



# CONSUMER RESEARCH ON THE INTERNET

PHOTOS: Max Missal

WHAT DO CONSUMERS WANT? WHAT DO THEY FEEL, WHAT BOTHERS THEM, WHAT WOULD THEY DO DIFFERENTLY IF THEY COULD? SYMRISE HAS ESTABLISHED A NEW TYPE OF MARKET RESEARCH

"People who are annoyed very often contribute significantly to innovations," says Dr. Dag Piper. Annoyed people include those who voice their opinions loudly in the various online communities, complain about advertising, products, taste, services and so on. "This is a really interesting aspect," says the Global Director Sensory and Consumer Insights, "because these are completely unfiltered opinions, and you can learn a lot from them."

Together with Cornelia Lichter, Marketing Director Beverages EAME, Marek Münstermann, Category Director, and Stephan Glaubitz, Marketing Manager, he reads through forums and blogs, using the suggestions posted to further improve products or develop new ones; occasionally he will also write something himself and introduce new topics - but always with complete candor and openness about who he is. "The Net community takes it very badly if they feel that they are being used incognito for corporate interests," says trend scout Piper. Netnography is the name of the new form of consumer research: the focus of ethnographic observation has been shifted to the Internet, allowing Symrise to keep a finger on the pulse of what consumers and buyers really want. At a rough estimate, there are around 100 million blogs worldwide. That is quite a lot, even if around 95 percent of them are no longer active. But you never know: Symrise uses specially developed software which systematically browses social networks and digital communities on the web and searches them for relevant information.

"You very seldom glean a really genuine, straight opinion from conventional surveys and focus groups," says Dr. Dag Piper. Symrise has used the new insight gathered in this manner in its "Citrus Study." Together with HYVE AG and their NetnographyInsights© approach, consumer opinions and insight were researched in online communities and used for the latest product developments. "You

can't rely solely on yesterday's methods for today's consumers," says the trend scout resolutely, "and, naturally, we formulate concrete questions before embarking on this kind of research."

What does the consumer associate with citrus beverages? What emotions are linked to citrus drinks? Which consumption situations play a role? How are citrus flavor, brand and packaging discussed online? Symrise can answer these and many other questions with the help of the new Citrus Study.

"Citrus is one of our core competencies," says Cornelia Lichter, "and with NATURALLY CITRUS!® we have successfully established an umbrella brand." Dr. Dag Piper adds, "Now we have to ask ourselves: 'What's next in citrus?' We want to develop visions for the products of the future, and we want to stay as close as possible to the needs and perceptions of consumers. Thanks to our new method and the insight we have gained, we are now in a position to add new impulses to our NATURALLY CITRUS!® portfolio, as well as offering our customers highly promising concepts which are very close to the consumer."

Symrise is constantly adapting to face new challenges. "We need to give consumers a greater say, to allow their needs to shape our offerings," explains Dag Piper, "What we do today is more than simply providing our customers with ingredients for products: We offer innovations and proprietary products."

The company does not rely solely on the Internet for development research: Symrise has set up a network with 13 universities and colleges, where ideas, suggestions and trends are studied and examined, and the Group also has global ideas teams staffed with 200 experts in six countries all around the world.

"We develop new ideas roughly two to three years in advance, and these are then implemented by our project managers," says Dr. Dag Piper. Let's see what the future holds! □