

CASE STUDY

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Communications Research

The Issue:

A pharmaceutical manufacturer's drug was in the news following reports of a higher than expected incidence of severe adverse effects among those taking the drug. Although the FDA made no changes in approval for the drug following a review of the adverse events data, the company was interested in determining how it should respond to the negative publicity.

The Solution:

MRSI surveyed physicians and consumers to measure the awareness and impact of the news. Research determined that physicians were aware of the information but understood the situation and thus did not have a negative impression of the drug. Consumers, it was found, relied on their physicians to determine what drugs were safe enough to prescribe and thus were not negatively affected by the news either.

Business Implication:

As a result of the research, the pharmaceutical manufacturer determined that no additional education was needed regarding the FDA notice and the safety of the drug, saving the company considerable time and money in developing responses to the negative publicity.

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CASE STUDY

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Custom Online Research Panels

The Issue:

A client offers software services for human resource professionals. Customer needs are changing at a rapid pace. This results in a need to research issues as they arise, but the cost of reaching this group is too expensive to continually initiate new research studies.

Our client needs timely answers to issues as they surface in the marketplace. In addition, R&D is developing new enhancements to the software solutions. To focus the development effort on the right customer need, a mechanism for customer feedback is needed. The system has to have immediate availability (to address the idea when it is born) and fast feedback (to decide whether or not to pursue development). And the system has to be affordable!

The Solution:

A custom Internet panel of human resource professionals was recruited. This provided a ready source of qualified respondents with the ability to reach them fast. As our client identified issues, we could have actionable data for them in less than a week. Using our iResearch[®] technology kept the study costs affordable.

Business Implications:

Our client was able to answer questions that in the past were cost prohibitive. Decisions can now be made with customer input, instead of marketer's intuition. The panel is almost like having a group of customers just down the hall to talk to. Imagine management raising an issue today, and being able to provide a cost-effective answer by the time they meet again next week!

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Customer Satisfaction

The Issue:

A major utility provider wanted to gauge customer satisfaction levels among consumers and small to medium-sized businesses regarding its response to power failures during a particularly active storm season. The objective was to determine customer satisfaction with the company's response given the level of devastation by each storm.

The Solution:

Quick timing was essential, both for implementation and research results. Using sample by county provided by the client, MRSI developed phone surveys that could be implemented right after every storm. Questions focused on how long power was off, ease of communication with the utility, and satisfaction with how long it took to get the power back on.

Business Implication:

The client received results within days after each storm. Research determined that a major satisfaction point was visibility. Customers wanted to see trucks working to repair outages immediately after storms. Findings such as these enabled the utility provider to determine improvement areas and how best to communicate with their customers to maintain high satisfaction levels.

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Customer Satisfaction

The Issue:

An outbreak of contaminated pet food products created low levels of consumer confidence in pet foods and associated pet food retailers. A national pet food retailer was interested in conducting customer satisfaction research surrounding the incident. The retailer was specifically interested in assessing customer satisfaction with the company's response to the outbreak and understanding whether they were gaining or losing customers due to the incident.

The Solution:

MRSI was asked to conduct a telephone survey among pet owners about the contaminated pet food outbreak. The survey focused on awareness of the incident, whether the consumer was affected, and any impact the incident had on shopping behavior. A representative mix of current and competitive customers was included in order to fully understand the issue.

Business Implications:

Research indicated that nearly all pet owners were aware of the incident, but very few personally experienced issues with contaminated products. While the incident had direct impact on few in the pet community, shoppers as a whole were concerned with the issue at hand. The pet food and supply company was able to leverage this information to build confidence among their consumers and position themselves as a high quality pet food supplier with the best interest of pets as a key messaging platform.

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CASE STUDY

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Customer Satisfaction

The Issue:

A national retailer initiated a strategy of including in-store kiosks in several of their stores that offer healthy drinks and refreshments. The goal of this strategy is to enhance the customer experience, add a lifestyle point of differentiation, and generate incremental sales.

However, patronage at some in-store kiosks started to decline and sales were inconsistent across stores. This client requested research that would help them understand customer satisfaction levels for the in-store kiosks as well as better understand shopper purchase behavior at the kiosks.

The Solution:

Kiosk customers were recruited in-store to participate in this study. Invitations provided a website address and a single-use password for accessing an online survey hosted on MRSI's online interviewing platform.

Survey quotas were established by sales tier to secure sample representation for three different levels of in-store kiosk sales performance.

Business Implications:

The research found that satisfaction levels were quite high for the in-store kiosks, regardless of kiosk sales performance. Therefore, factors other than operational effectiveness were driving lower kiosk sales and the sales differences across stores.

The study further enabled this retailer to better understand "destination" visits to the in-store kiosks as compared to kiosk patronage as part of a shopper's typical store shopping behavior.

A higher percentage of destination visits was identified as a quality of better performing kiosks. Store location, trade area demographics, and convenience were drivers of these destination visits as well as key contributors to overall kiosk success.

This research provided insight into customer satisfaction as it related to in-store kiosk performance. It also pointed to non-operational drivers of sales performance as areas of client marketing focus to generate more destination-type visits and patronage.

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Direct Mail Evaluation

The Issue:

The Financial Department of an insurance and financial services company sends newsletters to its customer base with quarterly statements. The company wants to understand customer satisfaction with the newsletter.

The Solution:

MRSI designed research that would help the company to understand awareness, recall, and overall satisfaction with the newsletter. Research was also designed to determine customers' next action once the newsletter was received (did they read it, throw it away, etc.). A survey was mailed to the company's customers with the option to complete and send back via mail or submit information online.

Business Implication:

Research determined that there was high satisfaction with the newsletter's current format, yet some content topics were found to be of more interest than others. The insurance company decided to conduct further qualitative research to understand what articles or topics of interest were most beneficial to its customer base to further improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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Ethnographic Research

The Issue:

A retailer wanted to improve customer loyalty and increase sales for its store brands. The retailer identified “best in class” competitors with strong store brands and wanted to understand how the mix of product offerings, store experience and price impacted customer loyalty and the success of these brands.

The Solution:

MRSI designed a research program that included a series of shop-alongs at key competitor stores across the country. The shop-alongs were conducted with female heads of household that were primary grocery shoppers. These consumers shopped most often at the stores where the research was taking place and they were also frequent purchasers of store brand products. Insight was gathered first-hand on purchase drivers, emotional connection with the store and its brands, and overall store experience.

Business Implication:

The research uncovered that customers truly valued customer service, ambiance, store amenities, and cleanliness; and that it was those key triggers that led to an emotional connection with the store and its brands. Therefore, it was not necessarily just product offering or price, but also this emotional connection that ultimately led to increased customer loyalty and purchase of store brands. The retailer used these research insights to improve the overall customer experience at their stores to achieve loyalty and sales objectives.

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Marketing Strategy

The Issue:

A client offers a new Internet service that is faster and provides more benefits than comparable services offered by their competition. The competitive advantage, however, is temporary, with similar competitive entries expected within twelve months. In addition, our client faces internal pressure to initially return high margins while they have a market advantage to recoup their investment quickly. What is the most effective marketing strategy for this new Internet service?

The Solution:

MRSI designed research to identify key consumer needs and benefits, the effectiveness of various media in reaching the targeted consumer, and market share estimates for various pricing strategies.

Effective media and advertising messages were identified. Market share estimates were calculated to reflect the possible mixes of pricing and media strategies. The results indicated that an initial high margin pricing strategy would impede market adoption of the Internet service and leave the client vulnerable to loss of leadership position when competitive services were introduced.

Business Implication:

The client changed the original marketing plan to take advantage of the opportunity to establish strong market position by reducing price, thus protecting long-term revenue and profits.

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Product Label Design

The Issue:

A food manufacturer wished to completely redesign the label of one of its canned food products to update the brand's image, but to still be easy to find on the shelf (i.e., still communicate brand and key information about the product).

The Solution:

MRSI designed a three-cell monadic Internet study comparing the current label to two new redesigned labels. A computer image of a shelf set including key competitors was flashed on the screen (for 2, 5 and 10 seconds total) and respondents were asked about shelf recall after each exposure.

Business Implication:

The new designs were recalled, as well as the current design in a realistic shelf setting. In addition, the new designs were preferred 3 to 1 over the current label. They also served to improve the brand's image because they were seen as more modern, appetizing, and exciting. The stronger of the two new label designs was successfully expanded nationally.

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Product Positioning Research

The Issue:

A major vaccine manufacturer was planning a product re-launch to support an expanded indication for a key corporate brand. Past physician experiences with the vaccine had encountered challenges and the company needed improved messaging that could overcome existing perceptions.

The Solution:

MRSI developed a multi-stage qualitative and quantitative research solution including exploratory ideation, message development, creative development and message implementation research. A quantitative discrete choice design was also conducted to optimize the product message.

Business Implication:

The brand team was able to identify unanticipated motivators and create a strong message that clearly and positively addressed areas of concern. In fact, the breadth of our findings provided the team the capability to modularize the message and supporting advertising campaign for application to a larger audience than anticipated.

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Promotion Effectiveness

The Issue:

A client is in a mature market and is experiencing declining brand penetration. The client hopes to revitalize the brand using a national sampling program. Which sampling method is most cost-effective in gaining new users: in-store product sampling, direct mail sent with other samples, solo direct mail sampling, or newspaper inserts?

The Solution:

A test/control telephone methodology was utilized to assess the effectiveness of the various sampling methods. After determining the purchase rate for each sampling method, a cost-benefit analysis was performed to identify the most cost-effective means of driving purchase intent.

Business Implication:

The client was able to execute a cost-effective program and understood what the end result would be prior to implementation.

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Qualitative Research

The Issue:

A company and its ad agency were in the process of developing a communications plan with the most relevant and effective messaging strategy. Extensive demographic research had been conducted and they had a good understanding of the “who,” “when” and “what”. They did not, however, have a good understanding of the reasons why consumers purchased or did not purchase their product.

The Solution:

MRSI designed a thorough qualitative research study with advanced and specialized projective techniques to identify those reasons, including emotional drivers and motivations, which influence the purchase of the product. These techniques allowed the company to identify perceived obstacles or barriers, both rational and emotional, which preclude people from buying the product more often or at all.

Business Implication:

MRSI was able to show through the research that the company’s current campaign was on target with people who currently purchase the product frequently, but that the message was less relevant to those who purchase infrequently and that the campaign actually alienates or exacerbates the negative perceptions of those who do not currently buy.

Research determined that the company needed to reposition its brand and offerings in order to connect more effectively with those who buy the product less frequently or those who do not buy it at all. Specifically, the company and agency needed to re-invent the product imagery to something more uplifting and less stereotypical. Armed with this information, the agency was able to develop a communications plan and messaging strategy that addressed misconceptions and enticed people to buy.

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Sales Environment

The Issue:

Reacting to the changing pharmaceutical sales environment, a leading pharmaceutical manufacturer wanted to improve the current sales representative detail process to meet both external and internal customer expectations and to create a valuable detail experience for physicians.

The Solution:

MRSI designed an online quantitative research study to assess the existing sales detail environment and explore new opportunities for changes to the client's existing sales detail model. Utilizing advanced analytical techniques, we were able to go beyond the analysis items originally specified to quantify the importance of specific sales representative attributes as well as the detail components.

Business Implication:

These results provided the client with prioritized action items to improve the detail experience as well as a quantified understanding of the current marketplace.

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Tracking Research

The Issue:

As a result of the changing dynamics in the restaurant industry, as well as the evolving face of fast-food consumers, a major QSR chain was interested in expanding its annual tracking study to include specific ethnic groups.

The Solution:

MRSI has partnered with the client in this study for over ten years and during that time, the research has evolved from simply evaluating the image of the chain's beloved mascot into a comprehensive study that drives decision making throughout the company.

MRSI has developed a custom tracking program among general market consumers which provides the client insights that drive advertising and promotion decisions, drive communication to consumers, identify hot button issues among consumers, generate future product opportunities, and help the company to keep a pulse on competition. The study will now incorporate a larger number of surveys for targeted ethnic groups in order to track new trends in the marketplace.

Business Implication:

Not only will the research continue to drive decision making for the client's general market consumers, but now it will also enable the client to more specifically understand the preferences and needs of particular ethnic groups. This will allow the QSR chain to reach all of its customers more effectively and continue to grow its overall business.

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