**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

can be defined as identifying, estimating, and evaluating the environmental impacts of existing and proposed projects, by conducting environmental studies, mitigate the relevant negative effects prior to making decisions and commitments

Environmental assessment has come into its own since the 1970s as a key tool in environmental to. While such assessment had been practised in one form or another long before the 1970s, it is perhaps after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 1972, that environmental assessment became part of the common lexicon among environmental stakeholders as well as the private sector. Environmental assessments are conducted by various stakeholders and to meet disparate objectives as numerous as the stakeholders themselves.

**TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

• State of the environment (SOE)

• Integrated Environmental Assessment and reporting (IEA)

• Environmental impact assessment (EIA)

• Strategic environmental assessment (SEA)

• Corporate environmental assessment and reporting Common to these and other environmental assessment processes is the need for policy responses for effective environmental management and/or sustainable utilization of the environment.

Environmental impact assessment of the various environmental assessment processes, EIA is arguably one of the most famous or notorious, depending on the protagonists. Often in the past, investors/developers have viewed EIA with suspicion as a tool used by environmentalists to undermine development. However, EIA is a tool used to determine the social, economic and environmental impacts of major developments in order to determine the necessary mitigatory measures. In the context of IEA, EIA is considered a policy response, along with other policies such as multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and natural resource management laws and institutions. The Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment (SAIEA) describes environmental assessment as: a process to identify, evaluate and assess the potential effects on the environment of a proposed development before a major decision or commitment is made (SAIEA 2005).

**ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IN ENTREPRENEUR PLANNING**

The main purpose of environmental scanning is to know the rapid changes occurring in the environment by which organizations gather information on changing conditions and incorporate those observations into a process where necessary changes can be made.

• Understand the consequences or impacts of the proposed development on the environment.

• Identify ways in which the development can be improved. These could include ways to minimize negative impacts and ways to enhance its benefits. 20 Training Manual on Integrated Environmental Assessment and Reporting in Africa

• Provide this information to decision-makers. Ultimately, the aim of an environmental assessment is to ensure that developments are sustainable and do not detrimentally affect people’s lives or the natural environment (SAIEA 2005).

**MARKET RESEARCH**

To run a successful business, it is essential that you know who your customers are, what they need, and how to reach them. Market research can help you get accurate and specific information about your customers and competitors, which is a critical part of starting or expanding your business. Consumer demands impact and direct all aspects of your company’s activities and can determine the success or failure of your business.

Need survey responses from a target audience? Looking for a niche online panel? With survey consultation for brand tracking, concept testing, consumer behavior, and more, we have you covered with market research services that scale to meet your needs.

Marketing research is used to rally employees, chart the direction of a company and set goals for the future. This all starts with a solid introduction to the marketing report, which must be detail-rich but not meander from core points. The introduction should grab the intended readers' attention and clearly say why the research was done and what it means. There are a few outline steps to keep you on course as you attempt to put strategic points into paragraph form.

Identify goals. Answer the question: Why is this research relevant? Think about what the company does versus what the research says. Make notes on any details which could raise questions about the way the company does business, is staffed or is equipped to compete against other companies.

Avoid nuance. Be as direct as possible when writing the first sentence. This will set the tone of the report and get the company's employees raising questions immediately as to how they can tweak business.

Talk in statistics and with knowledge of market demographics. For example, state, "Sales in 2011 grew 47 percent among those aged 16 to 24. However, the same age bracket in a recent survey said it was looking for a product with more features."

Embrace competition. If the market research shows the company is dominating, say so. If the market research shows the company is falling behind competition, admit it. The goal is to use the information to foster growth under any circumstance.

Add raw figures. Identify the company by a number of employees and include a dollar amount for gross sales in the most current completed year along with how that compared to the prior year.

End with goals. Within just a few sentences, sketch out some starting points for board room discussion about where the company could be advertising, how it could refine its products or whether it could change its approach.

Keep it brief. If you've gone longer than a three- or four-paragraph introduction, start editing. The intro's job is to lead people into the rest of the report, not repeat everything they are about to read.

**ROLE OF MARKET RESEARCH IN ENTREPRENEUR PLANNING**

The environment that your business operates in can be very dynamic. Shifts in economic conditions, demographic changes, new regulations and changes in technology can all affect the way you do business.

Market research can help you:

* better understand the characteristics and preferences of your customers
* identify opportunities to increase sales and grow your business
* monitor the level of competition in your market
* reduce the risk in your business decisions
* develop and complete your business plan

Established businesses thinking about making significant changes, like business expansion or relocation, can also use market research to support their decisions.  Some other common situations that might call for market research include:

* launching a new advertising campaign
* increasing production or stock levels
* introducing new lines of products or services

**HOW TO CONDUCT MARKET RESEARCH**

Before you start, establish clear goals for the market research activity you will undertake. You should define what you need to know and why.

Once you have established your goals, develop a strategy and select the techniques you will use to gather data. The two broad types of research you can use are primary and secondary research:

* **Primary research** consists of data collected directly from potential customers through surveys, focus groups, field testing, etc. You can do the research yourself or hire a company to do it for you. If you complete the research yourself, you keep the costs down and have the added benefit of getting to know the market for your business.

A drawback of primary research is that it can be time consuming and expensive, particularly if you are hiring a marketing firm to conduct the research. The benefits are that you can target specific groups (such as your customers or the geographic market for your business) and tailor the study to answer specific questions.

* **Secondary research** involves searching existing information that has already been collected, such as demographic data and industry statistics, and using it in your own business or marketing plan.

Secondary research uses existing resources like company records, surveys, research studies and books. It is normally less time consuming than primary research, and can be less expensive. While secondary research is less targeted than primary research, it can still yield valuable information.

**Examples of questions that can be addressed through secondary research:**

* What are the current economic conditions, and are they changing?
* What are the industry trends?
* Are there international markets for my product or service?
* Who are my customers? (Population, age group, income levels, where they live, etc.)
* What is the state of the labour market?

Another key secondary resource is statistical data from official statistics providers, associations and private organizations.

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