

SHOPPER INTELLIGENCE CASE STUDY

Moving the conversation from price to shelf

Executive summary

Unilever was facing retailer pressure to lower deodorant prices. The concern was that deeper price investment would erode margin, contribute to price deflation and devalue both the brand and the category.

Shopper Intelligence helped Unilever shift the conversation from price to shelf. The evidence showed that price was important, but not the lever most likely to change the game. Shelf layout, simplicity and availability were the bigger opportunity because they mattered to shoppers and satisfaction was poor.

Rank 9 layout and availability importance across the store	Rank 175 recommendation experience among the weakest categories	Value up category value increased while brand price points were protected
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At a glance

Market	Australia
Category	Deodorants
Client type	FMCG manufacturer / Unilever
Retail context	Coles and Woolworths
Business issue	Price pressure, margin erosion and risk of category/brand devaluation
Shopper Intelligence role	Identifying the shelf layout, simplicity, availability and satisfaction issues behind the commercial pressure
Main commercial result	The conversation shifted from price deflation to shelf improvement
Reported outcome	Layout changed in Coles; Woolworths later copied the change; category value increased for both retailers

The business context

The deodorants category was under price pressure, with the retailer looking to lower brand prices as a way to drive sales. For Unilever, the concern was margin erosion, price deflation and the risk of devaluing both the brand and the category.

Unilever needed to prove that the bigger opportunity was the shelf experience. The aim was to show that shoppers needed a simpler, easier-to-shop fixture, particularly where the shopper was buying for someone else.

The Challenge

The commercial challenge was to move the retailer conversation away from price as the default response to commercial pressure. Price mattered, but the question was whether more price investment would really change the game.

Unilever needed a shopper-backed case for prioritising shelf layout, navigation and availability, rather than relying on lower prices alone.

What Shopper Intelligence proved

1. Price mattered, but it was not the differentiator

Shopper Intelligence showed that price was important, but more of a hygiene factor than the lever that would transform the category. Price sat in the middle of the importance ranking and satisfaction was acceptable, so further investment in price alone was unlikely to differentiate the retailer or solve the shopper problem.

The stronger opportunity was shelf: it was important to shoppers, satisfaction was weaker, and improving it could change the shopping experience more meaningfully.

2. Shelf layout and availability were the real priorities

At category level, layout and availability ranked highly for customer satisfaction, with Shopper Intelligence identifying Rank 9 across the store. This gave Unilever a clear shopper-backed reason to shift the retailer priority from price to shelf.

3. The shopper experience needed attention

The deodorants category was performing poorly on recommendation and satisfaction measures, with Shopper Intelligence indicating Rank 175 out of 178. This showed that the issue was not just price; the category experience itself needed to improve.

4. Simplicity mattered for shoppers buying for someone else

The case also highlighted that satisfaction was particularly poor amongst shoppers buying for someone else. When the shopper is not the end consumer, clearer navigation and a simpler fixture become even more important.

How the insight was used

The evidence gave Unilever a stronger way to open a shopper-centric conversation with Coles and Woolworths. Instead of focusing only on lowering prices, the team could recommend shelf layout, availability and planogram changes that addressed the real shopper issue.

Unilever also conducted eye-tracking research to further understand out-of-stock and layout issues. This supported the Shopper Intelligence findings and helped build the case for practical shelf changes.

Client perspective

"We knew the problems in the category e.g. price deflation. We wanted to prove simplicity was just as important as offers. Shopper Intelligence helped turn around price deflation and highlighted the missed opportunity if we didn't get it right."

Customer Business Manager

The Result

The layout changed in Coles, and shopper satisfaction improved versus Woolworths. A year later, Woolworths copied the layout change and its satisfaction rose too.

Category value increased for both retailers, brand price points remained undiluted and sales increased. The case shows how shopper evidence helped protect value while creating a stronger commercial argument for shelf improvement.

Client perspective

"Shopper Intelligence was able to unlock key insights about our shoppers that we never knew about. It strongly complements our existing data suite and tech capabilities whilst enabling us to open a shopper-centric conversation with our retail partners about what shoppers want. ROI from the review demonstrated how pivotal the Shopper Intelligence Insight was in not only landing the review but also improving the layout for the shopper."

Shopper Excellence & Capability Manager

The takeaway

This case shows how Shopper Intelligence can help suppliers defend category and brand value by identifying the shopper issue behind the commercial pressure. In deodorants, the insight helped shift the priority from price reduction to shelf layout, simplicity and availability.

By proving that shelf was both important and underperforming, Unilever had a stronger case for planogram change and was able to protect brand price points rather than defaulting to price deflation.

Want to understand what is really driving shopper behaviour in your category?

Speak to Shopper Intelligence: shopperintelligence.com/contact