

Evaluation of Information Sources: A Study of Sarawakian Business-To-Business Elite Managers

by Ernest Cyril De Run, and Siti Hasnah bt Hassan, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak.

Abstract

This paper reports the findings of an empirical study on the information behavior of 179 SME elite managers based in Sarawak, Malaysia. The purpose of the paper was to make available its findings for marketing managers to develop an appropriate promotion strategy that would reach such elite managers. This paper details SME elite managers ranking of important, reliable, and most often used information sources by industry, equity, and overall. The paper also notes the difference in personal and impersonal information sources importance, reliability and use, by industry, equity, and overall. It also notes respondents ranking of the top five used information source. The study revealed that most elite managers preferred their own experience, believed in it, and used it. Elite managers of SME's in Sarawak were found to rely more on personal rather than impersonal sources in gathering information, which they believe is reliable and is as or more important than impersonal information sources.

Keywords: Business-To-Business, Information Sources, Elite Managers, Small-Medium Industries (SMI), Sarawak, Malaysia

Introduction

A challenge facing marketing managers of business-to-business products and services is to determine the best way to conduct their sales messages to the decision-makers who make purchase decisions. Marketing managers need to carefully select media preferences of their target markets and the audience and/or readership profiles of available media such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines to deliver messages effectively.

Since the managers marketing business-to-business products face a number of unique market conditions, they must be specialized in their approach to serve their potential customers. In light of the few identifiable, and concentrated potential buyers, the marketing managers of business-to-business products and services should hone their communication objectives to ensure that the communication media they choose will result in strong links with their targeted buyers, thus resulting in sales.

Knowing the attitudes of business-to-business buyers toward information sources is important in developing countries, since the purchase decision process tends to be centralized in such countries in the hands of a few top-level managers (Tuncalp, 1999). Malaysia is no exception to the general phenomenon of centralized decision-making found in developing countries. Thus, in order to reach these decision-makers, marketers of business-to-business products and services should be aware of how company executives evaluate different sources of marketing information when they make buying decisions.