



Purchase to Plate: the experience of the older consumer in Northern Ireland

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Older consumer profile

- The number of people in the UK over sixty could rise by 40% over the next thirty years
- NISRA (2005) predict that there will be twice as many people aged 65 and over in 2041 than there are at present
- The elderly population are considered disadvantaged in relation to food choice, their shopping experiences and supermarket planning developments
- Specific research within Northern Ireland has identified the elderly as a potentially vulnerable group



Food Retailing

- Food retailing has undergone widespread changes during the last fifty years
- This change has been so radical it has been coined the 'retail revolution'
- While the number of food stores available in which to shop is reduced, the size of the stores is greater than ever before
- Three major food retailers - Tesco, Sainsbury's and Asda dominate the UK grocery industry



Consumer satisfaction

- There is a clear distinction in the way older consumers now shop for food compared to the way they would have in previous years
- This consumer group has had no option but to undergo the changes in food retailing and adapt their shopping behaviour
- The success to which this has been achieved will depend on each individual
- Thus satisfaction levels among older people may differ to younger age groups as they have lived and experienced an alternative food retailing environment



Value of older customers

- Between 2005 and 2015 the 65 –74 year olds will increase spend by 80.6% and the over 75s by 48.7%
- The older consumer segment are sophisticated consumers with money to spend and that they are not unwilling to spend it
- Those who target and serve the older consumer are set to capitalise on a lucrative market group



Methodology

- Four focus group interviews with eight to ten participants of both gender and aged 60+ years
- Preliminary results from a consumer questionnaire (n=280)
- The questionnaire was telephone administered as interviewer completed
- The questionnaire was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 11.5



Results and Discussion

- The data was categorised into four topics that detailed the consumers' experience of food shopping
- The categories identified were:
 - shopping patterns
 - positive factors influencing the food shopping experience
 - negative factors which influence the food shopping experience
 - suggested improvements



Shopping patterns

- 59% of people aged 60+ years in Northern Ireland carry out their main shop once a week
- Older shoppers participate in daily shopping
 - *"I shop everyday and I'm living on my own. I like to get out and out I go".*
- It was unanimous that no one ever participated in online shopping, some of the reasons given included
 - *"That's too technical", "I haven't got an internet" and "What is that?"*



Shopping patterns

- A heavy reliance on accompanied shopping or being dependant on others to undertake shopping on their behalf was experienced
- Almost half (45%) of the participants carry out their main food shop at one of the three major multiples in Northern Ireland
- Store choice decisions were based on a variety of reasons, including
 - lack of choice, close proximity to home, the provision of other amenities under one roof, habit or routine



Positive factors

- Social interaction
- Staff
- Trolleys
- The provision of a free bus service
- The provision of adequate parking
- Other amenities provided under one roof
- The range and variety of product choice in-store



Negative factors

- Overcrowding
- Checkout queuing
- Inappropriate shelf height
- Store size
- Provision of seating
- Product relocation



Negative factors

- Impersonal service provided by staff
- Multi-purchase promotions
- Product and pack sizes
- High price of food
- Font size on food labels and packaging



Suggested improvements

- The older consumers proposed some practical solutions to the current problems they face. These included:
 - change the height of the shelves,
 - locate shops closer to residential areas and
 - launch a mobile shop.
- Others that would help to ease the difficulties currently faced would be
 - to ensure the provision of assistance with packing goods at the checkout
 - to increase seating and rest areas



Conclusion

- At present there would appear to be shortcomings in food retail provision for older consumers and as a result needs remain dissatisfied and consumers disgruntled



How does this information
compare to your experience or
the rest of the UK?



What recommendations could be made to improve the current situation?



Who should be involved in or responsible for implementing the suggested changes?