Stating the research objective is extremely important, for it defines what information will be collected from whom and in what format. The key assessment to be made of the research objective is: "If this information, as stated in the research objective, is provided, can a decision alternative be selected?"

determine the likelihood (measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Very Unlikely to Rent to 5 = Very Likely to Rent) that, given all factors are equal, students will rent from an apartment providing "free basic cable TV" (with channels available clearly stated) or from an apartment complex providing "free satellite TV with premium channels" (with channels available clearly stated).

Is this a good research objective? Recall earlier in this chapter we listed criteria for writing research objectives. We said that a research objective should (1) specify from *whom* information be gathered, (2) specify *what* information (construct) is needed, (3) specify the *unit of measurement* used to gather the information, and (4) word questions used to gather the information in the *respondents' frame of reference*. Let's consider the criteria used in defining research objectives to answer our question just presented.

FROM WHOM ARE WE GATHERING INFORMATION? Research objectives should address *who* has the information we need. Political pollsters know they must seek information from registered voters. If we are studying factors consumers use in selecting an Internet service provider (ISP), then we should seek information from persons who have recently made this decision. We have already stated that for our apartment complex example we are seeking "students who intend to rent apartments off campus for the next academic year." The research objective should not only specify who is to provide the information sought, but also state *how* these persons are to be included in the sample.

Notice in our research objective above we stated that the students would be surveyed using a "representative sample." (You will learn which types of sampling plans give you a representative sample in Chapter 9.) Notice that other decisions are being made when we specify from whom we are gathering the information. We are assuming these persons we have specified will know the information and will provide it to us accurately. Since most students make their own decisions about where they live at college, the students should know the information we need. This is not always true. A researcher who asks "anyone in the household" about details of the families' financial plans will find that usually only one person in the household is familiar enough with these plans to answer specific questions. A researcher who asks high school seniors about their preferences for on-campus entertainment when they get to college is asking the wrong people. They do not know because they haven't experienced college campus life yet. Finally, not all respondents are willing to give us the information we seek. Will a respondent be willing to give you accurate information on such sensitive topics as speeding tickets, finances, or personal relationships? We must make sure we are asking for information that respondents are *willing* to provide.

WHAT CONSTRUCT DO WE WISH TO MEASURE? Exactly what information do we need to make our choice among the decision alternatives? Recall that earlier in this chapter we discussed a situation where a manager must choose between one of two proposed ads: A or B. Many would say we should choose the "better" of the two but this raises the question of what we mean by "better." It would be difficult to write a research objective without defining what is meant by "better." What information will tell us which ad is "better"? Is it the ad that is more memorable? More relevant? More believable? Least misinterpreted? Most likeable? Most likely to produce a favorable attitude? Most likely to produce an intention to buy the advertised product? Just what is "better"?[25] Each item in our list of different types of information we could collect is a separate **construct,** defined as an abstract idea inferred from specific instances that are thought to be related.[27] The following constructs have been mentioned: memory, relevance, believability, understandability, likeability, attitude, and intention to purchase. For example, marketers refer to the specific instances of someone buying the same brand nine out of ten times as a construct entitled "brand loyalty." Sometimes marketing researchers call the constructs they study variables. Variables are simply constructs that can be measured or quantified in some way. They are referred to as variables because they can take on different

Memory, relevance, believability, understandability, likeability, attitude, and intention to purchase are examples of constructs: abstract ideas inferred from specific instances that are thought to be related.[26]