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Book Review

MARKETING RESEARCH - A PRACTICAL APPROACH

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What considered as an integral part of the marketing department's responsibility without which any company cannot succeed, is Marketing Research. It is important to understand the distinction between data, information and knowledge along with broad understanding of latest issues such as ethical issues that should be of concern to researchers. A basic text "Marketing Research: A Practical Approach", authored by Bonita Kolb (2008), is the book that covers all the steps involved in conducting qualitative as well as quantitative research. In this book, Bonita has arranged all the steps involved in carrying out marketing research with a great effort and awareness.

Beginning with an introduction to marketing research and uses of it she went on developing the concepts of research as a process that frames the research questions,

explores the sources of information, choosing, planning, designing and conducting a research and finally finding results and framing recommendations.

Bonita explains the benefits of critical thinking and describes the steps involved in critical thinking process. She also argues upon how secondary data are helpful in critical thinking and how to obtain such data. She concludes that these critical thinking are useful in framing the research questions and research approaches. I must commit, this chapter is very useful concise form of decision making process.

Further in discussions, she helps us in learning about research proposal. This section basically emphasis on the following:

1. Understand the three reasons for writing a research proposal
2. Describe the components of a well

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written research proposal

3. Explore the types of external companies that conduct marketing research

Bonita writes that the following questions are raised before you write a research proposal:

1. The question - Why? Which must answer "the subject of the research?"

2. The question - How? Answers "Which research method will be used"

3. The question - When? Explains about "the time the research will take"

4. The question - Where? Explains "the place or contact method"

5. And the question - What? Which must answer "the documentation that will be presented at the end of the research?"

This chapter of the book concludes that the research proposal has three main sections:

1. The Problem (Introduction, Research objective, Research question)

2. The Methodology (Research approach, Research method, Data collection plan)

3. Analysis and Findings (Data analysis, Methods of reporting of findings)

Bonita also discusses about the budget and timeline, possible research tools, confidentiality statement and other relevant information in context to a research proposal.

The book next discusses "Cultural Considerations for Marketing Research" and unique international marketing research challenges, the importance of language translation and the unique ethical issues when conducting cross cultural research. These discussions are extremely important in case where companies are seeking to expand

in global sphere their businesses beyond their boundaries. Further book explains how secondary data can be used to examine the external environment, the industry and consumers in that market.

Second part of the book is Qualitative Marketing. Here she writes the unique factors to consider when developing a participant profile or choosing participants for qualitative research. While explaining how to construct a sample using the convenience, snowballing and purposive methods, Bonita writes when we construct samples using convenience sampling, we ask the ones who are willing and available to participate, whereas in case of the snowballing method, we find one qualified participant who then recruits others. Next comes the introduction to focus groups and their advantages and disadvantages, the steps taken in developing the focus group methodology of marketing research, the personal characteristics and skills needed in a moderator of focus group research, with a worth reading on how group conflict is minimized and how the alternatives to focus group methods of research are explored. This section concludes with the discussion on in-depth interviews of the experts, the planning, questions framing and testing.

Part three of the book is Quantitative Marketing Research, which starts with the discussion on probability sampling, target population, issues in it and determination of sample size. Next comes is the questionnaire design, process and layout as well as discussions on electronic survey form and process of conducting surveys.

Last part (fourth) of the book guides the reader through some of the practical steps outlined in analyzing the data and reporting findings. This section explains how to analyze the quantitative versus qualitative

data, using various statistical tools and finally report writing professionally and presentational representation.

A well structured book, “Marketing Research: A Practical Approach” does a very good job of describing not only what you can do to enhance your skills in marketing research, but also learn the missing important concepts in conducting such researches. It truly could be your Marketing Research Manual!

References

1. Kolb, B.(2008). Marketing research: A practical approach. London, UK, SAGE Publications Ltd.