Consumer Research for the stars of the future

Boneheads Grilled Fish and Piri Piri Chicken

The Background

With five stores in Georgia and one in Florida, Boneheads is not the biggest restaurant chain. Yet.

The Boneheads concept is about providing highly flavorsome grilled fish and piri-piri chicken. With signature spices and piri-piri based sauces, Boneheads cooks in many styles and has a deep seated aversion to deep-frying. The concept is targeted at the health conscious, slightly more affluent market, and is positioned at the top end of the Fast Casual sector.

The brand concept makes a point of distancing Boneheads’ founders from being “businessmen.” But, with the very savvy Raving Brands as a parent company, you know it is going to be an astute operation. Raving Brands is behind several innovative concepts including the highly successful Moe’s Southwest Grill. Their business model is innovative concepts and growth through franchise sales. Given the pedigree, Boneheads is one to watch.

The Issue

The value of professional, quality consumer research is not in question. Such research has two huge benefits for a chain at Boneheads’ stage of development. First, it tests the market and the concept allowing for vital tweaks and changes. Secondly, it quantifies the value of the brand to potential franchisees and demonstrates commitment.

Value is not the problem. Cost-justifying the expenditure against a handful of stores is. With just four units open at the time when Boneheads first approached Alexander Babbage, the need was for effective and cost-efficient research.

The Solution

Meet the MAXtrak® research system. At a generic level all consumer research follows the same pattern: consult with client to understand need; decide the best way to collect information and design survey; collect data; process, analyze, and interpret data; deliver actionable results. The MAXtrak® research system is a standardization of that process designed by Alexander Babbage to optimise efficiency and results.
At the heart of the system is the MAXtrak® unit. This is a programmable handheld device with an easy interface for collecting responses. Its benefits to the process include improved quality of information, cost reduction, and faster data collection and processing.

In the case of Boneheads, 397 sets of responses were collected in one day in the four stores. The data was then downloaded, processed, and a report delivered to Raving Brands. In its entirety the whole process took less than three weeks.

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Seth Salzman, Senior Vice President and Brand Head at Boneheads

The Result

There were two pleasing types of result that came out of the project.

The first concerns the insights that the report delivered. Detail has to remain confidential for obvious reasons. But, in general, the project did reveal that Boneheads was already reaching a very attractive demographic and highlighted an opportunity to establish an unique positioning. At the same time a couple of weaknesses were identified and subsequently remedied. And there was one market segment that had been seemingly overlooked. These were just some of the many findings.

In that aspect the project delivered what was required: a valuable report, delivered in a very timely manner and pointing the way to several actions likely to deliver real success. The value of the report would be felt both in brand development and franchisee recruitment.

The other pleasing result was the fact that the project had been done at all. With just four stores and a correspondingly small budget, such quality research would normally not be possible. But, the efficiencies of Alexander Babbage's proprietary MAXtrak® research system means it is now within the reach of even the smallest chains. Helping the fledgling chain become a star of the future.

Seth Salzman, Senior Vice President and Brand Head at Boneheads: “I didn't think that we could afford proper consumer research for Boneheads as much as I knew we needed it. Alexander Babbage and MAXtrak® proved me wrong. The quality of the research and the information that we received was great. In some cases it helped strengthen our thoughts for change and it also helped us find out a few things that surprised us. Along with making some changes to better serve our consumers, it also gave us the data we needed to show our franchisees why we were making the changes and also how many things their customers already loved about the brand. Since the changes have been made, we have seen great results and have gotten very positive feedback from our customers.”