



Balancing data & human intelligence in a data-driven world

Ludivine Szlajak – Kellanova Benelux

What to expect today



An invitation to question our relationship to **data** & human role & interference in our industries (with a focus on assortment, shelf & competitiveness)



Practical recommendations of how data and human touch can be balanced (or at least, a route to thinking about it)



A concrete example of how we applied those recommendations with our Pringles brand

Most Benelux point of sales would fit in an Olympic swimming pool (1500m² or less)



With around one point of sales for every 10km² and 70% of shoppers visiting 3-4 banners per year, every retailer is fighting for the highest in-store traffic (or swimming lane 😊)



Shelf remains the key physical point of contact between shoppers & assortment

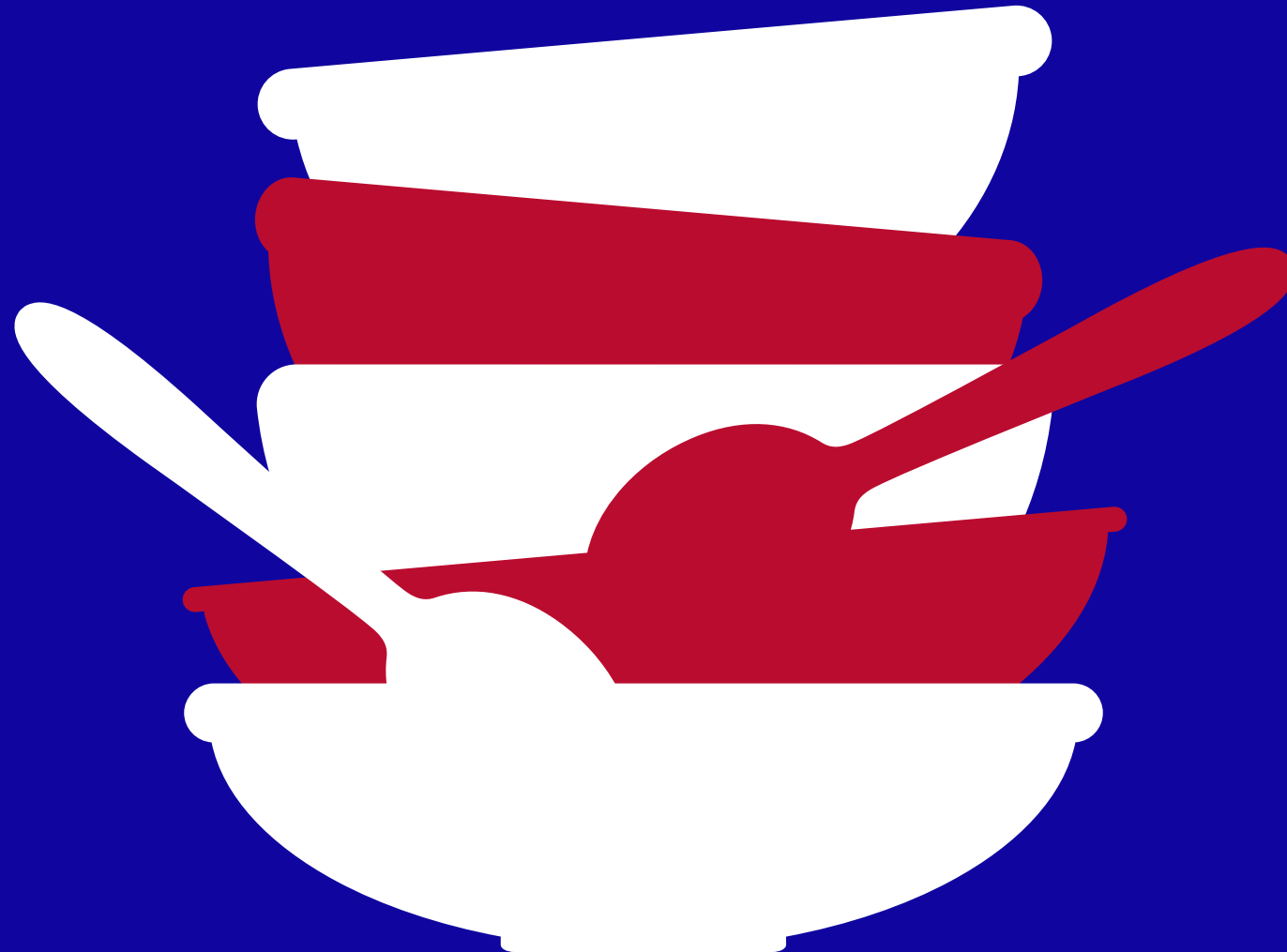
Only 4,3% of total FMCG sales are
made on display in BE





How can and should **data be
used to best build
assortment & shelf in a way
that makes **available space**
as **competitive** as possible**

The challenge: balance





RATIONAL & MEASURABLE & QUANTITATIVE

Data

-driven decisions



EMOTIONAL & FEELING & QUALITATIVE

Human

-driven decisions

In a world where there is more & more data



**Is there still room for a human touch?
Where to start with so much data ?**

Decision-making is a cycle fed by data



that still requires a human presence

Complex models & environment can (and should probably) not be entirely fed into data models



Human shoppers



What we say vs what we do

Human resources



Human interfering with data



Ask yourself

About your context

- Do I understand the full model I am operating in? How are my decisions impacting this model?
- Have I taken into account all the critical indicators in my decision making?
- **What is the value that I place behind each KPI?**

Think about building assortment (as a supplier, a retailer)

Revenue

Traffic creation
Brand image building
Consumer loyalty

...



Costs

Supply complexity
Additional resources
Need for analysis

...

It's the human at the helm who needs to understand the whole context and who will give each KPI a **value & prioritisation**



Ask yourself

About your context

- Do I understand the full model I am operating in? How are my decisions impacting this model?
- Have I taken into account all the critical indicators in my decision making?
- What is the value that I place behind each KPI?

About your data

- Can I measure everything? And if not, can decisions still be made?
- Can the data I am using be biased? (data collection, human nature)
- Am I steering data in a direction I have chosen upfront?

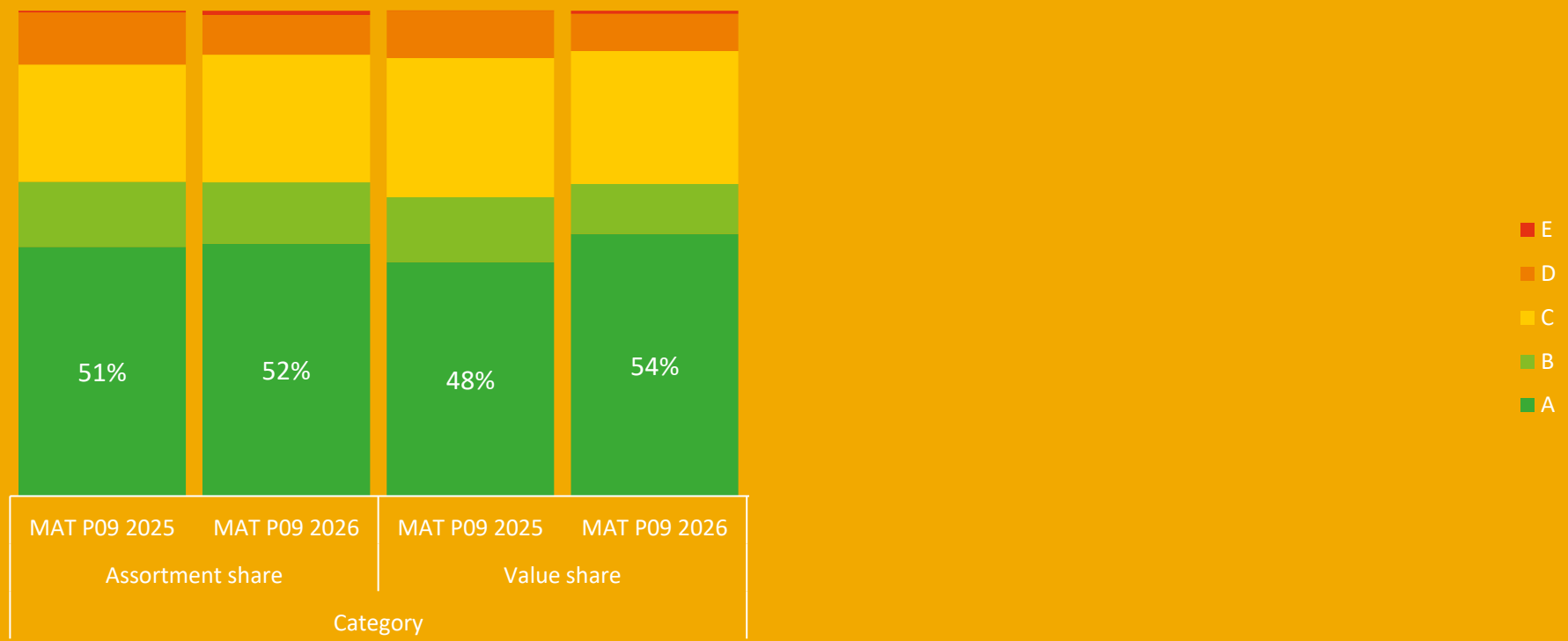
Building a strategy: question your data



What is enough data? What is too much data? Can data be biased?

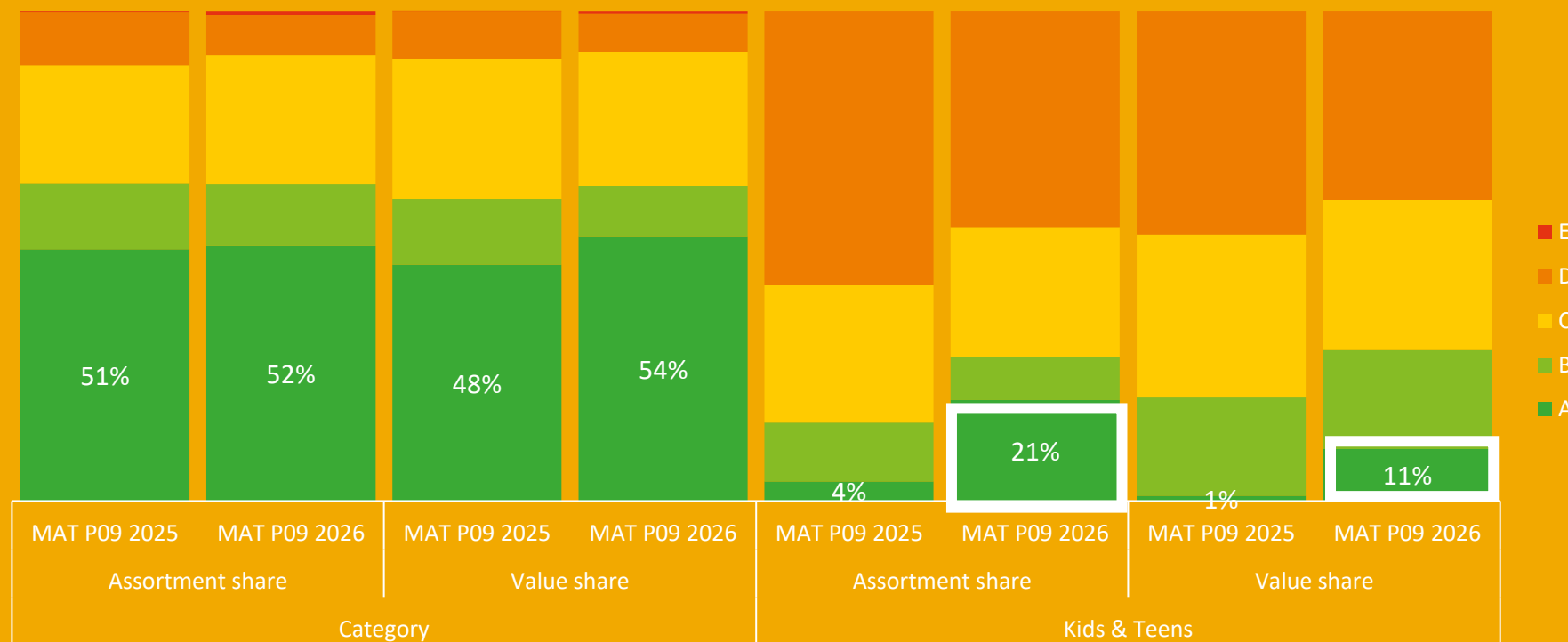
What does data say?

On the cereal category, half of the assortment is now nutriscore A at this retailer



What does additional data say?

On Kids & Teens cereals, assortment development towards NS A is not showing a proportional growth (21% of SKUs for 11% of value share)



Was data not complete? Biased? Is there a different KPI prioritisation?

What does additional data say?

Health is not the only criteria that comes in play when a choice is made, especially with impulse purchases

**Top 30 BE innovations
only 3 with health-benefit claims,
mostly impulse & indulgent purchases**

**Functional & convenience still
show strong appeal over
health claims**

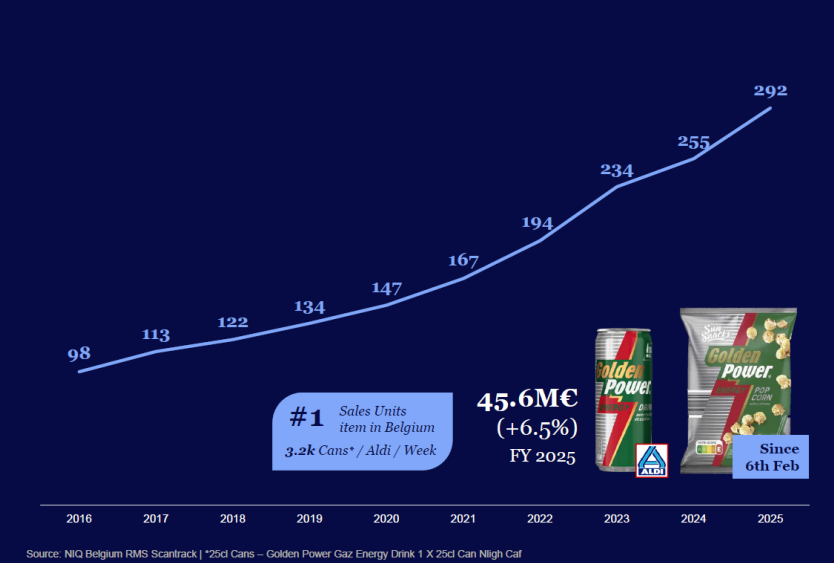
Top 30 innovations Sales Value first 26w after launch
Total Belgium – Sales Value after 6 Periods – 2025 Innovation Variety

Rasp. White & Milk Choc. Franul	Rasp. White & Dark Choc. Franul	Lando Norris Monster	Jasmin & Rose de mai Dash P&G	Double Hazelnut Magnum	Milk Biscoff Cote d'Or Mondelez	Rio Punch Monster Coca Cola	Protein Cécémel Fr. Campina	Zero Sugar Nalu Coca Cola	Roasted Garlic & Herbs Lays PepsiCo
€ 2 664 K	€ 1 604 K	€ 1 579 K	€ 1 482 K	€ 1 209 K	€ 1 178 K	€ 1 116 K	€ 928 K	€ 875 K	€ 803 K
Orange & Passion Fruit Schweppes Suntory	Cinque Formaggi Dr. Oetker Oetker	Forest fruits Red Bull Red Bull	Red Orange Fit Tonnisteiner Tonnisteiner	White Biscoff Cote d'Or Mondelez	Prestige 1240 Leffe Interbrew	Tropical PassionFruit Fuze Tea Coca Cola	Calabrese & Nduja Tipo Dr. Oetker Oetker	Nectar Rich in Vit C Minute Maid Coca Cola	Mystery Pringles Kellanova
€ 784	€ 765 K	€ 715 K	€ 677 K	€ 650 K	€ 626 K	€ 624 K	€ 616K	€ 574 K	€ 560 K
Peach Pear Spa Spadel	Double Cherry Magnum Magnum	Demelant Anti Fourches Elseve L'Oreal	Tiramisu Danette Danone	Peach & Passion Fruit Aria Aria	Watermelon Eristoff Bacardi	Bloody Berry! Mort Subite Aiken Maes	Cherry Fiz Axe Unilever	Façon Paris Brest Danette Danone	Chocolat Lotus Lotus Bakeries
€ 549 K	€ 533 K	€ 437 K	€ 407 K	€ 396 K	€ 387 K	€ 375 K	€ 360 K	€ 352K	€ 348 K

Functional & Convenience still ruling, despite health trends

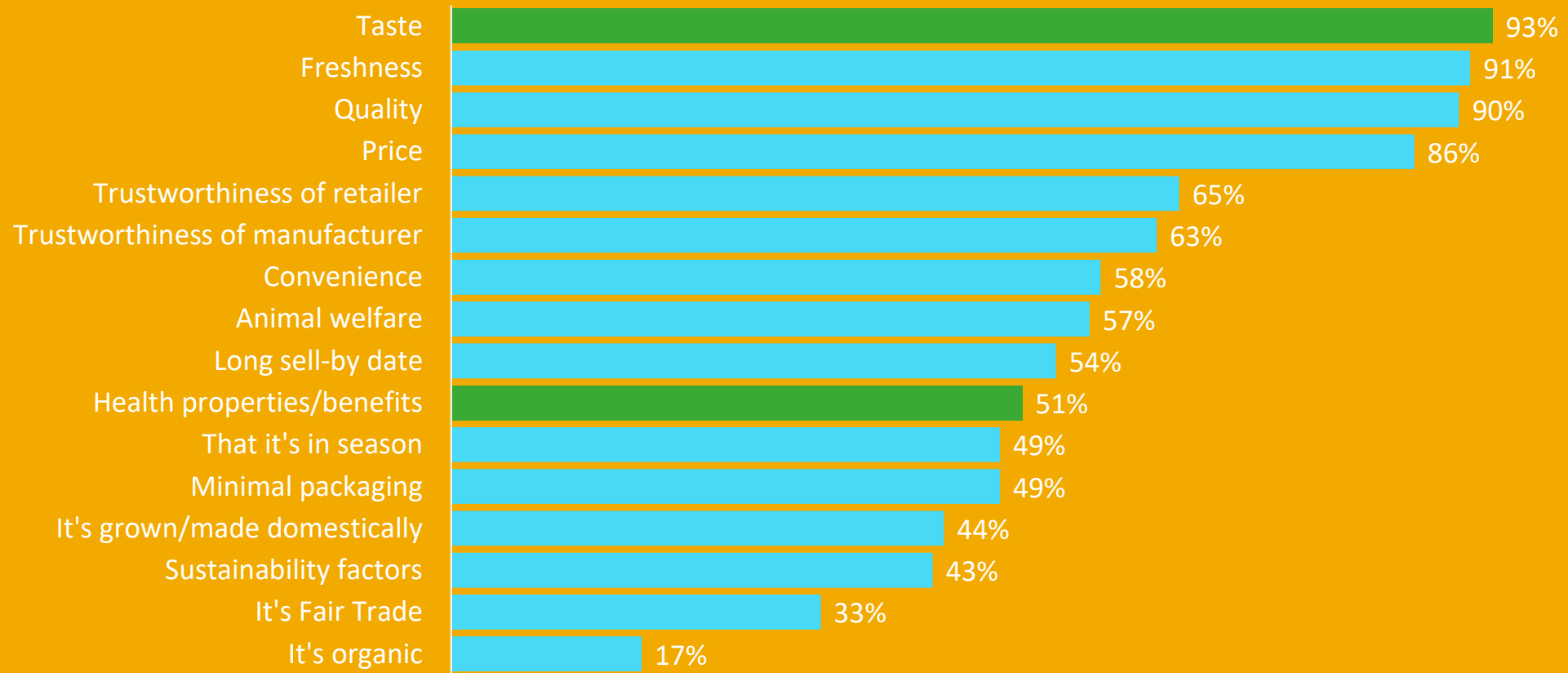


Energy Drinks Value Sales Evol.
Belgium – Sales Value (M€)

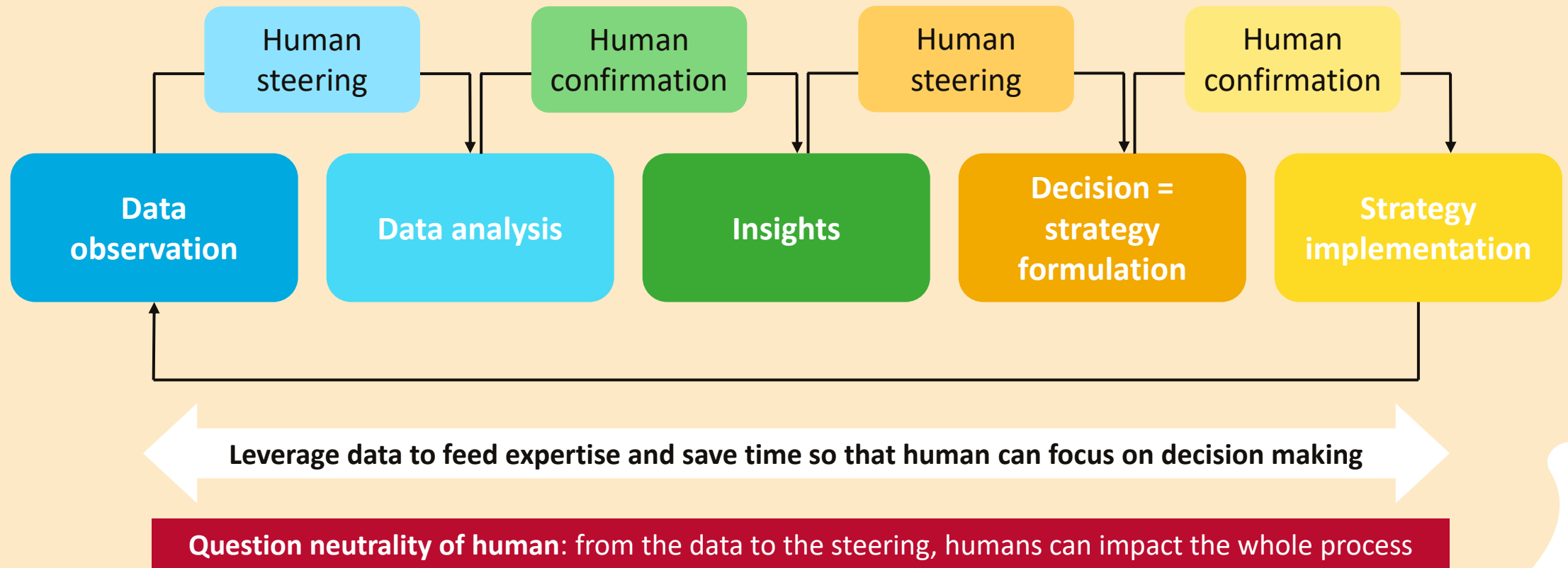


Focusing on one insight is rarely enough, and qualitative insights are always less robust (what you say vs what you do)

Key factors when buying food & drink
UK – % of respondents – February 2025



In a nutshell, data and human should work in constantly evolving tandem

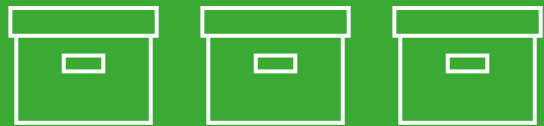


In a world where there is more & more data



**Is there still room for a human touch?
Where to start with so much data?**

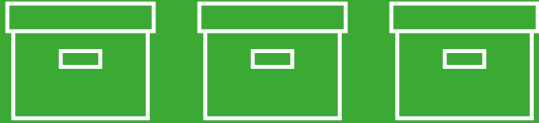




**One-size-
fits-all**



**One store
= one approach**



One-size-fits-all

Better cost efficiency
Harmonised experience across stores

Does not leverage franchise flexibility
Missed opportunity to cater local needs

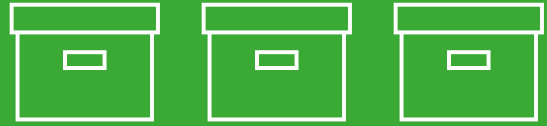


One store = one approach

Leveraging all available data
Tailor-made experience to local shopper

Increased complexity
If AI-driven, less flexibility for human intervention





Common core

OPTIMISE RESOURCES



Custom approach

ACCEPT COMPLEXITY

The route to balancing data & human touch

1

Understand your context: what is the model you operate in? what data do you have access to (or don't)?

2

Evaluate your context: what is truly important to evaluate? Are you capturing the right indicators? Is the data unbiased?

3

Frame your own balance: How do you want to prioritise each KPI? what is the weight of data in your decision making?

4

Constantly start again: our world is fast evolving and what works today will not work tomorrow. Re-evaluate your balance as you go

our



CHALLENGE

Our context: a highly competitive category, for which innovation is a key driver



95,9% penetration²

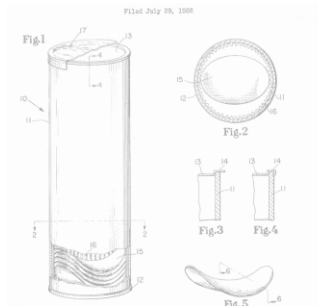
21,8 trips per year²

150 – 375 SKUs in category¹

10 – 25% new SKUs vs previous year¹



**+50 years of
unique product
& packaging**



#3

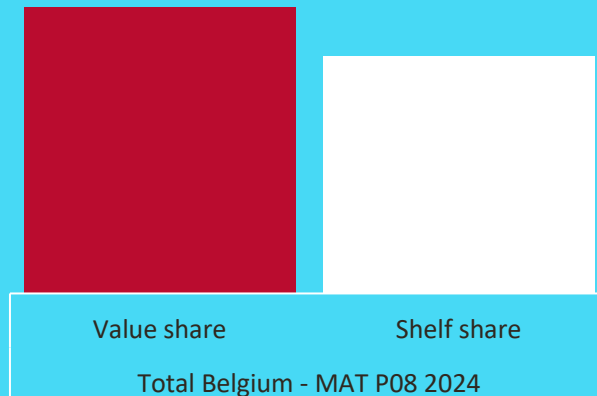
**branded player
in the category**



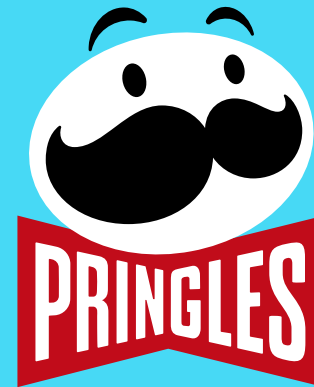


**Our challenge: convince that we
deserve more shelf space and find
the right assortment development
to grow our brand**

a gap between value & shelf share



or a hidden competitive advantage



Same space
More stock
Less manutention
Better revenue per cm

7,86cm

the space one can of Pringles
takes on shelf, **no more, no less**

up to x2

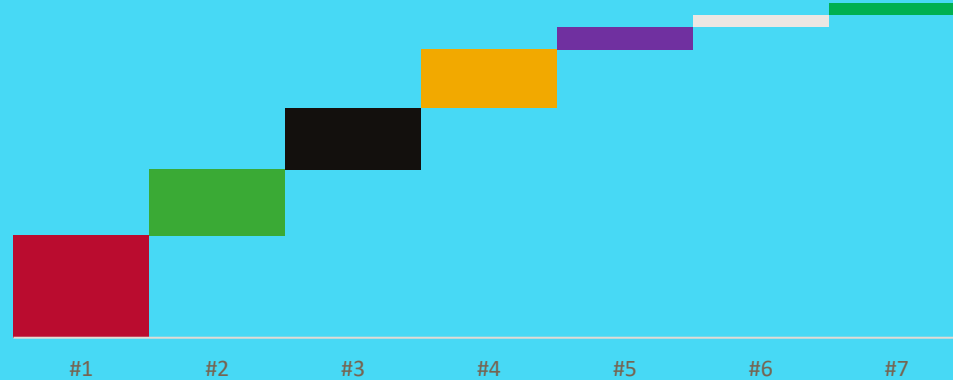
€/used cm

Pringles can bring up to twice
the value per cm vs a bagged
competitor with similar ROS



**in larger formats, new flavours
bring a different shopper but
limited incrementality**

Pringles 165g – MAT P08 2026 – volume per flavour



**Long-lasting
innovation cannot be
tied to flavour only**

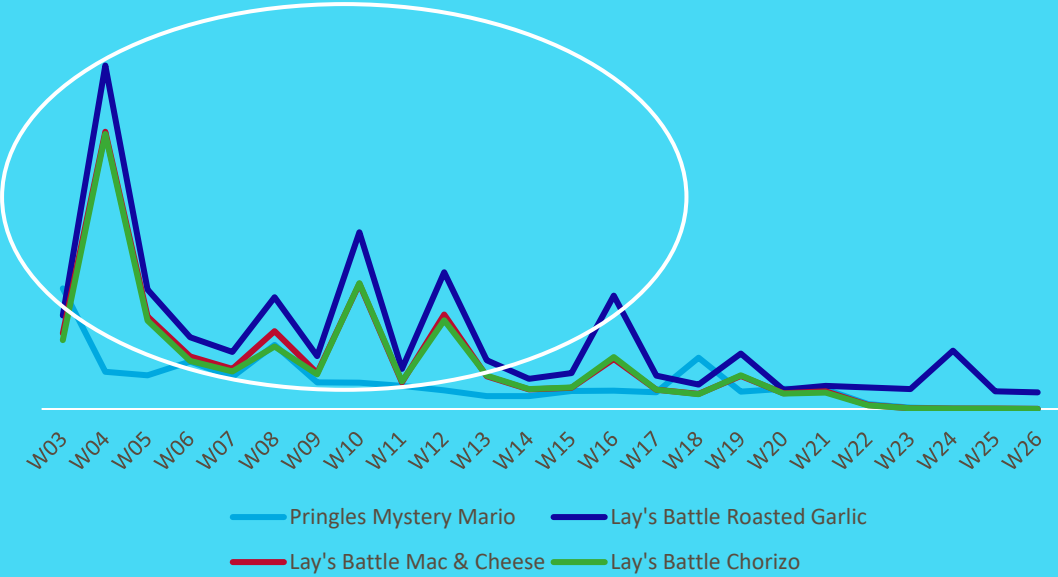
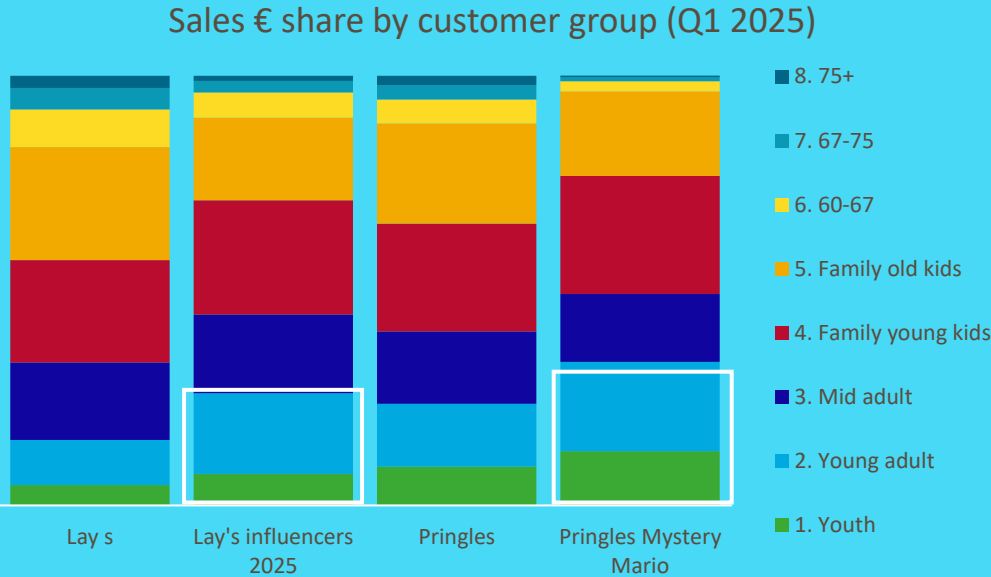
**Pringles has in-house
capability to come up
with a new food form**



**with still the same DNA
and €/cm efficiency**

Limited editions flavours attract younger shoppers vs core assortment

and drive sales peaks for a quarter before interest decreases





€/cm

as a KPI to critically analyse
category assortment
performance, feeding shelf
analysis and core portfolio
development

THE **ICONIC PRINGLES FORMAT,** **REINVENTED** AS A **TORTILLA** CHIP

All the ingredients for a bold innovation:

150G OF PRACTICALITY:

STACKABLE, PORTABLE, CLEAN TO EAT, STRONG €/CM

A BASE OF CORN & BLACK BEANS:

BOLD TEXTURE, AUTHENTIC TORTILLA FEEL

AVAILABLE IN 3 BOLD FLAVORS,

PACKED WITH TASTE

-  **PAPRIKA** – BNL's fan favorite
-  **CHEESE** – The soul of any tortilla
-  **ORIGINAL** – Unleash your creativity





€/cm

as a KPI to critically analyse
category assortment
performance, feeding shelf
analysis and portfolio
development



Limited editions

as an accepted form of
complexity to keep on recruiting
new generations and develop
frequency, tabling on emotional
appeal of offer (= different KPI
prioritisation)



What's next?

Building a category shelf concept: the ultimate balance between data-driven decisions and human touch

Think what “looks pretty”, what “makes sense” vs “what we know makes money”



In a nutshell

1

Data is at the foundation of our business, but a healthy dose of **human touch is still needed** (so long as our fridges don't order food for us 😊)

2

Do not shy away from investing time & resources into finding the **right data** & make it **accessible**

3

In a world with illimited data, define **what is enough data** vs **what is too much data**

4

As technology progresses, be ready for more data-integration but also for a clear definition of when human holds the helm ; **question your own neutrality in that process**

**Is your data saying
the truth or is it
saying what you
want it to say?**

