

The Grocer

Focus On: crisps, nuts & snacks by Karen Bamford (karenbamford@btinternet.com)

Publishing: 30 April

Advertising deadline: 8 April

Submissions deadline: 4 April

The Story

The snacking market is changing beyond all recognition. A market that used to be dominated by fried potato crisps is now defined by its diversity, with popcorn, baked snacks, nuts and other products stealing share from the traditional crisps. What's driving this change? Who's cashing in and who's being left on the shelf? What are crisps brands doing to fight back?

Key themes:

Health: This will be a key focus. The feature will explore how health concerns are driving the development of 'healthier' snack products such as baked and air popped crisps, baked snacks and vegetable crisps. Are traditional potato crisps suffering because they are seen as unhealthy, compared to the new products available?

Sharing: This is a key area of growth for the wider snacks market, with some of the biggest growers of the past year being heavily reliant on sharing formats. What's driving this growth? How important is the use of promotions (such as £1 price marks and link deals with soft drinks) in sustaining this growth? How has NPD and other factors driven this?

Retailers: Central to this article will be a discussion of how different retailers – both supermarkets and c-stores – are approaching the category in terms of their promotional strategies, merchandising, branded and own label ranges, and so on. Which retailers are in growth and decline? Why?

Potato crisps: Our data shows the Brits spent less on crisps in the past year, but packs sold actually increased. To what extent has this been driven by the growth in own label and increasing deals on sharing formats? Which retailers have driven the growth in own label? What else is contributing to the woes of the crisps market?

Flavours and textures: This feature will explore in detail how the flavour of British snacks is evolving through new product development. What will be the hot new flavour trends of 2016 and how are brands looking to cash in? Another point of discussion will be the conflicting performances ridged crisps brands? What other textures, such as lattice and so on, are doing well?

Price: As with many sectors in the deflationary grocery market, value is growing more slowly than volume. This feature will explore the reasons for this. To what extent are crisps, nuts and snacks brands being used by retailers as weapons in the price war? Are they being promoted more?

Vegetable crisps: This feature will explore in detail how the development of non potato crisps – made of everything from parsnips to sweet potatoes – is impacting the market. Who's driving this trend and who will be jumping on the bandwagon next?

Nuts: We're going nuts over nuts at the moment, with the sub category enjoying strong value and volume. Which brands and types of nuts are driving this growth and what does the coming year have in store? How is this growth affecting the wider market?

Popcorn: Popcorn is flying. Which brands and retailers are making the most of the growth and how? As the market becomes more crowded are prices coming down? What does the coming year hold for the popcorn market?

Meat snacks: Analysis suggests the market for meat snacks is in strong growth. Why? Which brands are driving this growth and how are they looking to sustain it?

Innovation: This will be key to this feature. We will be investigating how new product development has shaped the category over the past year and what is in store for shoppers in 2016. We will be profiling four of the most interesting launches in a separate innovation panel.

Promotions: This feature will explore how the promotional strategies of retailers and brands have changed over the past year. Attention will be paid to the promotional strategies of retailers and how this has affected average prices over the past year.

Advertising and marketing: This feature will also investigate how the marketing and advertising strategies of the category's biggest brands have evolved over the past year and how they will develop in the coming year to sustain growth or return brands to growth.

Licensed products: This article will feature a box out on how licensed snack products are performing. This will explore products carrying the trademarks of other food brands, such as cheese, spreads, and those of films, etc. What are the hottest licenses in snacking and why?

Key questions the feature is likely to address:

- What consumer trends have impacted the category over the past year?
- How have promotional strategies (both in terms of price and marketing) evolved?
- How have individual retailers' strategies impacted the market?
- How has merchandising changed in the market?
- What impact has own-label had on branded players?
- What's next for the category?