

> Yamaha Motor Europe N.V.

Motorcycle manufacturer accelerates new product development with SPSS Web survey tools

Situation

Yamaha Motor Europe N.V. (YME) is the European headquarters of Yamaha Motor Corporation. YME markets and sells Yamaha motorcycles, as well as a variety of land vehicles and watercraft, in 24 European countries.

Critical Issue

To gauge its potential customers' reactions to its latest motorbike designs, YME's new product development team conducted focus groups across Europe. While informative, however, the trips were costly and time-consuming.

Solution

In 2001, the company developed the Yamaha Design Café, an online portal that delivers interesting stories on Yamaha Motor's latest sports bikes geared toward YME's core audience—sports bike enthusiasts. Accompanying the stories are links to surveys, which provide a cost-effective means of collecting consumer data. YME used SPSS survey research tool mrInterview to develop and field the Design Café surveys.

Results

- Improved the new product evaluation process
- Enhanced the competitiveness of existing products

Yamaha Motor Europe N.V. (YME), based in Schphol Rijk, Amsterdam, is the European headquarters of Yamaha Motor Corporation. YME markets and sells Yamaha motorcycles, ATVs, snowmobiles, golf carts, and a wide range of other land vehicles and watercraft. YME has manufacturing facilities in France, Spain, Italy, and Turkey, and also services customers in all European countries. They include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, as well as developing markets in Eastern Europe.

At-a-glance

Country: Europe (headquarters in the Netherlands)
 Industry: Automotive
 Date Founded: 1956 YMC/1968 YMENV
 Company Type: Public
 Revenues: \$8.45 billion (Yamaha Motor Corporation)
 Employees: 32,066 (Yamaha Motor Corporation)

Application

Product development
 Product marketing

Solutions Used

Dimensions™
 mrInterview™
 mrTranslate™

To make sure its latest motorbike designs were on target, YME's new product development team conducted focus groups with potential customers across Europe. While highly informative, these trips were costly and time-consuming. The alternative, interviewing three- to four-thousand respondents by telephone, proved too expensive to be a feasible option.

In 2001, YME turned to the Internet for a more economical and efficient means of collecting comparable consumer insight. The result was the Yamaha Design Café (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe). The site, which can be reached from YME's home page, delivers interesting stories on Yamaha Motors' latest sports bikes based on interviews with Yamaha's engineers, product planners, and designers.

Accompanying the stories are links directing readers to surveys. In the surveys, YME asks technical questions that only a well-informed bike rider would know, such as the differences between two-stroke and four-stroke engines. This approach ensures that YME is truly hearing from its target audience—genuine motorbike enthusiasts.

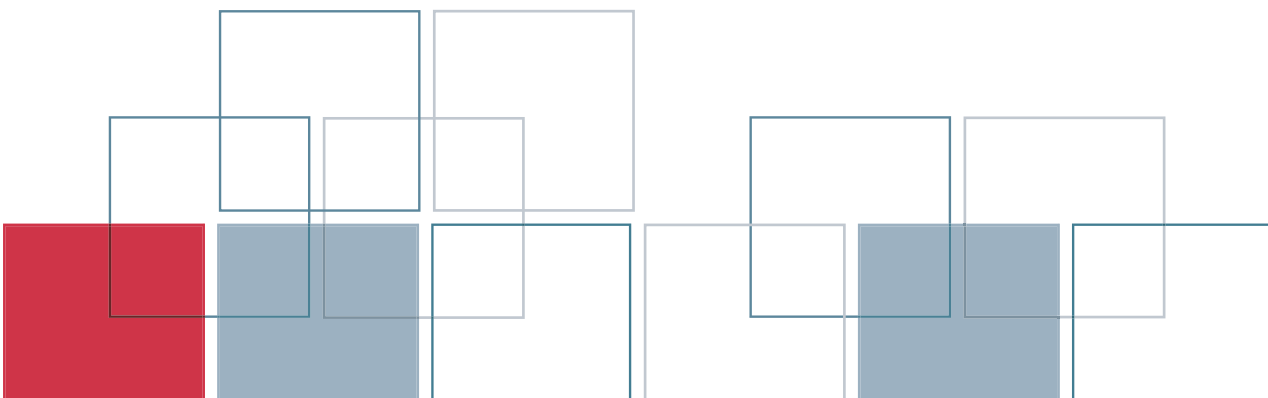
Hennes Fischer, YME's product planning consultant, used mrInterview from SPSS—a product within the company's Dimensions survey research technology platform—to develop and field the Design Café surveys. Familiarity with SPSS products was just one reason Fischer chose the SPSS survey application.

“SPSS' mrInterview was the only software that gave me the flexibility to design a questionnaire offline; other versions forced you to compose questionnaires on the server,” said Fischer. “Likewise, mrTranslate (another Dimensions offering) offered the best translation abilities and was the easiest to use—a necessity since the majority of our research is multilingual. Finally, the people at SPSS were true professionals. They listened to my needs and met all requests.”

YME saves time and reduces costs since the new product development team can now conduct focus groups with more specific information gathered by mrInterview beforehand; Web results also make some travel unnecessary. Beyond product planning, YME uses mrInterview to conduct internal research, asking dealers questions on a range of issues, from logistics to product evaluation. These results are then shared with logistics personnel, who can help dealers address bike delivery and other issues.

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– Hennes Fischer
Product Planning Consultant
Yamaha Motor Europe



Improved the new product evaluation process

The Yamaha Design Café has already paid dividends as a new product evaluation tool. Recently, Yamaha Motor Corporation created an electric two-wheeler for the Japanese market. YME wanted to determine the product’s potential in Europe, since the conventional European motorcycle customer doesn’t tend to buy electric scooters.

In only two weeks, the survey, which featured pictures of the bike, generated 2,000 responses from scooter lovers in France, Germany, and Italy. The feedback helped YME’s new product development team learn how Europeans would use the scooter and how much they were willing to pay for it. After some technical modifications, YME plans on importing the bike from Japan and introducing the motorbike in limited quantities in France, Germany, and Italy.

□ “It’s extremely important to stay in touch with how our customers feel. Thanks to mrlnterview, we never feel out of the loop, which gives us confidence that we’re always delivering a product that truly meets their expectations.”

– Hennes Fischer
Product Planning Consultant
Yamaha Motor Europe

Enhanced the competitiveness of existing products

Fischer uses mrlnterview for fast and focused research that gives the new product development team timely data upon which to act. He can also combine the results of his Dimensions-based research with qualitative and quantitative data generated by third-party research firms to identify new opportunities in product evolution.

By leveraging the domain expertise of his staff and the sophistication of traditional research agencies, Fischer now has access to richer data and is able to cultivate and validate development recommendations faster. For example, YME has modified present motorcycle models based on the survey replies that have been gathered through the Design Café, which has helped keep the vehicles competitive.

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