

Real-time Online Shopping Data Helping Consumer Cos Formulate Better Strategy

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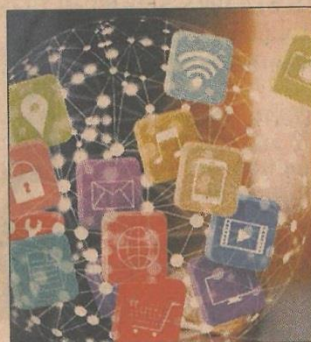
Bengaluru: More than half a dozen consumer companies such as Parle, Britannia, HUL and Arvind Fashions said increased online reach helped them get real-time data to plan new launches and tweak their go-to-market strategy at a time when traditional market research is severely restricted due to lockdown.

Most companies saw their online sales contribution double after the lockdown since March, although on a smaller base. However, they are also able to get real-time data on demand, rivals performance and granular insights on select geographies through ecommerce retailers. "Expanded online presence increased our company's customer data repository by 40% during the period" said Krishnarao Buddha, senior category head at Parle

Products adding that they have increased their reliance on data from ecommerce platforms such as Bigbasket, Grofers, Amazon Pantry and Flipkart. "Online data was always available but we have realised its value now," he added.

Britannia Industries too said that there was a data deficit issue which delayed some of its plans and decisions by 4-5 months. "We have got a new distribution management system and we will now have a lot more data than in the past. As things become normal, we will go deeper before wider," Varun Berry, managing director of Britannia Industries, told ET.

Market research firm Nielsen India discontinued data collection on its panel stores in "lockdown districts" from March 22, in line with government measures to curb spread of Covid-19, and said it will impact data continuity and consistency



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over the next few weeks. While the researcher has restarted providing insights, many companies are still reluctant. HUL, during its earnings call last week, said Nielsen's data is not of the reliability that it usually sees.

There is also a surge in sales of transactional data such as sales, purchase, orders and stock besides specific customer insights by egrocers, helped by smaller clients.

"While larger FMCG compa-

nies such as Hindustan HUL and Procter & Gamble are regular subscribers, smaller consumer companies are showing higher interest since June as they want to grow their category. They sell niche products such as flavored yoghurt or nutrition bars," said Seshu Kumar, national head - buying and merchandising at Bigbasket that will see ten companies next month compared to just two such companies in June. After its online sale doubled from pre-Covid times, ready-to-eat maker Gits Food used customer insights from online to launch a bulk pack of pure ghee to reduce store visits and will be launching online-only RTE meals in its portfolio.

"Ecommerce gave us a head start and helped us acquire new customers looking for packaged food over cloud kitchens. Henceforth, we will launch all our products first online," said Sahil Gilani, director of Gits Food.