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An assessment of the marketing capabilities of trade book publishers in South Africa

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ABSTRACT & KEYWORDS

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current marketing capabilities of trade book publishers in South Africa. In addition, this study ascertains how these marketing capabilities impact on trade book publishers' sales and brand performance. There are currently several gaps in the literature on both marketing capabilities within the global publishing industry as well as gaps in the literature on the South African trade publishing industry.

The main research problem is the lack of understanding of the marketing capabilities of trade book publishers in South Africa and how these capabilities can impact on the sales performance of these trade book publishers. This study is a qualitative, case study that examined four marketing capabilities within trade publishing houses in South Africa. Four propositions (on marketing communications, pricing, product innovation and channel management) were developed and tested in the study. The Resource-based view (RBV) theory as the main theoretical lens for this study is examined. The research was gathered through interviews over a 2 month period that were conducted at the publishers' offices. 5 publishing companies took part in the study and a total of 15 interviews were conducted. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The transcriptions were loaded on to an analysis software tool called MaxQDA which allowed easy analysis by the researcher.

All four propositions established were supported by the research. These marketing capabilities exist within all five trade publishing houses but that they are not being utilised as they should be. There is definite room for improvement in the publishing industr. The most significant capability for the trade publishing industry is the marketing communications capability as this is the most widely used.

The originality of this research is that it is a case study in South African trade publishing houses and that it is looking at the marketing capabilities of trade publishing houses through the RBV approach. The implications for the industry are mostly in-house implication as the models generated require an organizational change within the publishing houses. Limitations of this study as well as suggestions for future research are outlined in this study.

Keywords

Channel management, marketing capabilities, marketing communication, pricing, product innovation, publishing industry, sales and marketing performance.