

# Deconstructing today's complex e-commerce shopper

**How Unilever has refined its understanding of today's sophisticated online buyers to enhance performance by channel and category.**

## A deeper understanding of today's e-commerce shopper

As a global FMCG player, Unilever has been at the forefront of the growth and development of all forms of retail. While buying 'online' may once have been considered one channel, today the format is fragmented into many unique landscapes and so shopping patterns and behaviors are more complex. In an increasingly crowded landscape, Unilever Netherlands constantly evaluates its current and future e-commerce strategy to ensure its brand availability, assortment, profile, and positioning are always optimized to the best advantage. They are regular users of GfK's Consumer Panel solutions to help understand changing behaviors and attitudes.

## Insight that informs long-term strategic thinking and daily activities

Unilever challenged GfK to run an extensive piece of research encompassing 16 categories and four online channels. 7,000 online FMCG buyers were questioned about their behavior and attitudes and how they navigate the developing e-commerce landscape. Respondents were asked where and what they purchase, and who does the shopping. The research probed the 'why' of e-commerce to understand the drivers and barriers of channel selection. The customized survey probed the choice of sub-channels, focusing on the different needs being fulfilled and asking consumers to rank them in order of

“ There's no question that the pandemic cemented the importance of online retail. It has long been a key priority for Unilever, and as it evolves, we want to make sure we are at the vanguard of driving the landscape forward. In this wide-ranging project, we not only confirmed our existing thinking of how e-commerce shopping is evolving in the Netherlands, but we also identified new insights, ideas and trends to integrate into our thinking. ”

Tamara Vieveen, Shopping and  
Commerce Insights Manager  
Unilever Benelux

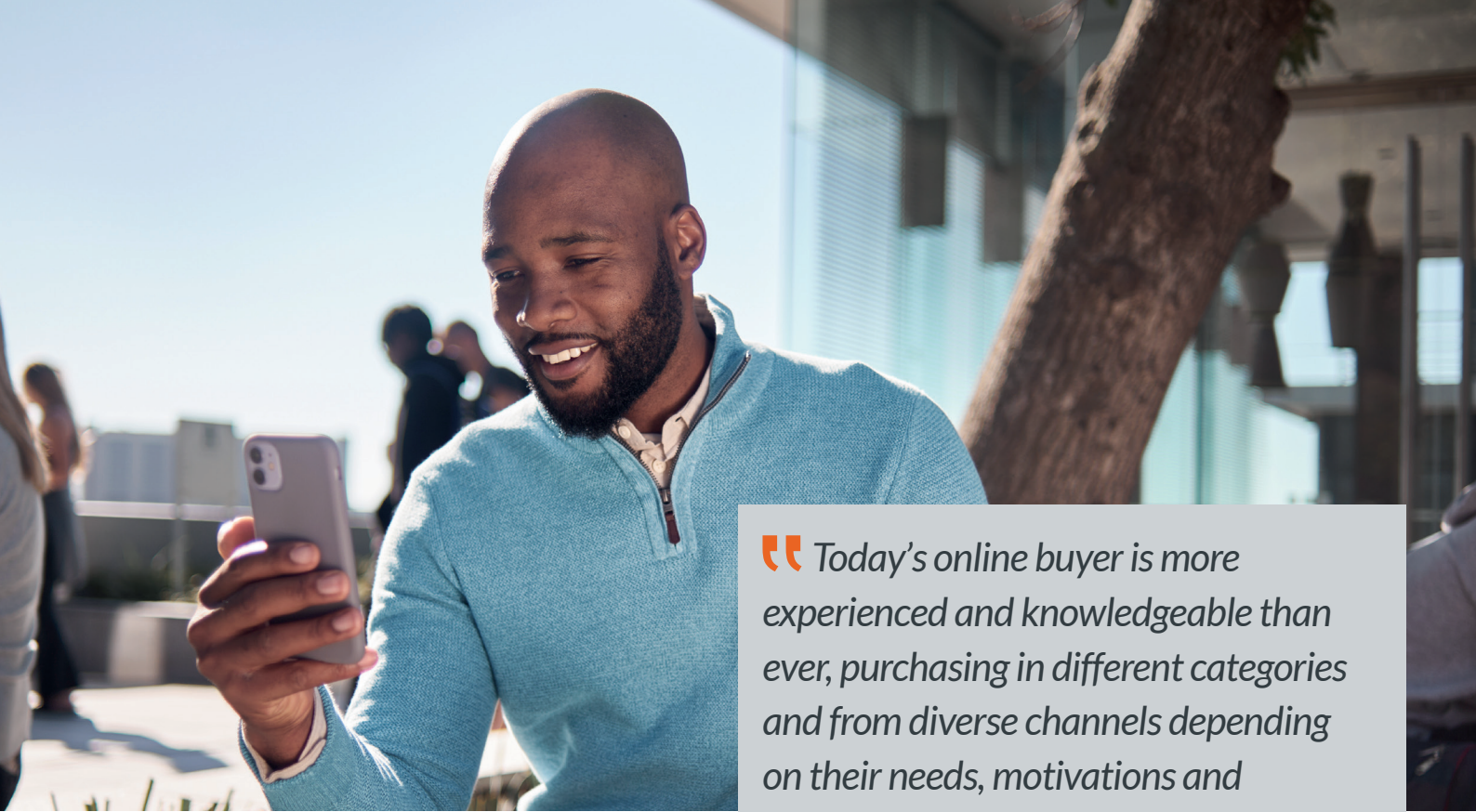
importance. Motivations for buying missions including occasions and specific trips were investigated. By probing what people like and don't like, what they look for in particular, and combining these results with consumer panel data, the Unilever and GfK team used the findings to build very detailed profiles of the e-commerce shopper.



### Facts & Figures

Sector	FMCG
Reach	3.4 billion daily customers in 190 countries
Revenue	€52.444 billion (2021) globally
Operating brands	Some examples include; Dove, Ben & Jerry's, Knorr and Axe

Source for Facts & Figures: 2021 Unilever Annual Report



## Unpeeling the layers in e-commerce to reveal brand opportunities

The research revealed that every online platform triggers a different shopper trip, and it identified which platforms offer the most potential for Unilever brands to appeal to new customers. A key insight was that online platforms are not all the same, and put simply, there is no one solution to online shopping for Unilever. Buyers are more mature in their habits today, and their behavior is constantly evolving. In fact, as Tamara Vieveen says: “There are many layers to e-commerce and that needs to be reflected in our strategy.”

The findings in this piece of research are used by the Unilever market research team, the category management team, marketing and account teams to understand current channel dynamics. They are important insights to be used for portfolio planning, product positioning, and ultimately, of category channel strategies. The findings are used as input for conversations with retailers and at a top-level, they have fed into strategic thinking across the market research team.

“Today’s online buyer is more experienced and knowledgeable than ever, purchasing in different categories and from diverse channels depending on their needs, motivations and occasions. It is only by acknowledging and analyzing this that we can perfect our service so that the right Unilever products are always present, available, and prominent on the virtual shelf.”

Tamara Vieveen, Shopping and  
Commerce Insights Manager  
Unilever Benelux

## A long-term collaboration

Unilever and GfK have a long-standing working relationship that can be counted in decades, not years. Described as ‘two-way’, the Dutch division of the global FMCG player relies on the team at GfK Consumer Panel to alert them of new developments in the market and in consumer behavior that they should know about. At the same time, the CMI team knows they can contact GfK whenever they have questions, issues, or challenges, or want to focus on a particular project.

Take your strategy  
to the next level

Like what you read about how Unilever is using our GfK Consumer Panel solution?

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