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second to none

Mystery shopping in an omnichannel world

From a targeted methodology to a widely-used omnichannel tool

JEFF HALL

FOUNDER AND
PRESIDENT,
SECOND TO NONE



Mystery shopping as a research methodology continues

to stand the test of time and for good reason: Properly-designed programs deliver corporate-side stakeholders with line-of-sight analytics across their organizational hierarchy in near real time with the ability to prioritize resources for improving customer experience delivery with pinpoint accuracy.

While mystery shopping has most often been applied in a targeted or siloed manner and focused on the operational execution in select customer channels, Second To None views 2018 as the year this research methodology becomes widely adopted as an omnichannel strategic tool within the domain of customer journey mapping as brands recognize the need to design a journey map and build out an enterprise-level solution to evaluate all phases of the customer experience.

Broad consumer adoption and increasing preferences for e-commerce, online customer interactions and digital communications have created an unprecedented shift in consumer expectations – one in which our experiences with a brand should be met equally well whether in-person, online or over the phone.

Peak-performing omnichannel mystery shopping programs measure and report on a host of key distinct touchpoints within the context and lens of a fully integrated journey map:

Omnichannel mystery shopping | The channels



On-site Owned sites

Mystery shopping is exceptionally good at measuring site-level ability to deliver along key operational standards, including location cleanliness, appearance, customer greeting, staff helpfulness, speed of service, adherence to protocols, product/merchandise knowledge, asking for the sale and thanking the customer, among others.

Partner/franchise sites

In addition to measures typically important to owned sites, partner or franchise locations can be assessed on compliance to signage, marketing, pricing, displays, associate percep-

tion of your brand, how your brand is mentioned/positioned among alternatives and whether it is portrayed in a positive manner.



Online E-commerce

Key metrics to monitor include site access and rendering across device types, ease of site navigation, ability to locate products, evaluating the path-to-purchase, ease of checkout, order confirmation, out-of-stocks, time or days elapsed until delivery, condition of package upon delivery and ease of returning/exchanging product via shipping or in-store. A common iteration of e-commerce mystery shopping is the execution of a BOPIS measurement program – the full cycle of buying online and picking up in-store.

Messaging apps, chat, e-mail

Brand-driven digital communications through mobile apps, online chat and e-mail are fertile ground for extracting customer experience insights through mystery shopping. As more brands adopt direct-to-consumer strategies

for nurturing highly personalized customer relationships, companies overlooking this channel as part of their mystery shopping strategy may easily put brand equity at risk.



On the phone Contact center

Customer interactions with contact centers often represent prime opportunities to strengthen the customer relationship through agent ability to answer questions and navigate a path toward optimal issue resolution. Customers typically reach this channel while interacting with a brand's e-commerce site or after an in-store transaction, amplifying the importance of measuring wait/hold times, agent friendliness and knowledge, addressing the customer's need on their first call and the speed with which issues are resolved. Dismissing the importance of contact center mystery shopping creates vulnerability in a solid understanding of experience delivery across all touchpoints.



The challenges

Brands with a desire to measure and

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continually improve the omnichannel customer experience often face headwinds early on in attempting to internally identify who owns the customer experience at each touchpoint, where the CX ownership handoffs exist, then arriving at agreement around the priorities and standards of measurement. Navigating through this requires CX champions from the highest level of the organization, with an ability to advocate, articulate and champion cross-channel mystery shopping in a manner that can cascade downward and throughout the organization.

As with brand-side operational execution, the design of mystery shopping programs across disparate channels and customer touchpoints demands diligent planning and a research partner with the seasoned leadership, nimble project management resources, technology framework and analytical capacity to reliably administer a program at-scale.



The benefits

Omnichannel shopping programs developed to be adaptive and evolutionary in nature and initially designed through an internal collaborative framework will enjoy long-term organizational support. Aligning study design to assess and uncover the critical metrics reflective of the paramount customer experience elements and then leveraging a broad set of analytical tools, including key drivers, predictive analytics, sales linkage and text/sentiment insights,

allows stakeholders across the organizational hierarchy to understand the story in the data, communicating priorities in real-time, affect positive change and continually enhance the customer experience.

Insights are verifiable and robust as each shopper completes multiple shops throughout their journey across each channel touchpoint. The shopper-research provider rapport is much like that of a customer community, wherein these shoppers participate over a longer time span and throughout a detailed set of interaction scenarios.

Progressive mystery shopping organizations will also be able to assist with your customer surveys as well. This simplifies the steps needed to create a 360-degree view of your customer experience gathered via marketing surveys, operational measures and journey evaluations. Your supplier should be apt to feed all data streams into the same dashboard for convenience.

As we witness high-performing brands embracing omnichannel mystery shopping as a much broader, integrated, cross-organizational journey map research tool in order to leverage the unique quantitative insights these measures provide, this holistic perspective is viewed as a critical means to informing continued brand relevancy, the protection of brand equity and the ability to outperform the competition.

About Second To None

Second To None empowers customer-centric brands to deliver consistent and intentional consumer experiences on-site, online and on the phone. Solutions include mystery shopping programs, voice of customer surveys, compliance audits and online reputation monitoring. Our work is grounded in statistical science, strategic relevance and the ability to deliver practical, actionable insights in real-time.

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