

Predicting consumers' future wants, needs

By [Dr Dunja Kartte](#)

23 Jul 2009

If you knew everything about tomorrow - what would you do differently today? The answer to that is probably everything.



Savvy marketers know they need to research their tomorrow's consumers. Find out who they are, the world they inhabit and how they will make future purchasing decisions. I believe the future is less about product specifics and more about the identification of unmet consumer needs and fulfilling their desires.

Why is it so important? Because tomorrow's world will be radically different from the one we live in today. Tomorrow's consumer will have different expectations. This is particularly relevant to South Africa where material changes are rapid.

Shift to psychographics analysis

Future business success will depend on gaining futuristic consumer insights and developing relevant and preferred products and services ahead of the competition. This means a shift from purely demographic consumer profiling to the analysis of psychographics, which is any attributes relating to personality, values, attitudes, interests and lifestyles.

First, to develop a marketing strategy that delivers exactly what your company's future customers will want, turn away from "conventional" assumptions. Start with consumer behavioural research that analyses the economic, political, social and communication trends of your company's target market globally and then in South Africa.

Use **scenario planning** approaches to discover plausible alternative future outlooks and crisscross as many scenarios as possible. A deep analysis of peoples' lives can be conducted by dissecting their work, leisure time, friends and family.

A consumer behaviour analysis also needs to take generational differences into consideration. This is called **generation's research** and it's the investigation into the changing attitude and beliefs of consumers over their lifetime.

Segmentation

Segment your target market and examine their core values, lifestyle, spending patterns, behaviour, product involvement, usage patterns and attitude. You may well find that different segments of people might have very different unmet needs and demands from what you originally thought. Also, there is likely to be a movement between these groups, depending on the dynamics within the segments.

Behavioural insights into each segment of people are important, but it is also necessary to define the size of each segment and to estimate the “profit pool” per group.

By taking an innovative and future-oriented research approach, marketers will be able to confidently plot the way forward, develop accurate consumer profiles and develop a marketing strategy that is bang on target.

As Mark Twain once said: “It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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