

## **AN ABSTRACT OF MSPA EUROPE GUIDELINES ON MYSTERY SHOPPING**

The full Guidelines can be found, in English, on the web pages of MSPA Europe at [www.mysteryshop.org/europe](http://www.mysteryshop.org/europe).

### **Ethical Principles**

- A Mystery Shopping study reviews how staff and processes perform against pre-determined standards during an interaction. The aim of the study should be to develop these and increase customer satisfaction.
- Mystery Shopping studies must not be used as the sole reason for dismissals and reprimands.
- To be ethical, the client's own staff must have been advised that their service delivery may be checked from time to time through mystery shopping

### **Technical Principles and Guidelines**

#### **Essential**

- Scenarios used for mystery shopping must be safe in that the mystery shoppers are not asked to do anything illegal, that puts them under any physical risk, that requires them to disclose personal information against their will, or that may lead to unwanted register entries and follow-up approaches to them.
- The objective, intended uses of the results, and reporting form of surveys must be made clear to participating staff.
- Names of staff members or their identities through video, tape etc. may only be revealed if staff have been informed about this beforehand. Since staff of a competitor cannot be informed about the research, their identities may not be revealed.
- The researcher and the client must agree on the future storage and destruction of all study material whether questionnaires, videos, tape recordings or other methods are involved.

#### **Advisory**

- The questionnaire should be focused on objective questions, aimed at gathering factual information. Some subjective ratings may be used to help the interpretation of the results.
- In a pilot study, prior to a full scale project, it is recommended that staff are informed, but this is not mandatory if staff identities are not revealed.

- When mystery shopping a competitor, the test should ideally include making a purchase that reflects the type of business that is tested. If there is nothing purchased, the strain on the competitor's personnel and resources should reflect, at most, a normal inquiry in the relevant market.

**Good Practice**

- The test scenario should be realistic, in that it mimics natural, realistic consumer behaviour in the market concerned.
- The distribution, timing and content of the test visits should represent the normal flow of customer interactions.
- Simplicity, brevity, and keeping the assignment appropriate helps to ensure that experiences are correctly recalled and reported.