

# Putting the shopper first

## How research can connect shopper attitudes and behaviors

The burst of interest in shopper insights has been a recent phenomenon in marketing research. It's not that researchers haven't been concerned about the shopper but we have begun to realize the importance of the person doing the shopping versus a traditional focus on the consumer.

This shift in focus has been motivated by the need to drive not only sales for the CPG, food or durable goods company, etc., but also by a pressing desire from the retailer to enhance category purchase. This need to drive category purchase has been critical in the adoption of a stronger focus on the shopper. After all, this is the person making the purchase (we refer to a mom throughout, but similar principles apply for the male shopper). Mom may be influenced by others in the household but at the end of the day, she makes the purchase decision – often in mere seconds.

For many, especially in the early stages of shopper insights, the focus was on in-store or near-store experiences and how these experiences affected the purchase decision. The depth and breadth of shopper insights, however, has extended to include experiences that occur far away from the store. Understanding Mom and how her behavior at the shelf is driven by outside factors in her life is crucial to developing the correct marketing plan to increase product velocity.

To begin, let's define shopper insights. Shopper insights focuses on the impact of the personal biases, outside influences and shopping environment and how they motivate the consumer to make a purchase at the shelf.

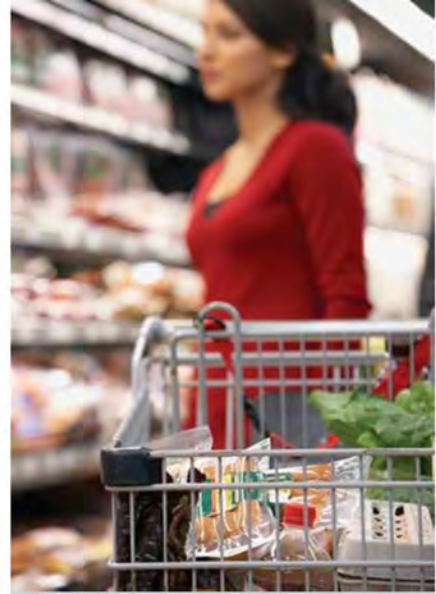
Personal bias is an important component of the shopper marketing experience. It is anything that the shopper brings to the retail environment that influences the products purchased. She comes with attitudes, behaviors and other individual factors that

will impact the decisions made in the store. Within mature categories, these biases may have been formed throughout her life but they could be impacted by the introduction of stimuli both before entering the store and while perusing the aisles. For new products, she may be influenced entirely by what she sees when in the store.

Let's consider the Mom who is buying juice for her children. She may come into the store with the desire to buy 100-percent juice with no additives, colors or preservatives. This may serve as the first lens for purchase that she includes in her

### snapshot

This article discusses the impact of personal biases, outside influences and shopping influences on a shopper's purchase decision and how research can minimize the discrepancy between shopper attitudes and shopper behaviors - and improve category purchase.



By Christopher D. Ratcliff  
and Andrew L. Zoota

*Editor's note: Christopher D. Ratcliff is senior vice president, and Andrew L. Zoota is research director, in the Dallas office of Cincinnati-based MarketVision Research. Ratcliff can be reached at 817-921-6563 or at [cratcliff@mv-research.com](mailto:cratcliff@mv-research.com). Zoota can be reached at 817-560-2516 or at [azoota@mv-research.com](mailto:azoota@mv-research.com). To view this article online, enter article ID 20110605 at [quirks.com/articles](http://quirks.com/articles).*

consideration. Once at the shelf, a flood of information and other considerations are presented. She begins to consider in more depth who she is shopping for and the fact that they want a “character” juice. Next, the size of the package influences her decision. Finally, the type of packaging comes into focus. Her options are limited very quickly. What compromises must be made to complete the final purchase? How can she locate what she is looking for at the shelf and include all of her shopping criteria? How will her attitudes about the category match (or not match) the final purchase behavior?

Obviously, each of these factors may influence her purchase decision or may derail the purchase completely. As

researchers, we must be able to identify each of the drivers and measure its impact to help sell our products. Unfortunately, we often fail to recognize the psychological motivators of purchase and move straight to the tangible attributes of our products.

Outside influences may take the form of others or may be pressure that the shopper is dealing with herself. Influence of others – often from the children or significant other – and the need to fulfill the desires of other household members who are being purchased for serve as strong purchase motivators. Although Mom holds the ultimate veto, humans, in general, have a fundamental goal of being liked. For most, being liked is something we are concerned with; we want others to have a good impression of us. For that reason, the shopper will acquiesce to some extent because of what is important to the person for whom the item is being purchased. However, she is pushing the basket in the store and placing items in it, therefore she has the final say.

Back to the juice example, Mom may only see a handful of sugar-filled juice options that have characters so she excludes that shopping criterion in her selection. She may want to fulfill that desire of her kids (or perhaps her husband), but she cannot locate a product that meets another more important criterion (100-percent juice).

Shopping environment includes all aspects of the shopping experience from how the shelf is set to in-store communications to the actual product offerings. All of these factors weigh heavily in determining what will be purchased, how often the retailer will be shopped and what opportunities exist to create strategic advantage for a retailer.

### Decrease the disconnect

Unfortunately, the attitudes of the shopper and the behaviors that are displayed may not always seem to match. This inconsistency is what we seek to understand through shopper research. Specifically, our attempts to create more harmony between the shopper's attitudes and her ultimate shopping behavior give us more success in marketing our products. It also helps make our retail partners more successful in

selling not only our products but the category as a whole. Thus, our goal is to decrease the disconnect. To do this, we must understand the shopper (outside and inside the retail environment) and what drives her ultimate purchase.

This insight helps us to create the right products, promotions, pricing and planograms to influence the purchase at the shelf. We must consider what she is looking for when she goes into the store; what she sees when she is at the shelf; what she walks out of the store with; and why she made that decision. The number of life influences that impact this purchase decision is obviously quite large but we can drill down to glean how she arrived at the purchase decision by examining the psychology of the shopper at each stage in the process.

### Series of research initiatives

A series of research initiatives aimed at understanding the shopper in all aspects of her life will help us to arrive at the correct marketing decision. The research should include the following components:

Ethnographic research with the consumer to understand how she decides, uses and replenishes the category of interest. This should be an intensive review of her life, with and around the category of interest. How does she think about the category? How does she (and her family) use the category? Who influences the purchase? How do they influence the purchase? What substitutions are made within the category and are these substitutions deemed acceptable?

The insight from this phase of the research drives our product development, marketing and planogram design exploration. It also provides insights into the pleasures and pains that exist with the category and drives an in-depth understanding of how the consumer acts upon them.

Ideation to explore how to enhance the pleasures and minimize (or eliminate) the pains is the natural extension of ethnography findings. This phase of the insight planning process allows the marketing team to drive new ideas that will meet the shopper's needs. The goal is to use the information gathered in the ethnography to drive new (or extended)

We have an  
App for that...



Visit the iTunes App store to download your free Quirk's App and get Quirk's magazine on your iPad or iPhone.

**QUIRK'S**  
Marketing Research Review

product, promotion and planogram offerings that help make the shopper's life easier by lessening the disconnect between consumer attitudes and actual behavior.

We are seeking to help the shopper reduce the dissonance between what she wants to buy and the desires and wants of those for whom she is shopping. When we make our brands meet the needs of her and her family, we have made the brand a more crucial aspect of her life. This leads to increased loyalty to the brand and generally higher velocity.

Validation research to understand if the ideas generated fulfill the needs that were identified in the ethnographic research. This may include both qualitative and quantitative research.

The qualitative research may take the form of a concept refinement exercise. This is an iterative process in which small groups of target consumers review concepts and provide input about how to improve those concepts to meet a specific shopper need. During this process, concepts are

rewritten and re-illustrated based on what the shoppers want from the product. At the end of a couple of groups, a breakdown session with the marketing team to further refine concepts is included. The breakdown process uses the consumer input to further enhance the concepts. These enhanced concepts go through this same process again to fine-tune the offerings.

Once the concepts are complete, they are taken back to the consumer again through quantitative concept testing to understand which of the offerings meet the needs of consumers. The most impactful concepts are then taken into simulated shopping environments (either in vivo or online). The specific approach will be driven by the need of this component of the insight planning process.

The in vivo testing of the concepts is an important part of the process to tie learnings back to the initial research - in-store ethnography. Understanding reactions to the new product on the shelf drives minor refinements to the product but more importantly, it drives

the quantitative testing through placement options and the type of in-store promotions that may be most impactful on purchase.

Generally, understanding shoppers' reactions to pricing, promotion and planograms is achieved through an online test of the concepts inserted among the existing category. By varying price, point-of-sale and placement combined with good category knowledge, we can understand the volume of the new product.

### A more complete picture

Product and category management must be driven by what the shopper expects and her attitudes, blended with how the person who ultimately consumes it uses the product. This shopping experience information provides a more complete picture of how to market products to make them successful at retail. | Q

### Better packaging

Enter article ID 20100105 at [www.quirks.com/articles](http://www.quirks.com/articles) to read Scott Young's take on getting shoppers to respond to packaging.

**The Premier Source for Connecting with Healthcare Professionals**

**Online Research**  
Fully integrated data collection department providing our partners access to a robust suite of the latest online tools.

**Recruitment**  
Our dogged and determined approach has earned us a reputation in the marketing research community for successfully recruiting even the most challenging segments.

**Qualitative Research**  
Focus groups, in-depth interviews and other custom protocols managed by a team of experienced in-house professionals.

**Analytic Services**  
We employ a mix of methodologies and techniques coupled with a rigorous approach to detail that provides practical solutions to today's business needs.

**Olson Research Group, Inc.**  
Healthcare Marketing Research  
Quality Data Collection | Recruitment | Analysis

**Pennsylvania** 267.487.5500  
**California** 650.450.9700

[www.olsonresearchgroup.com](http://www.olsonresearchgroup.com)