


Chapter 7

Integrating Mystery Shopping With Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policies: A Strategic Approach to Business Development and Impact on Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality

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ABSTRACT

Mystery auditing (mystery shopping) is a vital tool offering insights into training programs and policy implementation, helping businesses identify strengths and areas for improvement. It enables companies to benchmark service standards against competitors, revealing best and worst practices for continuous development. Mystery shopping contributes to long-term business performance by enhancing customer satisfaction, engagement, and retention. Despite its growing use, academic research on mystery shopping remains limited, with few scholarly resources and specialized departments. This study examines how mystery shopping measures customer satisfaction, focusing on identifying service weaknesses. It also explores the integration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies in business practices, highlighting DEI's increasing relevance in brand management. The research applies mystery

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shopping in sectors like white goods and garment fashion, offering case studies, a SWOT analysis, and demonstrating how DEI policies can improve service quality and inclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

Mystery shopping is a widely utilized market research method in which individuals, referred to as mystery shoppers, gather data from the perspective of a customer. This method is often conducted without the awareness of the employees being assessed. In certain instances, mystery shoppers are required to assume predefined roles; however, this approach is not intended to mislead but rather to ensure that the collected data accurately represents typical customer interactions. As a research technique, mystery auditing provides valuable insights into frontline service encounters, enabling organizations to establish customer service standards, assess service quality and recognize outstanding employee performance. The data obtained through mystery shopping programs play a crucial role in evaluating customer experiences across various points of interaction with a company, whether in person or via telephone (Grove and Fisk, 1992; Finn and Kayandé, 1999; Finn, 2001; Wilson, 2001; Hesselink and van der, 2003; Hesselink et al., 2004; Ford et al., 2011; Chen and Barrows, 2015).

Mystery shopping is a systematic assessment tool that gives significant insights into the performance of training programs and policy implementations, assisting companies in identifying strengths and areas for growth. It also enables businesses to measure their performance against industry competitors, evaluating if their service standards are superior, comparable, or worse. Beyond internal reviews, mystery shopping can expose best and worst practices across rival organizations, providing strategic opportunity for continual development. Finally, mystery shopping helps to enhance revenue and long-term business performance by increasing customer pleasure, encouraging deeper involvement with products and services, and improving customer retention. One of the most significant problems faced in this investigation arose during its early phases. As the name implies, mystery shopping is an elusive and underexplored study topic. There is a lack of scholarly literature on the issue, and there are almost no specialized mystery shopping departments in colleges throughout the world. While some European institutions provide mystery shopping classes, the profession has mostly grown as a result of proprietary knowledge gathered by specialist research organizations (Grove and Fisk, 1992; Cunningham, 2023; Block et al., 2023; Leuhery et al., 2024; Badmus et al. 2024).

As a result, rather than performing a direct study into mystery shopping, it is vital to lay the groundwork by examining adjacent disciplines including customer

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