Carlsberg looked to pioneering technology to discover what stands out in the cluttered pub environment.

**The brief**

A man walks into a bar. But what does he buy? It’s most likely to be one of the drinks that catches his eye. So last year Carlsberg Sweden set out to discover how best to do exactly that.

“We’d done a major ethnographic study previously, but we still felt we needed some quantitative data to support the findings we had,” says Jonas Ydén, market research manager, Carlsberg Sweden.

Pubs are typically laden with point of sale (POS) material, from beer mats to towels.
Case study: Carlsberg

“\textbf{Carlsberg wanted to get as close as it could to what draws the eye of drinks buyers}”

The way they aggregate the data means there’s basically no manual handling involved, which also made Tobii’s offer the most cost effective.”

The stage was set for what Ydén believes was the world’s first live eye-scanning study of beer selection in a pub.

\textbf{The execution}

The study was carried out in three different pubs in Stockholm using a total of 250 respondents. Upon entering each pub, people who agreed to participate were interviewed to establish what drink or brand they were planning to order. The participant then put on the Tobii Glasses, which were calibrated by a Tobii representative, and left to order at the bar. After the purchase decision a follow-up interview was carried out. “Not only would we be able to see where people looked, but we would also be able to see who changed their minds and then find correlations between what they looked at and what they actually ordered,” says Ydén.

Participants were given gift certificates valid for exchange at multiple outlets for the cost of a drink to thank them for their participation in the survey.

\textbf{The strategy}

Ydén commissioned market research company Ipsos Sweden, which in turn involved research company MRC International to help carry out the study, for its experience in the methods of using eye-tracking to gain the most accurate results. The teams decided it was important to use a mobile eye-tracking device that looked and felt as natural as possible so that consumers would not alter their behaviour as a result.

Together Ydén and his agencies approached several providers of the eye-scanning technology, and eventually opted for the offering of Tobii Glasses. “Tobii’s glasses are far less intrusive than any of the others we saw,” says Ydén “they essentially look like sunglasses.”

CRITICAL TOOL

With these marketing materials representing a significant investment for drinks brands, Carlsberg Sweden was keen to discover which of them influenced consumers the most and which were not providing value for money.

“My first thought was eye-tracking technology,” says Ydén. “We needed to find out exactly what the purchase drivers are.”

Having previously tested eye-tracking technology with print advertising using computer screens, Ydén was aware of its effectiveness. But this time round he wanted it to be even more specific.

With the myriad of stimuli surrounding customers on an evening out, Carlsberg wanted to get as close as it could to exactly what drinks buyers are drawn to at the point of purchase. The company decided to step into pub goers’ shoes and literally see what they see, through the use of eye-tracking glasses.

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Analysis

Although Ydén thinks the project was generally well executed, he admits they should have planned some back-ups in terms of participating outlets.

“We carried out the research in three different locations, but we had planned four to begin with – that fourth outlet being representative of two other segments of the market. So we completed the research in British and Irish pubs, but we didn’t manage to capture insights for the nightclub and trendy bar market because the outlet in question pulled out on the same day we were going to do the field work.”

Nevertheless, Ydén says the research Carlsberg has done previously into this segment means it already has a “holistic” view of that type of consumer, so this field work would have just been “the final piece in the puzzle”.

Ydén says Carlsberg may well use the Tobii eye-tracking technology in further research studies.

“I think we can close the door on the technology in terms of the on-trade market, but we may well use it in retail. Eye tracking has been used on supermarket shelves before, but what about if you take a few steps back and see how you can affect the customer on their way to make their purchase?” he says.

All in all Ydén is very pleased with the pioneering gamble that Carlsberg took in the Tobii technology, especially since it was only in its Beta phase at the time.

“At Carlsberg we pride ourselves on being able to understand consumers’ likes and behaviours, and eye tracking has allowed us to take this to the next level. By tracking a potential customer’s point of gaze we were able to measure aspects of the decision making process in a way that has never been done before.”

Tabitha Barda is former features editor of The Marketer, now editor of Caterer Middle East