

Specialist Food and Drink Retailers – UK – March 2021

Report Price: £2195 | \$2995 | €2600

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on shopping behaviour and its impact on the specialist sector
- How consumers shop at specialist food and drink retailers
- The types of specialists most used in the UK
- Consumer attitudes towards specialists
- How satisfied consumers are with the specialists they shop at

The specialist food and drink sector covers a variety of categories and types of stores, ranging from young, online-only retailers like HelloFresh, to traditional, store-only family-run butchers and many in-between. However, one thing seems to unify a sizeable proportion of specialist shoppers – an intimidating shopping experience, with over a quarter (28%) of those shopping at specialists in agreement. Whether it is not knowing which cuts to order from a meat counter or how to cancel a subscription, some consumers are clearly having difficulty shopping with their chosen specialist retailers.

The COVID-19 outbreak has led to considerable shifts in consumer behaviour, which we believe are here to stay. The virus has led to a sudden and severe drop in footfall in high streets across the country, with 48% of UK consumers saying they have cut back on time spent in-store since the outbreak. This third national lockdown will have seriously dented hopes by many in the sector that 2021 would provide the opportunity to get back on track. However, on the flip side is the rise in online shopping. This is a channel where many in the specialist food and drink retail sector do not play, and as a result, are losing the opportunity to re-engage with customers who have taken their spending online.



“Specialist food and drink retailers have suffered in a year like no other in recent times. With the economy struggling as the pandemic took hold, wages dropped and footfall on the high street plummeted as online retail surged.”

– Piers Butel, Retail Analyst

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