

# Locating and leveraging inside sources of consumer insight

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Credit: Cornell Food & Brand Lab

Most people do not really know why they buy what they buy, eat what they eat, or do what they do! As consumers we can make something up or answer a survey, but we don't know buying trends and behaviors as well as those directly in the field. Sales associates or food service workers, for example, watch dozens— or even hundreds— of consumer decisions every day. These experts are the Inside Sources.

Most consumer researchers utilize [focus groups](#), surveys, or laddering

interviews to understand what people do and how to change it. New research from the Cornell Food and Brand Lab, published in the *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, shows these efforts often come up short on real insights because they overlook inside sources that frequently or intensely deal with the target market. For instance, if a study were being done on golfers, inside sources might include the caddy, pro shop staff, groundskeepers, golf instructors, or country club waiters. Whoever they may be, inside sources can provide unexpected, notable observations about the behavior of the target population that would not otherwise be brought to researchers' attention.

This study shows an inexpensive, direct approach for locating, questioning and leveraging inside sources to find solutions for behavior-based problems. According to the author, Brian Wansink, Professor and Director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab, inside [sources](#) can be invaluable for both marketing insights as well as public health insights: "Who do you think has more insights about why people buy fish instead of beef - the person who buys it once a month or the butcher who sees people buy it 100 times a day?"

**More information:** Wansink, Brian (2015). Locating and Leveraging Inside Sources of Consumer Insight. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 33(3). [DOI: 10.1108/JCM-08-2015-1513](https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-08-2015-1513)

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