

Strategic Motivational Research

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Importance of Motivations

Virtually all effective marketing initiatives help harmonize a brand's positioning with the needs of consumers. Understanding how consumer needs affect product choice equips marketers to position brands to win. Market research that delivers insight into consumer motivations should therefore be at the core of most strategic research programs.

Brand choice has complex and hidden drivers that reflect underlying psychological dimensions. When viewed by the researcher, the consumer-brand relationship is like an iceberg. Only a fraction of the mass is at the surface, easily visible. Most of the iceberg - and most of the motivational dimensions - lie below the surface. The "sonar" for insight into consumer-brand relationships is Motivational Research.

Consumer-Brand Relationships

The truth is that consumers can't tell us why they choose the brands they do. People will not admit to some motivations and they are often simply unaware of others that influence their actions. Traditional research techniques tend to focus on "tangible" reasons for brand choice like product features, convenience, price, etc. These are the elements that people can and will explain to us.

But consumer motivations are multi-layered. The outer layer encompasses those rational, functional factors that consumers consider in brand choice. This outer "needs layer" is relatively easy to study. It also offers the least opportunity for brands to develop strong relationships with consumers. Brands compete elsewhere.

If we dig deeper into consumer-brand relationships, we inevitably find social factors connected with brands. As humans, we instinctively structure our world according to feelings about social identity. What brands say about the consumer is a key factor in brand choice. Within certain limits of social acceptability, people can and will verbalize their attitudes about brand social identity. But socially unacceptable feelings about the image of brands are too often withheld.

The core of consumer-brand relationships is a more deeply psychological layer of complex and hidden consumer motivations. The emotions that govern this inner layer concern changing how one feels "inside," and the need to express one's self to the "outside." Traditional market research techniques offer little insight

here. But this *motivational* dimension is the real brand battleground where the key drivers of choice are found.