

Focus On: Easter & Spring by Ash O'Mahony (<mailto:ashleigh.omahony@wrbm.co.uk>)

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The Story Britain's confectioners truly cracked it last Easter. Sales of Easter confectionery jumped by more than £25m (8.3%), perhaps partially down to the unusually long cool-off period after Christmas. Not only did shoppers buy in higher frequencies, but they were also willing to part with more cash for their Easter products. So which retailers and brands raked in the most? Which products proved a hit? And as Easter falls two weeks earlier this year, how can we repeat this success in 2018?

Key themes:

Miniature: One of the key trends of last year was the rise of the mini egg. We're not just talking the brand - miniature eggs as a sub-category massively outperformed the market with a whopping 20% growth in value, even taking into account a slight decline in average price. Not only did mini eggs attract more shoppers, but people also bought more often, mainly during Early Season, and took home more per trip. So why is less suddenly more? And can this continue in 2018?

Price pressures: Brexit and supply shortages might have pushed up the cost of raw materials such as cocoa beans and sugar, but brands have largely kept prices down in shell eggs (average price is down 1.7%). How did they manage it? To what extent have they resorted to shrinkflation? And will we start to see price increases feeding through this year?

Premium own label: Brands may have kept prices down, but retailers have gone in the opposite direction. The average price of an own-label shell egg was up 20% in 2017 as retailers went premium – and nearly all took home increases in sales. What do they have in store this year and will premiumisation continue?

Responsible sourcing: With some retailers making a big deal about ethical sourcing in 2017 – is this an increasingly important factor for consumers when buying into the category?

Dairy-free: Last year marked the launch of numerous dairy-free creations, we look at how these performed and will this trend continue?

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

Non-chocolate: Easter isn't all about chocolate. We explore the best innovations in other categories which are making the most out of this festive occasion, from sugar confectionery, to toys.

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?