

Homegrown social shopping community grows

The Buchanan Group has announced that it has signed up 25 000 members to the Home Tester Club, a social community review and ratings site born in South Africa and being exported internationally. This growth of more than 200% over the past eight months has seen the size double in the last six months.



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The group is known for its retail marketing tools such as Brand Power, Zoot Review and Medifacts.

It launched The Home Tester Club to allow FMCG retail brands to tap into the power of social media and the subsequent rise in the importance of online and web-influenced offline sales, which already accounts for 42% of total retail sales in the US. The site allows consumers

access to a platform where they can rate and review new FMCG products on a safe, trusted and uncensored platform.

Community of interest

Building a community of interest around product reviews and shared shopping advice was the brainchild of Buchanan's South African operation, headed by Buchanan Group Africa, India and Middle East, CEO [Steve Cragg](#). The social platform has since been exported to India with plans to roll it out into various international markets.

New FMCG products brands can use the network to distribute samples to community members who not only rate and review the product but also serve as brand advocates by handing out product samples to friends, family and neighbours.

The reviews and ratings posted on the club allows fellow shoppers access to unbiased opinion and recommendations on new products and also serves marketers with consumer insights outside formal focus groups, while gaining unforced traction through word-of mouth in the social media space for brands who ultimately can also choose to these use consumer recommendations in its marketing communications.

"Value it has to offer"

"Clients are starting to see the value in what the club and specifically the word of mouth advocacy has to offer," says Cragg. "To date we have run word of mouth advocacy sampling campaigns for Unilever, Nestlé, Kraft and Pioneer Foods and more brands are signing up."

One such campaign, for Comfort Fabric Conditioner, reportedly saw 833 club members receive 10 000 samples to use and review as well as to distribute to their personal networks. A special Facebook page was set up and linked to a travel prize where consumers receiving samples were directed to and asked to share their experiences. Within four weeks the page received over ten thousand 'Likes,' reached 54 655 consumers virally and served up 982 158 page impressions. Of the trial members, 75% bought the product after it had been passed on to them to try.

Future expansion

Ultimately, the club will expand beyond the internet and onto mobile devices for use in the actual retail environment taking the community much closer to the actual transaction. Quick Response (QR) codes will allow club members to view new product ratings at the point-of-purchase and then decide whether it is worthwhile or not.

The Home Tester Club in India is also growing rapidly with over 10 000 members signed up onto the platform and 17 000 fans on its Facebook page.

For more, go to www.hometesterclub.com.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>