

DOHERTY'S MEATS

Overview

This case study highlights how insight can be used to identify key shoppers and stores in order to target effectively and compete as a family business against large brands in the competitive retail landscape. Doherty's Meats have made effective use of cost-effective sampling in their heartland, along with social media, to introduce new customers to the brand and increase repeat purchases to maximise their performance in store.

The Company

Family owned since 1830, Doherty's Meats is steeped in history and prides itself on quality as one of Northern Ireland's leading producers of chilled and frozen meat products. By making use of local and fresh ingredients and unique family recipes, Doherty's Meats has won several awards, including Gold and Bronze in the 2017 FreeFrom Ireland Awards. Doherty's Meats' products include chilled and frozen sausages in a variety of flavours, burgers, meatballs, bacon, black and white puddings, chicken and a comprehensive gluten free range. These are distributed through a number of retailers across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the UK.



Earlier in 2018, a meatloaf in an oven-ready tray was launched as part of Doherty's commitment to innovative products – building on their knowledge and expertise in creating excellent quality products and filling a gap in the market for convenience shoppers.



Insight

Doherty's Meats received their first shopper insight report in May 2016. The report revealed that despite strong sales growth in their core Northern Irish stores, customer penetration and repeat rate overall were declining. Aware of the importance of a loyal customer base for the long-term growth of their business, Doherty's Meats were keen to take action and engage with their key customer segments. The shopper insight report revealed that Doherty's Meats had strong appeal amongst families (both young and old) and to convenience and price sensitive shoppers. It also confirmed the strength of their performance in the North West of Northern Ireland. With this information, Doherty's were able to build on their solid foundations and target, with confidence, key shopper segments in their heartland.

Action

The first point of action was to focus on boosting their customer penetration, by scheduling regular sampling activities in their core stores, paying particular attention to raising the awareness of families and convenience shoppers – known core customers of the Doherty's brand.



“We decided to focus our attention on looking at our local core stores and our current customers. Just a small increase here makes a big difference to performance overall.” – Brian McQuaid, Sales Manager

The appeal of the Doherty’s brand was extended further in 2018, with the launch of two gluten free frozen lines in Tesco in Northern Ireland. These award-winning lines – the only frozen gluten free meat options in Tesco – were added to the Doherty’s portfolio in Tesco to introduce new customers to the brand who were previously unable to enjoy Doherty’s products.

Furthermore, a brand refresh was designed to raise awareness and improve the visibility of the Doherty’s Meats brand, reinforced by a stronger online presence, with regular competitions and recipe ideas and more effective use of social media to spread the word.

Outcome

The in-store sampling was a great success, boosting penetration in core stores by up to 8% and increasing repeat purchase rates by up to 38%. New consumers have been introduced to the brand and a much higher proportion of customers are coming back for more.

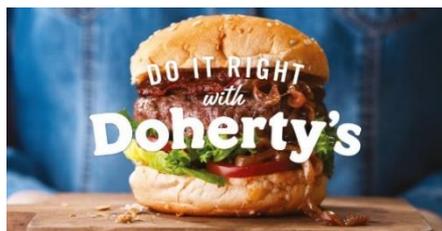
The introduction of the gluten free lines has attracted 4,000 new customers and boosted total brand sales by 5% in heartland stores, coupled with a rise in purchase frequency. The gluten free burger product has been particularly well received, with a repeat purchase rate of 18% since its launch – well above the average for the frozen meat category.

“We are delighted with the success we have had over the past eighteen months. We had confidence in the strength of our brand but the shopper insight report was a real wake-up call and prompted us to be more much more pro-active in engaging our core shoppers. The in-store sampling not only lifted out penetration rates but brought us into direct contact with our consumers, which generated lots of useful feedback.” – Brian McQuaid, Sales Manager



Next Steps

Today, Doherty’s Meats continues to grow and remains a firm favourite amongst families across Northern Ireland. Penetration and repeat purchase rates are above average in all categories and driving strong sales growth. Sampling activities continue in key stores and Doherty’s Meats have been keen supporters of campaigns to promote Northern Irish food, such as Buy NI Food and Tesco Taste Northern Ireland.



With an active and engaging presence on social media and building on their strong family history and product innovative, Doherty’s Meats are turning their attention to mainland, where they hope to secure listings for their new convenience products.

Written by Sophie Barnard, June 2018, University of East Anglia (In partnership with Queens University Belfast and research funding from Invest Northern Ireland).