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COCA-COLA CENTER FOR MARKETING STUDIES

Spring 2003 MMR Newsletter

TERRY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

IBM Project: Going Further Than Customer Satisfaction

Christine Nelson

For a second year, IBM has utilized MMR students to get further insights from their satisfaction tracking studies. This year's student team, including Annie Hou, Shirley Hu, Samir Mardolker, Manju Sudhakaran and myself, spent the school year building skills in the areas of data integration, statistical analysis, advanced modeling techniques and ultimately, discovering relationships and insights that could help drive IBM's business.

Rather than complete a research study from design to report, our team worked with data that had been gathered over several years. This project focused on the investigation of customer satisfaction, its role in retaining customers and ultimately, linking customer satisfaction levels with behavior.

It all began with the arrival of a shiny CD. Inside were several years' worth of customer satisfaction data, files containing the survey instruments and more importantly, purchase transaction data. With the assistance of our advisor, Dr. Srin Reddy, we began by dividing our research project into 3 components: (1) literature review of customer satisfaction which ultimately led to recommendations for strengthening the survey instrument, (2) specific analysis to understand differences in satisfaction across groups and (3) building and estimating a satisfaction-loyalty-purchase model.

Our overall investigation of customer satisfaction led us to the understanding that satisfaction does not tell the entire story. We were challenged to see a broader picture and uncover the link between satisfaction and loyalty and how they relate to consumer behavior. Once we had built our foundation, we were able to provide recommendations for strengthening the customer satisfaction survey instrument. From that point, we were able to analyze those large data sets and integrate data from several sources. These tasks allowed us to utilize advanced modeling techniques to discover the interrelationships between satis-

faction and purchase behavior. The result is a promising decision support model. In the end, we were able to provide IBM with a fruitful model revealing the relationships between customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and repurchase behavior.

Among the additional things we experienced: interaction with our client and a supplier firm, team coordination of the project scope and objectives, a study of advanced quantitative methods, and the improvement of our verbal and written communication skills. Though the road was long, our work for IBM has been rewarding on many levels and has been an excellent complement to our education in the MMR program.

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MMR Team Supports Masterfoods Effort to Develop New Business Category

Cathy Kaboski

The Masterfoods team was tasked with identifying a strategy and new product concepts for a new category of business for the company. This involved developing an in-depth understanding of the consumer and of consumer segments. The team's members, Paola Assael, Troy Johnson, Cathy Kaboski, Megan Lyle and Nirupama Rajasimhan, spent the fall semester becoming familiar with the business category and pouring over secondary data to glean strategic insights. They used these insights to develop a protocol for qualitative research that was conducted the next semester.

In January, the team conducted a series of in-home interviews, along with observations of product storage. The qualitative interviews provided insights, which lead

to the development of nine new product concepts. The team then developed a questionnaire to identify attitudinal, behavioral, demographic and psychographic characteristics that could be used to segment consumers. In addition, consumer interest in the new product concepts would be assessed, and the potential within market segments would be determined. The questionnaire was executed online by Ipsos, and after the data collection process is complete, the team began to analyze the results.

The team worked with Bob Cohen, who was a great source of support, and the faculty advisor was Dr. Melvin Crask. The team agrees that the project has been an invaluable learning experience that could not have occurred in the classroom.

Bush Brothers & Company: The Story of the Bean Consumer

Laura F. Lievsay

What's the first thing that comes to your mind when I say, "We are doing a marketing research study on beans." If you are like most people, your eye brows rise in an incredulous look and you exclaim "What?!" After shaking my head to confirm that you did indeed hear me correctly, you feign a smile and stammer "Uh, that's...cool." I know what you are really thinking—"How boring. I'm glad it's you and not me." How do I know this? Because I (and my team members) received this reaction over and over again when we told people about our research project. However, people could not have been more erroneous. The project for Bush Brothers & Company was not only a successful, fun research study but also a great learning experience.

It began with an excellent team. Lisa Pierce and Kajoli Tankha were the representatives from Bush. The MMR team was composed of Jonathan Lepisto, Jolanta Tomala, Teresa Shen, and myself, with Dr. Rajiv Grover as our faculty advisor.

The project was conducted during the fall semester of 2002. It began with Lisa and Kajoli putting forth one broad question—what are the purchase and consumption behaviors of bean consumers? After some discussion, this question was refined into several objectives and then the methodology was established. The first wave of the methodology consisted of a combination of observations and store intercepts. During this phase, the MMR team carefully noted consumers' actions as they made their bean selection. After their choice was made, the consumer was approached and asked a few questions. Once the observations and store intercept data had been collected, preliminary findings were discussed. Then several people were called back for in-depth interviews. This was the second wave of the methodology. Steps were taken to insure that respondents consisted of both users and non-users of the Bush brand.

After the data collection was completed, the project moved to the analysis phase. The MMR team members pulled common words and themes from the in-depth interviews. These themes were then used to develop a story of the bean consumer. The resultant story was both insightful and exciting. The story along with recommendations was presented to Lisa and Kajoli

who were ecstatic with the success of the project.

The MMR team was also ecstatic about the success of the project. Looking back, we realized how much we had learned. We performed a full qualitative study from proposal writing to data collection to analysis to presentation. Add friendly, knowledgeable clients who respected our opinions, and overall you have a wonderful research project. Therefore, the next time someone says, "We are doing a marketing research study on beans," maybe you should find out more about the project before you make a judgment. You just might want to join the team.

Adventures in Observation

Andrea Burns

At the very beginning of the program, we started hearing profiles of the projects we could possibly work on for the remainder of our stay here at UGA. Some descriptions were quite specific, while some were still in the formulation stage. The General Motors project was of the latter type. Armed with a capable group of five (consisting of Sherwyn Boyce, Chad Holleman, Charles Swann, Evan Williams, and myself) and the knowledge that this project had something to do with GM and a website, we embarked upon an adventure of observation that had never before been experienced by this small assembly of students.

Our task, roughly speaking, was to assist in the launch of a new service for GM customers by recommending implementation points, introduction procedures, and personnel training techniques. In order to realize our aspirations, we employed observational methods and personnel interviewing to understand "the big picture" of dealership realities. What we learned was quite interesting, and to our amazement and delight, our findings were eagerly received by the rest of the GM project team. We discovered that what we had begun to see as obvious was actually fresh news to much of the project team—and who says that qualitative research isn't useful?

Speaking as a student, watching your rec-

Students Exploration into the Pharmaceutical Industry

Billy Fletcher

Four courageous talents combined forces with Eli Lilly for a project in competitive intelligence. Due to strict confidentiality agreements most of our gained knowledge is highly sensitive, disallowing extensive expression. The first half of our efforts was a learning experience wading through complex secondary data and gaining important background/industry knowledge. Team efforts were branched for insight optimization and then mashed for a concrete foundation for further research. Now as pharma veterans we crafted RFP's and recruited a brilliant supplier firm to join the fray. Armed with confidence and brio, focus groups were conducted and many trends emerged. After compiling all data earned, final reports and presentations were made. Eric Johnson at Eli rocks. And all knowledge gained is now for sale to any bidder.

ommendations being taken to heart by the type of people you hope to one day work with is a moving experience, and one that reassures us that we are truly in the right place, pursuing the right ambitions, and actually making a difference.



The University of Georgia

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