



From Source Data to Client Delivery

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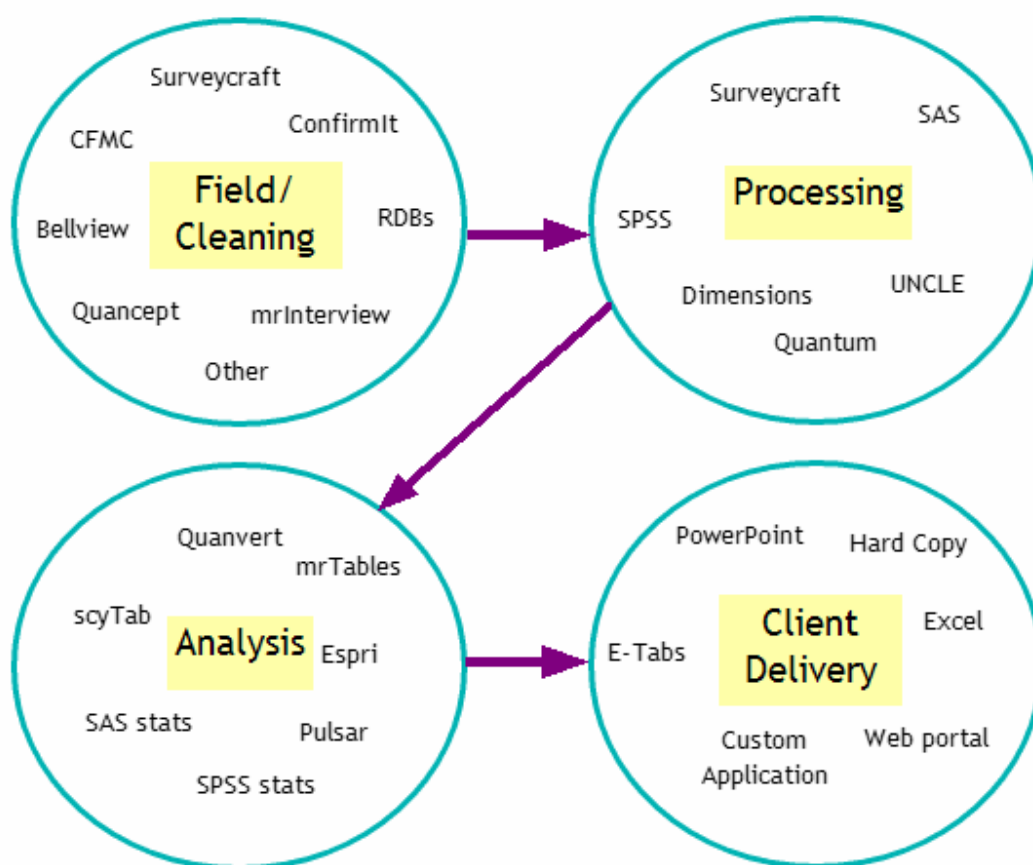
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The fundamental activity of Market Research is to

- collect or oversee the collection of data
- process the data
- analyse the data, and
- deliver detailed analysis or top level results and recommendations to clients.

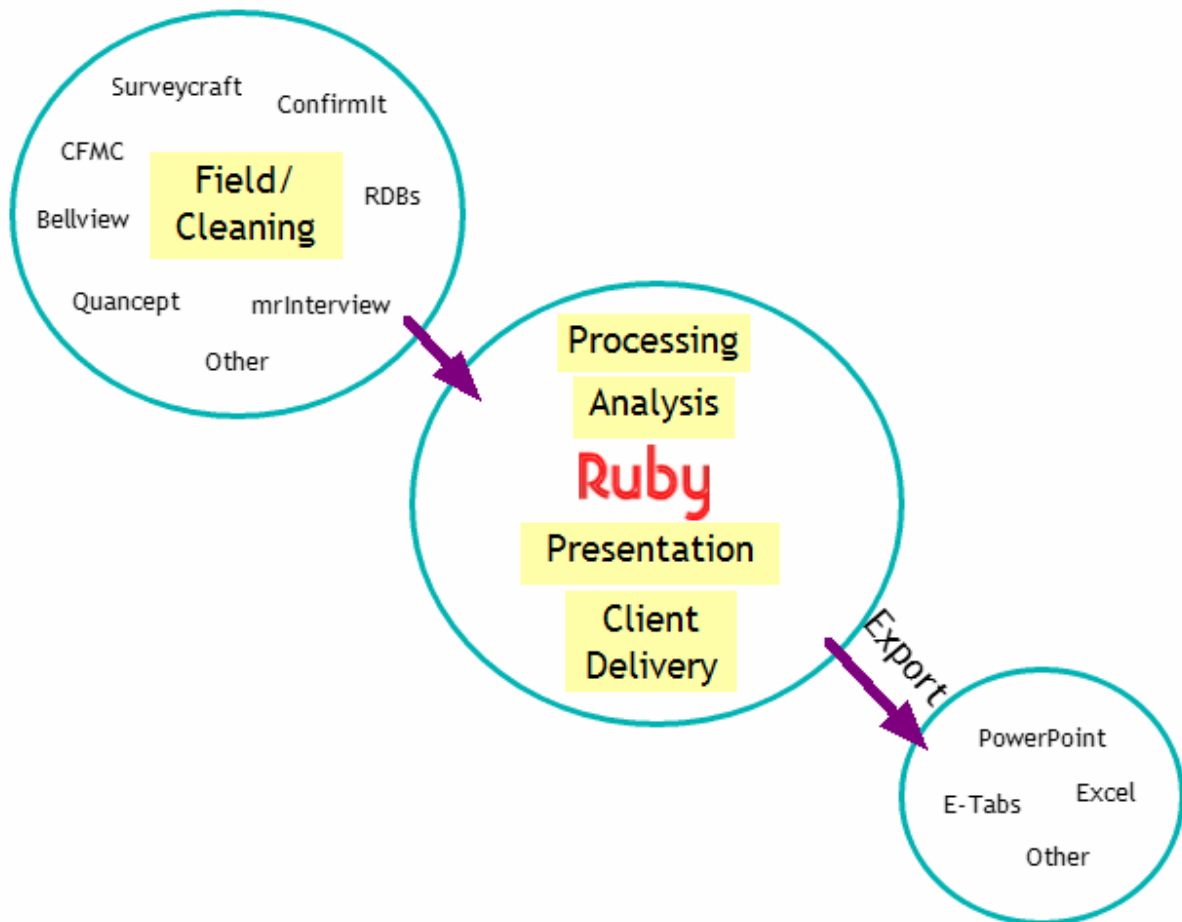
Many MR companies have historically evolved a heterogenous collection of software systems and solutions to facilitate these activities. Different regions use different field systems, different DP departments use different software suites to clean and process, and analysts use a wide variety of desktop tools, ranging from the standard MS Office applications, through to generic or custom cross tabulators and specialist segmentation or statistical packages.

The across-the-board result is typically something like this:



A particular set of connections could be Surveycraft for field, export to Quantum for processing, export to Quanvert for analysis, and then export to an RDB web portal format for client access to top level measures. The more complicated the connections, the greater the administrative costs, the longer it takes, and the greater the opportunity for errors to creep in.

Using Ruby, the processing chain can be simplified to this:



The message is that Ruby can handle all the processing requirements, all appropriate analysis, and all of client delivery. For clients who require generic formats such as PowerPoint or E-Tabs, Ruby has in-built exporters so that the entire processing chain from clean source to processed measures to updated reports to client-specified delivery format can be fully automated. This extends to automatically updating the highly customised PowerPoint decks often used as a vehicle for regular reporting.

A particular processing chain here could be:

- Any card image system or format for field and cleaning
- DP uses Ruby to automate all the constructions needed to achieve summary and other top level tables which form the analytical infrastructure of the job
- Analysts use Ruby interactively to investigate the data, follow hypotheses, examine historical or projected trends
- Client Services use Ruby to populate or update customised presentations, and
- Clients use Ruby via a supervised server to either review prepared materials and reports, or to conduct self-directed analyses.

This chain requires only a single conversion step – from the field system to Ruby’s native file format. For continuous tracking jobs, this is usually done incrementally, with the current wave being appended to the data already in hand.

Such an arrangement has many advantages. Some are

- A single in-house system for all DP work post cleaning
- A single in-house system for analysis
- A single in-house system for most client delivery
- With all constructions being done within Ruby, jobs can be self-maintaining (as far as possible), self-diagnosing and fully automated
- Official measures and norms can be guaranteed to all be constructed in the same way
- Jobs can be moved around to different offices on different continents
- Training costs are minimised
- Genuine empowerment of analysts to pursue complex hypotheses without recourse to DP
- Liberation of DP and analysts from much of the tedium required to run a job, thereby substantially increasing the number of jobs which can be safely handled.

In summary,

