

Points for Consideration

Market Research for Extension Programming

Overview:

Market research is focused on a specific market. The Extension service offers programming to a unique service market segment - non-formal education. The philosophy of the market approach for Extension involves “scanning the environment’ to identify the needs of clientele, target audiences, and match Extension’s programs with audience needs” (Raymond, p.1). According to Rust and Huang, transformative service market research is an emerging type of research based on customer centrality. Customer well-being is a central focus of transformative service research, which is defined as “the integration of consumer and service research that centers on creating uplifting changes and improvements in the well-being of consumer entities: individuals, communities and the ecosystem” (Ostrom, Mathras, and Anderson, p.559).

The purpose of a research-based market approach for Extension programming is to identify non-formal educational demand through the comprehensive examination of local community’s demographics, resources, assets, capacities and citizens’ needs. Analyzing existing/secondary data is a first step of market analysis. According to Voss, Tordella, and Brown, secondary data analysis of market research is an integral part of a community needs assessment that provides approximation in community change and opportunities.

The Process:

The first step of the market research process for Extension programming on the county level includes the secondary data analysis (analysis of existing data) of the following major areas:

- General overview of the county
- Demographics (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, gender, etc)
- Health
- Agriculture
- Business and industries
- Local county Extension resources
- Recent Extension programming efforts
- Available non-formal (community) educational opportunities outside of Extension
- World, national, and local trends

Traditionally, existing/secondary data for the analysis has been gathered from the U.S. Bureaus of Census, Labor Statistics, and Economic Analysis; administrative records, and local historical records (Voss et. al.). In addition to the aforementioned resources, existing documents containing official reports (such as Extension impact stories), Extension staffing resources can also be analyzed to help build a more complete picture of the existing community profile.

Advantages:

- 1) Helps give a first approximation of community profile
- 2) Helps local community leaders make decisions
- 3) Assists in developing sampling frames for possible surveys
- 4) Supplements information from community survey
- 5) Useful for checking for bias in data from other techniques
- 6) Can check the validity of survey and non-survey data
- 7) Invaluable resource for preparing grants/proposals
- 8) It is economical
- 9) Helps to make primary data collection more specific

Disadvantages:

- 1) Lack of control of how data were collected by others
- 2) Specific unit of measurement of data may not be clear
- 3) Accuracy of secondary data are not known
- 4) Data may be outdated
- 5) Availability. May not have permission to view certain data.

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