

Executive summary

Zoe leads communications for Ocado Retail, the world's largest dedicated online supermarket. In three years, Zoe has transformed Ocado Retail's communications approach, matching the business's commercial appetite for growth with an ambitious comms strategy that is befitting a market leader.

This year her achievements include:

1. Strengthening brand resonance and relevance through a 77% YoY increase in media coverage
2. Spearheading innovative initiatives that drive market differentiation such as 'Buy Woman Built' and 'Ocado Roots'
3. Challenging outdated brand perceptions to attract new customer segments and redefine media understanding of Ocado Retail, to position them as a go-to commentator on a range of issues

Zoe's experience both in-house and agency, coupled with her industry knowledge and proven strategic vision have seen her become an integral part of Ocado Retail's success in recent years. As a result, her comms budgets have grown YoY, despite a challenging economic environment.

Transforming Ocado Retail's approach to communications

Ocado Retail's success has traditionally been overshadowed by its owners, M&S and Ocado Group, which are led by superstar CEOs and are category leaders in product and technology.

Zoe has been instrumental in building a distinctive voice and role for Ocado Retail within this landscape, working with her team and agency partners to bring its customer first commitment to life in multiple ways.

1) Proactively positioning Ocado Retail as a key commentator on cultural trends and behaviors relevant to its customers

This year, Zoe spearheaded the reimagining of Ocado Retail's approach to proactive communications. Blurring the lines between corporate and consumer PR, she has harnessed a treasure trove of customer data and built an agile, multichannel newsroom operation that delivers storytelling to support each of the business's three core values: Range, Value and Service. She translated these insights into thought leadership and executive positioning programmes, helping to build trust and excitement in the proposition, which directly increased revenue. Example commentary programmes include:

- 'The Orange Wine Boom', which led to product searches increasing by 13% WoW
- 'Fakeaways', which highlighted cash-strapped consumers' switching behaviour and



- communicated Ocado Retail's Value proposition
- 'No and low alcohol ranges', driven by new drinking habits and rituals, which saw Ocado Retail increase its product offering by 18% since June 2022, with over 210 options now available for fans

In total, communications drove 444 pieces of proactive coverage for Ocado Retail in 2024, a new record for the brand. Of this there were 95 pieces of national coverage and 86% included a spokesperson quote, both new records.

This is in direct contrast to the team Zoe inherited, which dealt almost exclusively with reactive issues management; with a KPI of two pieces of coverage a month.

2) Executive profiling to build trust in the people behind the brand

Upskilling and educating the leadership team on the importance of reputation has been one of Zoe's biggest achievements since joining Ocado Retail.

Her expert counsel and collaborative approach, coupled with her decades of comms experience have allowed her to anticipate how the media will approach a story, using this insight to coach her leadership team, reassure them, and introduce perspective in crisis situations. This skillset has transformed the newly established leadership from when she joined into established industry experts and commentators to target media. Highlights include:

- Securing Hannah Gibson's first profile interview since she took on the role of CEO in The Sunday Times. The narrative focused on how Hannah's passion for food and eye for detail has positively impacted the business
- Detailed feature in the Daily Mail during the peak Christmas trading period, focusing on Ocado Retail's pure-play online business model and how it is setting the business up for success

- Improved relations between Ocado Retail and key industry titles like The Grocer, who had criticised the brand for not being closed off to the wider industry. Zoe placed Amit Chitnis, Ocado Retail CCO, as a speaker for a series of industry leading events, and secured an in-depth profile with The Grocer to target suppliers and industry partners
- Instigated regular media events within the calendar to improve and deepen relationships with key opinion formers such as one to one tours of Ocado Retail's CFCs and hosting the first ever media dinner for Ocado's Leadership Team and over 15 influential media
- Secured Hannah Gibson as a Top Voice on LinkedIn as part of efforts to build Ocado Retail's brand equity given the reputations of leaders and the organisations they represent are intertwined



3) Harnessing the power of social to drive brand fame

Over the past year, Zoe has seen her remit increase to cover brand social, the outcome of which has seen a transformation in how the brand engages with its consumers. Celebrating the human experience with its playful, uplifting content, the impact during the business's peak commercial Christmas trading period has been immediate:

- In December alone, there were over 2.4m total video views across social, up 84% MoM. Total impressions were also up 95% MoM
- TikTok continues to deliver strong return on investment for the brand - delivering 1.56M total views in December with total engagements up 49%
- Smarter investment regarding influencer and partner content has not only provided cost effective ways to engage consumers and build brand advocacy but drove 1.63m organic video views in December with an above industry average engagement rate

Tapping into existing social conversations to position Ocado as a social and cultural commentator has been a key part of the team's content strategy. The standout example of which was the brand's social parody of the iconic 'Looking for a man in finance' meme, which garnered 959k views and 73,000 likes; acquiring 1500 new followers.

4) Refresh of Ocado's financial communications

In partnership with MHP Group, Zoe has been instrumental in driving forwards a more proactive approach to the brand's engagement with retail and business media.

This been reflected in increased engagement surrounding Ocado Retail's quarterly Trading Updates, and in concerted efforts to give Hannah Gibson her own voice and presence amongst retail correspondents.

This has strengthened understanding of the brand and its proposition amongst key opinion formers, resulting in increased positive, well-messaged coverage that

shifts the focus away from Ocado Retail's owners and onto its own strategic progress, and what is ultimately an exciting UK growth story.

5) Giving Ocado Retail a point of competitive differentiation

In the past twelve months, Zoe has sought to answer the question 'what does Ocado Retail stand for?' as a way to increase understanding among key stakeholders of the unique Ocado Retail proposition and why the business is relevant to their agendas.

Under her leadership, the comms team and MHP Group have focused on the industry-leading work the brand is doing in the small supplier/challenger brand space to convey Ocado Retail's ability to lead and shape the market. Highlights include:

- Working with Sarah Butler at The Guardian on a feature about Ocado's new refill proposition
- Building a detailed feature in the Sunday Times with Lucy Tobin about the Range of Ocado's new Buy Women Built Aisle, which included an interview with Hannah Gibson
- Working with Josie Clarke at PA media to exclusively place an announcement about Ocado's new Buy British aisle, the largest of its kind in the country, leading to widespread coverage despite other supermarkets having already announced theirs
- Partnering with the Soil Association to transform food and farming systems in the UK

Impact

Arguably the most powerful testament to the strength of Zoe's efforts has been the improved consumer and shareholder confidence in Ocado Retail and Hannah Gibson. Over the past year, **Ocado Retail has seen more customers shop with them than ever before**, with standout metrics including:

- Reaching the milestone of 500,000 orders per week in Q4 2024
- Revenue increase YoY of 13.9%
- Industry leading NPS, with an increase of almost 5 points YoY
- Christmas sales increased by 175% to their highest ever level
- 175% increase in consideration amongst those who have seen a form of Ocado Retail PR
- Value for money perceptions have reached a new peak (31%)
- 5% increase in consumer trust metrics over the past twelve months