

INSIGHT 360°

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF MSPA - ASIA/PACIFIC

MSPA Asia Pacific 8th Annual Conference
Manila 2012 - President's Report P2 and P3

Cultural Differences... and
Mystery Shopping - Yvonne Kinzel P4



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MYSTERY SHOPPING PROVIDER ASSOCIATION

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'MSPA Asia Pacific 8th Annual Conference Manila 2012 - 'Bridging the Gaps in Mystery Shopping': President's Report

5 reasons why the conference was such a success...

There are five reasons why the conference was such a success...

1. Seven speakers of exceptional quality.
2. Inclusion of a half-day workshop: "Operational Excellence in Mystery Shopping".
3. Three great group discussion Leaders.
4. Great venues.
5. The Conference Sponsors.

For the exceptional high standard of speakers, we thank the following Board Members for sourcing them:

Jim Chong – President MSPA AP
Steven Di Pietro – Director
Bhairavi Sagar – Director
M Saidul Haq –Director



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Some testimonials from the attendees

- It certainly has been a very fruitful event. I look forward to the coming ones - **Mazen Sakran**
- I'm looking forward to the next conference - **Kristel**
- Let me just congratulate the entire team for setting up a wonderful three-day conference. Got so many extra learnin to take back to my company - **Reveryn Santos**
- Indeed a significant event and I shall be there regularly in future - **Edward Wang**
- I thoroughly enjoyed the conference this year and thought the content and organisation was excellent - **Rachel White**
- The lineup of speakers was top quality and the collaboration between members provides an opportunity for global connections in the future - **Michelle Pascoe**
- Guys - thank you all for the hard work over the past weeks – I think the conference was a huge success and I'm very pleased I attended - **Ed Dean**
- Walter Gimenez presented a different dimension to the (Mystery Shopping) business - **Aftab Anwar**



Speaker Highlights

Speaker highlights included:

- A video of a mystery shopper not following guidelines caught on CCTV
- How cultural differences affect the selling process
- How mystery shopping needs to adapt to the changing face of retail
- A detailed how-to on setting up a mystery shopping programme
- The impact of mobile technologies on mystery shopping
- How brain- scan images can throw light on the mystery shopping process

'Thirty one participants took advantage of the Half Day Workshop. It was organized by the Professional Development Committee under the guidance of M Saidul Haq and Jim Chong and was presented by Michelle Pascoe.'

The Group Discussions were well attended. This was no doubt due to the incisive topics chosen by the Discussion Leaders. They covered, "Doing International Business", "Worst Practices in Mystery Shopping" and "How to Improve Your Margins". Participants were treated to some of the best kept secrets in the mystery shopping business.

Special thanks to Anu Mehta, MSPA-AP Executive Manager, for negotiating with hotels for the best possible room rates and the best conference facilities. Anu's efforts are in no small way responsible for a great deal on the rooms,, and the use of a remarkable conference room on the 14th floor of the Intercontinental Hotel. The hotel initially insisted on us using a less satisfactory facility on the ground floor, but Anu's persistence paid off. We enjoyed great views from a beautiful room which had a sizable annexe for sponsor exhibits.

The Intercontinental proved to be a good choice. Nothing was too much trouble for the staff. Every one of our last-minute requests was speedily and efficiently met. A hotel concierge also recommended the restaurant for the Conference Dinner. This restaurant, Chef Laudico, created for us a special menu of traditional Philippine cuisine with a modern twist. It was well received by all who attended.

As always, the financial and informal support of our sponsors, Prophet, MSR, shopmetric, Checker, Civicom and Sassie, underpinned the success of the conference.

The Eighth Annual Conference would not have been possible without the combined efforts of the Conference Management Committee and the support of the MSPA-AP Board. It was a great result from a dedicated team.

Peter Rogers
President





Cultural Differences ... and Mystery Shopping

"The service I received was totally unacceptable! I was only asked whether I like to have some tea! But I would have expected a choice of at least three different drinks... coffee... tea...water."

This comment was given by a Japanese mystery shopper in the first project we carried out in this country many years ago (for a Germany premium car manufacturer) – our first project outside of Europe.

Lucky us we had asked the shoppers to comment every single evaluation. Only because of that we were able to find out that the salesperson's behavior was not at all positive although the highest score was achieved.

Base for this evaluation was -of course- a German questionnaire and scoring system which was already in use for many years in my home country (Germany). As a next step we started to analyze all comments in detail and it didn't took us long to find out that we can hardly compare the scores for Japan with the ones for Germany or with the ones for the U.K. The expectations towards the sales consultation were too different.

In the meantime our company conducted mystery shopping projects in more than 60 countries all over the world. This is in fact very exciting as we do learn something new every day. And this has mainly to do with the particularities of each single country.

Some cultural differences are easy to recognize. Just think of the different ways of greeting. In Japan one makes a bow, in Thailand we do have the Wai whereas in some parts of Mongolia people do to rub their noses when they meet. In Germany we prefer a simple handshake. And no kisses (in contrast to many of our neighbor countries)!

The greeting is easy to watch. But it's getting more and more difficult when we start talking about things we cannot see. E.g. attitudes and habits based on national characteristics and experiences. Some cultures are very good listeners (like many Asian ones), others definitely prefer a continuous lively dialogue and they like to have a strong relationship with the counterpart (like most Arab cultures). Some can be described as cool planners (Germans) that stick to facts (lot of paper!) whereas others are used to change plans and timings easily if other things become more important (like e.g. Latin Americans). Some prefer a very direct speech (again, the Germans) and some are very good compromisers (e.g. Vietnamese).

If we do have a concrete look at sales negotiations the expectations towards meetings and products can be quite different. For the UK a "nice" product of good quality for a reasonable price is important, a good story has to be told (with humor, of course). In Japan one might expect a quiet, formal and harmonious product presentation done by a well-dressed salesperson. Whereas in most Arab countries a personal touch is expected and the presentation can be done loud and lively by an extroverted and rhetoric salesperson.

If we have this in mind, some questions concerning our daily business Mystery Shopping might come up:

- Does it make sense to check the same standards of service for different markets?
- Do sales people need to have the same skills in different cultures?
- Can the same mystery shopping scenarios and instructions be used across markets?
- Can a trained mystery shopper work in different markets (as long as he is able to speak the respective language)?

The simple answer would be just "No". But that would be too easy as many clients do have a crucial interest to compare markets without any long explanations. The request very often is the comparison of all countries at a glance based on one scoring system which does not allow any differences.

But the first step is to be aware that there are differences, to be able to "have a look outside the box."
We can then use this knowledge, when...

- We talk to the clients (to make them realize the differences)
- We cooperate with the local providers (to use their knowledge as the experts of the own countries)
- We develop the study design (to try to include country-specific particularities in the questionnaire or to provide long version of instructions (e.g. Japan or Germany) and short versions with the main points (e.g. Latin American countries) for mystery shoppers)
- We evaluate the results (e.g. the number of points made concerning a specific product. Is a scoring of 8.6 for the U.K. better than 4.6 for the Middle East?).
- And for those who attended the conference: Always think of the...ELEPHANT!!