

5 Marketing Research 'Must-Haves' for 2017



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There's no better way to start 2017 than to take stock of emerging trends in today's continually evolving marketplace and put some best practices in place for the year ahead. Read on to learn about 5 marketing research 'must-haves' that will help you meet business objectives during the year...

As we pause to look back on what has changed, we should take note of the improvements that are needed in order to stay on top of any new advancements. A lot has changed in the past 12 months. New marketing tools have been created and existing services improved that will continue to shape the way that we conduct marketing research. Forward-thinking marketers are placing more emphasis on survey-based software in order to discover exactly what their customers want.

As political change influences the way we work and developments are made with marketing tools, it is important that we stay informed about any relevant changes.

It's an exciting time for digital marketers with numerous online tools to help you deliver more effective marketing plans. As the availability of data increases and businesses adopt new practices such as marketing automation, the ability to implement new marketing tactics will become easier, more targeted and hopefully better for the customer. 2017 will more

than likely see continued growth in the collection of data that will inevitably shape marketing strategy.

There are many reasons to collect data:

- To conduct market research
- Benchmark customer satisfaction
- Review employee engagement
- Gather customer feedback
- Identify your next business opportunity or market development
- The information gathered will help you to identify trends, action change and, in turn, improve profitability.

There's no magic formula that will guarantee your marketing research will help you gather all of the information you need and transform your organisation. But, by starting the year with five key best practices to implement, you can be sure you will be able to cut through the noise and focus on key issues that will take your research to the next level.

Here we take a look at five business-centric methodologies that marketers can implement to help them meet organisational goals in the coming year:

Methodology #1 – Review Security Standards of Your Survey Provider

Whilst reviewing potential online survey suppliers, it is worth taking the time to see if they have necessary data protection and security accreditation. In today's digital world, protecting people's personal privacy is essential. If you are gathering data, it is your responsibility to ensure it is kept safe and secure.

The collection of customer feedback should be conducted proactively to identify issues, fuel decision making and to celebrate success, it's not all about negativity!

Consumer research can be used to capture opinion, views, feedback and customer details for correspondence. Gathering, analyzing and acting upon regular feedback is an essential part of developing customer trust, respect and long term engagement.

Gathering data from your customers must come with the assurance that their details and opinions remain confidential and secure. Any details submitted by the customer must be kept safe and not be subjected to potential abuse by the company or third party providers.

Confidentiality and providing accessible information to individuals about how you will use their personal data is a key element when conducting online surveys. Any responses must be kept confidential. Reassuring respondents of this will improve your survey response rates. The Data Protection Act regulates how people's personal information is used and your survey provider should be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Methodology #2 – Management of Data

In the November econsultancy B2B Digital Trends report, it is remarked that the most exciting change in the next five years will be in the direction of data-driven marketing that focuses on the individual.

It is essential for organisations of all sizes to be able to collect, store and analyse data in order to provide value for the business and provide a more customer-centric service. Advanced survey software allows for the planned collection of information that can then be analysed and adapted into actionable data.

Well-managed data will lead to increased sales, better customer satisfaction and insight into your market place. When choosing a tool for the collection and storage of your data, it is essential that you investigate how and where your data

will be stored and if it will be shared with anyone?

If you are operating in the UK, it is worth asking the question – ‘Does the data you collect remain in the UK or is it stored in the US’?

Whilst EU laws protecting data may change due to Brexit negotiations, any data you collect remains your responsibility, so ensure that you do everything you can to make sure it remains safe and compliant.

You don't need to be a data security expert but you must know enough to keep your customer's data safe. Not being aware of your responsibilities is simply not acceptable. If you are unsure, ask your provider where they store your data, how it is managed and if it is shared with anyone? The general school of thinking from legal professionals and data security experts is that a provider who stores or accesses survey data from outside the EU could expose you to risk.

For the B2B and B2C marketing professional, 2017 will see data management come into its own. Consumers have an ever increasing desire to be treated like individuals with specific preferences. To be able to fully take advantage of information that can drive business decisions, marketers must stay up-to-date with advanced online survey software.

Methodology #3 – Use Consumer Panel Research to Reach a Target Audience

If you are carrying out market research by gathering feedback from specific segments, it can be difficult to target or assemble particular consumer groups in order to gather relevant opinions.

This can mean that there is a requirement to use third party agencies, this can carry high costs. There will be a cost for each respondent to factor in as well as potentially hiring facilities and the time it will take to conduct the research.

All of these factors could result in only a small amount of data being collected at a high cost.

Live consumer audience panels, on the other hand, will give you instant access to registered consumers worldwide. Online panels connect researchers to millions of respondents for the purpose of sharing and accessing consumer data.

Benefits of Consumer Panel Research

- Consumer panels examine the opinions of specific groups whose behavior is regarded as representative of the whole market
- The cost of performing consumer panel research is very low
- Research projects can be completed quickly, allowing organisations to react swiftly to the findings
- Response rates tend to be high as respondents have opted in to take part in the research
- Consumer panels remain current and give a complete picture at all times
- Changes to consumer preferences can be researched and implemented quickly
- Feelings toward sensitive issues, including X-rated products, alcohol and cigarettes, can be researched without face to face questioning
- Data gathered is incredibly specific, meaning there is no danger of researching intentions rather than products
- Consumer panels can provide fantastic insight on sales activity, allowing companies across different outlets to compare their ROI and effects on consumers. If you have identified a need for specific research you can use a
- Live Audience service by simply selecting the audience criteria and the amount of responses you would like to receive.

Methodology #4 – Become More Mobile Friendly

Mobile technology continues to become more functional and, as a result, more widely used. Research shows that Google are becoming more focused on mobile friendly websites. This Marketing Land report reveals that mobile now represents 65% of digital media time. In today's connected world, it is essential and not just a 'nice to have', to be mobile friendly!

The modern day survey respondent remains engaged with their smartphone, it has become the main device for mobile research. The Deloitte Mobile Consumer Report 2016 shows that 81% of us use our smartphone while watching TV!

Consumers now place a huge amount of value on mobile devices, making them a compulsory object that most people wouldn't want to be without. Many respondents are now comfortable using their phone to respond to surveys, even whilst they are still in the shops or on the move. The mobile phone has become the trusted channel for information and is fast becoming the main channel for consuming media and for communicating with others.

Over the last year, the opportunity to engage with consumers instantly has never been greater. Consumers treat the mobile phone as a frequently used personal device, this leads to more honest communications when giving feedback.

Increased access to 4G services has meant that smartphone users are online more frequently in the UK and usually within an area that offers a data connection. This inevitably drives the value of the mobile research as consumers can increasingly connect to complete an online survey anytime, anywhere.

Methodology #5 – Stay Up-To-Date With Data Protection Laws

The General Data Protection Regulation, intended to strengthen and unify data protection, will be implemented on 25th May 2018 and organisations must ensure that they are compliant. GDPR will offer a streamlined approach to working with data throughout the EU and companies may have to restructure and

add to their current security workflow.

Elizabeth Denham the Information Commissioner commented: “The major shift with the implementation of the GDPR will be in giving people greater control over their data. This has to be a good thing. Today’s consumers understand that they need to share some of their personal data with organisations to get the best service. But they’re right to expect organisations to then keep that information safe, be transparent about its use and for organisations to demonstrate their accountability for their compliance”.

It is important not to lose focus of your business objectives. Take the opportunity, whilst ensuring compliancy, to design sales focused strategy with online surveys and realign your customer service objectives.

Conclusion

2017 is gearing up to be a year of considerable change that will provide its fair share of opportunities and challenges. The customer will be the fundamental driver of change. By staying on top of any new advancements in technology, methodology and regulation that we have highlighted, you can use online surveys to set best practices in place for the coming year.

Customer-led, digital-centric marketing will accelerate fast in 2017, according to Forrester’s report on Navigating change: 2017 predictions. Cloud applications (SaaS), business services and platforms now power a vast range of digital capabilities that have the ability to deliver new customer experiences.

Well researched, data-driven reports carry great kudos in the world of business for showing insight into industry trends. Awareness gained via online surveys can empower smart business decision making.