

Returning to the new normal

Amanda Brown

Times flies. It's the end of August already and the major news from our house is that school is back. Which means routine has returned, packed lunches are the order of the day and I've dusted off my chauffeur's hat. I do enjoy the summer holidays where everything is a little bit more relaxed and with the added bonus in recent weeks, of being able to get out and about a bit more enhancing all of our moods in the Brown household. And Edinburgh certainly feels busy, with both residents and tourists all having a positive effect on the out of home market which continues to innovate and adapt to provide a safe and attractive offering for customers.

However, the news over the last few days on how the shortage in labour is affecting the wider tourism and quick service sector is concerning, as it is for colleagues in the grocery channel, as we hear more stories and see gaps on shelves as the impact of Brexit and Covid continue to cause our industry new challenges.

I have a habit (well perhaps more than one, but this is the only one which I'll share with you); I like to visit grocery stores. Way too often. It was initially driven by my time at Kantar when I liked to keep an eye on what was happening across all stores and products and then amplified during the lockdown periods when it was my excuse to leave the house even if it was just for another bottle of milk. My behaviour might not be considered normal, but it does reflect what we have seen happening in the grocery channel over the last four weeks. More and more shoppers are now making more regular visits to stores - witnessed in smaller basket spend per visit. With more of us becoming comfortable again in visiting physical stores the online channel has seen its lowest share of trade for almost a year. Kantar

are also reporting that Ocado have seen their share take a dip for the first time ever as footfall to bricks and mortar increase.

The initial shock, and then impact of Covid and lockdowns, put different pressures on our food and drink supply chains and for a period of time took our attention away from some of the trends that were beginning to gain traction in our industry. Trends like sustainability have dropped off many people's radar as our industry coped with the fast-changing needs and new demands of the market. A year and a half on and, as we continue our emergence back into the new normal, not only are we reading and watching in the news about the effects of climate change, we are beginning to hear regular updates on strategic direction from retailers and foodservice operators about what sustainability means for them. I've just come from a webinar The Knowledge Bank organised in partnership with IGD and where we heard from Asda, The Co-op and Sodexo all emphasising the importance of taking responsible action against climate change and how we need to work together to do so. But crucially starting that journey now. It was interesting to hear their approach and you can watch the videos in your own time [here](#) to understand how it might impact on you and your business

76% of respondents to a poll at the webinar told us that their customers have already asked them to undertake new sustainability or climate change initiatives over the last 12 months, with examples including new or reduced packaging, operational efficiencies, reducing waste and community or workforce initiatives. We believe that this is an important commercial imperative and via the work we do in The Knowledge Bank and the UK Market Development team at Scotland Food & Drink, we'll provide touch points like today's event, ensuring information and insight continues to be shared.

See you next month.

PS. For any of you reading this regularly you might be interested to know the pollination of the sweetcorn was a success... we now have a corn growing on our plant 😊

THE KNOWLEDGE BAK

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