



Welcome

Consumer Insights

From jigsaw pieces to the 'big picture'

Imagine a jigsaw puzzle of a vibrant nature scene in which all the individual pieces contribute to the big picture. Each piece contains elements that make it unique and that are also part of the overall image. This is why one needs to understand the bigger picture as well as its individual pieces, if one is to fully appreciate the jigsaw. The big picture teaches us what we should expect from the smaller pieces.¹

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Gaining consumer insights means looking at the big picture of people’s lives in the round – understanding how people think, feel and act with respect to a certain product, service or behavior. This can include looking at: consumers’ emotions, wants, preferences, aspirations and needs; the costs they incur to purchase and own goods and services; the convenience of obtaining goods and services; and/or what makes communication between the entity and the consumer more effective.²

Developing a better understanding of customers is increasingly a strategic necessity for private and public sectors alike, because fast-moving markets, new technologies and new business models are changing what customers want, how they shop and how they access services. In less than two decades, ‘consumers’ and our understanding of them have evolved as a result of increased product choice and growing access to, and availability of, information. These changes are also apparent at the base of the pyramid. A body of literature on the growth of emerging economies has contributed to a shift in mindset, such that base-of-the-pyramid consumers are increasingly being viewed as value-conscious and resilient entrepreneurs.

Affordability is necessary, but it is no longer sufficient to explain consumer behavior at the base of the pyramid, as it is just one piece of the jigsaw. Consumers are motivated not merely by

survival and physiological needs; they also seek to fulfill higher-order needs – to build social capital, for cultural reasons or as a compensatory mechanism.⁴ In addition, tastes and aspirations change rapidly and guide people’s purchasing and consumption choices. Evidence has shown that when organizations offer products and services that also fulfill these higher-order needs, there is a greater chance of these products succeeding in the market. On top of this comes the recognition that a better approach is needed to help those at the base of the pyramid – one that involves partnering with consumers to innovate and achieve sustainable win-win scenarios in which they are actively engaged while, at the same time, the companies providing them with products and services can operate at a profit.⁵

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These shifts have motivated many public-sector organizations to rethink the way that they view their target audience: from being the ‘beneficiaries’ of public goods, services and behavior change interventions, to being promising consumers, entrepreneurs and active participants in the process of change.

The ‘nutrition’ consumer

The jigsaw analogy can be equally helpful for appreciating the importance of the ‘big picture’ in understanding and positively influencing consumer food choices and eating behaviors.

Eating behavior is governed by a complex set of determinants, some of which people are not even aware of when making their choices. Therefore, studying and addressing eating behavior from a health and nutrition perspective alone is equivalent to viewing just a few pieces of the jigsaw in isolation. People do not think in terms of ‘nutrients,’ and more often than not they do not think in terms of health when purchasing and consuming food. They think in terms that matter most to them, which are influenced by their internal and external environments. In the

words of Robert Zoellick, former head of the World Bank (2010): “People don’t live their lives in health sectors or education sectors or infrastructure sectors, arranged in tidy compartments. People live in families and villages and communities and countries, where all the issues of everyday life merge. We need to connect the dots.”⁶

“Consumer food choices are shaped by a long list of interconnected factors”

Governments play a critical role in shaping food systems and defining what is available and affordable⁷ and in trying to influence what is desirable. But consumer food choices are shaped by a long list of other interconnected factors. The more obvious ones include taste, cost, time and convenience.³ But this list goes on to include: values, culture, social norms and expectations, knowledge,⁴ desires and aspirations, and – not least important but often least considered – our emotions.

As a growing body of evidence suggests, the nutritional context is becoming more complex; the emergence of the ‘dual burden’ of overnutrition and undernutrition in individuals and populations is presenting a particular challenge. The ability to address this dual burden requires a systems approach,⁶ starting with an understanding of the very people who are interacting with, being influenced by and influencing this system.

The evolution of consumer insights as a discipline

New advances in behavioral science have shed light on the power of ‘irrationality’ in consumer behavior and decision-making. According to leading consumer scientists, 95 percent of our purchasing and consumption decisions may be formed in the subconscious mind.⁸ This is the part of the brain where logic takes a back seat and emotion grabs the wheel, and an understanding of it highlights how important it is for organizations to think about consumers’ deepest thoughts and feelings when developing products and services. Technological advances, such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, along with continual innovations in traditional research methods, have paved the way for more efficient data collection and analysis of behavioral drivers and patterns.

“Organizations that have traditionally relied on information gathering are now seeking more creative views of their markets”

Organizations that have traditionally relied on objective information gathering (demographics, numbers, best practices) are now seeking broader, deeper and more creative views of their markets, leveraging behavioral science and technology to find fresh insights into the needs, wants, fears and hopes of their target consumer.⁹ In addition, public-sector organizations are increasingly seeing the value of consumer insights beyond designing communication campaigns; such insights can help to inform the design and redesign of health services, products, business models, marketing strategies and policies at large scale.

In this issue of *Sight and Life* magazine, which is dedicated to consumer insights, we have curated contributions that explore the various dimensions and applications of consumer insights. We look at innovative methods and tools for generating consumer insights and at trends in behavioral science as the foundation for understanding consumers. We present examples of consumer insights and how they have been applied to design products and services, using different approaches such as social and behavior change communication, human-centered design and social marketing. We also look at the use of consumer insights in advising and shaping programmatic and policy changes. We feature contributions on the value and implications of technological advances for understanding and catering to consumer needs, and we look at lessons learned from the commercial sector and the importance of consumer insights to create demand through public-private partnerships.

If you are still unsure about the value of consumer insights for public health, we suggest you turn to [page 34](#), where Dr Sufia Askari and Sarah Gibson from the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) discuss the question ‘*Why invest in consumer insights?*’ from a funder’s perspective.

For a deep-dive into the use of behavioral science for demand creation – and in particular the use of behavioral ‘nudges’ – we encourage you to read the article on Epicurean food marketing by Prof. Pierre Chandon, Director of the INSEAD-Sorbonne University Behavioral Lab, in which he explores the concept of *Epicurean food marketing* and unpacks different ‘nudge’ types, on [page 18](#).

To explore innovative behavioral analytics to generate consumer insights, start with our special feature *Behavior analytics, artificial intelligence and digital technologies – building bridges between biological, social and food systems* by Prof. Laurette Dubé on [page 110](#). For more on innovative research methods, we suggest you read *Human-centered design and innovative research methods for healthcare* by Estée Liebenberg of the Praekelt Foundation on [page 50](#). To appreciate the value of behavioral and psychographic segmentation in appealing to different ‘types’ of consumers, we recommend you read *Highlighting group differences: using segmentation to meet the needs of different types of people* by Anna Kitunen on [page 80](#), and

'Branding for people not topics' – what public health nutrition can learn from commercial marketing by Shiloh Beckerley and Jeff Jordan on [page 75](#).

To see what actionable consumer insights can look like, turn to [page 25](#), where *Sight and Life* together with Wahana Visi, a partner of World Vision, are featuring a research article entitled *Social marketing to promote egg consumption in Indonesia – formative research findings*.

For a better idea of how consumer insights can be used to inform the design of innovative products and services, take a look at *Designing future-fit food* by Jade Bourne on [page 69](#), and *Promoting maternal and child health through beauty parlors in Afghanistan* on [page 155](#) by Soumitra Ghosh.

On [page 145](#), Dr Mahmooda Khaliq Pasha discusses how consumer insights were used in a social marketing approach to inform policy and program design for *salt reduction in the Americas*.

We are also pleased to feature two reports on leveraging technology to design tailored solutions for consumers. On [page 85](#), Prof. Payal Arora highlights the importance of tailoring technological products aimed at improving health outcomes to the realities, wants and needs of the growing user base from developing countries – the *next billion users*, who are “demanding, sophisticated consumers who are desperately seeking quality digital products and services.” On [page 160](#), Tamsen de Beer describes how mobile technology was used in the design of the well-known *maternal health program MomConnect*.

And finally, we are honored to feature a special contribution. On [page 122](#), Bill Novelli, Professor at the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University, and Diane Ty share with us their decades of experience in *applying deep consumer insights to purpose-led communication and purpose-led business initiatives*.

We hope you will enjoy this new issue of *Sight and Life* magazine. At *Sight and Life*, we have a growing Consumer Insights and

Demand Creation team. You will hear, in the near future, from the team leader about novel and innovative topics incorporating your feedback and your suggestions for future issues.

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With warm regards,

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A world free from malnutrition.



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A stylized, minimalist illustration of a computer monitor. The monitor is represented by a large, rounded rectangle with a thick border, and a smaller, solid rectangle inside it, suggesting a screen. Below the screen is a trapezoidal shape representing the base of the monitor. The entire graphic is rendered in a solid orange color, matching the background.