Local to global: How Shell tested market-level changes to make worldwide improvements

CHALLENGE

- Beginning in 2017, Shell noticed lower engagement + declining response rates across international markets

- To make necessary adjustments, Shell wanted to hear from a broader customer base—not just brand loyalists

- They wanted a more accurate picture of the customer experience

INSIGHT

Four areas for improvement were identified during the planning phase:

- Invitation method + survey entry

- Survey length

- Incentives

- Marketing communications

CHANGE

- Implemented new invitation options to reach broader customer base

- Shortened survey from 25 questions to 4 core + 6 market-specific questions

- Offered incentives that encouraged repeat visits

- Rolled out enhanced marketing communications to bring awareness to the programme

OUTCOME

- 159% increase in survey response

- 26% decrease in survey completion time

- 5% increase in OSAT

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Shell, a global energy company with expertise in the exploration, production, and refining of oil and natural gas, operates in more than 70 countries. Servicing 30+ million customers every day and employing 82,000 people, Shell's purpose is to "power progress together."

THE CHALLENGE

In 2017, Shell noticed its customer experience (CX) management programme was experiencing lower engagement and declining response rates across a wide range of markets. They knew to get the most accurate picture of the customer experience, they needed to hear from a broader customer base—not just brand loyalists who were already providing feedback. Shell went to SMG, its longtime CX partner, to better understand what tactics could be leveraged and to set a foundation for change in 2018 and beyond.
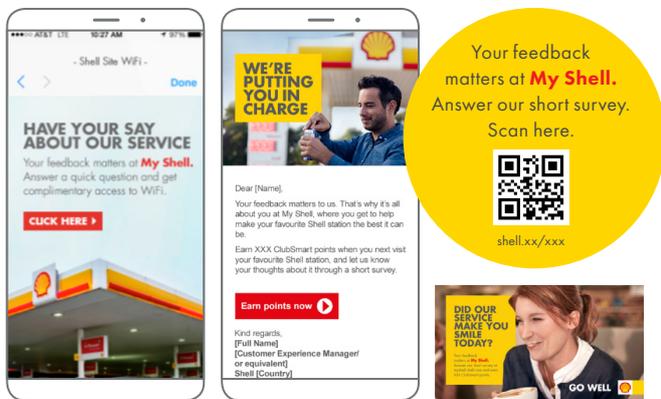
Enticing new marketing collateral was displayed at various touchpoints—in-app, in-store, and online—to reach a broader customer base.

THE INSIGHT

Shell conducted station visits in individual markets (Turkey, Austria, Switzerland, Thailand, Central Europe, and Eastern Europe) to understand the unique, local-level conditions. These markets were chosen not only because they are strategically important markets to Shell, but because they offered the greatest opportunity for improvement and response during the pilot phase.

When coupled with SMG's propriety research and proven methodology, the team came to the following conclusions about the current state of Shell's CX programme:

1. Completing the survey often took longer than customers' actual visits to Shell stations
2. Abandonment rate was high, particularly in markets that weren't offering an incentive
3. Survey entry could be made simpler by eliminating standard questions (visit date and time, station ID) with an optimised invitation method
4. Many customers were unaware that a loyalty programme existed and could benefit them

Shell focused on creating localised solutions in the test markets that could eventually be applied to the global programme.

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THE CHANGE

Shell rolled out changes to the four areas of improvement in 10 pilot markets. While each market took a slightly different approach, they each tested at least one of the following: marketing communications, survey length, survey entry/invitation, and incentives.

New survey invitation methods across pilot locations allowed for automatic answers on basic (yet time-consuming) questions like store location and contact information. Entry points were displayed as QR codes in-store, featured prominently in the app and online, and added to receipts. The team removed even more questions, relying on smart survey structure, text analytics, and location-level questions to provide detailed, relevant feedback—even with a shorter survey.

Enhanced marketing efforts were added in-store and online, increasing survey participation and bringing more awareness to non-loyalists about the rewards programme. Each market also tested incentives to encourage repeat visits, including discount vouchers and loyalty points.

"Our partnership with SMG has been very valuable in improving our VOC programme engagement. SMG has not only provided us with a VOC platform, but works with us in embedding the programme in the markets and frontline. Their account management team provided us with the expertise to design better incentives and customer communications. They then worked with our market teams to implement the changes. The results have been phenomenal, moving our engagement by over 50% in two years!"

UMER ASIF
Global CX Innovation Manager
Shell

THE OUTCOME

The efforts made across the pilot markets paid off. After the four areas of improvement were recognised and tweaked, Shell saw a:

- 159% average increase in survey responses
- 26% decrease in survey completion time
- 5% increase in Overall Satisfaction

FIGURE 1

Adjusting the survey length and invitation methods, although small changes, made a huge impact on survey response times and completion rates.

−26%
SURVEY
COMPLETION TIME

+159%
SURVEY
RESPONSES

By testing new strategies at a local level, Shell was able to make drastic changes to its global CX programme. With useful insights, proprietary research, and proven methodology, they achieved the desired results and can now incorporate important feedback from a broader customer base. ●

When your company spans across states, countries, and continents, it's imperative that you measure the customer experience at every location to provide the most accurate global picture of your brand and customers. SMG VisitView helps brands assess location-level feedback to surface actionable insights that drive loyalty and sales. **Learn more.**

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