Where does Mystery Shopping fit in the Customer Experience measurement toolbox?

Customer experience (CX) measurement tools are more prevalent across service industries than ever before and more regularly, and quite rightly, sit alongside other core business KPIs. The accessibility of customer data ensures that Customer Insight & Research teams have a wealth of research tools to help them better understand the customer experience. The most well-known and regularly debated tools include Customer Satisfaction, NPS, Customer Effort, Sentiment analytics and personalised customer behaviour data. However, there are challenges with these CX measurement tools – firstly, 'survey fatigue' where response rates are declining, and secondly an increasing savviness from the consumers on how best to lever these tools to their own advantage rather than provide honest feedback.

The debate about the best tool to measure CX to improve customer satisfaction and ultimately drive sales will continue. This debate will depend heavily upon an individual's experience of working with specific tools; more importantly, it will depend upon what best meets the core objectives of their business and what is a best fit for their individual organisation. There is no 'silver bullet' - if there was, there would be no debate. Each tool fits a purpose, and often, the best result comes from a mix of approaches or methodologies.

Why is Mystery Shopping a key customer experience measure?

Mystery Shopping, unlike many other tools, tells you not what customers might want or feel or how they react; it can tell you what actually happens in a service encounter. Every assessment completed offers a snapshot into service and each assessment helps an organisation build a picture of service levels over time. Once organisations have established what customers want and what the key drivers of customer satisfaction are, Mystery Shopping can be used to great effect to drive the desired operational change or improve compliance to operational standards.

Good mystery shopping programmes help the frontline, not just the Customer Insight or Research team, to understand what has been done well, what was missed and what action is needed to drive service improvements. Successful Mystery Customer programmes monitor the company against the standards they would like to deliver; if the strategy is right then this will translate to improved satisfaction and profits.

Mystery shopping is more than a CX measurement tool

A credible, operationally focused, mystery shopping programme can secure and improve employee engagement. Positively positioning the programme, securing buy-in from frontline teams and creating opportunities to recognise & reward service excellence not only places service front and centre but it will serve as an invaluable tool in educating, motivating and inspiring employees to continuously improve.

Happy employees will give a better customer experience, one that is in line with the desired service offer, which in turn will lead to more satisfied customers. More satisfied customers result in greater customer loyalty, increased market share and ultimately improve sales and profits. It becomes a perfect circle of improvement from which organisations can reap continuous value.

Mystery Shopping is not there to tell organisations what customers want but is there to help deliver the step change in service they need. Be it through service-focused, compliance-focused, or promotional based programmes, Mystery Shopping is an invaluable tool that helps companies focus employee & stakeholder attention on what matters most – the customer.