

ABSTRACT

SHOULD STUDENTS OF MARKETING RESEARCH 'DO AS THEY SAY' OR 'SAY WHAT THEY WOULD DO?'

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most comprehensive learning tools available to the instructor of marketing research is the live-case. The live-case requires the student to apply his research skills to an existing marketing problem. The client for the live-case may be external to the university (e.g., a business manager), internal to the university (e.g., the supervisor of a library, bookstore, or cafeteria), or the student himself (e.g., the student may want to determine the market demand for a product he has created). With the live-case, the student is required to consult with the client and to identify the problem. After the problem is formulated, the student proceeds to propose and/or execute the steps necessary to investigate it.

At California State University, Northridge, two forms of the live-case have been used in the marketing research course - the individual proposal and the team project. The purpose of this paper is to describe both of these forms of the live-case and to compare how each form affects the students' perceptions of the term project, course, and the instructor.

The Individual Proposal

The individual proposal is assigned to each student as an individual project at the beginning of the semester. After the students are given an overview of marketing research, they are asked to choose an existing marketing problem that they would like to investigate with research methods. Each student is then required to develop a detailed proposal that describes the phases of research necessary to investigate the problem.

Each proposal begins with a definition of the problem and a justification for investigating it. To justify the worth of the problem, each student is required to make assumptions that will allow him to calculate the cost of the research, the expected value of sample information, and the expected value of perfect information. Provided that the problem is worthy of investigation, the student is then required to conduct an examination of the pertinent secondary data. He then proceeds to refine his research design, paying particular attention to defining his sampling frame, specifying his method of data collection, determining his sample size and sampling procedure, and developing a questionnaire along with a cover letter or interviewer instructions. Although the student is not required to collect primary data, he is required to describe how he would analyze the data if it were collected. He must specify appropriate editing and coding procedures, the correct statistic for summarizing each item on the question-

naire, and the statistical tests that are necessary to investigate any research hypotheses. Finally the student must present a through critique of his proposed methodology.

The Team Project

To begin the team project, research teams are formed consisting of three or fewer students. Each team selects a client with a marketing problem that can be investigated with research tools. After each team consults with its client, it formulates the problem, examines the relevant secondary information, and proposes a research design. After the team's research proposal has been approved by the instructor, the team develops and pretests a measuring instrument, and proceeds to collect primary data via mail, telephone, personal, or self-administered questionnaires. After the data is collected, it is edited, coded, and computer analyzed. Finally the findings of the research are presented to the client in both a written and oral report. The written report must include a definition of the problem, a justification for investigating it, a literature review, a description of the research methodology, the research findings, recommendations, and a critique of the methodology.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Methodology

During the spring semester of 1983, forty-five students were taught marketing research with the individual proposal as the term project. In the following semester (fall of 1983), forty-six students were taught the same course by the same instructor with the team project as the term project. To assess the students' perceptions of the course to which they were exposed, they were asked, just prior to receiving the final exam, to complete a four-page questionnaire entitled "Class Evaluation Survey."

Results

Of the two term projects examined in this study, the team project approach produced better results. Those exposed to it tended to rate their term project as being more enjoyable and as having more educational value than those who were exposed to the individual proposal. Moreover, the team project students were significantly more inclined to rate their term project as being a good experience and as being the best part of the class. Furthermore, they were more inclined than the individual proposal students to recommend the instructor to their friends.