

Effects of Technology to Market Research Trends and Consumers

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1. Foreword

Technology has become more advanced, day by day and it has brought with it benefits to the market research and shortcomings to consumers. Therefore advances in technology has tremendously changed today's world of research and consumers' life, especially the modern ways of carrying out research from the traditional methods and again how consumers interact.

To date technology has made research methodologies simpler, easier, faster, cost effective and convenient. But on the other hand, technology has made consumers lazier, irresponsible, incompetent, unhealthy and very dependent creating research opportunities to work with other industries to achieve effective technology development that are harmless to consumers courtesy of *studymode.com*.

1.1. Hypothesis

Technology has brought more benefits to the market research industry but harmful to consumers.

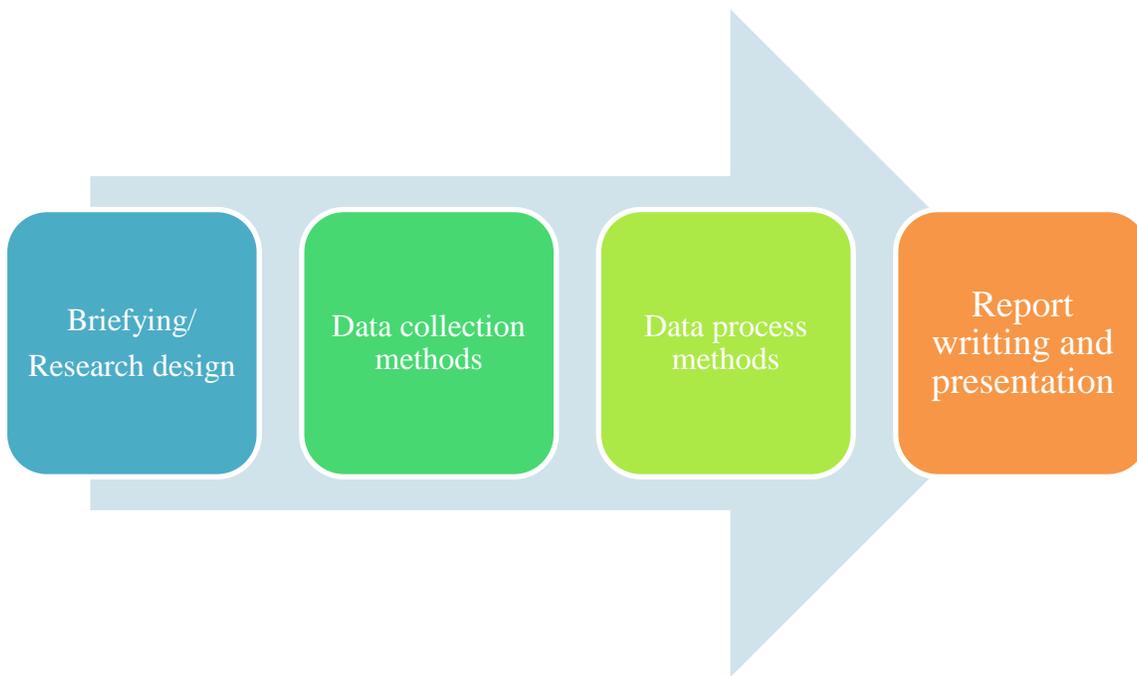
1.2. Guiding questions:

- ✓ How new technology has impacted market research trends?
- ✓ What are the effects of new technology to the consumers and market research intervention
- ✓ What are the conclusions

2. Effects of Technology to the Market Research Trends

Market research trends are changes that have occurred in the industry over period of time, and have impacted growth and development. Technology has impacted all stages of market research right from field brief, data collection, data processing to the report making and presentation.

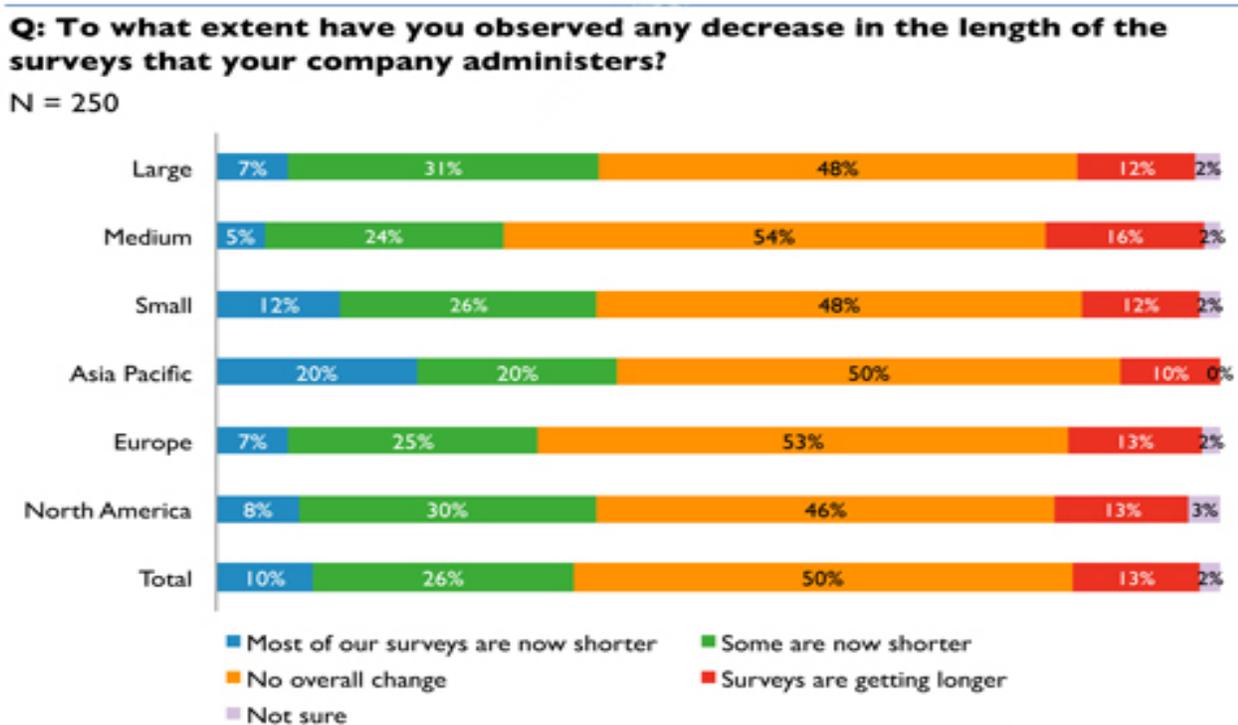
A keen look at the industry indicate that industry has embraced technology in varying degrees, some market research companies have embraced technology fully while others are cautious as they gauge the market's reaction to the dynamism introduced in the market through market trends. A critical look of some of the trends witnessed in market research as a result of the technological discourse is discussed in the subsequent section of the document. I will use a simplified diagram of a market research project to expound on the visible trends in the market.



2.1.1. Trends in Data Collection

Traditional data collection methods involving Pen and Paper otherwise known as PAPI have been used for the longest period ever. This, time consuming, financially draining and exhaustive exercise has since been dropped by most market research firms especially in most of the countries in the west. With the introduction of ICT, virtual questionnaires can be completed online with fewer errors than what was witnessed in data collection from PAPI and almost similar results realized with almost the same precision. A CATI and PAPI study conducted by Strategic Research two years ago, using the same number of respondents and same survey questions produced similar results with almost the same precision. This advancement in technological move has saved companies millions of shillings, for instance, the cost of making a 20 minute call using CATI may cost a research firm up to one third the cost of manual data collection, In addition, and telephone APPS programmes are now being used to collect field data. The proliferation of mobile telephony has made it easier to collect data at a much lower cost, this is especially so in Asia-Pacific, research data on the efficacy of this kind of data collection method indicated a significant reduction in the size of questionnaire compare in contrast to when one is using the PAPI approach. (Tim Macer, 2012)

Figure 1 changes reported in survey length brought by technology advancements



Overly this approach cuts down on paper cost, bulk transfers, security of questionnaires and other salient costs. These new technologies undeniable have lightened the work in research firms but have weaknesses on the flipside. For instance there is loss of the respondents face to the survey answers that normally presents the emotional face to the research questions. Reliability of this information is kind off worrying since you cannot place the face of the respondent to the questionnaire, demographic data such as age, social class verification data becomes highly unreliable. In home presence verification of products also becomes a challenge leaving more researches mainly with aspirations to work with without their knowledge.

The argument now is whether mobile applications or browsers will prevail, *Gabriel et al, (2013)* ¹I suggest that mobile phones can be a viable means of data collection but with careful thought about non response rates, which were largely attributed to poor network in some remote villages. The trend in the reducing the length of the questionnaire is obvious within most research firms, research indicates that 50% of the research firms attempt to cut down on the size of questionnaires at policy level. This industry age question has received significant attention from many stakeholders

In 2012 it was researched on this pertinent question on what should be the optimum length of a questionnaire and the answers were as follows; 18 minutes for telephone interviews, 15 minutes for web self filling questionnaires and 7 for mobile interviews. A few crazy outliers thought an hour or more was just fine! This data simply points out that stretching it past 18 minutes for any questionnaire regardless of the interview method is least recommended. *(Tim Macer 2012)*². Project conversations have not been left out; with teleconference facilities, central briefing and project updates is no longer either in voice or video, group dynamics can be observed from far of distances and synthesis of such groups done electronically. This new technology attempts to address the gap created with the loss of the face to face with the introduction of online data collection technologies, this is useful but cannot be efficiently utilized in large scale data collection. It is therefore evident that data technology has impacted significantly in data collection techniques in the market

¹ Gabriel et al,(2013),*Challenges and Opportunities of Mobile Phone-Based Data Collection: Evidence from South Sudan*

Tim Macer,(2012) software consultant and reviewer, The Confirmit Market Research survey conducted year

research field, some to the advantage and some to the loss of quality in the industry. Needless to say technology will continue to redefine the space of data collection in the market research industry.

2.1.2. Trends in Data Processing

Technology has revolutionized data processing trends, as late as the 80s statistically data was tallied manually. And yes, it could take a whole lot of time and it was also bound to many errors.

Today the data processing is spoilt for choices! The market place is rich in analytical software's including; Saw-tooth, SAS, MATLAB, GNU Octave, FlexPRO, STATA, SPSS, Quantum and R software. Data entry softwares like Dbase, CS Pro, Qdent, NIPO, Entrypoint, Epidata, online data entry softwares among others have completely over hauled the data processing. The industry has moved from using standardized tools to customized tools. Tools such as saw- tooth can provides conjoint analysis, market simulations, a variety of pricing researches just to mention but a few.

The new technology softwares have simplified the work and various different kinds of analysis today they can be achieved ranging from factor analysis, correspondence analysis, cluster analysis, significance test, and regression analysis and others. They data entry activity and analysis activity and processing time have greatly improved for the better and still expected to improve with advancing technology. The use scanners and mobile applications has also lightened the data processing process, data can now skip the editing, coding and manual entry, instead the data is transmitted directly from the phone to a central server from where cleaning and analysis can then proceed. This marks a very significant shift in data processing, especially in the time taken to process data from field, an opinion poll can now be released within 48 hours! Topline dipsticks data can be availed in hours. The trend therefore in the market is to identify the most reliable software that can capture data and cut down on data processing and analyses previously witnessed in the marker research and yet offer the highest reliability.

For long qualitative analysis has been done manually, but today we have many qualitative analysis tools like MAXQDA, NVivo, ATLAS, HyperResearch, WeftQDA, LIWC among many others. These softwares combines many stages of the manual tasks associated with qualitative data analysis, like classifying, sorting and arranging information (grids), such that you have more time to explore trends, build and test theories and

ultimately arrive at answers to questions. Reference is from the *Google Directory Listing of Qualitative Research Tools*.

2.1.3. Trends in Report Making

On a final note about research processing –report making and presentations – here I find a mix of optimism and despair, at least those are the emotions that I feel nowadays. New technology has provided high-tech reporting and interactive reporting tools, from the time researchers could send paper works, to the time of excel data, and finally today we have visual high tech reporting tools. Various research companies are embracing more high-tech reporting and interactive tools. To these research companies, this is one of the few competitive advantages they have and now we can cheer the initiation of such technologies in the research industry, although some times research companies have been far too lackadaisical in improving its ability to communicate insights with too many technological gimmicks. That said, the despair I feel comes from the finding that PowerPoint still rules the roost in terms of reporting and shows no signs of abetting soon. Despite various new alternatives like “Zoho show” that is an online presentation tool that helps you to create and deliver presentations. With Zoho show you can take your presentations wherever you go, apply new ideas instantly, review, edit, and share and deliver presentations on the go, and it goes a step further to include live audio chat with audience for some reason we are still trapped in the confines of PowerPoint.

Although that is a fact but the need to deliver results more quickly and the beginning of big data sets, might help drive adoption of visualization for reporting and presentation. With less and less time and more and more data to analyze, visualization may offer return of investments (ROI) and practical benefits that can't be ignored by research industry *courtesy of Tim Macer, software consultant and reviewer, The Confrimit Market Research..*

2.1.4. Desk Research

Internet era has provided a new way of conducting desk research making much simpler. Desk research is becoming increasingly important especially within business to business markets (B2B) and in consumer

research markets, opening up a of new-offspring channel in research methods and applications. With continuous evolvement of internet era and the rapid increase in internet penetration in all markets, then desk research is here to stay and grow in marketing research industry.

Desk research, lays the foundation for market research where funds are severely limited and or there is a quick need to gather data and the benefits of desk-research are;

- Desk research can easily provide you information within much less time there on drastically reducing time which you have to spend on fields to gather data.
- It saves time, effort and money spent on market research exercise as whole.

2.2. The Future of Market Research

Generally with technology having brought many changes and new trends in the market research industry, it is clear that market research is going digital in future. Additionally, today 80% of global research is dedicated to the quantitative surveys courtesy of *ESOMAR 2010*; it is also projected that 40% of the data will be generated through internet in future. This will minimize the field work cost paving way to the increase of surveys that will be carried out with mobile surveys and online surveys. Moreover, in future mobile surveys and online surveys will be adopted faster than any other form of data collection courtesy of *the green book research industry April 2011*.

2.3. My Concerns with the uptake of Technology Trends by the Market Research Industry

Now my concern is, with technology bringing many and better changes in the market research industry, how many market research companies embracing those changes in Africa and especially in East Africa?

Two more concerns; one is digital fingerprinting that is a system of ensuring sample and data quality in the research industry. Surprisingly, only 29% of research companies across the world are using digital fingerprinting and other data quality systems as a means of ensuring sample and data quality, 35% being in North America. Indeed, there is insufficient use of pretty much all of the fraud checking technology that is out there and available which can improve research quality work and make quality check process much easier *courtesy of Dan Ariely's predictably.*

Secondly, how many research companies are using “online community” which is a virtual community that exists online and whose members enable its existence through taking part in membership ritual? An online community can take the form of an information system where anyone can post content, such as a bulletin board system or one where only a restricted number of people can initiate posts, such as weblogs. It is only a few research firms worldwide that are offering online communities at 17%, and precisely this figure is the same as in 2009, *courtesy of Tim Macer, software consultant and reviewer, The Confrimit Market Research.* This being a little higher in North America, and by offering online communities this will provide new modalities in which our clients are interested and don't forget that nowadays they can go online anywhere anytime through mobile. If you ask me, offering online communities will up the game with research clients.

3. Effects of Technology Trends to Consumers and Market Research Intervention

Technology trends have affected consumers' life in various ways. Some of the areas consumers' life have been affected are like the mental ability, health, consumers communications and interaction, employment and service delivery and environment.

Although trends in technology have some advantages to the consumers' life who are the technology end users, it also has some negative effects to the consumers. By those technology effects, technology trends have created more opportunity for the market research industry to assist through research, to cab many of negative effects and possibly regulate through working with the various industries and government in various sectors generally to improve consumers' livelihoods in relation to the new technology trends.

3.1. Technology Effects to Mental Ability and Market Research Intervention

“I always felt that my greatest asset was not my physical ability, it was my mental ability.” this was said by Bruce Jenner a former US motivational speaker

Actually, inadequate use of our mental ability is the biggest drawback in our society that has come with changes in the technology as we all know we started with our own brain and body as the working tool. For example, with internet innovations of Google, it has lowered the ability to sharpen individuals' knowledge, experience and physical elements for resource. In today's world, you will get all sorts of information and knowledge from the internet, information mining has never become any easier, all you need is to Google or go to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia in the net and search any kind of info that you want, be it in history, geography, mathematics, science or any other related subject.

Just think of mathematics, the use of calculators, individual no longer practice to work out sums, a simple Google query up all possible answers for your arithmetic problems. But what does this do to our thinking capacity? I guarantee you that in the near future such inventions will only result in the lowered capability to work out math problems and other logical concepts, individuals no longer trouble themselves to think beyond Google answers.

Think of the cashier register machine used by bankers and calculators used in our schools, one needs not to think, why from primary schools to universities. Is it not ironical or maybe can we call this academic progress, I will leave you to be the judge. To say the least “It is not a wonder that the Kenyan government, next year after implementation of the Jubilee manifesto will be issuing pupils in class one with laptops. You can imagine what would happen when our students sit for mathematics, physics or any other paper without a calculator. It disturbs me that memorizing multiplication table is a thing of past because a calculator will do it for them, and they get an answer like of $3 \times 3 = 9$. You don't have to rack your brains, but what does this mean in terms of our brain development?

Then you wonder how many students of nowadays “dotcom” or else a cashier teller can actually give correct change if that cash register machine or calculator was not doing it for them?

ATMs and credit cards have brought lack of planning because the technology will help you handle all things and so you don't have to plan ahead. They have as well brought with it heightened impatience to individuals the urge of I want it now is much stronger than it used to be in pre technology era. Impulse buying is the order of the day, since all you need to do is to SWAP your card.

Talk of televisions, they have crippled many peoples' mental ability, more complacency and passiveness is the order of the day. It is because most of us today rely on TV for most the information we need if not all and hence people don't take time to read books.

Market research can come in handy in this area. To help the technology industry understand the effects from all perspectives through baseline surveys, knowledge and practice surveys, concept surveys, evaluation studies, extra, and advise accordingly. Market research by doing so will help the end users, and technology developers understand and establish issues before hand and on time to take the right direction.

3.2. Technology Effects to Consumers' Health and Market Research Intervention

Health wise, people have become lazier and unlikely to engage in physical activities, which is deterrent to good health. For example new technology trends from books to desktops then to portable computers like laptop, one may need not to appear at work place but can work from home and deliver on the same job denying people even the little gentle exercise like walking. Again technology change from when we were walking for errands to old moving crafts, then to speedy vehicles, electric trains and airplanes, people have become much lazier that most of us we can now jump into our cars and speed off after a binge or else one can fly to US within hours not days while sited has only made it worse, physical exercise through crucial burning up much of the undesirable calories has largely been ignored with the advancement of technology. Cooking technology has replaced the era of firewood to gas, electricity and microwaves. Nowadays we no longer keep adding fire woods after every few minutes for food to cook, but have we considered the effect of this fast hurried cooking

to the nutrient level in our foods. What do those examples show in terms of consumers' health risks? That new trend in technology is sure advantageous to the world advancement but harmful to the consumers' health.

More examples of technology wreaking havoc are seen in farming. Tractors are doing the job of farming which we used to do using Jembes years ago before technology advancement of using machine to plough the land. People could farm acres of Shambas using Jembes. The joy of eating fresh farm produce is long since gone, as a result of technological advancements; we are eating over preserved food from our refrigerators not to mention eating food that is adulterated using chemicals posing great dangers to consumers' life. These are a few examples that attempt to put in clear perspective the place of technological advancement in consumers' life in the field of agriculture.

Obesity as a consequence of unhealthy lifestyle has contributed significantly to lowered life span of the consumers' being. The fact that most people would rather have a quick burger or pizza as opposed to Githeri which is more nutritious is much more plausible today, simple because establishments are looking for quick fix solutions that will give them higher returns, have turned menus into death traps.

Video games and play stations have now replaced most of the physical games that characterized the yester years whereby our children used to play physical games in competition. What about too much television has had negative effects that include hyperactivity, emotional and behavioral disorders, and less consumers' interaction, unlike old times when our grandparents sat in congregation of grandsons narrate stories, update them with old and oge histories, rarely does those things happen today courtesy of *studymode.com*.

Social media especially ruins much needed consumers' interaction. Facebook and Twitter keeps consumers' glued to desktops, laptops, and iPods' keeping them away from their social life and causing them to be socially unhealthy. Children especially should get to know one another in the natural way – conversing with one another for them to grow physically, mentally and emotionally because those areas of children development are most critical.

The dangers of diseases are beckoning on our doors day by day due to much obsession with technology advancement are like obesity, cancer, high blood pressure among other lifestyle diseases. With the new trends in technology causing harm to consumers' health, market research will assist in understanding the effects of technology to the consumers' life and assist through surveys and studies make a change in the world that is technologically advanced but again with much reduced dangers of consumers' life. For market research, any

technology change and new trends are an opportunity for research to conduct surveys like concept tests in relation to the consumers' among other studies and make maximum utilization of our research products.

3.3. Technology Effects to Consumers' Communications, Interaction and Market Research Intervention

It is ironical that people do not have many chances for face to face interaction because technology advancement has lessened face to face consumers' interaction and yet face to face interaction is taken by many as the most effective means of communication courtesy of *Catherine Lee Cheng Ean from School of Communication, Taylor's University Malaysia*.

For instance the invention of the internet has reduced physical interaction and with it death of social skills. Mobile phone penetration in the developed countries is surpassing 100% mark to around 128% this year because of those who own more than one phone courtesy of *international telecom-paper* and in Kenya mobile phone subscribers are over 30million courtesy of *CCK*. Nowadays people can interact with anyone through cell phone, and you can talk to your neighbour while you're still in bed without necessarily walking in to his/her house. Social networks e.g. face book, twitter through which you can converse with your friends locally and abroad with minimal efforts. Emails have replaced the letter writing skills and now all you have to do is send a letter at the touch of your 'send' button. Well said, but this has only heightened the level of being impersonal within consumers' interactions. We no longer feel the joy of writing a letter, rereading starting all over again, and the excitement that used to accompany the opening of a letter has quickly been replaced by an email or an abrupt SMS text saying, "Will be late".

Back then, relatively a millennium ago, people used to walk miles to deliver messages which used to work like physical exercise, but having grown from then to poster, billboards, then to internet that provides email, internet, and mobile usage, hardly can people walk even a kilometer or two and thus we have opened the door for many lifestyle chronic diseases.

Of course there has been other adverse effect with the internet, we have heard people being ripped off money by conmen in the name of winning prizes or gimmicks like one of their family members has been taken ill while in actual sense it is a case of kidnapping. Case example is a kid that was kidnapped by his facebook friend in America, more to that is that some people have become victims by being cheated through internet. All this has come when the world is constantly changing to the new technology like today internet penetration in the world is high with over 35% globally, over 74% in the developed world and over 26% in the developing world courtesy of *Wikipedia*. Many individuals have found themselves in unfamiliar territories after being cheated in the guise of looking for all in the name of technology advancement. Like in the case of business technology uptake people are more cautious when transacting businesses electronically e.g. using Mpesa, Airtel money, bank accounts, electronic transfer amongst others these is because many have been short changed.

We have seen the cases of news polls in the news programmes from televisions news cast. Normally the news consumer mainly is the population with televisions which is mainly concentrated in the urban areas. This tells you that high number of the urban population is more likely to participate in those news polls. Then a statistician will tell you that most of the time when sampling using Kenya National Bureau of Statistic (KNBS) data consider 70% rural and 30% urban sample distribution in many scenarios to have non biased sample of general public.

Market research can help the world and technology developers at large through research and offer opinions and again research on the effects of such nature to the consumers and the world.

3.4. Technology Effects to Employment and Market Research Intervention

Technology development has influenced the advancement chances of workers in the industries but with an advantage to the businesses through creation of profit margin. Today most of the jobs we see in the world are being done by the machine brought by technology development. Sincerely most workers would want to achieve good positions and obtain higher pay in their line of career after gaining various kinds of experience, knowledge and skills, but today those valuable skills, knowledge and experience have been programmed in the

softwares and so they are with modern technology that can complete the tasks on its own eliminating employees at the expense of cutting cost. Unemployment has cut across the industries from mining, advertising agencies, communications, media, beverage confectionary and foods categories, social marketing, financial services, packaging, pharmaceuticals toiletries and cosmetics, construction, governments, non-governmental organizations, transport, energy, vehicles, name it and many others. This has raised joblessness in the world which is at the rate of 6% worldwide, increasing poverty levels in the same breadth courtesy of *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*.

Before the advancement of technology, physical work was a measure of prowess, today only a few individuals can be rated on the basis of their physical activity. Activities like mining have now been simplified not to say the least. But this has also resulted in high unemployment rates among the populace. Examples of such as the modern cash register which have substituted a lot of employees in the banking industry and have made that job to be easily done by just one person whom we call the teller. Another good example is point of sales machine that calculates and sums up the prices of all items together. Packaging nowadays for most items like sodas, beer, sugar, cement, oils extra have been automated whereby machine does the job of packaging phasing out employees. These were tasks that were done by people before the invention of the machines through changes in technology.

Then it goes without saying that employments created by technology are less than employments decreased by the technology. Then you can imagine how many people are suffering world wide because of the technology changes and more people being laid off daily.

For sure technology trends comes in hardy with easiness, efficiency, fast but myself I can see some gaps, whereby people are more important than machines, but preference of machine as result of technology development will advantage only a few people. Market research need to assist through research and seek from the end users individuals and the corporate world (through business to business research B2B) in order to help reduce the rate of unemployment, which if not addressed, soon we will heavily feel the reality of unemployment in the world. Those solutions mainly will help the government and the civil societies to plan manage the larger society.

3.5. Technology Effects to Environmental Pollution and Market Research Intervention

Environment in many parts of the world are much polluted by the industries, chemicals and vehicles amongst other things as a result of new technology trends. Air, water, soil and other surroundings have been greatly polluted by emissions of carbon monoxide, spilling of dangerous chemicals, producing plastic paper bags and make of glass items. While we know that surrounding places that we live in like home, work place should always be a place to make us feel relaxed and secured. It has been places turned unfit for consumers to stay. In fact, consumers are continually fighting colds, allergies of the eyes, noses and throats, in addition to fatigue, headache amongst other ailments which have become a common manifest of environmental pollution. Remember that smoke, chemicals and carbon monoxide and noises are majorly from new trends of technology which is advancing day after another. From when we were using plain water to today we use mixture of chemicals, then from when we were using our feet to walk to today when we are using vehicles that are on the increase causing more air pollution through emission of carbon monoxide and noises.

Examples of the countries that are in great danger of pollution are like china that emits annual carbon dioxide of 7,031,916 thousands of tonnes per year which translates to 23.5% of the total world emissions. Ironically China is leading in the list of most polluted country but again leading in the list of new technology development likewise to the United States of America, European Union, Japan etc courtesy of *Wikipedia*. United States of America (USA) is second emitting 5,461,014 thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide which translates to 18.27% of the total world emissions, followed closely by the European Union emitting 4,177,817 thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide which again translates to 13.98% of the total world emissions. Amongst other countries like India, Russia, Japan, Germany, Canada, Iran, United Kingdom, South Korea, Mexico, Italy amongst others courtesy of *Wikipedia and don't forget Kenya is on the rise*.

It is ironical that China, USA, European Union countries like England, Germany, Japan etc are among the top most technologically developed countries in the world; however they are leading in the most polluted countries in the world. That alone is a proof and it shows how adversely the world is affected by the new technology trends and this trend continues as long as the technology changes will continue. It leaves one asking, what is the need of making one big leap in advancement only to be followed by a series of negative effects in exponential proportions?

Finally improvement in power from the advanced weapons e.g. nuclear weapon has caused more deaths and damage to the world. In history we remember that on 6th August 1945 during the World War II, Japan was hit by an atomic bomb by America which has had negative effects to Japan country and whole community up to date. Actually it had a very acute effect that killed an approximate of 90,000 to 166,000 people in Hiroshima city and 60,000 to 80,000 in Nagasaki cities of Japan with roughly half of the deaths in each city occurring on the first day. Although atomic bomb was as result of technology advancement of weapon one would wonder why come up with such a powerful technology development that could cost life such a great deal without control courtesy of *Wikipedia*.

Technology has changed over the time from old times to date when things are done using technology, causing harm to consumers and environment!

So what? Experience is the best teacher; now market research should take up with the new trends in the industries and work together with other industries through research studies to help them achieve their new technology trends efficiently, harmless to the consumers and environment through such studies like environment and customer satisfaction surveys, concept tests, and baseline surveys amongst others and assist even more to make contributions to make a harmless technology growth.

4. Conclusions

The world is rapidly changing in line with new technology developments creating trends in the market research moving it to digital. The world of many years ago is not the same world of today, many things have developed and many things have been affected by technology change including consumers' life.

Years back technology thing was new; today technology is growing rapidly affecting all industries together with market research industry. Bringing new research methodologies, from data collection, analytics to report making and presentation that has overtaken traditional research methodologies like paper and pencil interviews (PAPI), to computer aided/telephone interviews (CATI/CAPI), online surveys and mobile applications.

Market research industry in the near future will fully embrace, adopt and trade with the new technologies to improve operations and work with clients who are also working in the world of technology change. Market research is fairly and gradually increasing the uptake of new technology research methodologies.

Effects of new technology advancements are the opportunities created from the end of consumers' life for market research. Market research will provide insights that will impact changes to consumers' life and the world at large.

Market research industry to work closely with the government, civil societies and other industries through concept tests to test products and services developed, baseline surveys to understand facts, environment and consumers satisfaction surveys to measure peoples' satisfaction and know dislikes and likes about the new developments, evaluation surveys to see the effects of a new technology advancement, knowledge and practice survey to establish peoples' understanding of new technology concepts to help create more effective and harmless improvements in the technology. Finally new trends in the technology industry create new trends in the market research.