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Marketing Research in Non-Profit Organizations

1. Introduction to Marketing Research in the Non-Profit Sector

Marketing research has been widely studied in organizations that operate in a business environment, and very little interest has been shown in marketing research in non-profit organizations. Non-profit organizations essentially provide services, be it in healthcare, social services, behavioral healthcare, public health, education, conservation, or art and culture. Thus, their marketing issues with constituents vary widely from the missions of non-profit organizations to those of multinational corporations. While for-profit organizations are supposed to maximize profit, non-profit organizations cater to different missions that are generally service-oriented and include health, education, culture, conservation, and so on. Furthermore, non-profits cater to social goods that are required for human survival and may be considered public goods, like public health, air quality, education, and so on.

Marketing research gives them ideas on packaging their services, pricing, promoting events, and also for segmenting and targeting their markets. Here, the non-profits that engage in marketing research understand and recognize that marketing research is for the purpose of understanding the market for their services and not for making profits, as is the main goal of business marketing research. At a time when competition for funding is almost at its peak among non-profit organizations, identifying and understanding the recipients' needs, wants, and expectations is increasingly important for survival. Researchers further believe that with a greater in-depth understanding of the recipient, governing members will be in a far better position to make informed decisions as well as quantify and qualify their staff development. In line with the views expressed above, the purpose of this special edition on marketing research in non-profit organizations is to provide opportunities for individuals involved in marketing and/or research to share their ideas, knowledge, thoughts, and experiences in advocating for more marketing research to be carried out in non-profit organizations to help towards a more data-driven management. This, in turn, will help in better addressing issues related to 1) meeting the needs of the intended target and preventing the possibility of marketing myopia and the selling of the wrong benefits and features to the wrong audiences; 2) ensuring that informatics undersells are generated as planned; 3) providing feedback to the informant on the extent to which the above three issues have been met or exceeded; and 4) ensuring that the mood is maintained for continuous relationships as well as collaboration, i.e., not becoming a 'taker'.

2. Importance and Benefits of Marketing Research for Non-Profit Organizations

For non-profit organizations engaged in public services and charity, it is definitely necessary to know your donors – both those who finance the organization once and those who become regular sponsors and repeat their donations. A clear understanding of what works at the level of attracting funds to the organization is required both for increasing financing and for its current sustainability. To address these issues, conducting marketing research, in particular survey research, is a strategic need for organizations. The feedback system established with the help of the results of the marketing research functions as an instrument of continuous relationships for non-profit organizations.

Marketing research provides an opportunity to learn more about donors. Based on the results of marketing research, one can get an idea of the socio-economic characteristics and philanthropic traits of donors, their political and social preferences, moral values, and consumer behavior. By learning more about the methods of communication used by potential sponsors as loyal consumers, fundraisers acquire timely knowledge that is relevant and adaptable to targeting in promotional activities to attract charitable contributions. The survey helps to adjust the marketing and communication strategies in which a charity participates, and this is already an indicator of the effective achievement of the organization's strategic goals. One of the social marketing goals is to create goods and services for individuals, together with a view to achieving social goals. The selection of the service delivery area directly influences the efficiency of the work conducted.

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3. Key Differences Between Marketing Research in Non-Profit and For-Profit Organizations

Marketing research in non-profit organizations differs from the marketing research in for-profit organizations in several key aspects. 1. Objectives: In for-profit organizations, the aim is profit maximization. While non-profit organizations seek to be as efficient as possible with money, other objectives must take priority. The main objective of marketing in a non-profit organization is to find out how well the organization is achieving its mission or, more specifically, the impact of its programs and services. 2. Funding: For-profit organizations are funded by customers or stakeholders, who pay for products or services. Non-profit organizations, in contrast, are generally funded by a combination of funding sources. As such, the target audience in non-profits might not be the same as the funding audience. 3. Audiences: Non-profit marketing research also needs to consider multiple groups who might be of interest: funders, clients or participants, and other stakeholders like volunteers may all be equally important to non-profit success. 4. Competition: The non-profit competition set may not be as clear-cut as those for for-profits, as people may consume a variety of services as well. Additionally, for many non-profit organizations, the competition set depends on the specific programs and services offered. 5. Resource Constraints: As most non-profit organizations have fewer resources, and people must have the skill set to conduct the marketing research as well as execute it, marketing research needs to be tailored to what the organization can afford. 6. Success metrics and outcomes: In non-profit research, we are generally interested in determining the achievement or how to measure certain criteria or goals rather than trying to prove the worth of an organization. In the non-profit world, we are often less trying to prove effectiveness than to improve a process. Because of the wide-reaching objectives of non-profit organizations, organizations must routinely deal with gathering data about the long-term outcomes of a program rather than measuring outcomes or effectiveness. Non-profit organizations regularly have to gather data on inputs, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impacts. Given those differences – and they are significant – non-profit organizations are often passionate about research practices and approaches that are unique to the sector. It's easy to craft a research plan to measure the bottom line, but if you're a food bank, does measuring your clients' bottom line mean you are better measuring program efficacy or social impact? Our goal as marketers and researchers, then, is to bring marketing research to the forefront for non-profits in a sophisticated way while valuing the genuine passion organizations have regarding marketing research that can be construed as a measuring stick to point to their definite impact. A marketing research approach that is built to help non-profit marketers reach their business goals is much like the process for their for-profit counterparts in some ways. At the same time, researchers need to remember that the focus is serving constituents, corporate partners, and donors, not just clients.

4. Ethical Considerations in Conducting Marketing Research for Non-Profit Organizations

Ethical practices in non-profit marketing research: A situational approach. The procedure of research requires two major steps: data collection and data analysis. Ethical practices should guide both of these major activities. Researchers should hold themselves to the highest ethical standards when working for non-profit organizations, which is part of a company's or association's broader marketing function. In particular, the collection of data should conform to the respondents' right to privacy and confidentiality, while the reporting of findings should be as transparent and honest as possible.

Data collection issues: 1. Bias in research: Research should be bias-free to indicate the attitudes, perceptions, and stories of as complete an audience cross-section as possible. 2. Informed consent: Respondents should know who is collecting the data, for what specific purpose, how the information will be used, and how the identification process will be treated. 3. Privacy and confidentiality: The data collected from the survey should be released to no one. 4. Anonymity: The public may wish to remain anonymous and should be given the option, and those who do should have their identities protected. 5. Inclusiveness: Gatekeepers and information should be bypassed when obtaining information about a non-profit audience.

Part of the appeal of going to the non-profit associations would be for their potential to be more open, to be more resource-defined, and to have more rounded knowledge of the problem. Moreover, participating in non-profit events allows groups an interesting angle into what is happening in different communities. When the values printed for these charities were analyzed, a few main ethical notions were found: trust, the preservation of informed consent of the public, and the embrace of the utmost standard of adherence to the truth. In the setting of this

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research, whereby data was collected via publicized links, other potentially important values expressed by the participants were the right to be left alone, the respect of individuals' privacy, and the participants' right to know the nature of the research and the purpose of the data being collected. Thus, to address the call from non-profit professionals for greater focus on non-profit marketing research, and to aid in the understanding of marketing as a function of management, we must discuss the ethical implications of marketing research for non-profits.

In the public opinion of the respondents hired by non-profit or governmental organizations, when revealed to such organizations by level of income, it should be tested whether ethical standards differ. If non-profit and governmental marketing businesses are so poor, is it honest to rescue such operations? Further study would also clarify whether the particular implications above are sufficiently widespread to impact the quality with which the public in general believes these operations are carried out. The findings also carry implications for social marketers working in these organizations. It would be ethically irresponsible for those who manage the research and marketing subdivisions of Canadian instrumental non-profit organizations to disregard the public's negative opinions out of hand if a significant percentage of the Canadian population judges such respondents as deplorable. There is evidence to suggest that many in the non-profit sector may not give as much of their incomes to these associations if Canadian citizens in general were given odds on which profits run by management would act uncompassionately with the need for charitable services due to this research.

5. Research Design and Methodologies in the Non-Profit Sector

SECTION 5. Research Designs and Methodologies in the Non-Profit Sector Designing a successful marketing research project requires the consideration of various research designs and methodologies. With regard to non-profits, a variety of research approaches prove helpful. Designing any research project, for-profit or not-for-profit, begins with identifying the appropriate approach. A qualitative research approach allows researchers to present the complexity of findings through thick description. These findings typically offer insights into the experiences of participants. A quantitative research approach, by contrast, uses hard numbers and percentages in order to empirically investigate the established research questions. Finally, a mixed-methods research approach is utilized to help identify the external validity of an approach. This involves more than simply running a statistical test to "prove" whether a finding is relevant, but instead asks participants why they are responding that way.

Importantly, the research design must be appropriate to the objectives of the research. The research design dictates "how" a study is conducted and addresses what data are collected, from whom, and at what stage data are collected. Each research design impacts the sampling strategy, data collection approaches, as well as the generalizability of research findings. Several methodologies within these three research designs can be utilized to collect valuable data that supports practitioner decisions. Two of the most commonly used methodologies include case studies as well as surveys. In short, several factors such as the philosophy of research and the nature of the research question can determine which design and methodologies are the most appropriate to answer that research question. It often happens that non-profit marketing research raises issues that can be convincingly resolved only by employing context-sensitive designs that reflect the complex social and environmental factors outside the control of the organization. It behooves researchers to consider the organizational and environmental dimensions of any non-profit they study, for they are likely to vary significantly by type of organization, field, and community. Effectively understanding the complexity of voluntary sector-organization dynamics requires researchers to accurately tap participants' perspectives. Non-profit participants are often well-positioned to access knowledge about their organization and community and to provide evidence-rich data about the effectiveness of public, private, or third-sector strategies brought to bear on a given social issue. This depth of understanding is only revealed by touching on the lived experiences of these actors. The goal of the non-profit researcher is not merely to observe actors from a distance but to listen carefully to their firsthand stories of events and experiences. These various considerations need to be taken into account in addition to resource constraints and access to funding to meet the research objectives for the level of knowledge sought in tailoring the design and subsequent approach to marketing research in non-profits.

6. Data Collection Techniques and Tools for Non-Profit Marketing Research

In general, appropriate tools and techniques to collect, analyze, and interpret data must be known and effectively used to have reliable results. Market research uses various techniques for data collection. One of the most widely used tools of primary data collection is a questionnaire. Data collection techniques can be classified as qualitative and quantitative data: qualitative data focuses on a small group such as in interviews and focus groups, and quantitative data focuses on a large group such as in surveys. This paper is intended to provide marketers with the basic tools and techniques to have accurate data in order to reach their objectives.

Non-profit marketers can consider using the following data collection techniques and tools: • Surveys: Surveys are conducted on the internet, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, or by mail. A few general suggestions are to include the option of "not applicable" in survey questions and to include the option of "other" along with specific examples. • Focus groups: Focus groups should be kept to less than 90 minutes. The size of the group varies with the target audience, but 9 to 14 participants are typical. • Interviews: Conducted with experts such as university professors, authors, individuals with a particular reputation or celebrity, or policymakers. Personal interviews involve an in-depth, one-on-one, oral communication between the interviewer and the interviewee, while telephone interviews are sometimes used as preliminary screenings before conducting focus group meetings. The focus group and interviews judge the public's reaction and are not an objective measure of their behavior. It may appear that adopting new technology will result in more valid and reliable results. A variety of data and benchmarks can be monitored by online services using data analysis software, which assists in the decision-making process. Regardless of the method researchers choose, the delicate balance between how much the technique costs and how much can be afforded will greatly determine the type and style of data collection.

Marketers who do not keep up with the available options and changes in technology risk adopting the wrong method because of their lack of expertise. It is recommended that researchers are proficient in making matches between the available technology and their specific needs in order to receive the correct data that will help meet the goals. No technique will be effective if it does not match both the research needs and the target audience. This is especially critical in non-profit organizations that need to carefully consider the target audience members as to their ability to participate. Choosing the right method for data collection is a critical part of the preparatory phase of data collection research. Some other suggestions for getting quality data include the following: • Pilot test the data collection tool and conduct a "think-aloud" testing mode with a few representative members of the target audience. Make revisions based on what you learn. • "Calibrate" your data collection strategy. Calibration is the process of ensuring that data collection will be conducted consistently from one respondent to the next. Calibration sets a foundation of measurements and the process for recording the results. It's particularly important when several interviewers will be used. Often, non-profit organizations struggle with data collection due to the difficulty of recruiting and motivating participants. Participants have a variety of reasons for not participating or for giving incomplete, misleading, or impersonal responses. Some of the reasons may include the time constraints of the targeted participant base, the lack of incentives, and the inability to make any impact on the results of the effort. Given these challenges, the non-profit organization should take a strategic approach to selecting the right mix of techniques and tools to adopt in the data collection process.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation in Non-Profit Marketing Research

Data analysis and interpretation are generally conducted by individuals with at least some experience in the field of market research. In theory, you can use analysis or interpretation to understand the variability in responses. An appropriate analytical technique should be selected in accordance with the marketing research question to assure meaningful results. There are three types of analysis techniques: absolute, typical, and comparative that can be applied to the collected data. The common technique to interpret data is narrative storytelling, based on the patterns, analysis, and drawing conclusions. It is also important to note that the output of market research in the form of raw data does not entirely inform the findings. Thus, analysts transform this raw data into synthesized and digested information, such as statistical values in the case of quantitative data. Moreover, those findings are then interpreted, looking at the social issue within its bigger context. But when market researchers are conducting data analyses for their non-profit clients, they actually conduct social impact measurement. They collect the data needed for the organization to understand the extent to which they have been making change, and for the organization to make decisions about what they should do next. Whereas market research ensures the design for data outputs is based on the organizations' needs, market researchers extend this practice in the execution of the data analysis. A major challenge, however, is to ensure these findings are actionable beyond delivering insights. Being able to perform analysis and interpretation accurately means we are not contributing to the inefficiency in the non-profit sector. In this way, both organizations and marketing research move towards becoming more effective.

8. Utilizing Marketing Research Findings to Enhance Non-Profit Strategies and Programs

Currently, many non-profit organizations engage in research to identify the effectiveness of strategies and programs. However, many research findings may go unutilized or implemented to their fullest potential. Non-profit organizations must strive to utilize marketing research results to make strategic and programmatic enhancements. Measuring the success of research implementation may be difficult due to the long-term data collection necessary. For marketing research findings to make a difference in programmatic development, they must be utilized by the organization. This paper provides critical steps to ensure that research findings are utilized in the strategic and programmatic enhancement of a non-profit. These steps include the consistent alignment of organizational goals and the synthesis of marketing research insights. Additionally, researchers conducting research need to portray the practical application of their research findings for program design, organizational outreach or marketing, or even donor or consumer engagement.

While all researchers conducting research using a non-profit organization should consider how their research findings may be utilized, researchers studying volunteering, donor behavior, or non-profit advertising have valuable research findings that have practical and clear implementation suggestions. Non-profit researchers should encourage organizations with whom they work to implement findings that will be mutually beneficial to the organization and the research establishment. Non-profit activities have been studied and evaluated in the marketing literature. To optimize their benefits, any organization with a marketing focus should maintain customer satisfaction and a willingness to adapt to new market positions in a dynamic environment. These marketing metrics are regularly used to determine programs and strategies that promote organizational success. Continual customer feedback provides organizations with a base from which to constantly modify strategies and work towards success. As a result, non-profits are successfully using research to continuously improve marketing design. Marketers must take this one step further, first using marketing research to quantify customer feedback and then act on this information. A concern with the existing marketing research literature is that while there is much information available about conducting research, there is little information about utilizing it. Non-profit organizations conduct research looking for the "magic answer" to increasing an individual's involvement. After extensive research, many researchers present their findings to a non-profit. Following the research meeting, the non-profit leaves with a large manual full of tables and findings, and generally, this is where the report sits. What can researchers do to ensure that the research insights are communicated in such a manner that they are utilized to the fullest potential? The importance of strategic implementation is communicated within the area of management, strategic planning, and implementation. The truth is, businesses do not know how to implement strategies or research. In order to optimally guarantee the success of research findings, an organization must encompass a total research development plan. Ideally, organizational changes will already have been put in place before the research was conducted. However, a midstream adjustment is also important to ensure the primary goals are customized according to the data collection.

9. Challenges and Limitations of Marketing Research in Non-Profit Organizations

A systematic marketing research program is often constrained by the range of resources available to the non-profit organization, both in terms of money to pay for researchers, equipment, and facilities, and in terms of staff with the expertise required to undertake this work. Staff time, especially that of senior management, is in particularly short supply. Data may not be easily or economically available, particularly for projects that may be of very limited interest to anyone who might bear the very high cost of gathering it. For example, few data on the behavior of Europeans living in Africa are gathered globally, and for many small underprivileged communities around the world, there may be no relevant data that are relevant to their situation. Not all data are of equal value, accuracy, or relevance, and many organizations lack the training to assess data quality.

The non-profit context presents additional, unique challenges due to the need for credibility and reliability to both staff and clients, reliance on volunteers for work and therefore data collection, lack of expertise or resources due to the presence of a highly sophisticated organizational hierarchy in terms of professional qualification, and managing service delivery. Non-profit organizations may also be committed to specific values that might lead to bias in data collection or analysis, as well as checks in methodology designed to contribute to the organization's measurability to its mission and results. Marketing research in small non-profit organizations and in specific contexts and markets can also be potentially difficult to generalize.

Fieldwork challenges encompass a range of issues, including becoming an identifiable 'market' in the area of marketing research and prospecting, much higher standards of informed consent, complex ethical considerations, and a need for an informed and willing research participant population. Engaged scholarship suggests a need to ensure transparent approaches to research design and conduct, opportunities to provide information, and opportunities for input. Cooperative approaches present ethical dilemmas; unethical data are wasted while unethically allowing people to simply withdraw after research is financed and set up, or go to some expense to participate in that research.

10. Case Studies and Examples of Successful Marketing Research in Non-Profit Settings

Habitat for Humanity - "ReVISION" Strategic Planning 2003-2017 Jewish Health Systems Community Marketing Research Project Case Western Reserve University Neighborhood Leadership Institute Western Reserve Girl Scouts Greater Cleveland Make a Difference Day marketing audits Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities Community Relations Committee Project Love, Inc. Calgary's Chevrolet Contino Campaign Cleveland Housing Network "American Dream Fund Hannas - 1997 The positive outcomes from these case studies are clear from the amount of funding, energy, and time committed to their growth, effectiveness, and maintenance. Was it worth the investment? Lessons Learned Attend to the process of engaging consumers first, trust commitment, adapt research methodologies and approaches to constituencies, demonstrate buy-in, and follow through on recommendations. Be accountable and track if those outcomes were met or accomplished. If you did not meet them, have the courage to change course, and think about the purpose you serve in an empowering community process. Maximize adaptability and responsiveness. Transform research outcomes through the diffusion of information channels and putting results "into action" as a social agenda or public policy dominating organizational priorities. In so doing, you will achieve greater social impact.

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11. Future Trends and Innovations in Marketing Research for Non-Profit Organizations

As donors become more 'businesslike', it is expected that the tools and techniques used in for-profit marketing research will play a more influential role in the strategic thinking of non-profit organizations. The evolution of these techniques is not confined to the for-profit sector, but is being adapted and adopted by non-profit organizations today. Having a good understanding of this research context offers donor servicing professionals in non-profit organizations the opportunity to position themselves to engage with donors in more effective ways. This section offers insight into the emerging trends and potential innovations that may shape the practice of marketing research in non-profit organizations in the future.

Future issues in the field: The full gamut of techniques from institutional finance, data analytics, and artificial intelligence are all increasingly being used to 'reverse-engineer' the determination of needs and desires in clients. One accrediting company has claimed that spending more than a week collecting and analyzing data to figure out how to best approach new and heavily researched groups is now more important to the revenue of a consulting company than their MBA. The rise of algorithm-driven models of donor behavior and its corollary, the increasing use of authenticated online communities as a source of research insights are changing the face of research. More sophisticated involvement of not-for-profit stakeholders in the research process is also notable. The theory and modeling of big data research would complement the topics in this publication. Campaigning Watch, internal reports, social media analytics, direct feedback, dealership workshops, and an internal consulting team are the sort of tools and techniques that are widely used by politicians as they compete for votes. A range of insights obtainable from proprio and crowdsourced individuals would allow practitioners to inform targeted action plans when setting up and analyzing coproduction with partners, stakeholders, and end users. Social media practice will allow non-profit organizations to connect and engage with communities in the sphere of crowd sharing. For example, participation in social media would allow consortium members to input into the evolving research questions and research methods, including data sharing. The plethora of information from social media sources, in English and in other languages, offers a check and balance: are the stakeholder populations engaged with and targeted through social media representative of possible users more generally? Certainly, best practices will optimize partnerships and outreach and help to facilitate the transition to impact. More inclusive market designs involving creative applications of auctions and practical information elicitation have the potential to outperform ordinary auctions in the marketing research of minority consumer preferences. Social media accounts of key individuals and organizations will also be updated with a synopsis of each new publication, leading to wider dissemination of outputs and helping to maintain and build on existing relationships. It is expected that the project will have a broader transformative impact on the consumer ecosystem through the establishment of a community of marketing research practice.

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