



# DEBRA KASSARJIAN

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## CONSUMER INSIGHTS CONSULTANT

### Bringing Consumer Targets to Life | Expanding Pipeline | Positioning Brands for Growth

Grew diverse consumer insights programs and teams, with emphasis in new product development, customer satisfaction, and brand communications. I am a builder of people, builder of capabilities, and builder of brands; a creative leader providing energy, clarity, and direction to business opportunities.

- CONSUMER INSIGHTS
- EDUCATOR
- GLOBAL INSIGHTS
- PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT
- INNOVATION PROGRAM EXPERT
- CUSTOMER SATISFACTION (CX)
- ACTIVATION
- STRATEGIC PLANNING
- BRAND COMMUNICATION

## BROAD EXPERTISE

- ❖ Developed national brands:
  - CPG: Hunt's, Healthy Choice, Butterball, Nestle, Dr. Pepper, White Wave, Chicken of the Sea
  - Foodservice: Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, Applebee's, IHOP
  - Other Industries: Chevron, Ortho, Levi Strauss, Apple, Alcon, Avery-Dennison
- ❖ Client, supplier and ad agency experience. Expert and educator in regards to qualitative and quantitative research.
- ❖ Designed and executed annual research plans for over 60 diverse business teams. Managed hundreds of projects, including new product platform research, need state segmentation, ideation, concept and positioning testing, advertising tests, product testing, journey mapping, customer satisfaction surveys, tracking, and matched market testing. Brought consumer targets to life through ethnographic videos, immersions, lunch and learns, and innovation centers.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

DK Insights, Pasadena, CA

**Principal** .....2017-Present

Established independent contractor business to uncover key consumer touch points and lead transformation change initiatives to incorporate innovation programs and brand communications. Deliver insightful marketing research based on years of experience driving growth for dozens of Fortune 500 companies. Translate research findings into meaningful and actionable strategies that align with customer stakeholder objectives. Manage programs / projects from concept to delivery.

- ❖ Educator for UCLA extension and Program Director for the Conference Board

Dineequity, Glendale, CA

**Director, Consumer Insights** ..... 2015-2017

Established Center of Excellence covering Innovation, Pipeline Development, Brand Communications, Technology and Restaurant Services for both IHOP and Applebee's.

- ❖ Launched and fully managed a million dollar guest satisfaction program domestically and internationally.
- ❖ Expanded IHOP's relevance across core customer segments and new younger demographics, as well as daypart/occasion drivers for sales, traffic and loyalty. Forged the new IHOP "Eat Up Every Moment" campaign.
- ❖ Facilitated exchange of innovation projects and outcomes within the company for cross pollination of successes. Created insight forums in order to bring targets and trends to life. Unified CI and Business Analytic strength.
- ❖ Partnered with BAIN to re-launch Applebee's brand strategy and pipeline to focus on new targets and needs.

TNS Global Custom Research, San Francisco, California

**Vice President, Innovation and New Product Practice Area Lead** ..... 2012-2015

Established new practice area. Educated teams in innovation best practices as part of a new accreditation program. Directed over a dozen Account Executives and covered a wide range of clients and industries.

- ❖ Specialized in need state segmentation, ideation, and co-creation tools, facilitating creative activation workshops to ensure foundational studies were integrated into client short and long-term strategic planning.
- ❖ Grew client businesses through deployment of customized strategies achieving defined objectives with results including:
  - Optimized back-to-school retail programs, led 7-country need state segmentation study, established health conscious segments for New Hope, determined Alcon's successful move from functional to scientific-based brand promise.

## YUM! BRANDS

**Director, Customer Experience and Innovation, Pizza Hut, Dallas, TX**..... 2010-2012

**Director, Consumer Insights and Menu Planning, Taco Bell, Irvine, CA**..... 2001-2010

Led foundational studies such as a major Needs State Segmentation and Kano model problem detection studies. Sat on leadership teams. Contributed to corporate long-range planning and annual YUM! Global Planning meetings.

### *Strong Research Director*

- ❖ Led collaborative menu insights and innovation for Taco Bell and Pizza Hut by expanding insights department from 3 to 9, developing and managing innovation and customer satisfaction research budgets exceeding \$5M annually, and increasing pipeline productivity, sales, and profits over 10 years.

### *Leader in Business Development and Strategic Planning*

- ❖ Developed new product research platforms, ground up, for \$6B Fast Food division by partnering with R&D and marketing to introduce over 100 new products in 10 years, expanding depth of pipeline from 3 months to 3 years, and establishing protocols for improving test market success rate from 50% to 90%, leading to years of continuous growth.
- ❖ Brought vast array of lifestyle themes to life through team immersions, Lunch and Learns, and ethnographic videos, resulting in impactful pipeline and communications and complete redesign of retail space.
- ❖ Established multimillion-dollar partnership with Frito-Lay, positioning Doritos Locos Tacos as strongest product launch in Taco Bell's history.
- ❖ Led major shift in pipeline from core products to expanding brands into new dayparts, occasions, and targets. Developed /tested major brand campaigns with 100s of product advertising spots.
- ❖ Grew impact of Pizza Hut's Customer Satisfaction Program for Franchisees by classifying 6000 Pizza Hut stores into five performance levels and establishing prescriptive programs tied to incentives to spur ongoing sales improvements.

### *Progressive Educator of Marketing Research and Global Insights*

- ❖ Pioneered cutting edge capabilities such as Facebook micro-panel ethnographies and LaunchPad rapid, iterative product development – an approach that identifies many more proven ideas at much greater speed than traditional stage-gate process for half the cost.
- ❖ Acted as international trainer for YUM! marketing teams in terms of building pipeline and establishing best practices.
- ❖ Chaired Marketing Research Conference Board, for executive group across diverse industries to share best practices several times a year; attended CX 2017 SMG Forum.
- ❖ Presented at YUM! Global Marketing Insights, TMRE (2010 and 2011) and Front End of Innovation (2014).

## OTHER EXPERIENCE

CONAGRA, Irvine, California - **Associate Director**

M/A/R/C, Irvine, California - **Senior Account Manager**

CHEVRON, San Ramon, California - **Project Director**, Received President's Award

MCCANN-ERICKSON ADVERTISING, San Francisco, California - **Research Project Director**

## TRAINING | PARTNERSHIPS

- ❖ Research partner for McKinsey Consulting.
- ❖ Trained as a Baldrige Assessor, executed extensive internal assessment, published corporate directive.

## EDUCATION

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
**Master of Science (MS)**, Business Administration

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, Los Angeles, California  
**Bachelor of Arts (BA)**, Psychology