

Marketing assignment

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EXPLORATORY RESEARCH Exploratory research is conducted to clarify ambiguous problems. Management may have discovered general problems, but research is needed to gain better understanding of the dimensions of the problems. Exploratory studies provide information to use in analyzing a situation, but uncovering conclusive evidence to determine a particular course of action is not the purpose of exploratory research.

Usually, exploratory research is conducted with the expectation that subsequent research will be required to provide conclusive evidence, It is a serious mistake to rush into detailed surveys before less expensive and more readily available sources of information have been exhausted. In an organisation considering a program to help employees with childcare needs, for example, exploratory research with a small number of employees who have children might determine that many of them have spouses who also work and that these employees have positive reactions to the possibility of an on-site child-care program.

In such a case exploratory research helps to crystallize a problem and identify information needs for future research. **EXPLORATORY RESEARCH METHODS** The quickest and the cheapest way to formulate a hypothesis in exploratory research is by using any of the four methods: ??? Literature search ??? Experience survey ??? Focus group ??? Analysis of selected cases

Literature Search This refers to “referring to a literature to develop a new hypothesis”. The literature referred are - trade journals, professional journals, market research finding publications, statistical publications etc

Example: Suppose a problem is “Why are sales down? This can quickly be analyzed with the help of published data which should indicate “whether the

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problem is an “ industry problem” or a “ firm problem”. Three possibilities exist to formulate the hypothesis. 1. The company’s market share has declined but industry’s figures are normal. 2. The industry is declining and hence the company’s market share is also declining. 3. The industry’s share is going up but the company’s share is declining. If we accept the situation that our company’s sales are down despite the market showing an upward trend, then we need to analyse the marketing mix variables.

Example 1: A TV manufacturing company feels that its market share is declining whereas the overall television industry is doing very well. Example 2: Due to a trade embargo imposed by a country, textiles exports are down and hence sales of a company making garment for exports is on the decline. The above information may be used to pinpoint the reason for declining sales. Experience Survey In experience surveys, it is desirable to talk to persons who are well informed in the area being investigated. These people may be company executives or persons outside the organisation.

Here, no questionnaire is required. The approach adopted in an experience survey should be highly unstructured, so that the respondent can give divergent views. Since the idea of using experience survey is to undertake problem formulation, and not conclusion, probability sample need not be used. Those who cannot speak freely should be excluded from the sample.

Example 1: 1) A group of housewives may be approached for their choice for a “ ready to cook product”. . 2) A publisher might want to find out the reason for poor circulation of newspaper introduced recently.

He might meet (a) Newspaper sellers (b) Public reading room (c) General public (d) Business community; etc. These are experienced persons whose knowledge researcher can use. Focus Group Another widely used technique in exploratory research is the focus group. In a focus group, a small number of individuals are brought together to study and talk about some topic of interest. The discussion is co-ordinated by a moderator. The group usually is of 8-12 persons. While selecting these persons, care has to be taken to see that they should have a common background and have similar experiences in buying. This is required because there should not be a conflict among the group members on the common issues that are being discussed. During the discussion, future buying attitudes, present buying opinion etc. , are gathered. Most of the companies conducting the focus groups, first screen the candidates to determine who will compose the particular group. Firms also take care to avoid groups, in which some of the participants have their friends and relatives, because this leads to a biased discussion. Normally, a number of such groups are constituted and the final conclusion of various groups are taken for formulating the hypothesis.

Therefore, a key factor in focus group is to have similar groups. Normally there are 4-5 groups. Some of them may even have 6-8 groups. The guiding criteria is to see whether the latter groups are generating additional ideas or repeating the same with respect to the subject under study. When this shows a diminishing return from the group, the discussions stopped. The typical focus group lasts for 1-30 hours to 2 hours. The moderator under the focus group has a key role. His job is to guide the group to proceed in the right direction.

Analysis of selected cases Analysing a selected case sometimes gives an insight into the problem which is being researched. Case histories of companies which have undergone a similar situation may be available. These case studies are well suited to carry out exploratory research. However, the result of investigation of case histories are always considered suggestive, rather than conclusive. In case of preference to “ ready to eat food”, many case histories may be available in the form of previous studies made by competitors.

We must carefully examine the already published case studies with regard to other variables such as price, advertisement, changes in the taste, etc.

DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe “ what exists” with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The methods involved range from the survey which describes the status quo, the correlation study which investigates the relationship between variables, to developmental studies which seek to determine changes over time.

Descriptive Research Methods Case Studies Detailed analysis of a single (or limited number) of people or events. Case studies are usually interesting because of the unusualness of the case . The major problem with case studies is the problem of objectivity. The person who is presenting the case usually has some theoretical orientation. It is acceptable for a theoretical orientation to affect one’s interpretation of events. In a case study the theoretical orientation can also lead to the selection of the facts to include in the case.

It is not surprising that case studies often seem to provide very compelling evidence for a theory. Case studies can therefore assist psychology by illustrating how a theory could be applied to a person or events and by assisting with the development of hypotheses for more systematic testing. Observational Research Accounts of the natural behavior of individuals or groups in some setting. Unless the observation is unobtrusive, there may be some subject reactivity to being observed. This often decreases with time, a process called habituation.

Observers cannot usually observe all behaviors all of the time. They may use a behavioral checklist and may also use time sampling or event sampling procedures. It is important to assess observer bias by the use of interobserver reliability. Observational research may also pose ethical problems. These can arise when the behaviors being observed are not public behaviors and when the observer joins a group in order to observe the members' behavior ??? participant observation. Survey Research

Structured questions to assess peoples beliefs, attitudes, and self-reports of behavior. If the researcher wishes to generalize the responses to a population, it is important to have a representative sample. Surveys that rely on self-selection (respond if you are interested) produce non-generalizable results. Surveys also provide information for co relational research. One can correlate responses to some questions (often demographic questions) with responses to other questions (often attitudes or reports of behavior). Survey question must be clear and unambiguous.

Even if the questions are unambiguous and non-leading, people may display a social desirability bias and give positive or socially acceptable and desirable answers. Survey methods include: (1) the interview or face-to-face method which is generally viewed as the best method for obtaining a high rate of responses but is also very costly; (2) phone surveys, which are less expensive but have a higher non-response rate (which has probably increased with caller ID); and (3) written or mail surveys, which are least expensive but have a very high non-response rate.

Follow-up messages can help increase the response rate. Archival Research Analysis of pre-existing data or records. Archival research often involves content analysis, a qualitative analysis of material. For example, one would use content analysis to determine whether there had been an increase in the frequency with which women and minorities were mentioned in US history books between 1920 and 2000. Some archival research is quasi-experimental. EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH Science revolves around experiments, and learning the best way of conducting an experiment is crucial to obtaining useful and valid results.

When scientists speak of experiments, in the strictest sense of the word, they mean a true experiment, where the scientist controls all of the factors and conditions. Real world observations, and case studies, should be referred to as observational research, rather than experiments. For example, observing animals in the wild is not a true experiment, because it does not isolate and manipulate an independent variable. With an experiment, the researcher is trying to learn something new about the world, an explanation of ' why' something happens.

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The experiment must maintain internal and external validity, or the results will be useless. THE BASIS OF CONDUCTING AN EXPERIMENT With an experiment, the researcher is trying to learn something new about the world, an explanation of ' why' something happens. The experiment must maintain internal and external validity, or the results will be useless. When designing an experiment, a researcher must follow all of the steps of the scientific method, from making sure that the hypothesis is valid and testable, to using controls and statistical tests.

Whilst all scientists use reasoning, operationalization and the steps of the scientific process, it is not always a conscious process. Experience and practice mean that many scientists follow an instinctive process of conducting an experiment, the ' streamlined' scientific process. Following the basic steps will usually generate valid results, but where experiments are complex and expensive, it is always advisable to follow the rigorous scientific protocols. [pic]