

Talking Shop: Citibank HK finds insights in retailer perspective

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Maggie Yung is country marketing director for **Citi Hong Kong**. The bank recently commissioned **Synovate** to carry out a Shopper Engage study in one of its branches. Shopper Engage involves videoing customers in-store to learn about customer behaviour and gain insights into improving the customer experience. Retail in Asia interviewed Yung to find out Citibank's reasons for using Shopper Engage and what the bank learned from the study.



RIA: Synovate's Shopper Engage research is designed primarily for retailers. What made Citibank decide to commission this study?

MY: We were going through an aggressive branch expansion plan in Hong Kong and saw this as an opportunity to rethink our merchandising strategy. Customers visiting our branches were being presented with an array of posters, pamphlets, standees and digital signboards. We wanted to reduce the clutter and focus on presenting a clear and consistent message – the same way good retailers do.

Maggie Yung

RIA: What did you get out of the study? Were there any particular insights that stood out?

MY: The study enabled us to see how customers were interacting with our merchandise – for example, how long they spent looking at specific posters being presented to them.

The biggest insight – and surprise – was that the average branch visit lasted less than 30 seconds. This was very useful data for convincing my internal people that our messages had to be simple and direct.

Dividing those 30 seconds into in-traffic and out-traffic, we found that the time to get to the teller was around 12 seconds, while the time to leave the branch was around 18 seconds. When customers walk into a branch, they're very mission oriented. Once they've finished their transaction, they're more relaxed – and that's when we have the opportunity to get their attention. This was very interesting, as we hadn't taken that perspective before.

Another key finding involved the standees on the table where customers fill in their deposit slips. What the footage showed us was that, seeing three to five standees on the table, customers ignored them all. This made us decide to use just one standee in future.

RIA: Can you tell us about any "hot spots" that the study uncovered? Were these areas that you were using to their best advantage?

MY: Our waiting areas are hot spots, we learned. In a normal branch, this would be the queue area and the area where customers wait to see a relationship manager. In Citigold Centres, which are dedicated to servicing our high-net-worth customers, it is an area where customers can relax, have coffee and watch CNN. We decided to put up posters in these waiting areas to make use of a good opportunity to engage customers while they wait. Before we did this research, there was not a lot of information in the waiting areas for customers to look at.

RIA: What are the most important changes the bank has made since the study?

MY: The first change is that when we design a new branch's layout, we integrate merchandising opportunities around hot spots from the very beginning. Secondly, in terms of creative communications, we brief our internal staff on presenting a consistent key message of the month. We now adopt a strategy of less is more when it comes to our merchandising.