

Case Study

Bridging Manufacturer and Retail Partner Interests Through Shopper Research

PHASE 1

Client Objectives

An electronics manufacturer with a long history as a TrendSource client was facing new challenges regarding customer expectations of their in-store experience within an unassisted retail sales environment. Specifically, the client was interested in a deeper dive to better understand the retail customer. Research questions included:

- Why do customers visit a retail outlet vs. making an online purchase?
- What information do customers need and want when in-store?
- How would customers prefer to receive information?
- What happens in-store when customers are unable to find a SKU listed online?
- How do customers interact with in-store kiosks?

The key objective was to explore opinions from real customers (shoppers) during the buying process and utilize their feedback to address the client's questions.

PHASE 2

Program Development

Based on the knowledge that evaluating a great in-store experience is a multi-step process, TrendSource recommended an iterative approach to delivering results to this client with each step building on the next. Shop-Alongs were chosen as the primary research methodology. The program would need to provide:

- Insight into the in-store segment of the shopper journey
- Insight into key informational and product elements that shoppers look for when visiting a retail outlet
- A chronological 'story' of the in-store segment of the shopper's journey, including:

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- o Interaction with brands
- o Key breakdowns in client's unassisted pitch to the shopper
- o Informational requests directly from the shopper

PHASE 3

Keys to Successful Implementation

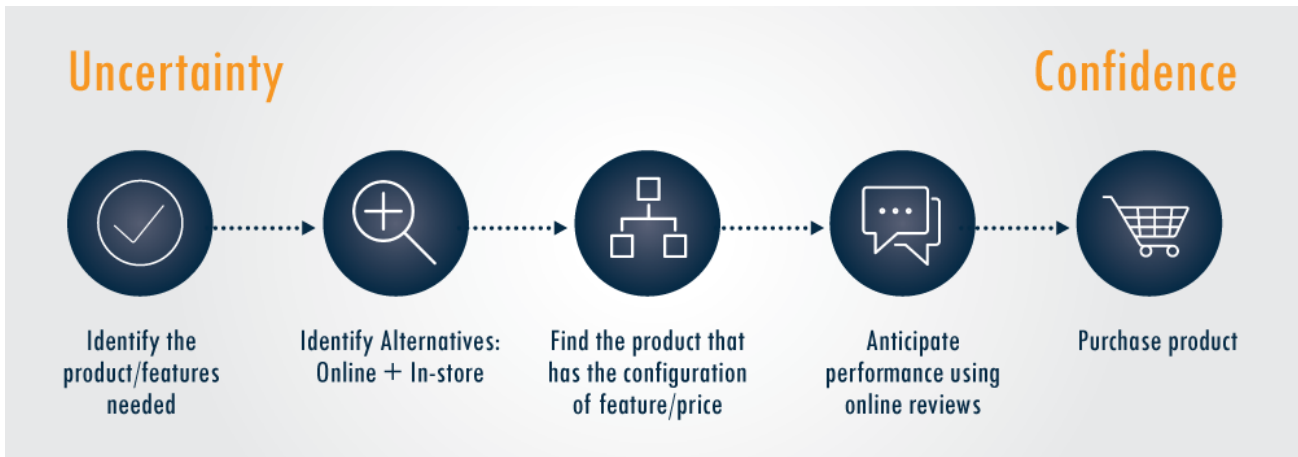
- To deliver the best possible results, target shoppers were drawn from a wide demographic mix:
 - o Responsible for product purchase
 - o Considering the client's brand
 - o In the market to purchase in the next three months
- Hands-off ethnographic observation followed by an open-ended contextual inquiry to ensure avoidance of unnecessary interviewer influence
- Transcripts were reviewed in detail, one at a time, ensuring that the customer's views were accurately represented in the findings.

PHASE 4

Analysis and Results

Shopper feedback revealed that the process of purchasing the product was a journey from uncertainty to confidence. Shoppers sought to progressively obtain information about the products available in the market, identified which products best matched their needs, and anticipated their own experience by reviewing peer and expert ratings* (Figure I).

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Multiple rounds of detailed review of shopper comments revealed 6 themes** (Figure II). By uncovering clear shopper insights, TrendSource provided the client with direction to design an in-store solution to meet these needs. This prompted the manufacturer to collaborate with retail partners to more effectively design a retail experience that kept the top themes that were uncovered from this research in mind and leveraged the shopper’s journey in a meaningful way. These conversations lead to a stronger partnership between manufacturers and retailers who have a symbiotic relationship and are both focused on ensuring the best possible experience for their shoppers.

