IMRG utilises a new dashboard to visualise retail data in the UK

IMRG and Capgemini partner to develop an interactive digital dashboard that delivers fast, secure access to market analysis and insights for 250 leading UK online retailers

Further visualising retail data

For 20 years, IMRG, the UK's online retail association that offers neutral and unique resources to its membership community, has partnered with Capgemini to operate the IMRG Capgemini Online Retail Index, the definitive performance indicator for more than 250 of the UK's leading online retailers. By providing weekly, monthly and quarterly reports that include more than £25 billion in annual sales figures, IMRG offers businesses with the insights they need to make critical decisions.

However, as data has expanded in importance, these retailers wanted more information placed directly into their hands. IMRG's monthly reports painted a detailed picture but struggled to keep pace with modern demands. In response, the organisation once again reached out to Capgemini to create a new tool by which the output of its index could provide an interactive experience, and the scope of the data expanded. Together, IMRG and Capgemini selected Microsoft Azure as the best fit technology for the solution and began to work on an implementation plan.

Overview

Client: IMRG

Industry: Retail

Region: United Kingdom

Client Challenges: Faced with a radically changing retail industry, IMRG wanted to provide its members with more comprehensive, responsive, and rapidly accessible output to provide better business insights

Solution: In partnership with Capgemini, IMRG used Microsoft Azure and Power BI to offer an interactive dashboard that allowed its members to readily access relevant business analysis and understand how they compared to the rest of the market

Benefits:

- Improved data-driven insights for retailers
- Greater preparedness for disruptions
- Renewed engagement with member businesses

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A dashboard for data visualisation

Working collaboratively, the partners developed a new platform that retailers could access quickly and easily in order to visualise relevant business data. To maintain the digital dashboard, IMRG members submit data directly to the organisation's website every week. This tracks 80 sales and performance metrics across 25 product sectors and numerous sub-sectors, aggregating the data into accessible, interactive graphics that provide summary overviews and in-depth insight into a wide range of criteria arranged by sector.

To manage the dashboard, IMRG uses the Azure Storage Explorer Windows client to gather and upload the data to the Microsoft Azure Data Lake. A data pipeline run using Azure Data Factory loads data into the Azure SQL Database and then performs quality checks for each retailer on week-on-week and month-on-month variances, which are compared against pre-determined thresholds. A suite of Data Quality Power BI reports then assess the data against expected ranges. Once data quality and accuracy checks have been passed, the latest weekly data is loaded into the database, which takes just 30 minutes, as opposed to the previous three-day requirement. Once the data is loaded and new KPIs are calculated using the SQL Database, IMRG can review how the dashboards look before refreshing the embedded datasets in Power BI.

Through the dashboard, retailers can quickly view the desired reports and tailor the parameters in order to gain a more comprehensive view of their performance and how they compare to similar businesses. This is then paired with personal interviews with experts from IMRG to help interpret the data and provide further guidance. As a result, online retailers in the UK have never had an easier time understanding how they stack up against the competition and coming up with a plan to better serve their customers.

> *We take the YoY sales growth from the total industry and filtered to just Beauty every week and month. This gives us a benchmark of our sales performance vs industry and other beauty retailers to understand if we are over or underperforming. This is then used in internal packs that are shared with the wider business as well as our senior leadership team."*

Louise Mortimer,
Online Optimisation and Analytics Manager, Estee Lauder

Interactive, data-driven insights

The The launch of the new dashboard has prompted a new level of engagement between IMRG and its retailer members. With interactive data visualisation, the organisation gave these businesses a new tool to track their performance and identify ways to improve based on the success of competitors or other relevant retailers. When combined with the conversations that IMRG experts then offered as a follow up, UK retail businesses suddenly had access to a great deal more information and could also tap into substantial expertise to draw further insights from the data. Finally, by providing increased visibility of metrics and the option to show a retailer's own data against the benchmark, IMRG has also helped to increase the accuracy and maintenance of the data inputs to the index.

Following the dashboard's rollout in January 2020, businesses across the UK experienced an unprecedented disruption in the form of the COVID-19 global pandemic. With the new system already up and running, IMRG was able to deliver real-time insight, providing a greater level of guidance than ever before. This helped businesses adapt quickly and come up with new methods for supporting their customers in order to continue delivering key services, both to avoid a crippling loss of revenue and support the country as it dealt with a massive shift in everyday life.

Together, IMRG and Capgemini see a future for retailers based on increasingly refined data. Building upon the success of the dashboard, the partners can now work on expanding the organisation's predictive and forecasting capacity to provide these additional analytics through the front-end portal. Now and in the future, IMRG has dedicated itself to the expansion of data-driven insight within the retail industry.

The IMRG Capgemini Digital Dashboard has been a revelation. We now have comparative trading information for our retail sector available almost instantly, enabling us to contextualise our performance and make rapid changes to our trading tactics."

Duncan Hood,
Analytics and Optimisation Manager, Marks & Spencer.

About Capgemini

With Capgemini is a global leader in partnering with companies to transform and manage their business by harnessing the power of technology. The Group is guided everyday by its purpose of unleashing human energy through technology for an inclusive and sustainable future. It is a responsible and diverse organization of 270,000 team members in nearly 50 countries. With its strong 50 year heritage and deep industry expertise, Capgemini is trusted by its clients to address the entire breadth of their business needs, from strategy and design to operations, fuelled by the fast evolving and innovative world of cloud, data, AI, connectivity, software, digital engineering and platforms. The Group reported in 2020 global revenues of €16 billion.

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About IMRG

For over 20 years, IMRG (Interactive Media in Retail Group) has been the voice of e-retail in the UK. We are a membership community comprising businesses of all sizes – multichannel and pureplay, SME and multinational, and solution providers to industry. We support our members through a range of activities – including market tracking and insight, benchmarking and best practice sharing. Our indexes provide in-depth intelligence on online sales, mobile sales, delivery trends and over 40 additional KPIs. Our goal is to ensure our members have the information and resources they need to succeed in rapidly-evolving markets – both domestically and internationally.

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