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84% of Media Companies Highly Rate Their Ability to Translate Research into Business Actions

Fourth ARF Organizational Benchmark report reveals the similarities and differences between large and small media and entertainment companies

New York, NY (July 16, 2020) – The ARF (Advertising Research Foundation) today released the fourth report of its first annual Organizational Benchmark Study, which features findings from a survey of media company executives, who expressed their views across a variety of issues, from department structure to stakeholder satisfaction.

The report reveals a notable divide between small and large (1,000+ employees) media companies, when it comes to department structures. In fact, 72% of small media companies have primarily or fully centralized departments. On the other hand, 47% of large media companies have decentralized structures, with multiple centers for research and insights, including Consumer Research, which is the most cited department for internal seekers of consumer insights (92%).

“While stakeholder value was highest for research companies and lowest for advertisers in our previous reports, we found that media companies rank highest in the percentage believing that key stakeholders rely on research and analytics to make business decisions (79%),” said Paul Donato, chief research officer, the ARF. “Furthermore, 84% of media companies rate their companies as above average or best-in-class in their ability to translate research into business recommendations.”

Similar to the Advertiser, Agency and Research surveys, media companies report sales as the most important KPI for expenditures on research and insights (67% of large and 41% of small companies). However, smaller media companies also place value in brand equity (28%), brand lift (28%), and efficiency (24%).

More insights from the ARF media company report include:

- 52% of media companies with centralized research and analytics departments say they are investing about the same in market research and data analytics as in the prior year, while 30% have invested somewhat or significantly more
- Large and small media companies differ in their immediate hiring priorities. Large companies value basic analytics skills and research methodology as the most important

skills – both sought by 75% – whereas small media companies seek advanced analytics skills (76%). For future hiring, however, there is greater congruence between large and small companies, with advanced analytics as the top skill (68%).

- Almost 55% of media companies cite survey analysis software as the leading *tool* used to analyze data, followed by R (35%).
- Centralized media companies expressed greater satisfaction with their consumer insights and data science capabilities (83%) than decentralized companies. Decentralized media companies expressed slightly greater satisfaction with their consumer insights departments (74%) than their data science departments (67%).

The media report is the fourth of a five-part series from a survey conducted in 2019, with the final benchmark report focusing on consultancies, to be released this summer. The ARF's first three reports were centered on advertisers, agencies and researchers.

For more insights into how the survey results fare across the four sectors, the ARF will release a member-only Tableau database. Additionally, ARF members can still sign up for a custom, detailed review of their respective companies, to provide a comparison with the overall benchmark report results.

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About the ARF

Founded more than 80 years ago, the ARF is dedicated to creating, curating, and sharing objective, industry-level advertising research to enable members to make a true impact on their advertising and build marketing leadership within their organizations. It has more than 400 members from leading brand advertisers, agencies, research firms and media-tech companies. For more information, visit www.thearf.org.

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