

Integrity Policy

The quality and reliability of Questionmark's work is partly determined by our independence from the interests of the companies and organisations we research. We guarantee this independence through our governance, income structure and integrity policy.

Trust in employees

Part of Questionmark's independence is determined by the integrity and power of our employees. All Questionmark's employees and its subsidiary QM intelligence subscribe to Questionmark's mission and the general principles of professional scientific practice. Everyone involved in Questionmark's research is responsible for maintaining scientific integrity. Questionmark's Board trusts its director and employees and maintains a dialogue about conducting research and acting with integrity.

Integrity risks

There is no doubt about clear violations of integrity, such as manufacturing and falsification. Questionmark is committed to an open consultation culture where concerns about acting with integrity are discussed and resolved. This conversation is, for example, about whether employees could be consciously or unconsciously encouraged to act with integrity. Questionmark tries to prevent this possibility in several ways. We do this by making explicit which risks we see in terms of influencing or wrong incentives for employees and how we deal with them.

- Influenceability: extent to which an employee can (un)consciously influence the comparison.
- Incentive: extent to which an employee has an interest in a certain outcome.

Suggestibility

Research is human work. Therefore, there may be room for influence. A few examples of decisions, all of which influence the end result.

- Research questions: What are we going to investigate and what do we not research?
- Demarcation: Which products do and which do not belong in a particular category of a supermarket?
- Calculation: How heavily does each subject matter in research? What scale do we apply?
- Framing and reporting: In the wording of the results we have the possibility to emphasize or not emphasize certain outcomes.

Prevent influence

We have arranged a number of things in our working method to minimize the scope for influence.

- The research method is always predetermined and published in as much detail as possible. This method includes, among other things:
 - which topics are being researched
 - how heavily each topic weighs in the comparison
 - how a certain ranking is calculated

When drawing up the method, we never know exactly which choice is favorable or

unfavorable for the subject of our research.

- The research method is developed in collaboration with social organizations, which help determine which research questions are socially relevant are most relevant.
- The research method is submitted to the Scientific Council for each theme.
- Scientists on the Council all have their own relationships with the market specified in a declaration of interests.
- The research method is presented in advance to companies that are the subject of the research.
- The data we collect is submitted to companies that subject of research.
- Doubtful cases in the analysis will be submitted to the Council of Scientists, whereby the names of the relevant supermarkets have been anonymised.
- Each final report is submitted to the Council of Scientists, which also comment on wording and emphasis.
- Questionmark's Board thinks along and takes responsibility for this procedure.

(Appearance of) conflict of interest

Employees could have an interest in a certain outcome for various reasons:

- A. avoid losing face to personal contacts or want to do them a favor
- B. personal financial gain
- C. earning or securing income for Questionmark

Avoid conflicts of interest

- A. Personal contact

For Questionmark's research, it is policy that researchers only contact companies that are the subject of our research by email.

One of the researchers is also an account manager for supplying data to Albert Heijn. This researcher has incidental personal contact with Albert Heijn in the context of that current contract.

- B. Personal Financial Gain

Questionmark

Questionmark employees, including part-timers and employees on zero-hour contracts, report to Questionmark situations that may create the appearance of a conflict of interest, including in any event:

- o additional income from work for companies or organizations that are (indirectly) the subject of our research, including supermarkets, trade associations, food manufacturers;
- o employment of immediate family members at companies that Questionmark directly researches, including supermarkets

Questionmark management determines on a case-by-case basis how to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

C. Income for Questionmark

All employees know that Questionmark is always looking for funding for its income. Our strategy stipulates that the focus for finding income is on charitable funds and from services to non-profit organisations.

However, it is a strategic goal to give supermarkets and producers the opportunity to use the data we collect for our research. This data can be purchased for an expense allowance, making supermarkets and producers a possible source of income. There is no active acquisition towards these companies.

Based on our principle of being transparent, here is the current overview of discussions with supermarkets about the possible paid purchase of data. If there is a new contract with a supermarket, all employees, the board and the Council of Scientists will be informed about this.

- o Ekoplaza: one-year contract completed in 2016, no talks since then
- o Albert Heijn: current contract since 2017
- o Coop: last conversation 2017, no contract resulted
- o Dirk: quotation issued in 2018, not resulting in a contract
- o Plus: incidental calls, last summer 2020
- o Lidl: contract from 1 May 2022
- o Jumbo: No calls
- o Aldi: no calls