✓	✓
Personal interviews	✓	✓	✓
Focus groups	✓	✓	✗
Observations	✗	✓	✗

Research Design

Market research is a science and utilising the correct design principles provides reliable and statistically significant results which is essential when these are used to inform decision making. Avoiding respondent bias, maximising response rates, sampling techniques, ensuring clarity of understanding of the question and so on are all essential to be able to rely on the results.

Finding a truly representative sample of the population can be difficult. Post-research techniques can be used in the analysis phase, namely weighting of results, to correct for any issues regarding representativeness. This demonstrates how the effective design of a research project and the statistical analysis that follows are skilled activities.

In recognition of the skilled nature of research design, it is considered appropriate for all market research to be assessed by a centralised team namely Research and Insight. Market research providers serve in both an advisory and delivery capacity.

Standardised wording in surveys ensures consistency and comparability and appropriate design ensures fairness and safety for respondents. Not all research activity would be delivered by the Research and Insight team and in this instance, the advisory role should be obtained with a view of having all research activity endorsed by R&I. A research design not endorsed by R&I could still be delivered by the team as would be the case with an external provider.



Innovation through research

At any time, undertaking new activities is essential in retaining and attracting new customers. It is critical that we adapt to the structural changes in society that have occurred as a result of the pandemic, the most obvious of these is the shift to home working and the impacts this has on the need to travel. While the pandemic introduced acute and significant changes over a short period of time, we must also be mindful and proactive in our response to longer term structural changes – our population is ageing, the high street is losing market share to online retailing and regionally we have the biggest potential growth in car ownership outside of London.

It is vital we continue to engage with our communities and monitor behaviours as they change. This will inevitably lead to a period of instability – we cannot simply do the same things we did before, we must be bold and innovative in the face of uncertainty.

How often is an idea left unacted upon because it might not work? How many ideas are not shared because there's no budget to try them out or other such perceived barriers? Experimental research and field trials can be part of the solution. We already undertake engagement research, asking customers and potential customers how they act and feel, what their needs and expectations are and how we can deliver for them. We can directly test our ideas in this way but it isn't always suitable. People are required to imagine a hypothetical scenario and how they think about that may differ from reality. In some cases our actions are subconscious – we don't consciously weigh up every decision we take and we are influenced by external factors that we may not even be aware of.

Controlled experiments can provide real-world, measurable outcomes from interventions. Embarking on an intervention that fails to meet expectations could be a very costly endeavour and this risk almost certainly holds back innovation. Spending a smaller amount of money on an experiment which demonstrates whether an intervention works is a cost-effective way of testing our ideas. While an intervention that does not work is a failure, an experiment which identifies an intervention does not work is not. The research outcome is simply to identify the merits of the intervention in question and as such can never be a failure as the evidence it provides is actionable and leads to evidence-based decisions.

Case Study: PAYG Marketing

Typically, PAYG marketing was targeted at stations that already had a reasonable uptake of the product. An experiment was carried out in late 2021 to test this approach with a second set of stations targeted for marketing which had particularly low levels of uptake. The additional costs of this activity were funded by the research budget. Results from the experiment indicated that stations with low take up – previously thought to indicate the product may not have been suited to the local demographics of our users – were worthwhile candidates and now a mixture of stations types is included when promoting PAYG.



Strategic Context

Support Vision 2025

This strategy directly supports three goals of our Vision for 2025;

Grow patronage and improve our customer experiences

To improve the customer experience we must understand what the situation is now, identify what works well and what needs to be improved and then monitor the effectiveness of our interventions and initiatives.

Growing patronage comes from two markets; increasing the number of journeys made by our existing customers and attracting new customers. Both require behavioural change and in order to persuade and encourage such change we must understand the key barriers to using public transport in order to target our interventions most effectively.

Exploit technology, safeguard the condition of our assets and improve our processes

We must embrace changes in technology, software and processes to best reach the communities we serve. Working collaborative together, the Research & Insight, Marketing and Media & Communications teams can utilise a variety of processes and channels including digital and face-to-face to target engagement most effectively and efficiently.

Case Study: Metro Brand Tracking

The pandemic brought a stop to face-to-face surveys which lasted for many months. As a result, the Metro Brand Tracking survey normally undertaken by an external research agency was brought in-house and carried out online. This survey is completed three times a year at a previous cost of just under £30k – over the duration of the pandemic and with close working between Research & Insight and Marketing teams, effective promotion of the survey online and the use of scientific approaches to weight results has led to the decision to remain with the in-house approach permanently, saving £20k after promotional costs are factored in.

This also allows for an easier and more responsive approach and has most recently led to structural changes to the survey that will create shorter versions in each wave, increasing engagement and uptake.

Transform our organisation to be agile, innovative and inclusive

Adopting new research techniques and using the experimental research approach is already providing us with actionable intelligence. During 2021/22, experiments have been carried out relating to PAYG promotion and making selected car parks free for a trial period. Internally, focus groups have been added as a research channel offered and these will be expanded to external research in 2022/23.



Current market research activity

Nexus has an existing market research programme which is currently managed by the Research and Insights team within Corporate Planning. A combination of in-house and outsourced research activities take place on a continuous basis.

Nexus Researcher Team

The Nexus team of researchers carry out a range of customer engagement research including the Continuous Monitoring Survey programme and both the Bus and Metro Customer Satisfaction Survey programmes. This in-house team provides a level flexibility that would be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain from a third-party source.

In addition to the established survey programmes above, researchers have undertaken other activity to support Nexus activities including;

- **Observations** such as measuring transaction time at TVMs, evidencing the benefits of cashless transactions
- **Data collection** such as mobile network coverage on the Metro network, identifying areas with poor coverage
- **Ad-hoc surveys** including Ferry User profile and catchment area survey

Continuous Monitoring Surveys (CMS)

The single largest engagement Nexus undertakes with the public is via the **Continuous Monitoring Survey (CMS) programme**. This is a face-to-face survey carried out on board public transport in Tyne and Wear and carried out under contract with Network Ticketing Ltd. This programme engages with over 300k respondents on buses and almost 100k on Metro every year. Local heavy rail and the Shields Ferry are also surveyed. The surveys are short as required under the contract but 'Nexus questions' have been added to obtain a range of user profile information including demographics, journey purpose, car availability, method of arrival to stop and so on. This dataset cannot be understated in its significance – results from the CMS are used in funding bids, development of business cases and strategies, corporate business plan KPIs and to inform operational decisions including Concessionary Travel reimbursement.

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face surveys were suspended and Researchers redeployed into observational roles to monitor train occupancy and face covering compliance. After a pause of 6 months, the CMS programme resumed and since then has been instrumental in helping track the recovery in patronage as we learn and understand the changes in travel patterns brought on by restrictions and the legacy they will have.

These activities provide timely insight to inform operational decisions as well as providing a robust evidence base to support business cases, strategies, modelling and management decisions.

Metro and Bus Customer Satisfaction Survey



Two long term tracking studies measuring customer satisfaction with Metro and Bus services are carried out by Nexus researchers. This is in the form of face-to-face surveys carried out at Metro and Bus stations across Tyne and Wear.

The current format of **Metro Customer Satisfaction Surveys (MCSS)** has been in place since 2008/09. This ran as a biannual survey until 2018 when the frequency was increased to quarterly whilst maintaining the same annual sample size quota of 2,000 surveys or better.

The current format of **Bus Customer Satisfaction Surveys (BCSS)** has been in place since 2009/10 and is carried out on a continuous monitoring basis. Without a fixed schedule of surveys, the sample size is subject to fluctuation; the three-year average to 2018/19 was just under 5,000 per year.

The ability to track customer satisfaction with a range of indicators over a long period of time allows for a deeper understanding of the changing drivers of satisfaction.

Without the in-house CSS programmes, Nexus would need to rely on, and pay for, the Transport Focus managed surveys which has a separate programme for Bus and Light Rail. These surveys are carried out annually as a snapshot at a single point in time and relate to the specific journey the customer is on at the time. The frequency, sample size and wider understanding afforded by using the in-house team provides a much richer and timely dataset, one which can be used to evaluate interventions within 3 months rather than an annual snapshot which makes identifying the impact of specific interventions more difficult.

The table below shows the estimated value of the research undertaken by the in-house Researcher Team for the regular elements of the research programme.

Research element	Benefit cost
Continuous Monitoring Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Est £600k cost if outsourced • Significant evidence-base to inform operational decisions and to support business cases, strategies, modelling and funding bids • ENCTS negotiation benefit – provides a baseline position £1-2m lower than using DfT default data values
Metro Customer Satisfaction Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Est £40k cost if outsourced • Long term nature of survey provides robust evidence base to inform operational decisions and to support business cases, strategies, modelling and funding bids
Bus Customer Satisfaction Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Est £100k if outsourced • Long term nature of survey provides robust evidence base to inform operational decisions and to support business cases, strategies, modelling and funding bids



Insight Panel

The Nexus Insight Panel was created in 2018 and currently operates as a monthly survey which is distributed to its 700 members. This regular engagement provides a breadth of knowledge and understanding on a range of subjects.

The panel was re-purposed at the start of the pandemic to provide a weekly tracker survey to understand how people were feeling and the impact the pandemic was having on their day-to-day activities and mobility. This provided an insight that was specific to our region and in the early days Nexus was one of only a handful of organisations that had embarked on this approach – with the others being large organisations including BDRC, Transport Focus and YouGov. This ability to re-purpose and adapt was only possible because the panel was managed in-house and demonstrates the benefit of an agile research programme.

A research panel is not without its challenges; it is essential to continuously attract new members to mitigate against those who leave and to ensure engagement is high among existing members. Dedicated resources should be allocated to ensure the longevity of the panel as well as engaging with stakeholders to maximise the promotion and reach of the panel across the region.

The table below shows the benefits of the research undertaken with the Nexus Insight Panel.

Research element	Benefit cost
Annual 12-survey programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Est £200k value • Provides robust evidence base to inform operational decisions and to support business cases, strategies, modelling and funding bids
Ad-hoc surveys (internal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid discovery of findings to inform short-term operational decisions • Est £20k per survey
Ad-hoc surveys (external)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working with key stakeholders including Transport North East, Women in Transport, Police & Crime Commissioner Office.

Recent examples of how the panel has informed operational decisions include helping to define priorities for secured bus services and the decision not to implement chatbots.

Metro Brand Tracking Survey

This survey runs three times a year and is designed to measure brand awareness and sentiment, awareness of marketing activities and products and barriers to use.

North East Travel Survey (previously Have Your Say survey)



This has been run as an ad-hoc survey with successful iterations in 2013 and 2018 and an aborted one in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. The survey seeks to establish travel patterns and behaviours across Tyne and Wear and the wider region. The various iterations to date have led to a refined survey, working in close collaboration with Transport North East, designed to provide a regional travel survey that supports the National Travel Survey undertaken by central government.

As this survey provides the best picture of travel behaviours that is currently available, this should be made a permanent element of Nexus' research programme. The 2022 wave will see it renamed as the North East Travel Survey and an annual repeat is recommended to provide an ongoing evidence base of regional travel behaviours.

The table below illustrates when how the core Research Programme is deployed throughout the year.

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Continuous Monitoring Survey												
Insight Panel												
Bus Satisfaction												
Metro Satisfaction												
Metro Brand Tracking												
North East Travel Survey												

Research framework

In addition to the research carried out in-house, Nexus also engages with a research consultancy to carry out ad-hoc projects. This ensures that specialist skills and methods are always available to Nexus.

The framework covers a range of activity from backfilling any gaps in Researcher availability to larger scale projects. These projects are often provided when it would not be possible to resource the project internally but it is also noted that the independence of an external research agency provides assurance of objectivity.

A key benefit of having the use of the external agency is in the targeting of non-users. Online surveys hosted by Nexus can deter non-users of public transport who think "that's not for me" even when resources are dedicated to targeting specific groups of people.



Case Study: Metro User and Non-User Segmentation

A large commissioned project, this was undertaken by our agency who identified a number of segments of users and non-users. These segments can be used to develop personas and will be used to inform marketing plans.

Recent examples of research carried out under the framework include;

- **Qualitative research with non-Metro users:** to identify barriers to use
- **Metro Segmentation research:** established 5 user and 3 non-user profiles – these segments will be embedded in future marketing plans
- **Escalator Safety Study:** observed customers in their use of escalators at Metro stations to identify unsafe practices to inform the need for interventions
- **DfT Fare Evasion Survey:** Ongoing survey to estimate levels of fare evasion

Internal research

As well as a varied external research programme, the Research and Insight team also provide services to colleagues utilising many of the same research methods. Using the scientific and professional approaches used for undertaking research externally with our own employees provides the same high level of statistical reliability of results.

Along with traditional surveys – both paper and online – a recent addition to the research services on offer has been in the training in and delivery of focus groups. These have covered a range of issues across Nexus and have been used as a training tool with the aim of expanding this method of research to external, customer facing projects.

The ability to test out new approaches with employees in a particularly controlled environment, adds to the effectiveness and accuracy of the customer facing research programme which in turn provides colleagues with better and more reliable evidence, demonstrating a cycle of mutual benefit and continuous improvement.

Case Study: People and Culture Strategy

To support the People and Culture strategy development, Focus Groups were held across Nexus to ensure the strategy delivered for our people by understanding what they wanted and how they felt. Answering the “why”, Focus Groups allow a more detailed discussion that identifies views and feelings that may otherwise not be uncovered in standard surveys.

Strategy Conclusions and Objectives

Conclusions










The strategy makes the case for evidence-based management / decision-making and demonstrates how research can be a valuable tool in establishing the underlying evidence base, thus acting as an enabler.

The strategy is framed around 4 pillars: Scientific, Consistent, Professional and Varied. The pillars underpin an approach to Research that provides the most accurate and actionable Insight to best enable evidence-based decision and management.

In order to achieve the aims of this strategy, 10 objectives are shown below which, if delivered, will deliver the outlined benefits.

Objectives

The new objectives naturally fall into three themes: Skills & Professionalism, Channels & Technology and Corporate Service.

Continuation of existing Research Programme with introduction of biennial reviews to ensure appropriateness, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness (Continuous Monitoring Survey, Metro Customer Satisfaction Survey, Bus Customer Satisfaction Survey, Metro Brand Tracking Survey, North East Travel Survey, Insight Panel Surveys)		
Skills and professionalism	Channels and Technology	Corporate Service
 <p>Upskilling Enable more in-house research by upskilling existing office team to allow qualitative research to be undertaken</p>	 <p>Introduce new channels and technology Continuous assessment of new research channels and technology opportunities</p>	 <p>Market Research Manual Develop a Research Manual setting out the services provided by Research and Insight team and acting as a guide for colleagues</p>
 <p>Professionalisation Programme Undertake Market Research Society training courses and investigate accreditation opportunities for employees and Nexus</p>	 <p>Insights from Experiments Scientific and controlled experiments/trials of ideas, with dedicated allocation of Research Budget for such activity</p>	 <p>Coordinated Research Programme Ensuring internal and external research is coordinated or endorsed by R&I team, following best practice and knowledge</p>
 <p>Code of Conduct Develop a Nexus Research Code of Conduct, aligning as close as possible to that of the industry body Market Research Society</p>	 <p>Insight Panel Expansion Continue to expand membership of panel, increasing geographical coverage and working with stakeholders to embed as a regional resource</p>	 <p>Embed Research and Evidence into SLT Reports for Decision Recommendation that any SLT Report for Decision includes a compulsory section on the evidence base used</p>

