

Vol 2 Issue 11 Aug 2013

ISSN No : 2249-894X

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*Monthly Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal*

*Review Of  
Research Journal*

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**RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595**

**ISSN No.2249-894X**

Review Of Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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## RETAIL RESEARCH PROCESS

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### Abstract:

*Retail research is the methodology used to study retail behaviour. It helps the marketer to predict how retail would react to promotional messages, and to understand, why they made a particular purchase decision. It helps in formulating marketing strategies, analysing the marketing mix and understanding the factors which influence the decision-making.*

### KEY WORDS:

Retail Research , methodology , marketing strategies , decision-making.

### INTRODUCTION:

The marketing concept is built upon the assumption that marketers have to first identify retail needs and then develop products and services to satisfy these needs. Retail research offers a set of diverse methods to identify such needs. It is also used to understand retail behaviour in a better manner.

The research provides the basis for the development of new product and service concepts to meet target retail needs. Many of the applications of retail research are designed to help a marketer make specific marketing decisions concerning product, promotion and distribution.

### RETAIL RESEARCH AS APPLIED RESEARCH

Research means a systematic and objective investigation of a problem in order to discover relevant information and principle. Research can be classified into two broad categories, namely, basic research and applied research. Basic research, also known as fundamental research, seeks to extend the boundaries of knowledge in a given area with no necessary immediate application to existing problems. whereas, the applied research proceeds with a certain problem and specifies alternative solutions and the possible outcomes of each alternative solution. Unlike basic research, it is prompted by commercial considerations. Retail research is considered under applied research.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD RETAIL RESEARCH

A good retail research is characterised by the following characteristics:-

Scientific method - Effective retail research uses the principles of the scientific method- careful observation, formulation of hypotheses, prediction and testing of retail behaviour.

Research creativity - At its best, retail research develops innovative ways to solve a problem related to retail to satisfaction.

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Source:Review of Research [2249-894X]UDAYSINH MANEPATIL yr:2013 vol:2 iss:11

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Multiple method - Competent researchers can adopt various methods for solving a problem. They also recognize the desirability of gathering information from multiple sources to give greater confidence.

Value and cost of information - Competent researchers show concern for estimating the value of information against its cost. Value/ cost helps the research department determine which research projects to conduct, which research designs to use, and whether to gather more information after the initial results are available. The value depends on the reliability and validity of the research findings.

Ethical marketing - Most of the retail research benefits both the sponsoring company and its retail. Through retail research, companies learn more about retail's needs and are able to supply more satisfying products and services.

## RETAIL RESEARCH PROCESS

The retail research process is a set of operations which aids the researcher in systematic gathering, recording and analysis of data to help solve decision-making problem. The process provides the researcher with an orderly means to investigate problems. It is not a static and highly structured framework.

### Retail Research- Sequence of Steps.

Each retail problem is different from the other and hence requires own special emphasis and different approach. Since every retail research problem is unique in some ways, the research procedure has to be typically customised.

- Formulate retail research problem :- One of the most valuable roles retail research can play is helping to define the problem to be solved. Only when the problem is carefully and precisely defined, can research be designed to provide pertinent information. Part of the process of problem definition includes specifying the objectives of the specific research project that might be undertaken.

- List out research objectives :- After identification of research problem, researcher should make as list of research objectives which are considered for research purpose.

- Determine research design :- The sources of information for a study and the research design go hand in hand. They both depend on how much is known about the problem. If relatively little is known about the phenomenon to be investigated, exploratory research will be warranted.

- Design data collection method and forms :- It begins by determining if the information needed is already available as secondary data, either within the firm or from and outside source. If not, information will have to be generated by means of a survey or an experiment. While considering the sources of research information, it will be necessary to determine exactly how and by whom the information will be collected.

- Analysis and interpret the data - First of all, research data collection forms must be scanned to be sure that they are complete and consistent and that the instructions are followed. This process is called editing. Once the forms have been edited, they must be coded. Coding involves assigning numbers to each of the answers so that they may be analysed. The final step in analysing the data is tabulation. Apart from these, statistical tests are also applied and interpret data.

- Prepare the research report - The research report is the document submitted to management that summarises the research results and conclusions. It is all that the research executives will see of the research effort, and it becomes the standard by which that research is judged.

## RETAIL RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design may be described as series of advance decisions that, when taken together, comprises a master plan or model for the conduct of the investigation. It is the blueprint that is followed in completing a study. An appropriate design requires careful consideration of the problem and objective to be met in relation to the time and resources available for the study. The design of a research ordinarily covers the following aspects:

- a) Objectives of the research including a statement of the main or general objectives and other operational objectives in as specific a form as possible.
- b) The relation of these objectives with the problem in hand.
- c) The form in which the results will be obtained and how they may be used.
- d) The methods to be used in attaining each of the objectives of the research.
- e) A time schedule for the entire research, including tentative deadlines for specific phases of the research.
- f) Personnel and administrative set up, with duties specified for each person working on the research project.

## DESIGNING RETAIL RESEARCH

The purpose of the retail study is determined by research design. When descriptive information is required, a quantitative study is useful. If new ideas, is needed, a qualitative study is likely to be conducted. The retail research design can be classified into two categories:

Qualitative research design  
Quantitative research design

Qualitative research design - The purpose of the study and the study of data needed are considered while selecting the appropriate research design for a qualitative study. The data collection techniques include:

- i) Depth interviews - Lengthy non-structured interview between a respondent and a highly experienced interviewer, who minimises his or her own participation in the interview.
- ii) Focus groups - These consist of six to eight respondents who meet with a moderator analyst for a group discussion focussed on a particular product as product category.
- iii) Projective techniques - Consisting of a variety of disguised tests that contain ambiguous stimuli, such as incomplete sentences, untitled pictures or cartoons, word association, tests, etc. which are designed to tap the underlying motives of individuals despite their unconscious rationalizations.

Quantitative Research Design: - The design of a quantitative research study includes the method for collecting the data, the sample design and construction of the data collection instrument.

i) Data collection methods - There are three basic ways to collect primary data in quantitative research.

- a) Observational research- by observing retail behaviour.
- b) Experimentation- by designing experiments to identify causes and effect of the relative sales appeal of many types of variables.
- c) Surveys- by questioning people in person, by mail or by telephone about their purchase preferences and likings.
- ii) Data collection instruments - The primary instrument is the questionnaire. Other types of instruments are inventions and attitude scales which include Likert scales, semantic differential scales and rank order scales.
- iii) Sampling. It involves :
  - a) The sampling unit- whom to survey,
  - b) Sample size- how many to survey, and
  - c) Sampling procedure- how to select them.

Data collection - Highly trained social scientists are required to collect data in qualitative studies. But, in quantitative studies a field staff is generally used.

·Analysis - In qualitative researches, the moderator or test administrator usually analyses the responses received. In quantitative research, the analysis is supervised by the researcher.

·Report preparation - It includes a brief executive summary of the findings. Depending on the assignment, it may or may not include recommendations for actions. The report will contain a full description of the methodology used.

## CONCLUSION:-

· Retail research is undertake on a variety of issues. For example, the M.B.A. Research Agency conducts periodical behaviour. These surveys are classified under various groups and sub-groups. The most common retail research studies relate to the determination of retail characteristics, measurement of market potentials and retail motivation.

In India, retail research is not yet well- developed as in the advanced countries. Some of the important reasons attributed for this condition includes the stage of India's development, the lack of stiff competition and the scarcity of supply as a result of which the sellers do not have much difficulty in selling their goods and services. According to a 1994 survey, the most frequency use of retail research in India is in the area of retail buying behaviour. Other important applications of retail research, according to the survey, are found in the fields of motivation, brand preference, brand attributes and customer satisfaction. But the success of retail research depends upon the co- operation of the public. Unprofessional or unethical retail research practices may seriously affect public's willingness to co-operate in research surveys.

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