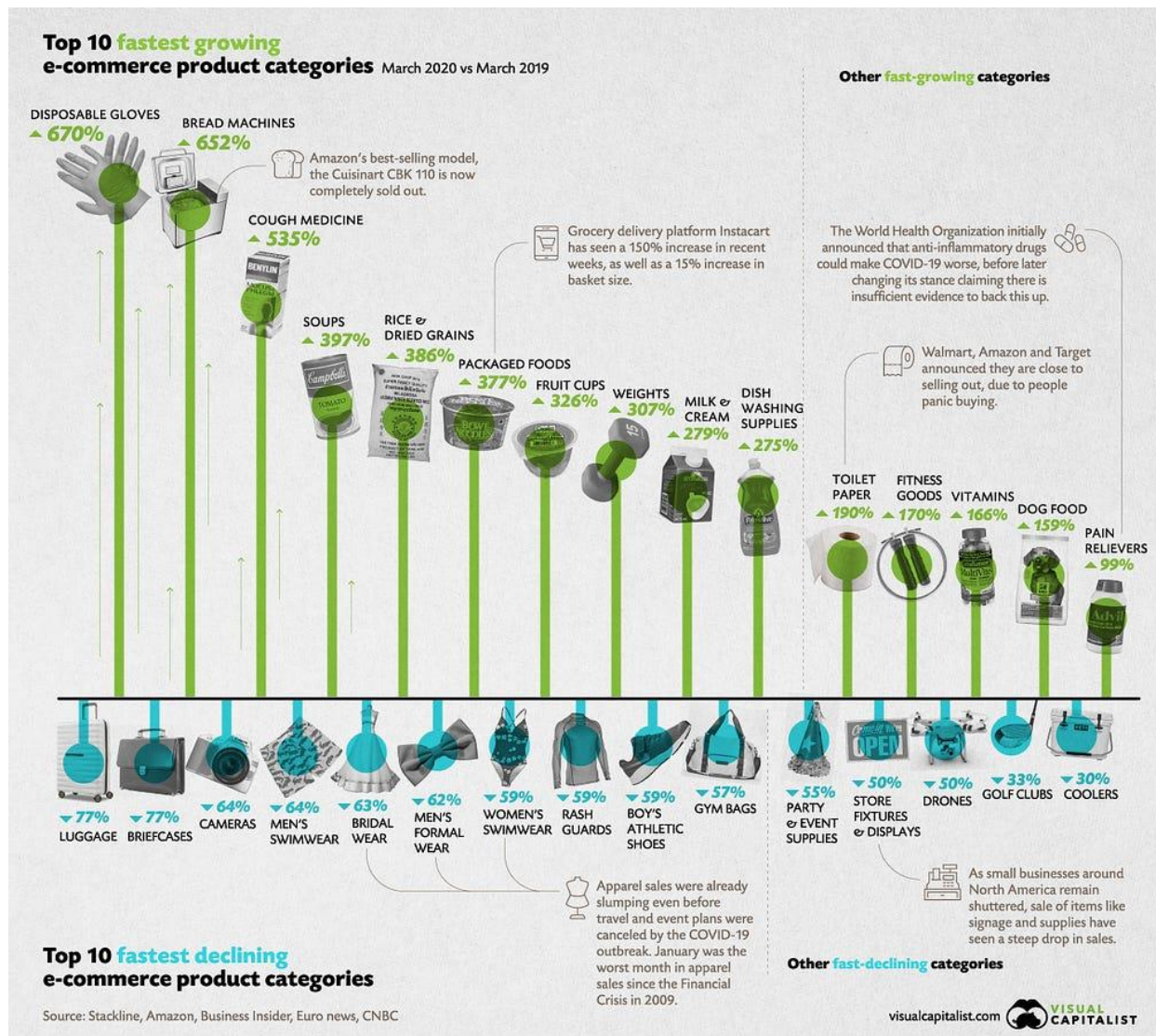


A graph that tells an interesting story – Week 2 Assignment

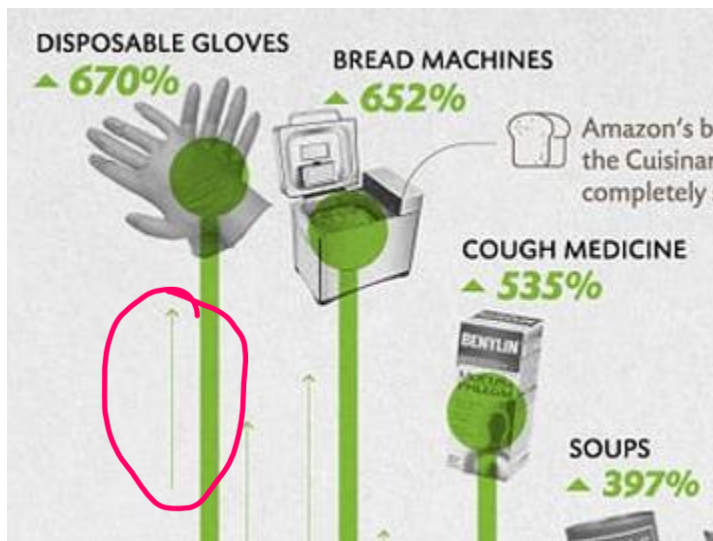


Overall, I think this is a good presentation-style visualization for laypeople. It communicates a clear story about how purchasing patterns changed during the first March of the pandemic. There isn't a y axis, which I think is fine for this graph, because the story isn't about the precise degree to which purchases increased, it's about how much more people were sick, cleaning and trying to avoid germs (e.g., disposable gloves, cough medicine), and staying home making bread during quarantine (i.e., bread machines). The lack of a y-axis would not be appropriate in an "exploration" graph for experts, but I think it works here.

Successes

I think this visualization blends elements of an infographic and deviation graph (as per the Financial Times' visual vocabulary). This is a deviation graph in the sense that the x-axis is

zeroed at the magnitude (or dollars?) of purchases in March 2019, and items above or below the scale deviate from that relative zero. The icons and annotations (as per an infographic) provide useful additional context that helps explain the impact of trends or why they occurred, which I think is a good addition. While I think the visualization is a little busy because it includes both the fastest growing *and* declining product categories, I ultimately think that including both helps with communicating the story of purchase changes. The colour difference between the growing categories (in green) and the declining categories (in blue) helps to organize the information. Finally, I like the arrows around the top 4 increased categories:



I think the intent is to emphasize that the visualization is about relative changes in purchases, not the absolute number of purchases. This could be useful because I assume that it's easy to think this visualization is telling us that people bought more surgical gloves than soups in March of 2020, when this visualization can't indicate the number of purchases. I'm not sure how effective these arrows are, but they're unobtrusive, so I think their potential utility is worth keeping.

Improvements

There are some small things I think I would still change about this visualization. I would make it a little clearer in the title or in a description, whether the visualization is defining growth monetarily or in terms of the number of items sold. My guess is that this visualization is about the latter, but the answer to that question could really change which purchases grew the most. Additionally, simple clipart graphics could communicate about the product categories faster, because the pictures can sometimes be quite detailed, darkly lit, and hard to see.