

Soup - UK - May 2011

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What is this report about?

The total retail sales value of soup in the UK continues to go from strength to strength, with sales jumping 10% between 2009 and 2011 to reach an estimated £617 million. Unlike some other sectors of the food industry, soup has proven a resilient market during the economic downturn. With annual sales growth up at least 5% since 2008, consumers have increasingly relied on soup as a cheap meal despite reduced levels of disposable income.

What have we found out?

- Soup need to focus on marketing strategies that centre on increasing usage as well as increasing sales, as while soup is a well-established category with high penetration, consumption has fallen by 9.3% between 2006-10. Whereas 54% of consumers have bought soup in the past year, only 39% have eaten it. This suggests that soup is often forgotten about after purchase.
- Manufacturers need to do more to push the warming and comforting properties of soup given that even though recent winters may have seen record low temperatures, this was not enough to stem the decline in the consumption of soup, which has been squeezed by heightened competition from high street sandwich chains.
- Innovations such as chunky and more hearty soups can help increase engagement with men, less than half (48%) of all males buying or eating soup in the past year.
- Vending is one way in which soup brands can increase penetration among the half of all students that have not eaten soup in the last year, by placing hi-tech interactive vending machines on campus that engage consumers with games, quizzes or challenges such as blend your own soup as part of the experience.
- Soup brands can also increase consumption among men by repositioning soup as an accompaniment to sandwiches and other lunchtime foods, with smaller servings and packaging designed for on-the-go consumption i.e. cups, with men (31%) more likely to consume soup as a snack than women (22%).
- Soup manufacturers could give their consumer profile a boost by opening a pop-up café or mobile soup kitchen in areas busy with commuters, office workers or shoppers. As well as a powerful promotional tool, this kind of event boosts the level of goodwill which people have for a brand.

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