

Harsimrat Kaur, Marketing & Customer Insight Specialist

Name: Harsimrat Kaur

Job Title: Marketing & Customer Insight Specialist

Organisation: Wm Morrisons Supermarkets PLC

Number of years in current position: Six months

Qualifications: Masters in Mathematics



Briefly describe the organisation you work for.

Morrisons is one of the Big 4 Retailers in the UK providing Grocery and Non Food items to customers. It is a northern retailer based in Bradford and has 500 stores UK-wide, with online shopping available through a partnership with Ocado and Amazon.

Explain what you do on an average day at work.

My work varies a lot each day. My main task is to ensure that the business understands the opinions of our customers – this can be done through many avenues. I can use transactional data (what is scanned through the till) and analyse which types of customers are buying which products; whether a promotion did well; and whether we offered the right amount of space to an event. I also work with our agencies to consider whether our event was successful in comparison to the market (our competitors) particularly around Easter, Christmas, Valentine's Day and other key calendar events. Using search engine data (google.com or specific websites) we can also analyse what customers are searching for and this helps understand their mindset.

Away from the data, I also take part in research and accompany customers on shopping trips to understand how they shop and the decisions behind picking up products. We also have customer groups so we can ask questions to help understand why customers decide to buy a particular product. I also work with the pricing team in order to understand whether our pricing structure is competitive enough and why customers may choose to purchase items at a different price from elsewhere.

What do you like most about your job?

I love the numbers in the transactions and finding the story behind the shopping trip – number of

items; what time of day; price; customer type; which store; customer number (if there is a loyalty card presented); any discounts; refunds; vouchers; etc.

What stimulated your interest in maths, and when?

Mathematics was something I always struggled with but it was such a good feeling when I'd nailed an equation or methodology through my GCSE and A Levels. This led me to choose to study mathematics at University.

What influenced your career choice?

While studying at University, I worked in a Primary School as an office worker – but when the Headteacher found out that I was studying Mathematics she asked me to analyse achievement and attainment of students comparing high-income families to low-income families and write a report for the school staff and Ofsted. This was the first step in knowing I wanted to analyse data and really get into the numbers to understand what it was saying – and then explain that to others.

Which skills do you consider to be essential for your job?

Analytical skills; communication skills; being curious and questioning; presentation skills (it's great understanding the data, but you've got to explain it to others); willingness to learn code for software to help with analysing large data-sets. (For example SQL, SAS, SPSS, Alteryx, etc.)

Tell us a bit about any previous roles which you have held.

Before joining Marketing & Customer Insights, I was a Supply Chain Development Specialist for 18 months and as part of that role analysed data for our forecasting and replenishment systems. I was responsible for understanding all the formulae and variables that we could change to make the forecast and replenishment method/process most efficient. We then had to adapt the system to deal with seasonal products such as soups that increase gradually each Autumn and reduce again in Spring – and we had to look at methods to consider Christmas and Easter where there would be differently timed increases depending on products and areas of the business. The key here was to ensure that the customer had access to the right stock at the right time in the right place and to ensure that we didn't hold too much as a business, as every item we can't sell we have to pay to keep it in storage.

Any advice you may have for other individuals considering your career path?

You may well have the mathematical skills to do the job - but having the right attitude and being willing to learn every day is a vital skill to have and will take your career to the next level.

Your future career plans?

Continue in Marketing & Customer Insight and keep influencing business behaviour, taking into consideration customers and what they want/are looking for. I will also always be looking to learn new skills and get hold of new data to ensure the job is done better; simpler; faster and more effectively.