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How to Build a lovebrand through Mystery Shopping?

The concept of building a lovebrand has been widely explored across marketing, PR, and product development. Yet, how can Mystery Shopping add another essential piece to the lovebrand puzzle?

The primary objective for most companies that implement Mystery Shopping is to measure and analyze their sales or consulting processes. In essence, the focus lies in evaluating whether employees align with established sales standards and brand expectations and how effectively they adhere to these company-defined procedures to drive long-term revenue growth.

Sales processes are, however, not the only thing that can be measured by Mystery Shopping – it is also possible to measure emotions and subjective feelings.

Measuring emotions: Why it matters and how to do it effectively?

WHY?

1. A quantifiable difference between the sales process and its impact on customers' emotions

Naturally, the first step is to collect relevant data and quantify it — ensuring that further actions are based on evidence rather than assumptions. At Market Vision, we approach emotional measurement within Mystery Shopping projects by working with our clients to define two separate indexes. This begins with defining how both the sales or consulting process and the corresponding emotional reactions will be measured and evaluated.

2. Uncovering gaps between sales effectiveness and the customer's emotional satisfaction

Another reason lies in overcoming what we might call "professional tunnel vision" – the false assumption that a successful sale automatically equals a satisfied or emotionally engaged customer. People buy for various reasons and needs. Sometimes it is a necessary, routine purchase where

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service is not given much thought; other times, people buy to get themselves a treat or reward where the emotional aspect of the experience becomes much more important. Identifying and addressing the difference between these two dimensions will lead to higher sales. Why? Because people tend to return to places where they felt good. Even for something as trivial as a phone cable, the quality of the interaction can determine whether the customers choose to return – not because they had to, but because they wanted to.

3. Opportunity to respond and improve

The final reason lies in the already mentioned optimization of sales standards and procedures – ideally based on data derived from customers' subjective feelings. Sometimes, less truly is more. We've all experienced forced or irrelevant attempts at upselling that ultimately just waste our time. As a result of such behaviour, customers often choose to shop elsewhere – somewhere they don't have to spend more time than necessary or reassure the sales assistant multiple times that they really have everything they need.

HOW?

1. Setting up two complementary indexes within a single process

This brings us to the concept of “quantifying emotions” within our methodology. Each process or test is evaluated using two different indexes. Firstly, we measure performance through “hard data”, i.e. how well the staff follows the company's sales standards. These are typically closed-ended questions where points are awarded if the standard is met and not awarded if it is not. Secondly, we focus on emotions and subjective impressions. For this, we apply a structured rating scale, ideally with four points to avoid neutral responses. We usually use a 4-smiley scale which helps translate the questions into a more emotional and intuitive format.

2. Analysis of differences between indexes

After completing the Mystery Shopping measurement of the sales network, from both the process and emotional perspective, the key next step follows: analysing and interpreting the differences

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between the two indexes. The primary focus is on identifying the key gaps, i.e. the areas with the greatest discrepancies, as these are exactly the ones worth focusing on right after the Mystery Shopping execution. Take, for instance, a situation where the hard data indicates that a sales assistant followed the needs-assessment protocol perfectly, but emotional feedback from customers describes the interaction more as an uncomfortable “interrogation.” In such cases, it might be beneficial to apply the previously mentioned “less is more” rule.

3. Details as the key players

Finally, the power of detail. It is definitely worth paying attention to comments linked to individual assessments and putting together the small nuances that emerge from the process. After all, it is none other than the customers who should help us shape the perfect customer experience through their feedback. If we take the time to truly listen, analyse the details, and connect them into a bigger picture, success becomes almost inevitable.

How to work with the data and what to implement?

To frame the topic of emotional measurement and lovebrand building through Mystery Shopping, we can outline five key points. These should help anyone considering such implementation to move towards success and make the most of the data collected.

1. Go beyond process evaluation and begin with measurement of the feelings of your customers as well

It truly pays off. In the post-COVID period, many retail companies understandably shifted their focus to maximizing sales – and rightly so. But today, as the retail environment has returned to a more stable operating rhythm, it is the perfect time to evaluate how your sales processes affect your customers’ emotions, both positively and negatively. Where are you succeeding? What do your customers appreciate? And where might it be time to take a step back or, on the contrary, step things up?

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2. Listen carefully and read what customers are truly satisfied with and what they feel is missing – focus on the details and use them to build a complete picture

If you're already collecting data, it is necessary to actually work with it. Take time to analyse where the discrepancies lie and why they exist. Look at what the data tells you or, if needed, have the data interpreted by a research agency – the bigger picture can sometimes be difficult to see for those deeply involved in daily operations. Invest the time to review comments from Mystery Shopping outputs, piece the puzzle together step by step, and involve responsible staff to drive meaningful change.

3. Focus on influencing the purchase mindset within the context of your industry

One of our favourite questions with its broader context focuses on influencing the customer's purchase mindset. This is something I'd really like every reader to take away from this input – to focus on what drives your customers' purchasing mindset and why: Why would they make a purchase? What did they find great? Why wouldn't they buy? Often, this comes down to the credibility and presentation of the proposal. This is something worth actively working on, as without it, the desired results rarely come. Rather than relying on general market trends, tailor your approach to your industry. What works in fashion may not work in professional services. Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the price level. For lower-price items, customers tend to respond well to a fast and pleasant service that can quickly boost their morale. On the other hand, for higher-value purchases, customers seek a sense of care, attention, and reassurance. That's where things like refreshments in service environments or thorough consultations become important.

4. Invest time (and resources) into developing soft skills

No matter what you sell, purchasing decisions are largely driven by emotions. That's why, once you have measured and identified the emotional strengths and weaknesses of your sales process, it's essential to focus on soft skills development. Our data clearly shows that customers who care only about technical specifications or a purely rational explanation of services are in the minority. After conducting Mystery Shopping, I therefore strongly recommend investing in training and soft skills

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development for your staff. Every one of us is a bit different which means that each sales assistant brings a unique selling style.

5. This brings us to our final point which serves as a reminder of something which is often overlooked – **do not be afraid to step away from rigid standards and let people sell to people.**

It might sound like a cliché but people really do buy from people – not necessarily from companies. That's why it's incredibly important to give employees a certain level of flexibility to tailor the sales standards to their own strengths and natural style. If an employee scores well in Mystery Shopping for being kind, engaging and a great communicator, it is perfectly fine if you do not push them to offer 2-3 additional products every single time. This could make them uncomfortable which might eventually lead to a loss of their strongest soft skill due to the feeling of pressure of forced selling. In the end, such discomfort may lead to lower sales rather than better results.
