

The Grocer

Focus On: Easter & Spring by Natalie Brown (natalie_brown@live.co.uk)

Publishing: 9 January
Advertising deadline: 18 December
Submissions deadline: 11 December

The Story

Cracks are beginning to show in the Easter market. After a knockout performance in 2014 thanks to the holiday falling later in the year, both value and volumes fell in 2015 having hit in early April. All sectors apart from shell eggs lost sales with the likes of hanging bags continuing its downward trend. So, is it all down to the date? Or are there other factors at play? And, with Easter falling at the end of March this year, what are retailers and suppliers doing to inject some value back into the market?

Key Themes

Shell eggs: This is the only category in growth, and it's sluggish, but it did manage to attract nearly half a million more shoppers compared with 2014. How? Which retailers and brands were behind this?

Other formats: Filled eggs, novelties, mini eggs and hanging bags are all in value and volume decline. What are retailers and suppliers doing to push them back into growth in 2016?

NPD: Branded NPD soared to over £100m in value this year, a significant increase from previous years. What was driving this? Which products fared particularly well? Are there any that missed the mark?

Promotions: Easter eggs used to be the ultimate pile high sell cheap product in the supermarkets, which used them as loss leaders. This feature will explore how the promotional strategies of retailers and brands looking have changed over the past year.

Own label: While still small, own label has secured another year of growth across three sub-sectors. This feature will explore in detail which retailers are driving this growth and how they are using factors like promotions, premiumisation, NPD and merchandising to steal greater share of the market. How can brands compete?

Retailers: With a few exceptions, many retailers suffered as a result of the shorter trading period. Who had the toughest year and why? Who's managed to defy the downward trend? Within this, please explore how players are looking to target different retail channels – from c-stores and petrol forecourts through to the mults and discounters. How are they capitalising on this?

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

Other categories: Of course Easter isn't all about chocolate. This feature will explore which other categories are making the most out of this festive occasion, from toys to home baking. We explore the best innovations in other categories which are making the most out of this festive occasion, from sugar confectionery, to toys, to anything in between.

Innovations: We identify four new products or product ranges that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before, including launch date and RSP, and source a hi-res picture of each.

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?