GfK STORE EFFECT survey

Many German consumers decide at the supermarket shelves

Findings of the GfK STORE EFFECT survey

German consumers make the majority of their purchasing decisions actually in the store. Just below 70% of purchasing decisions are made at the point of sale (POS) itself, and the brand strength has considerable influence over whether or not a product makes it into a customer's shopping trolley. These are the findings of the GfK STORE EFFECT fast-moving consumer goods survey, in which GfK Marktforschung carried out around 800 interviews at its test market MarketingLab. This research bears out a theory that has been circulating among marketing insiders for some time.

One in three consumers plans his purchases in advance and goes into the supermarket with an actual or "mental" shopping list. These lists become increasingly important in proportion to the age of the customer and size of the store. In addition, half of all consumers collect information on current offers prior to doing their shopping, often with the help of retail advertising brochures.

For the current survey, consumers were asked about their buying intentions when they entered the store and about their actual purchases when they left. The findings show that in only 30% of cases customers plan to buy a specific brand and then actually do so. In over 15% of purchases made, consumers only determine the category of product they want to buy in advance and then opt for a special offer once they are actually inside the store. Fewer than 10% of customers initially plan to buy a particular brand, but then change their minds once in the store and switch to a rival brand and a similar proportion ultimately don't even buy the category of product they had intended to. However, by far the largest group are spontaneous purchases: almost 40% of purchases are not planned in advance, and the decision is made on impulse inside the store.

A strong brand makes a product more likely to find its way onto the shopping list

Whether or not consumers actually follow through on their intentions to buy a particular product depends a great deal on brand strength, that is, the emotional value added that brand products have in contrast to no-name products. Six out of every ten planned purchases are made because of an established brand preference and in these cases, customers know exactly which brands they want to buy.

The number of planned purchases therefore increases with brand preferences. For consumers who already know that they want to buy a particular brand when they enter the store, the number of planned purchases is almost twice as high as in the overall sample. The number also rises if the brand they plan to purchase is generally regarded as a particularly attractive, and consequently strong, brand.

Brand is also very important for impulse purchases

The impact of brand strength is also apparent when comparing individual product categories and those which include some strong brands account for a higher than average share of planned purchases.

Exceptions to this are product categories that primarily target spontaneous purchasers. In such cases, along with brand strength, the physical presence of a product in-store is the main factor influencing sales. For example, customers are certainly affected by brands when choosing from a variety of chocolate bars on offer, but the actual impulse to buy is triggered by the conspicuous placing of the product in the store. In contrast to chocolate tablets, where customers place a high value on the brand and often decide on the brand they wish to purchase before entering the store, chocolate bars, in particular, attract impulse buyers.

The survey

GfK Marktforschung is expanding its Shopper Research segment with the GfK STORE EFFECT survey, which it carried out in the GfK MarketingLab, its extended test market in Germany's Anterior Palatinate region. The GfK MarketingLab test market includes both the GfK BEHAVIORSCAN representative household panel and the GfK RETAILSCAN retail panel. It gives clients the ability to test the effects of their TV advertising or any price changes they might be planning to make under realistic conditions.

The survey investigated almost 30 product categories of fast-moving consumer goods, looking at how many brand purchases were already planned on entering the store and which brand decisions were made at the PoS.

Further information

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