

CASE STUDY 4.2

Brentford Square Community Shopping Centre Project (Part C): The research proposal

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This document describes the research process for the development of a marketing strategy plan for the traders, shops and businesses in the Brentford Square Shopping Centre and to establish guidelines for doing research on small community shopping centres.

Background

The Brentford Square Shopping Centre is located in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, on Canterbury Road, Forest Hill, and comprises a large supermarket, branches of two major banks, chain liquor and food outlets and over thirty specialty shops. There has been trading at Brentford Square since the late 1950s and in 1963 the Brentford Square Traders Association was established.

Over the last decade the traders have been experiencing a slow decline in trade and number of customers.

A primary reason for this is believed to be the expansion and promotion of nearby regional shopping centres, such as Forest Hill Chase, located a few kilometres to the west.

Many 'strip' shopping areas have been adversely affected by activities of the large regional shopping centres. Apart from the physical benefits of building and location these shopping centres have also been aggressive marketers.

To provide some counter to this, many community shopping centres have developed and implemented their own marketing and urban development programs. Some examples are Centre Road, (East Bentleigh), Maling Rd. (Canterbury) and Melton Township (Melton).

Objectives

1. Marketing strategy development

To develop a marketing strategy and a marketing plan for the Brentford Square Shopping Centre that will increase the customer traffic and the dollars spent with the traders in the area.

2. Guidelines for market research and data collection

Using the Brentford Square market research and data collection as a pilot project, develop guidelines to assist community shopping centres with market research, data collection and the development of marketing strategies.

The marketing strategy development consists of two stages:

Stage 1

- Discussion and review of business problems
- Market research and data collection

Stage 2

- Development of marketing strategy plan
- Implementation of the marketing and promotional activities recommended by the plan.
- Development of a business plan for the centre.

Although Stage 1 only will be addressed by the Brentford Square Project, recommendations will be made with respect to Stage 2 and information to assist other centres included in the guidelines.

Overview

Stage 1: Market research and data collection

Market research data collection can be divided into qualitative and quantitative surveys. These provide insight into the mind of the customer and quantification of their opinions.

Qualitative research gives a detailed understanding of shopper behaviour and choice of shopping location.

Quantitative research examines the numbers of shoppers who demonstrate particular shopping behaviour or attitudes.

Secondary data is also useful. A profile of the local community can be obtained by the collection of secondary data such as local area demographics and marketing advertising activities in the area.

An analysis of the market research data will be produced in a report along with broad based recommendations for a marketing strategy.

Stage 2: Development of marketing strategy plan

Using the information obtained in the market research data collection the preparation of a marketing strategy for a three-year time scale and a marketing plan to achieve the objectives of the strategy.

Implementation of the marketing and promotional activities recommended by the plan

The Brentford Square Traders Association has two more years with funding from the special rate and employs a Centre Manager with Marketing and Promotions as a key component of the role. The Association may also

consider using a marketing or promotional agency to assist with the implementation of the marketing activities described in the plan.

Development of a business plan for the centre

As many of the recommendations may have implications for the both physical design of the centre, and way the Centre conducts its business as a single entity rather than individual businesses the data and marketing plan would be used to form the basis of a business plan.

Understanding who are the customers, why they choose to shop or not shop in certain areas is essential for the development of a strong business plan for the Centre as a whole.

Description of the project

Purpose: To provide information to prepare a marketing plan for the Brentford Square Shopping Centre.

Objectives: Information required. Research should be driven by some consideration of the behavioural aspects that are crucial in peoples' shopping behaviour. Consumer behaviour is not random; people are driven by specific motives and goals. It is the role of the business manager to ensure that these motives or benefits are delivered.

The role of the research phase is to think conceptually about the issues and develop a model of the influences in the decision-making process.

For example some of the issues that need explanation are:

- How do people decide where they will shop?
- Are there patterns to shopping behaviour?
- How do people perceive shopping centres and strip shopping areas?
- What barriers are there to the use of a shopping area?
- What features of an area act as facilitators in the shopping experience?
- Are there particular segments of the market that should be the primary target for a strip shopping centre?
- Should this target relate to frequency of shopping activity?
- Should programs aim at increasing the frequency of visits by the 'infrequent shopper' or should they encourage the 'current customer' to spend more of their funds on each visit.

Research methodology

1. Qualitative Research: Qualitative research is an information collection process that involves directly speaking with the target customers. Typically this involves a group of 8–10 people brought together to discuss the issue under the guidance of a researcher (the group moderator).

The advantage of this technique is that it allows the researcher to explore and understand the underlying motives, objectives and choices that drive behaviour. By understanding these factors the researcher is able to recommend approaches to achieve the objectives specified by the organisation.

For group sessions participants would be recruited from the local catchment area and would include both regular and infrequent users.

In a four group scenario the characteristics of each of the groups would be:

1. Women 22–30 years with no children
2. Women 35–40 years with children
3. Women 45–60 years
4. Males 25–40 years.

The group discussions would be conducted in the home of a resident. They should be run by a qualified market research consultant. The presence and assistance of a representative of the Association/Chamber and local Council would be requested for each session.

A topic-guide that lists all the issues is prepared prior to the groups and used as a prompt within the session. The topic guide generally starts with broad issues and becomes more focused as it progresses.

A detailed report is prepared by the researcher at the conclusion of this process. This report is based on a thorough review of the tape-recordings or video-recordings made in the group session.

2. Quantitative survey: This involves taking the behaviours and ideas generated in qualitative research then determining how prevalent they are among the population in the area.

There are two options for collecting this data; one being quite comprehensive in its scope (on the telephone to the community), the other being limited to customers currently using the centre and to residents within a 3 km radius of the Centre (face-to-face interviews in the street or door-to-door). There is also a difference in the cost of each.

A. Telephone survey

A broadly based survey of the catchment area for customers to a community shopping centre.

- *Sample size:* 300 people
- *Quotas:* Set for areas defined by the area of residence indicated in previous surveys of shoppers.
- *Methodology:* Telephone
- *Questionnaire:* This would be up to 20 minutes in length and cover 10–12 key questions plus demographic descriptions.
- *Analysis:* The data for the total survey is reweighted to reflect the correct proportions in each of the local areas. Weighting ensures that respondents living a long way from the centre are not over-represented.
- *Output:* The sample size will allow analysis on the basis of different groups in the survey. For example it may be useful to look at groups living at different distances from Brentford Square or different frequencies of shopping at the Centre.

B. A face-to-face interview at shopping centre

- *Sample Size:* 300 shoppers
- *Quotas:* Set for areas defined by the area of residence indicated in previous surveys of shoppers. Of course, it excludes those shoppers who never visit this shopping area.
- *Methodology:* Face-to-face interview conducted on the street or car-park areas.
- *Questionnaire:* This would be up to 15 minutes in length and cover 10–12 key questions plus demographic descriptions.
- *Analysis:* The data for the survey is reweighted to reflect the correct proportions in each of the local areas.
- *Output:* The sample size will allow analysis on the basis of different groups in the survey.
- *Cost:* This method would be 20% lower in interviewing cost than the telephone method.
- *Disadvantages:* The main problem with this methodology is that it fails to contact the infrequent or non-shoppers. We will not know why they shop elsewhere or why they have rejected Brentford Square. This means that strategies to expand the number of customers by getting new customers to visit cannot be developed as reliably.

C. A face-to-face interview conducted door-to-door in the identified shopper catchment

- *Sample Size:* 300 shoppers
- *Quotas:* Set for random areas defined by the known catchment of 30 000 residential properties. Includes those shoppers who never visit this shopping area.
- *Methodology:* Face-to-face interview conducted at the door of the residence.
- *Questionnaire:* This would be up to 15 minutes in length and cover 10–12 key questions plus demographic descriptions.
- *Analysis:* The data for the survey is reweighted to reflect the correct proportions in each of the local areas.
- *Output:* The sample size will allow analysis on the basis of different groups in the survey.
- *Cost:* This method would be 20% lower in interviewing cost than the telephone method.
- *Advantages:* The main advantage of this methodology is that it is more likely to contact the infrequent or non-shoppers.

Research outputs

- Summary of behaviour, attitudes in shopping and choice of shopping location.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Brentford Square Shopping Centre.
- A summary report on the quantitative study would be prepared along with the tables.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the types of research mentioned in this research proposal?
2. Explain the rationale for the suggestion that both a catchment area survey and a survey in the shopping centre should be conducted.
3. Give a detailed comparison of the strengths and weaknesses for each of the quantitative methods suggested in the proposal.
4. Give your arguments for and against the inclusion of the qualitative research as part of the research design.
5. Review the structure of the research proposal and re-write it using the material you have studied in Part 1, Chapter 4.