

Let's put a new lens on the future of shopper marketing.

The Shopper Aperture

BY ANNE HOWE
MARS ADVERTISING

In marketing, we tend to rely on symbols and diagrams to help us define our business. In theory, our diagrams help explain what “it is” and “how we think about it,” but diagrams should really help us define actions we should take, as well.

Given the complexity of—and rapid innovation in—shopper marketing, we need more actionable diagrams. Here’s a way to simplify a few of the newer practices in shopper marketing via pictures with a bias for action.

Picture an actionable definition. Close your eyes. Picture the ubiquitous three intersecting circles. You’ve seen this visual in countless shopper marketing decks: Brand, Retailer, Consumer. New versions might have “Shopper” in place of “Consumer.” While an iconic symbol of shopper marketing, it’s outdated.

We propose a new diagram as a better way to depict the current landscape of shopper marketing relative to reality only a few short years ago (*see chart one*). We can use the right column as a checklist of things that require action in today’s version of shopper marketing; full engagement in the discipline means actually delivering something against each item.

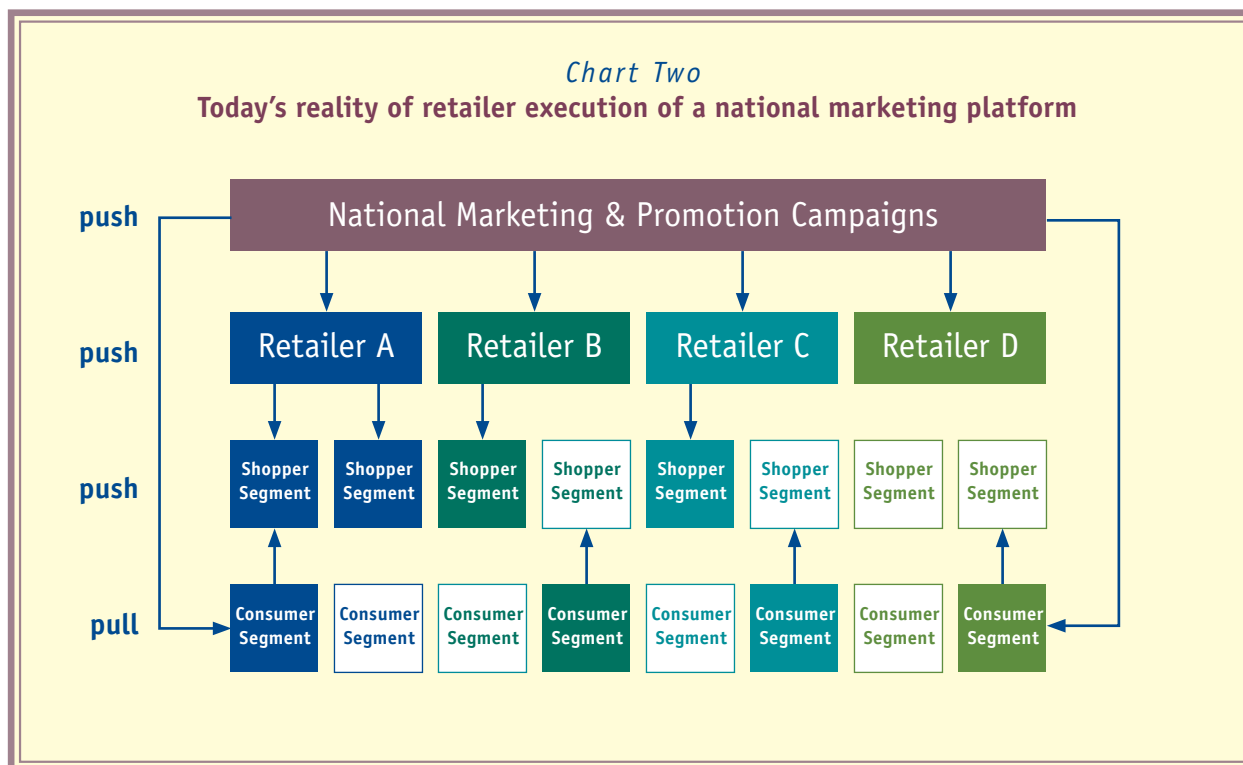
The practice of shopper marketing is evolving rapidly, with sophisticated retailers expecting manufacturers to bring solutions that drive trips, leverage the potential of the total store and grow basket size. Use this diagram to help make the transition from yesterday’s way of thinking to tomorrow’s action plan simpler and more effective.

Picture the problem. Back in the early days of shopper marketing—which for me means 1992—our objective was to deliver binders full of account-specific promotion options to sales teams to support communication of offers and trade deals.

By the mid-1990s, we were working with brand teams to develop national programs and platforms



SOURCE: Mars Advertising



SOURCE: Mars Advertising

to take to retailers. Shopper marketing success was measured by how many retailers executed a brand's national consumer promotion in their stores. Frankly, that model worked pretty well for a number of years.

Given the evolution of retailer sophistication, we need a new diagram to depict today's reality of retailer execution of a national marketing platform (see chart two). A top-down focus, driven by classic "push marketing," now results in only spotty effectiveness with retail partners.

Snapshot of a solution. Collaboration is the root of innovation in shopper marketing. But to get there, the focal point must switch from the consumer to the shopper. To win where the shopper's decision is really made, marketers should move beyond home-based demand/consumption thinking to full path-to-purchase understanding and messaging.

Assess your organization honestly: Does marketing understand the consumer in the shopping mode? Does the shopper play a role in the development of the overall brand-marketing plans? When these lenses are on, planning can be more collaborative internally, as well as externally.

We've coined the progressive path to planning all marketing activity as "shopper-designed" planning. This planning rigor has been in place for years within many progressive agencies and manufacturing companies, and

may well be the defining principle of a retailer-specific view on shopper marketing processes for the future.

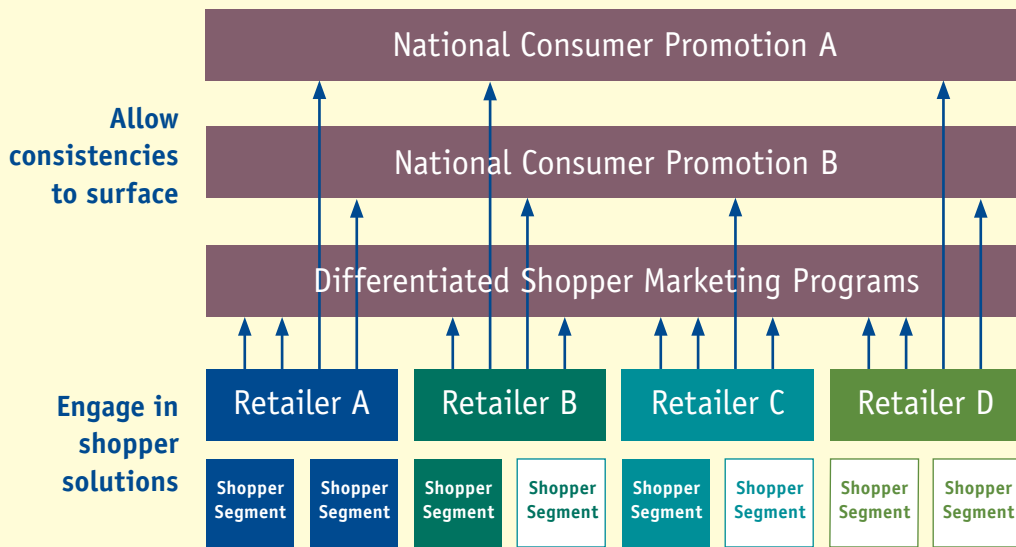
When the initiative works as a solution for the shopper *and* builds traffic/basket size for the retailer, *and* grows a brand without undermining the category, it makes the cut. When an approach or concept supports a strategy that both the manufacturer and multiple retailers have in common, it should ladder up to be considered by the manufacturer as an integrated national program that marketing dollars can support across a range of timeframes that make sense for multiple retailers.

Geoff Jackson, the director of shopper and event marketing for Campbell Soup Company, understands the value of this thinking, and now leads the organization's team that recently combined national consumer events and shopper-marketing staff into one cohesive unit.

"Our planning focus is changing to consider both shopper perspective and retailer strategies at the front-end of the planning cycles," says Geoff. "We are also working on solution-focused partnerships and expanded activation windows on key Campbell initiatives such as *Labels for Education* and healthy meal solutions," he adds.

Planning with a "pull" focus assures that the marketing spend is focused on those who are

Chart Three
Planning with a “pull” focus assures that the marketing spend is focused on core retailers



SOURCE: Mars Advertising

shopping at each of the core retailers in which every brand must rely on to make its growth target for the year (see chart three). This can help deliver differentiated approaches that retailers require and allow marketers to ladder those initiatives back up to effective and fully integrated national strategies.

When marketing dollars are mapped to support the programs along every stage of *the shopper’s journey*, it’s easy to correlate more of the marketing spend to specific results. This keeps shoppers happier, and results in growth for both brand and retailer, fueling a shopper-centric focus on more effective collaboration and future innovation in shopper marketing.

Transforming an annual planning process takes time and commitment to fundamental change within the organization. Once changes begin, it can take up to two years to fully realize the benefits, based on the long lead times between when a program is sold in and actually activated with shoppers. But there is no time like the present to begin, given the continued evolution of shopper marketing, especially within retail organizations.

Even relative newcomers into shopper marketing can realize benefits from shopper-designed planning. Tangible increases in both the sell-in rate and the level of retailer collaboration to ensure programs and initiatives are shopper-centric are just a few of the

early benefits that nascent shopper-marketing teams have realized by launching their shopper-marketing efforts against this process.

Frame the shopper. For true collaboration and innovation to be effective, the shopper must start and remain the “hero,” and be a core cog in the ways of working process for each and every effort. A cycle of continuous improvement is a clear benefit to be sure, but moreover, the shopper can take both subjectivity and guess-work off the table.

Presenting a boomer-centric concept for approval to a GenY buyer can be tricky, as can presenting a new-mom platform to a solid, yet old-school marketing veteran! All kidding aside, shopper-vetted insights, concepts and even results takes bias off the table. It puts objectivity front and center, increasing the program’s propensity to succeed, as well as providing rationale for improved ROI estimates. ■



ANNE HOWE is senior vice president, market intelligence for **Mars Advertising**, where she focuses on strategic development projects for the agency and its shopper-marketing clients. Anne can be reached at howea@marsusa.com.