



Shopper Research - How To Get Your Boss to Say *'YES'*

A number of steps you can take to get shopper research going in your organization

As an industry we spend more money on in-store activity and marketing yet many companies ask shopper marketers to work without investing sufficiently in shopper research to build a clear understanding of the target shopper, how they behave and how they are influenced.

Shopper research can be costly and time consuming. Without a track record, shopper marketers sometimes struggle to explain the benefits of understanding shoppers to budget holders.

Too many first shopper research projects are badly conceived or badly interpreted, resulting in poor returns. Mess up your first project and you might not get a second chance!

While there are no guarantees for your boss to sign off significant shopper research spend, **here are a number of steps you can take to get shopper research going in your organization** (and to make sure your first project isn't your last!)

Set your own expectations before starting a new shopper research project

1

Many organizations are still at the beginning of their shopper research journey - attempting to build anything beyond a basic and targeted view of the shopper world is likely to create unrealistic expectations and lead to disappointment

Remember that most organizations have been researching consumers for decades. It is unrealistic to believe that the depth of shopper knowledge can catch up with our understanding of consumers from just one or two studies.

Before proceeding review all the data that exists in the business.

You may think there isn't much, but you'd be surprised. Consumer panel data and retail audit data are, after all shopper data.

And don't ignore old consumer research reports either. Often consumer research contains some useful information about shoppers too.

Review what you already know before a new shopper research project

2

Build a set of hypotheses to guide your shopper research

3

Great research begins with great hypotheses. Engage your peers, or an external party, to help build a broad set of potential hypotheses.

At this stage go for quantity over quality. Brainstorm any ideas or questions you have about shoppers then restate these as a statement which could be proven positive or negative. Simple as that!

One of the best places for creating hypotheses for research is to go to a store and see what shoppers do.

Just watch them. Maybe even ask them a question or two if you can. Remember we're just watching to build hypotheses, nothing else.

Go to some stores and watch what is going on

4

Prioritize your shopper research hypotheses

5

We prioritize our hypotheses with one simple question:
If this were true (or false) what would I do differently as a result of knowing this?

Then consider the following:

- How valuable to my business would that change be?
- How essential is having more data to support my business case?
- How easy would it be to persuade my business to support this?
- How easy would it be to persuade retailers to support this?
 - How expensive would it be to research this?
 - How expensive would it be to implement this?

Start by prioritizing hypotheses that would be really valuable to answer, and then those that will be easy/cheaper to implement.

Focusing on your prioritized hypotheses, see if there is a limited research scope that gives disproportionately high value. A specific channel, brand, category, shopper type, or behavior, perhaps? Be really ruthless and focus only on the scope that covers the most valuable hypotheses.

This is the key to getting a really high return on your research investment (which is key to getting the second project!)

Narrow the scope of your shopper research

6

Get a realistic quote for your shopper research

7

At this stage the main thing to do is filter out those agencies who (too frequently) throw everything they can do with shoppers into the proposal.

So check the proposal carefully and ask the agency to map their approaches to each of the hypotheses. That way you can check how essential each methodology is.

Build the business case. Talk about how much additional sales or profit could be delivered by addressing these hypotheses. Talk about how much spend is made on activities which may not be delivering and therefore could be saved or re-allocated.

Keep it simple, and well structured. Show that the research is likely to pay back much more than it costs.

Build the business case for the boss

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And no, it's no guarantee, but it's a start. Of course, once the project is up and running, you now need to make sure it stays on track and delivers value.

If you'd like to know how to get the most value from your shopper research, why not download our **free e-book on conducting shopper research.**