**Dude Wipes, for example,** is not only using Freeosk dispensing machines in Sam’s Club locations to give away individually wrapped wipes—it’s also compensating people for handing out packs of wipes at Target. Brands like Oreo producer Mondelez International are also increasing their reliance on samples to “raise awareness about new and seasonal products,” Bloomberg noted. On the retail front, Walmart is expanding its free sample distribution to 1,000 locations, while supermarket operator Wakefern Food Corporation is installing free sample vending machines at 95 locations.

**But do free samples really work?** After all, Target has experimented over the years with free food and beauty product samples, but the vast majority of Target stores no longer offer any samples.

However, others have seen success with this tactic. After Snack Factory, the creator of Pretzel Crisps, started giving out samples, the company’s VP of marketing, Perry Abbenante, said that “the conversion rate of the sampling efforts was between 25 and 30%, meaning that at least a quarter of those who tried a free sample ended up buying the product,” according to Lightspeed.

**The Atlantic** magazine reported on a study of yogurt and found that almost 60% of samplers purchased the product, compared to only 15% of non-samplers. For frozen pizza and bagels, more than 20% of shoppers who sampled the items made a purchase, while those who did not sample the food did not purchase those products. In extreme cases, samples have been shown to boost sales by 2,000%.

**Does Sampling Really Lead to Conversion?**

Nielsen studies indicate five factors related to brand switching: price, quality, better service, variety of choice, and improved features.

A sampling campaign is the perfect opportunity to capture the attention of the 20% of consumers willing to switch brands if they find better quality in a competitor. It might also reel in the 19% who are interested in better service, another 7% who appreciate variety, and about 8% who appreciate the improved features of the latest, greatest thing.

As to price, perhaps your product's price is not incentive enough to lead to the conversion of 47% of consumers who can be swayed by this factor. However, by placing a free sample in their hands, your chances rise that they may consider switching brands. If the experience is satisfactory, a price-conscious consumer may weigh the cost/quality values and determine that your product is worth it. If your sampling campaign includes a first-time buyer discount strategy, that may be the final push to secure a price-conscious consumer conversion.

**Costco Case Study**

**Costco's in-store sampling strategy** is so legendary, it is not uncommon for a shopper to actually be a browser who has shown up for a free meal, one tidbit at a time.

Costco has learned that when sampling is done right, the shopping experience becomes fun, which draws people into the store in greater numbers. The products featured in a sampling campaign, in turn, see a significant spike in sales.

Just look at these amazing numbers Costco has reported from sampling campaigns:

* **Featured beer brands** saw a 71% boost in sales.
* **Featured brands and varieties of frozen pizza** experienced a 600% sales increase.
* **Featured wines** enjoyed a boost of more than 300% in sales.
* **Featured cosmetics** of lipstick and mascara sales rose by more than 500%.
* **Featured packaged cheeses** doubled in sales.