



The motivated consumer and the future of health

In-depth with... Lenneke Schils

Health is a ‘layered’ concept, according to worldwide market research agency GfK. It certainly means much more than simply avoiding getting sick.

According to Lenneke Schils, Industry Consultant Consumer Goods at GfK, health is higher on the consumer agenda than ever – something demonstrated most clearly by shifting consumption patterns in the soft drink and juice category. At the same time, people want convenience too. We undoubtedly live in what has become a ‘I want it fast, I want it now’ society.

Top global trends

Schils says that research identifies a number of global trends in consumer attitudes. The first is experience – the desire for fun and excitement. We all want our experiences to be memorable and meaningful, so in retail that means more than just a straightforward moment of purchase or consumption.

Another trend is wellbeing. “People face a continuous struggle,” argues Schils, “because they want to look and feel good.” Consumers want brands to help them make health easy.

A third trend, she describes as instant everywhere – reflecting our impatience

and desire to have everything right now. As a manufacturer or retailer, it’s your job to help save people time, without sacrificing their beliefs and ideals in the process. That’s the fourth trend of considered consumption.

“You are what you consume, you are what you buy,” says Schils. “The message you send through your consumption is even more important.”

Schils’ contention is that it’s the combination of these trends working together that shifts and shapes expectations of consumers. Fundamental needs don’t change, but we imagine the needs being fulfilled in a different way. Today, we still have a need to go from A to B, but rather than turn to an old-fashioned paper map, we navigate our way using a smartphone.

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Lenneke Schils
Industry Consultant
Consumer Goods at GfK



All our decisions can be traced back to four cornerstone benefits:



Security



Wellbeing



Gratification



Freedom

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The world of the motivated consumer

A third of consumers around the world use health and fitness trackers – a sure sign that people are becoming more aware and motivated on the issues. 61% of people are interested in products or services with proven health benefits.

Nearly 40% of consumers say they feel under pressure to provide healthy meals for themselves of their families. The sentiment is usually: 'I want to be healthy, but I have so little time. Please help make my life easy.'

The good news is that more people are trying to include more fiber in their diet, along with Omega 3 and dairy. They are also trying to cut out sugar, salt and artificial sweeteners.

There is undoubtedly still a big gap in the organic market which manufacturers and retailers are yet to fill.

Looking to the future

A big area of potential interest is custom-made food solutions, as consumers demand a 'meal for me'. After all, we live in a world where a great many products and services are now bespoke. So why not our dinner?

Food can be fortified in particular ways or tailored in a market such as Mexico, which has high levels of Diabetes. Is it far-fetched to imagine marathon-trainers receiving bespoke meals to reflect the demands of their training?

In some market places, such as the UK, there is particular concern among consumers at the prospect of getting sick from the food we eat. Portable devices that test for allergies in restaurants are now a real possibility.

Reducing our need for that sugar fix

An eye-catching sugar detox experiment won a creativity award at the Cannes advertising festival in 2016. Observing that the average French consumer tucks into three times the recommended amount of sugar in a year, Intermarché – one of the country's largest supermarket chains – created an innovative product to reduce dependency. A six-pack of chocolate yogurts was designed to give progressively less sugar in each individual carton.

Shoppers in-store sampled each in turn, starting with the sweetest and working towards a pot which contained half the sugar of the original. When they tried the first carton again, it seemed far too sweet for their taste.

