

MARKET RESEARCH: SPENDER OR SAVER?

The question “Market Research: spender or saver?” has found its well-argued answers during the 3rd edition of ESOMAR MEETUP ROMÂNIA

THE BENEFITS OF REALITY-CHECKS

Alice Mihai, Business Development Director, ISRA Center, and Oana Lungu, Insights Manager, British American Tobacco, brought in the limelight the research that connects marketing people to consumers' reality when a fast decision is necessary in order to deal with business challenges.

“On a business playground with continuous dynamics, where players are on fast-forward not necessarily because it is in the nature of things to be in high speed mode, but because they are motivated by the «rush against the clock» for success, positive differentiation is desired, that is sending a message that truly makes sense and implementing actions that take you one step in front of the market”, stated Alice Mihai.

The life of each marketing department entails making fast decisions even if important information is missing.



THE METHOD WHICH IS CURRENTLY MOST AT HAND FOR OBTAINING FAST AND RELEVANT ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC PROBLEMS, PREFERABLY AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, CONSISTS OF THE SO-CALLED REALITY CHECKS OR DISASTER CHECKS.”

OANA LUNGU, INSIGHTS MANAGER,
BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO

It is that specific useful and relevant information that helps us have access to the big picture. In order to have access to such information in a limited timeframe, alternative solutions are sought. Out of these solutions, intuition is the most at hand and is very often used in the decision-making process. Although inspiration can turn out to be “divine”, there are also many cases when intuition can do us great disservice, many psychological experiments standing as proof of it.

Big Data can become another inexhaustible source of information, but this “apparent” spring of data is yet somewhere on the horizon and, at a closer look, it is not as easy as it seems to navigate through the waves of information. That is why Big Data can easily turn out to be just a waste of time in the absence of the special skills to access and select the right information.

RESEARCH NEEDS TO BE ADAPTED TO CHALLENGES OCCURRING ALONG THE WAY

The by-the-book solution is to conduct customized research projects which respond to the need for permanent feedback from consumers. Such projects are included in the annual research plans and consist of tracker studies, product testing, launch studies. All these are very important, but the moments of time between these studies are frozen from the point of view of the information available. But time does not stand still, opportunities, changes, new priorities, market and competition movements may occur during these timeframes and they may require a response. It is important not to limit research to what is preplanned, standardized, set in steps, regulated because most often than not we need to respond to the challenges which occur along the way, and research can be adapted so as to offer the support expected in such situations.

“The method which is currently most at hand to do this – to obtain fast and relevant answers to specific problems, preferably as early as possible – and the best for the given context – of the roller-coaster type – consists of reality checks – or disaster checks”, mentioned Oana Lungu.

“This undertaking we are talking about does not just happen, it entails certain principles/ rules so as to make reality checks provide exactly what you need here and now, as quickly as possible and as smartly as possible, in order to obtain answers to burning questions, dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s”, added Alice Mihai.

To exemplify the versatile manner reality checks can be used in and the benefits they bring, Oana Lungu and Alice Mihai presented a few distinct situations. Examples are taken from the tobacco market, a market where marketers’ challenges are even bigger as the market is strongly regulated by the law, including at the level of communication.



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**ALICE MIHAI, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR, ISRA CENTER**

The first example brings a tactical decision into discussion, the choice of a new design direction for the pack of a value-for-money brand in BAT portfolio, the 2 directions being completely opposite: full color vs. white. The decision has major impact as, on this market, the pack has remained one of the few touch points the buyer has with the brand, a brand ambassador and a hook to engage consumer in a relationship with the brand. Making the choice between the 2 very different pack directions early in the decision-making process allows channeling of subsequent efforts and resources into a specific direction, taking into consideration that each direction can have a multitude of declensions and interpretations in terms of testing and communication.

Starting from the problem put on the table and from the context of the decision-making process - the need for a clear, relevant and fast verdict -, the reality check solution came in the form of predictive groups.

“A different but just as challenging situation was to maintain the level of engagement of a target more difficult to sensitize - a brand addressing the superpremium segment – in a highly competitive, continuously refreshing space, represented by online campaigns. To be more exact, the challenge was to develop a consumer engagement platform tempting enough to draw the attention of high class, high demanding smokers. In addition, the aim was to also generate some ideas in line with the offline activation campaign, with the brand essence and with the target”, explained Oana Lungu.

“Reality/disaster checks are those research studies that fit the specific situations they are addressing like a glove, having scientific rigor but also being at hand when immediate action is called for. They contribute to inspired decisions and make the connection between the marketing people and consumers in a sometimes creative, but always effective and fast way”, concluded Alice Mihai. ■

TRANSPARENCY, FLEXIBILITY, MUTUAL SUPPORT BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND BENEFICIARY ARE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS FOR OBTAINING FAST AND RELEVANT ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC PROBLEMS.