

The Grocer

Focus On: Cereals by Amy North (amy.north@thegrocer.co.uk)

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The Story

The category faces stiff competition from the likes of breakfast drinks, biscuits and cooked breakfasts. So what can brands and retailers do to slow, or even reverse, the value and volume decline? Which areas are they eyeing for future growth?

Key themes:

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 2017. Suppliers have certainly been reviewing their ranges, with many favourites taken into new formats or categories.

Health: Concerns about high sugar levels in cereal have long blighted this sector but many are looking to prove they're good for you with a couple venturing into the high protein sector. Is this a way for cereals to draw consumers back in? Are others focused on reducing sugar? How are 'healthier' cereals such as granolas and mueslis faring?

Hot cereals: Hot cereals have managed to avoid the volume decline hitting RTE cereals, but a huge cut to average price has seen any value gains wiped off. Why is this? What can they do to drive value growth back into the category? How is convenience playing a role in this?

Brands vs own label: Own label is out performing brands, which are in value and volume decline. Why? How have retailers ranges changed over the past year and how has this impacted the market? This feature will pay particular attention to what individual retailers are doing to carve out a greater share for their own brands.

Retail share: What part does the price war have to play in this? How are the discounters performing?

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.

Price/promotions: This feature will explore how the promotional strategies of retailers and brands have changed over the past year. Particular attention will be paid to the promotional strategies of retailers when it came to NPD aimed at adding value to the category. Did these products realise their full potential or were they undermined by unnecessarily high promotions?

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?