

IMPACT COMMERCE SOCIETY & TECHNIQUES PROJECTIVE METHODS POWER OF
 HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY STORYTELLING
 FUEL YOUR BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGY
 CURIOUSITY METHODS STRATEGY INFLUENCING
 INSPIRING YOUR OBSERVATION INFLUENCING SOCIAL MEDIA GOOD LISTENERS INQUISITIVE CREATIVITY ATTENTION IMPACT
 CAREER IN TO DETAIL COMMERCE TRAVEL THE WORLD
 INTELLIGENT
 PERSONALITY BUSINESS RESEARCH
 INFLUENCING SEMIOTICS SCIENCE PROJECTS TRENDS
 BRANDS INSPIRING GOOD SOCIAL MEDIA METHODS
 DESIGN LISTENERS STRATEGY
 INSIGHT



EXPRESSIVE
IMAGINATION CONCEPT •
• TARGET GOAL INQUISITIVE
• CULTURE COMMUNICATION •
PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES
STORYTELLING
INTERNATIONAL
FUEL YOUR
• CURIOUSITY THINKING PLAN
CREATIVITY ANALYTICAL INTELLIGENCE CONCLUSION •
PURPOSE
RESEARCH
INSIGHT
EXPERIMENT ATTENTION TO DETAIL GOAL
THEORY NEW
EXPERIMENT IDEAS
• INQUISITIVE
VISIONARY DESIGN
TRAVEL THE WORLD
INNOVATION



ABOUT MRS

MRS is the world's leading authority on research and business intelligence, for all those who need, use, generate or interpret the evidence essential to making good decisions for commercial and public policy. The quality standards, suitability and sustainability of evidence is important because evidence matters to decision makers. MRS is dedicated to the support, promotion and enrichment of the research and business world.

With members in more than 60 countries, MRS is the world's leading research association serving all those with professional equity in provision or use of market, social and opinion research, and in business intelligence, market analysis, customer insight and consultancy. For OVER 65 years MRS has been supporting generations of research and insight professionals as they develop their careers.

In this guide you'll discover why you should consider a career in research, the specialisms to consider, how to begin your career and the typical career progression you could expect.

Need some advice?

If you would like extra information about MRS, or would simply like to talk to someone about a career in research, please call us on +44(0)20 7566 1805 or email careers@mrs.org.uk or visit www.mrs.org.uk/careers

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WHAT IS MARKET AND SOCIAL RESEARCH?

There are a number of different scholarly and academic definitions of market and social research but, at its simplest, market and social research is a tool to support decision making. However, the organisations undertaking the research and the decisions they need to make can be very wide ranging.

For example, their decision might be:

- ▶ Which packaging best conveys the brand messages about this new ice cream?
- ▶ Do we need to change our university's open day to increase applications?
- ▶ Our sales are falling. What do we need to do to reverse the trend?
- ▶ Which policies should we introduce to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies?

The methods used to answer these very different questions are varied – from background research on the internet, to analysis of specialist databases and in-house sales figures, to taste tests, exploratory focus groups, analysing social media content, and to large scale, multi-country telephone surveys. That's to name but a few.

As you can see from the examples market and social research is an increasingly pivotal sector upon which businesses, such as advertising, retail and financial services, plus public sector such as government departments, rely for strategy, insight and reasoned analysis.

“Too many people think market research is just about using numbers and graphs but it's much more creative than that. Creativity is combined with bottom line commercial aims so you need to be business savvy too.”

Natasha Rastegar, Wine Intelligence

£ THE UK MARKET RESEARCH INDUSTRY EMPLOYS £
OVER 60,000 PEOPLE
& CONTRIBUTES AROUND £3BN A YEAR TO THE UK ECONOMY



WILL IT SUIT ME?

Market and social research will suit you if:

- ▶ you are interested in psychology and love finding out what people think and how they behave
- ▶ you are very well organised with great attention to detail
- ▶ you have great people and communications skills
- ▶ you enjoy using both your creative right brain and your analytical left brain.

Market and social research can be hard work and sometimes the hours are long, but it is a hugely engaging and rewarding career – trying to understand people’s behaviour, attitudes, and motivations.

Market and social research is also a relatively well-paid, professional career and research is an important cog in the wheels of society, commerce, communications and policy. While your friends and family may not be familiar with the names of many research employers, they will certainly have heard of their clients.

Once you have developed your skill set you will be able to research whichever sectors and/or techniques that particularly interest you, be it coffee, condoms or corporate takeovers.

Another plus is that there are generally few barriers to progression. Most employers encourage you to show initiative, take responsibility and develop your own ideas, and you should expect ongoing development and learning.

“ Before working in quantitative research, I assumed you needed to be a mathematician to do it. But actually, numbers aren’t the half of it. To be a good at it you will be equally reliant on your understanding of human psychology and the power of your storytelling. ”

Alex Jones, Illuminas

**MARKET
RESEARCH
WILL SUIT
YOU IF YOU’RE**

INTERESTED IN HOW PEOPLE BEHAVE
ORGANISED WITH GREAT ATTENTION TO DETAIL
CREATIVE AND ANALYTICAL
GREAT AT COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE



ABOUT THE SECTOR

Market and social research is a very varied profession comprising a real range of different roles and disciplines.

It's a high-level, professional career with lots of opportunities to develop your skills and progress. While starting salaries are generally pretty modest (around £20k) this typically rises rapidly.

The majority of researchers work "supply-side", which means within a research agency. These organisations determine the research to be carried out, organise all the logistics of research, may analyse and interpret the results and deliver the findings back to clients (in any format from data tables, to in-depth reports, to presentations and workshops).

Supply-side researchers tend to deal with multiple clients, sometimes across many different sectors and sometimes using a range of methods. Variety is often a key motivator in a supply-side role – researching lipstick today, washing machines tomorrow and bank account branding next week. However, some researchers do specialise, perhaps working on a single client account, or with a particular method or technique (such as new product development or market segmentation) or within a particular sector (retail, financial or media, for example).

Social researchers use many of the same skills and techniques as market researchers but their focus is on optimising the performance of the public sector. So they might be researching an advertisement that

encourages mothers to have their babies vaccinated, exploring what disabled people need to allow them to participate in sport which will influence national policy, or at a local level evaluating a lunch club for the elderly.

By contrast, researchers on the client side (working as part of a research team within a wider company or organisation) are usually concerned with the performance of their own organisation and their own market, and they become immersed in this resulting in a much greater depth of understanding of the business. They also have more opportunities to see and be involved in how the research is implemented and how it influences the direction of a product or service, or an organisation's overall strategy.

THE RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE SECTOR IS MADE UP OF... **RESEARCHERS, PLANNERS, ANALYSTS, CREATIVES, MARKETERS, DIRECTORS & CONSULTANTS**



MY CAREER IN HEALTHCARE MARKET RESEARCH



I've worked in healthcare market research for over 17 years and in that time have been fortunate enough to have had many exciting opportunities – but the most overwhelming feeling I have when I think about my career is a real sense of privilege. Much of that comes from the work we do with patients: I've spent time interviewing people with HIV, hearing about their journey from the horror of diagnosis to learning how advances in treatment mean they can now live a long and normal life. I've almost been moved to tears as a man my age described how his psoriasis was once so bad that it covered his entire body, with his every movement causing him pain; before feeling his palpable sense of joy as he described the impact that a new biologic treatment has had on his life and self-esteem.

I have also spent many hours talking with inspiring doctors – individuals operating at the top of their profession; men and women who have pioneered new ways of doing things.

While some of the fascinating conversations I have had with those responsible for making critical decisions about whether certain medicines or procedures should be funded by the NHS or not might be better suited to a moral philosophy class.

Many of my best experiences have come from qualitative research, finding out about how and why people do things and trying to better understand their behaviours. But for those who enjoy the challenge of designing and executing quantitative research, providing robust data so that clients can make big decisions with the confidence that numbers bring, then there are ample opportunities in this sector too.

There is a misconception that you need some form of medical training to work in healthcare market research; you don't. My degree was in politics and my colleagues graduated in subjects as diverse as French and Business and Geography. None of us are medically trained, you just learn as you go – and sometimes

you learn so much that you realise you know more than your GP about certain conditions!

What you do need are the core skills and characteristics that make a great researcher – curiosity, creativity, an analytical mind and the ability to turn information into a meaningful story – as well as the attributes that make people effective in any commercial business environment.

If you are interested in a career in Healthcare Market Research or Business Intelligence then a good starting point is to visit the Jobs and Careers section of the British Healthcare Business Intelligence Association (BHBIA) website at www.bhbia.org.uk.



Steve Lowery
Co-Founder and Director,
Red Leaf Research.

WHAT COULD I SPECIALISE IN?

There are four, quite different, types of roles that are worth exploring if you are considering a career in market and social research:

Qualitative research

Qualitative researchers get answers to their client's questions by directly interacting with people. So if you decided to become a qualitative researcher you might find yourself running a mini focus group with school children to discover more about what they drink when they arrive home from school, or accompanying a shopper on his or her regular supermarket shop, observing behaviour and asking questions about the choices made.

By analysing what was said (or written, or recorded) you'll be attempting to understand and explain human behaviour all the while knowing that what people say is often at odds with what they actually do.

Qualitative research often involves UK travel, as you'll be travelling to meet the consumers, rather than vice versa. Evening work is regularly involved and hours can be long. However, it is probably the discipline with the greatest opportunities for international travel, particularly if you speak a foreign language.

Quantitative research

Quantitative research is often known simply as "quant", and quantitative research typically provides a snapshot of behavioural and/or attitudinal data, usually by asking people direct questions: Have you contacted your local council at all in the last 12 months? Which brand of dog food do you buy most often? How would you rate your broadband provider overall?

You might be running surveys carried out by telephone, online, face-to-face or even on paper. You might be organising product taste tests, where consumers decide which formulations are the tastiest. You might find yourself digging through databases of anything from factory floor areas, to breakfast cereal sales and doing some in-depth analysis to answer client problems.

If you plump for life as a quantitative researcher you will need to be logical and data minded but also have people skills – you will be the middle man or woman, organising all the different processes of the research as well as keeping the client happy. You'll also need to be creative when it comes to designing research and presenting results in an engaging way.



Analysts

Do you use a loyalty card when you do your weekly grocery shop? If so the information about what you have bought is collected week after week and can be linked back to some personal information you provided when you first applied for the card. With millions of people doing the same, there is a vast pool of data which can provide answers to questions such as: How well did this promotion work? Are the buying patterns for fruit and veg different once people retire? Which people are loyal to a particular brand or trend (eg organic, ethical, recycled)?

An analyst's role is to analyse data that has been collected elsewhere – perhaps in a survey run by a quantitative researcher for example, or perhaps sales figures, population statistics or click-through rates on a website. You might find yourself working on a range of different tasks from data matching, manipulation and mining to special complex one-off analyses.

Operations

Operations executives work on the different background activities that make research happen. Within a fair-sized research supplier you might find:

Quantitative Field Executives, who recruit, train and reward interviewers that conduct face-to-face research. Their qualitative counterparts (“Qual Field”) will be making sure people are screened and recruited correctly, to attend events such as focus groups or workshops, that venues are booked, refreshments and incentives are organised and everything runs smoothly.

The Data Processing team make sense of the streams of information that reach them after data entry or online research have been completed.

“ I’ve worked in advanced analytics for ten years now and I am constantly learning new things. I started in the public sector at the Department for Transport, then spent time at global research agency Research International and have spent the last few years at specialist agency Bonamy Finch, based just outside London. Creatively applying statistical techniques to business problems and influencing business decisions is a rewarding career choice. ”

Giselle Hillman, Bonamy Finch



MY CAREER IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is a thread of market research, which is used to gain insights into people's attitudes, behaviours, motivations, cultures or lifestyles. It aims to seek out the 'why's' and get beneath the surface to help brands get to the heart of their consumers.

In a nutshell, what a qualitative researcher does is just that... research. We go out with an objective, question in mind, find out the information we need, we filter and analyse this content and then turn it into a concise and interesting story. This research informs strategic thinking, cultural insight and consumer understanding for companies the world over.

What we are asked to explore goes far and wide, from understanding how brands work within a culture to exploring people's behaviours, value systems, and lifestyles.

Qualitative researchers explore these areas using a range of techniques: focus groups, one-on-one depth interviews, ethnographic immersions, blogs, mobile tasks and creative workshops.

Within the qualitative remit we're increasingly using semiotics and cultural trends analysis as part of our attempt to provide a coherent understanding of what's going on, and what it could mean for brands.

Many people have the misconception that research is about mundane numbers, tables, graphs, surveys but it's so much more than this. It's a vast industry, which harnesses the academic, social and psychological, to the frame and inspire the creative and strategic.

I've been working in research & brand consultancy now for 4 years and it seems to always stay fresh and exciting. One week I could be working on a fashion brand exploring youth styles in London

and the next week understanding what 'delight' means in Lagos. I love that the focus of my job is to ask questions about human nature and immerse myself in different cultures.

It's important to do research into the companies you are interested in to find out if their approach is right for you.

If you want a job that's extremely varied, exciting and always interesting; where you get to think a lot and meet all kinds of people from Sheffield to Shanghai; if you get a kick out of analysing the small, obscure and grand things in life then why not fuel your curiosity and look into a career in qualitative research!

Tracey Osunde,
Project Director,
Flamingo



MY CAREER IN QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

“ Being a quantitative researcher isn’t just about graphs and numbers. True, you will see a lot of these along the way, but in the same way that qualitative research requires more than reading transcripts and listening to verbatim, your focus will ultimately be that of any researcher – to tell the story within your data, relate it back to your client’s objectives and understand what it means in relation to their strategy.

What is specific to quantitative research, however, is the methodological approach to gathering the data. By definition, the approach depends on data being quantified, and so methodologies are based around closed question structures – the mainstay of the classic questionnaire!

Now, I know what you might be thinking... ‘lengthy questions... lists and lists of options... matrix grids... Likert scales...’ And you would be right. But before the image of that man brandishing a clipboard takes hold, it’s important to recognise that quantitative research goes beyond ticking boxes.

In fact, quantitative research is as much about respondent psychology as it is about making sure you are asking the right questions. A good questionnaire makes it easy for respondents to provide answers, but a better one engages with them and encourages them to really think about what they are saying to us – a little detail can go a long way to achieving that.

Effective communication skills are essential. Firstly, whether you’re a Research Executive or a Research Manager, you will usually be working as part of a team. Then add client-side researchers, end-clients, suppliers and even other research agencies into the mix and you will soon realise the value clear communication has in producing a smooth and successful project.

One of the things I find most exciting about working with quantitative methodologies is their capacity to be scalable in both remit and reach. For example, a relatively simple online methodology could be used to identify what 25–30 year old males think

about the look of a new car. The same methodology could also be used to find out about how it compares to an older model of the car, what the optimum pricing points are, and what impact its advertising campaign could have. And at relatively little expense, it would be possible to get a truly international perspective on all things motoring – be it Accrington or Australia!

Having worked in both qualitative and quantitative research I have been able to appreciate the skill in both disciplines. Before working in quant, I assumed you needed to be a mathematician to do it. But actually, numbers aren’t the half of it. To be good at it you will be equally reliant on your understanding of human psychology and the power of your storytelling.

Now, on a scale of 1–10, how much does that surprise you?

”

Alex Jones,
Senior Research Executive
Illuminas



CAREER PROGRESSION

The large agencies supply-side have the most opportunities to start to a career as a researcher, and they offer structured graduate training and qualification schemes as part of this.

However, don't despair if that isn't where you start out. Smaller agencies and client side roles typically provide a mix of on-the-job and more formal training, which will also equip you to fulfil your role, and external training is often included too.

The MRS qualifications (Advanced Certificate and Diploma) are the standard for the profession, and are well regarded. They are particularly useful in proving your value outside your area if you have specialised in a particular sector, technique or organisation early in your career.

Job descriptions vary considerably between organisations but here is a rough guide to roles you may come across in your first decade as a researcher:

Trainee Research Executive / Junior Research Executive – an entry level role which implies some serious training is involved. Your role will be to assist on various project tasks at this level so you might find yourself adding data to PowerPoint slides, checking data tables or organising venues for focus groups.

Research Executive – not all organisations will have a trainee level and you may find yourself joining a company as a Research Executive straight after university. At this level you will be taking on a wide range of tasks – helping to design questionnaires, specifying how you'd like the data tables to look or perhaps carrying out accompanied shopping trips. The experience level is around 1 to 3 years.

Senior Research Executive – at this level you will be stitching together all the individual tasks to form a whole research project and taking some responsibility for seeing a project through from beginning to end. You may start to have some people management responsibilities and some client responsibilities too. Experience level is around 3 to 5 years.

Research Manager/Project Manager – Usually this is someone with around 5 years of research experience who can do pretty much everything required on a reasonable sized project, from the proposal to the presentation, including all the day-to-day client contact. The Research Manager title is often used for client side roles too, where you may be managing some of the research at arm's length by commissioning a research supplier.

Associate Director – this level implies research expertise across a range of projects or perhaps in a key role on a single very large or complex research programme, as well as leading a small team of researchers and/or some responsibility for winning business.

**MANY RESEARCHERS ADVANCE
TO A MORE SENIOR POST
WITHIN TWO OR THREE YEARS OF ENTRY**



MY CAREER IN CLIENT SIDE RESEARCH

“ As a client side researcher your main role is to act as the voice of the customer within the business you operate. In many instances, you provide the link to the ‘outside world’. Any organisation that is truly focused on customers will place research at the heart of its planning and decision making and will rely on the internal research team (you) to guide and manage the research needs. Often, client side researchers sit as part of the marketing team.

As a client side researcher you can always rely on a variety of work and being exposed to lots of different types of challenges and solutions. You work with a range of research methodologies across the qualitative and quantitative spectrum and are often working on ad hoc pieces of work alongside regular tracking studies.

To be an effective client side researcher requires a number of different skills.

1. Awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches (and an empathy for the challenges and requirements of the research process).

2. The ability to develop and maintain relationships with lots of different people within the business as well as the agencies you use on a regular basis.
3. Communication skills for sharing customer insight around the business.
4. Understanding of what your business is trying to achieve so you can ensure the work you do feeds into this.
5. Project management skills to set and maintain timelines, budgets etc.
6. The ability to link different pieces of information together to build a full picture of a situation.
7. Comfort in juggling multiple tasks and requirements at once and working at speed

I have worked on both sides of the research fence (agency side and client side) and have really enjoyed both. For me, having experience of the ‘other side’ helps hugely in understanding and communicating with the agencies I work with.

Having client side research experience on your CV is valuable if you are looking to progress into other areas of a business or develop your career in a particular direction. It shows you can manage people internally and manage agencies, it shows you can clearly define objectives and put in place work to address these objectives and it also shows an ability to keep the customer at the heart of what the business does.

Working as a client side researcher is something I really enjoy and value. There are not many roles where the work you do and the people you work alongside varies so much in the space of hours or days. I also get a lot of satisfaction from helping colleagues understand our customers better and seeing the insight I have helped generate used to make the business better.

”

Simon Taylor,
Customer Research Manager
at Tesco Bank

GETTING STARTED

Graduates

Market and social research is a graduate entry profession, but many degree subjects are considered. For quantitative research roles, numerical degree subjects can be helpful and for qualitative roles psychology or other social science degrees are useful.

There are also a number of universities that offer Masters Degrees in market and/or social research which are viewed positively and could give you an advantage in finding a job.

The MRS Advanced Certificate and Diploma qualifications are widely recognised and are well worth getting under your belt in the early years of your career. Indeed many of the larger research suppliers have training schemes which lead you into achieving these qualifications within your first years in research.

Non-graduates

Market and social research is primarily a graduate entry profession and you'll find that almost all Research Executive roles require a degree, often a 2-1. However, it is possible to find a way into the profession without a degree.

One route is to look for a support role in an Operations team. This may be more "backroom" and may not include much contact with external clients, but it will give you great experience and insight into research tasks and processes. This is also a way into research and there are many examples of successful Senior Executives who started in operations and worked their way up to Director level.

Examples of research roles which may get you started include interviewing, either face-to-face or by telephone, administration roles (recruiting consumers for focus groups, running viewing studios, field co-ordination or office management) or some entry level data analyst roles.

“Graduate schemes consider candidates from lots of backgrounds, giving you access to a career you might not have considered.”

Natasha Rastegar, Wine Intelligence



Experienced – but not in research

Even if you have several years in another career, you'll find that some disciplines translate very easily into market or social research. For example, marketing experience is usually seen as valuable and often has a research component; advertising planners often make good qualitative researchers; analysts from other fields, who are used to manipulating and examining datasets, can also make the transition pretty easily.

However, if your current career is in something entirely different (accounting, teaching, retail) but you are now convinced that research is the career for you, then you will need to work a little harder:

Firstly, do everything you can to get exposure to and experience of research – read books, attend training courses, do some weekend telephone interviewing. Secondly, do all you can to get a broad understanding of the sector and different organisations within it. Thirdly, do be prepared to accept a drop in salary level if you are moving to a role where you don't have any experience.



**OVER 20 MRS COMPANY
PARTNERS RUN
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RESOURCES: HOW MRS CAN HELP YOU

As MRS is the world's leading authority on research and business intelligence, they provide a number of resources and services designed to improve your employability.

Whether you are new to the profession and wish to kick start your career, or an experienced researcher looking for the next step on the ladder, MRS can help you.

MRS Qualifications

Each year over 500 people from over 40 countries demonstrate their commitment to development by studying for an MRS qualification.

Whatever your level of experience, whatever your practice area, MRS qualifications offer you real career advantage. MRS qualifications have been designed to champion and promote standards.

In a research world hungry for excellence and expertise, MRS Qualifications represent the highest level of achievement.

MRS Training

MRS provides a comprehensive range of courses that give you everything you need to meet the latest methodological, commercial and leadership challenges.

MRS training is designed for every level of experience and for every practice area.

Professional Development Framework

The MRS Professional Development Framework is an essential tool to help you achieve the knowledge and experience you will need to become a skilled and competent research and insight professional.

Young Researcher Network: R-Net

R-Net is an active and influential MRS network created by new researchers for new researchers

By joining the network you can build new relationships, broaden your skills and shape the future of research. It's also host to the most popular social events in the research calendar. Throughout the year R-Net programmes events that grant you exclusive access to research business experts who share

their experiences across a range of topic areas. R-Net is for researchers dedicated to making the most of their careers.

Student Membership

MRS offers those in full time education the opportunity to become an MRS member at a substantially discounted rate. MRS membership opens doors to a wealth of benefits, including access to networking events, discounts on training courses, seminars and conferences, professional recognition, a subscription to a quarterly magazine, access to advice on research legislation with the Codeline Advisory Service and much more.

Work Placement & Intern Opportunities

A great way to gain on the job knowledge and training, either as part of your degree or after graduating, is to experience a work placement or internship with an MRS Company Partner. Many companies choose to recruit students and graduates for specialist projects and really value the ideas young individuals wishing to pursue a career in research can bring. Completing a work placement



or internship could be the essential element that stands you above the crowd during interviews, or could even open up further opportunities for you within your placement company, it can enable you to make some valuable contacts too.

CV and Interview tools

Effectively promoting yourself and your knowledge is a skill that could determine your success in achieving the job of your dreams. In what can be a very competitive market it pays to invest time in your CV and interview techniques to ensure you stand out from the rest. Visit www.mrs.org.uk/careers for advice on developing your CV, creating a covering letter, creating interview rapport and career networking.

Research Jobfinder

Research Jobfinder is the most powerful jobs board for research and insight professionals. It specialises in matching the right person to the right role and provides all the tools and functionality a jobseeker will need.

Visit www.researchjobfinder.com.

The Research Buyers Guide

The Research Buyer's Guide is the only directory of professionally accredited market research providers and viewing facilities for the UK and Ireland. This could be a useful tool to identify organisations that appeal to you, and which you might want to approach for career opportunities.

Visit www.theresearchbuyersguide.com

Research-Live

Research-Live is the busiest online destination for those in search of breaking news, multimedia coverage, in-depth analysis and interaction. It is the most influential website for news, analysis and opinion and could arm you with the facts you need when networking and/or interviewing.

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Whatever your level of experience, sector or discipline, MRS membership guarantees you a respected profile among colleagues, clients and employers. You will find MRS members throughout the research and business world. They are committed to creating powerful evidence-based research work that generates progress in commerce and society.

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The Market Research Society
The Old Trading House
15 Northburgh Street
London
EC1V 0JR

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