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**Online Shopping**

**A collaborative thought piece By Big River Solutions & Shoppercentric**

## Shoppercentric and Big River Solutions have been collaborating for over 5 years, bringing together their expertise in Category Management / Shopper Marketing Solutions and Shopper Insight.

In a recent Mintel report online grocery sales were predicted to be worth £11.1bn in the UK in 2017, which will be an increase of £1.1bn on the previous year. Other data shows that the proportion of shoppers buying most or all of their groceries online is growing - 14% in 2017 vs 7% in 2014 – such that the online channel now accounts for around 6% of all grocery sales.

Two of the key drivers of growth are convenience and the technology that facilitates exactly that. The introduction of one hour delivery slots, click and collect, driverless and same day deliveries are all focused on meeting the core need for greater convenience. It allows the time consuming job of a main shop to be completed by others, with only the task of putting it away left to the shopper.

Perhaps not surprisingly, in the UK at least the largest retailers are also currently the largest e-tailers. The growth in online has made little change to the status quo, although initiatives such as the food boxes and new entrants to online are starting to make their presence known. So what does this mean for suppliers?

Regardless of whether your brand is being sold on or offline or both, you still need to maximise sales by influencing shoppers. And yet with many regular online shoppers using a favourites list to really milk the convenience and speed of online shopping, how do you make sure your brand stands out enough to get onto the list in the first place, and subsequently stays on that list?

In fact, the same broad issues faced in store also apply to online shopping:

* How do we effect change in this developing channel and ensure we maximise ease of shop, engagement and sales?
* How do we positively interrupt behaviour in order to influence what shoppers do?
* How do we ensure that we simplify and make the task easy, but maintain choice?

Add to this the fact that online shoppers shop less often meaning that a brand’s opportunity to influence is less than in store. What does this mean for promotions, communication and engagement?

Just because your brand is on a page rather than a shelf doesn’t mean some of the core business principles are no longer relevant. Category management alongside shopper marketing is crucial in optimising ease of shop in the online channel, improving product pick up and purchase, and ensuring that the shopper’s need of choice are delivered.

It is equally as important to understand shopper behaviour in this channel if you are going to stand a chance of influencing shoppers’ decision making, and deliver the ease of shop that is so important in relation to convenience. You may feel that as a supplier you can’t effect change on the retailer’s website, but in the same way that category management and shopper marketing can influence shoppers in stores, you can become the retailer’s trusted advisor for your category online if you have key pieces of information at your finger tips:

* Knowing the role of your category online can support both ranging and developing the right channel strategy vs bricks & mortar
* Recognising the points of friction on the path to purchase can determine improvements in ease of shop
* Understanding levels of purchase planning and opportunities to influence change can help to prioritise tactical shopper marketing
* And talking to your trade buyers about both in store and online shows you understand the multicuannel issues they face - utilising the benefits of each channel, and the potential crossover via click & collect

Understanding online shopping isn’t just about creative or easily navigated websites, it is also about the core fundamentals of shopper behaviour and decision making, and the retailer / brand business relationship:

* Using shopper insights to influence their purchase behaviour online
* Applying the fundamentals of category management to drive growth for the retailer and your brands
* Being a proactive part of your retailers thriving business
* Creating a growth strategy and the tactics to deliver specifically for the online channel

If you want to know more about how category management can support your brand online we are here to help:

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