

# Small Data

## Takeaways

- You should read how Lego went for rebuilding because of a single data point in 2004. Cool story.
- Small data points are powerful when you contextualize them within multifaceted layers of observations and insights.
- Pay attention to cultural imbalances as they indicate what's missing in people's lives, what's overrepresented or underrepresented in society — revealing areas of lack in consumer lives.
- Anecdote:
  - Following the 2008 recession, Lindstrom helped the family-owned supermarket chain Lowes Foods conceive of a new strategy for stores in North Carolina and South Carolina. The company struggled to compete with online shopping and Walmart. Lindstrom's small data observations showed that Americans value security and are often fearful – in most other countries, for example, hotel room windows open, but American hotels bolt them shut. He noted that American architects and designers seemed fixated on round edges, which give the illusion that space is embracing its occupants. Lindstrom noted an abundance of rules and restrictions – even cotton swabs came with safety instructions. He concluded that freedom wasn't prevalent in everyday US culture, making it an untapped desire.
  - Lindstrom told Lowes's bakeries, for example, to sell only square cakes – which shoppers expect to be round – symbolically giving customers permission to disregard their own rules. Through myriad small data-driven elements, Lindstrom helped Lowes's customers experience liberation during shopping.
  - This can be just a correlation and not really the direct cause of it, but still interesting and a different perspective.

- **Leverage small data insights by following seven steps.**
  - **Collecting** – Seek out baseline perspectives on macro and micro levels as you work toward a more objective understanding of the culture you study. Create a hypothesis by interviewing sources with insider and outsider points of view.
  - **Clues** – Pay attention to details that seem incongruous to their surroundings or anything that appears noticeably missing from people’s lives. Reflect on what most stirs people’s emotions.
  - **Connecting** – Consider areas of similarity between the clues you gather and whether they validate or invalidate your initial hypothesis.
  - **Causation** – Ask what emotions the clues evoke: How would you feel if you inhabited these people’s lives?
  - **Correlation** – Search for shifts in consumer behavior: entry points. Try to understand the life events that trigger significant personality changes.
  - **Compensation** – Reflect on which unfulfilled or unmet desires lead your research subjects to compensatory behavior.
  - **Concept** – How you can compensate for what people feel their lives lack?

Cultivating a more objective understanding of your inner motivations and desires helps you assess those of others. The brands you love likely reflect a sense of what you feel you lack in your life.

## Resources

