ISI-Cited Journal Article

Writing a Series of Best-Selling Research Reference Books

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This author conducted a needs assessment before embarking on the journey of writing a research reference book. The study was carried out to, among other things, identify the topics that the book should cover and determine what readers (561 lecturers at a teacher training institute) would consider a fair asking price for it. Based on the results of this needs assessment, the author wrote a series of books titled Research Method and Statistics, consisting of five volumes totalling fifty-eight chapters and 1677 pages. This five-volume set was published by McGraw-Hill Education Malaysia between 2006 and 2008. Since its publication, the series has been widely used by researchers, educators, and students in local higher educational institutions and is one of McGraw-Hill's best-selling series. This article describes the needs assessment and details how the results were used as the basis for writing a successful book.

Keywords: reference book, market research, needs assessment

Background

I was the facilitator of a twelve-week research course organized by the Teacher Training Division of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, between 2003 and 2006. During that time, participants often lamented the dearth of reference materials suiting the local research climate. In addition, participants had found reference books written by overseas authors difficult to understand. Hence, there was a need for a research reference book that would suit the needs of course participants as well as those of local readers and researchers – in other words, a book that would accommodate local conditions.

Soon thereafter, I began the arduous task of selecting and reviewing locally available research reference books. I found that some books focused on certain aspects of the research process.