

ONLINE CPG PURCHASING BEHAVIOURS

Understanding digital women with Google

Summary

Situation

Google wanted to understand the extent to which consumers investigate CPG products online, how they engage with CPG brands online and how this relates to offline behaviour and the products that they buy.

Approach

We conducted two parallel projects. First, we investigated CPG products using our cross-media panel which combines observed online behaviour with monitored purchase data. The second project added a survey element to the cross-media tracking to compare 'digital women'; those who use of the internet to search for and purchase CPG goods with those who do not.

Outcome

Google is using the research to better understand the consumer audience for CPG products and to help CPG brands explore the importance of online for their end customers.



Situation

Compared with other categories, relatively little is known about the relationship between online research behaviours and subsequent purchases of Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG). Google wanted to understand the extent to which consumers investigate CPG products online, how they engage with CPG brands online, and how these behaviours relate to their in-store purchase activity. In particular, with women continuing to dominate the role of main household shopper, Google wanted to investigate how they behave online within the CPG category.

With our innovative digital media technology (that captures online behavioural data), our ability to analyse large, complex data sets and our expertise in survey research, we were uniquely positioned to carry out this research. Our approach made it possible to link online behaviour with offline procedures and attitudes to build a compelling 360-degree picture of CPG activities.

Approach

We conducted two projects in parallel. First, we investigated consumer practices within four CPG product categories: food and drink, baby care, beauty and household. Using our cross-media panel of more than 7,000 respondents

which combines observed online behaviour with monitored purchase data, we tracked their online searches and offline buying behaviour for a year. From the resulting data, our Digital Media Intelligence team extracted a database containing more than 100,000 searches and 2 million page impressions.

The second project compared women who use the internet to search for and purchase CPG goods ('digital women') with those who do not. This project combined a new analysis of the CPG database with an additional survey element, thereby demonstrating the versatility of the digital tracking approach; that is, using existing data to answer a new business question.

We conducted a nationally-representative survey to size the market for digital women and to set the parameters for further surveys, either online or via the telephone, with digital and non-digital women respectively. This research helped us to understand the attitudes and opinions that were driving the behaviour that we had observed. Both projects required detailed, complex analysis to bring together disparate datasets.

"This was a landmark study for Google, executed brilliantly by GfK's team"

Bernardo Correia,
Industry Head,
Google UK

“This study was challenging to execute due to the large and complex datasets GfK was working with and especially the categorization of data to identify CPG-related online activities. We worked closely together with the GfK team to apply some innovative new approaches, and the results show the benefit of directly linking purchase data with online behavioural data”

Louisa Middleton,
Product Marketing Manager,
EMEA Market Insights,
Google UK



Outcome

The research has provided a fresh perspective on online CPG-category behaviour, and delivered important insights into the volumes of consumers searching online and the impact on spend and advocacy. It has revealed that a considerable online audience exists for CPG brands and has linked search activity with consumer behaviour and spend.

The findings show that, during 2010, more than 19 million UK adults searched the internet for products in the food and drink category alone. There are nearly 8 million women in the UK who are ‘main household shoppers’ and who search for CPG categories online; on average, these women spend more than their non-digital counterparts. Digital women are also more likely to be brand advocates.

Google has made the findings available to the CPG industry to help brands better understand their customers and to inform digital media strategies.

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