from insights to in-market
A product-development journey
New product development is a collaborative team effort. Marketing research plays a key role, as does research and development, packaging design, and marketing. To get a sense of the direction General Mills might take in extending its Nature Valley line, one of the company’s marketing researchers suggests an industry-trend review. One emerging trend is the consumer desire for simplicity. The brand’s marketing researcher leads the team on a cultural immersion to better understand if this macro trend can be applied to a new product offering for Nature Valley. The team quickly learns that consumers believe “healthy snacks are designed by nature,” which fits perfectly with the Nature Valley brand.
Next, the marketing researcher leads the team on a category assessment of the healthy-snack category as a whole. The team develops a variety of new product concepts for Nature Valley and zeroes in on those that contain nuts because they have high appeal among consumers. Nuts and nut-based snacks are not only on trend, consumers love them because they are filling and healthy due to their protein content.
Although the focus is on “healthy” snacks, customers keep talking about peanut brittle in positioning testing. They love its taste and crunch, but just wish it could be healthier. The marketing researcher takes this tip to the team. Would it be possible to create a snack bar with the taste and crunch of peanut brittle that was a healthier snack?
The team is on to something. Nuts, crunch, the taste of peanut brittle but with better nutrition—could there be a winning combination? Additional rounds of concept testing begin. As the package design team starts mocking up a box, the marketing researcher reminds them that consumers want to see whole ingredients in their snacks. Therefore including a close-up visual of the new product and the whole nuts will be critical to its success.
Nature Valley knows its customers value simplicity and honesty. The R&D team develops multiple prototypes that include the fewest ingredients possible and those most recognizable—without compromising taste. The marketing researcher then shows these various prototypes to consumers to get their reactions.
With the new snack bar almost ready for launch, sensory analysis and product testing is done with customers to make sure it is both as sweet and as salty as they want it to be. Satisfied with the results, General Mills rolls out the new bar—“Nature Valley Roasted Nut Crunch”—to the delight of customers nationwide.