Weight Management: U.S. Consumer Mindsets

Description: Weight Management: U.S. Consumer Mindsets

It's the modern American paradox. Nearly one-third of Americans – 100 million of us – are watching their diet. We want to lose weight or maintain our current weight. Yet people continue to gain weight, and even though levels of obesity may have stabilized, you’re far more likely to hear someone say “I’m going on a diet” than “I need to eat more.”

What exactly do Americans think about weight management? That's what Packaged Facts wanted to find out, and using our proprietary survey capability, we asked. The results form the basis of our new report, Weight Management: U.S. Consumer Mindsets.

Weight management isn’t easy, and traditional diets are often started and then quickly abandoned. Mentally it’s hard to accept a strict diet plan. One little cookie won’t hurt, will it? Probably not, but that cookie is often the first step in the road to slipping back into eating habits that got the dieter to this stage in the first place.

How can food marketers navigate the dieting world and self-contradictory impulses Americans so often have? Packaged Facts found that there's a wide array of fundamental changes in how Americans view what needs or can be done to lose or maintain weight. For example, the report found that Americans are focusing on their snacking habits, rather than mealtime eating, to lose weight. This makes sense when you consider how important snacking has become in our lifestyles. According to Packaged Facts survey data, only 32% of those following a diet plan or eating strategy try to lose weight by eating in moderation at meals. More than twice as many (66%) say they limit how much they eat when they snack, while 62% set boundaries on how often they snack.

Packaged Facts also found that consumers are moving away from formal diet plans imposed by outside authority, while increasingly associating dieting with healthy eating. With the aid of mobile platforms that enable consumers to monitor their health and track their weight management efforts, DIY dieters increasingly embrace their own private healthy eating and exercise regimes as the path to weight loss success.

Scope of the Report

In general, weight management is divided into two categories of consumer behavior: efforts to lose weight and efforts to maintain weight. Simmons National Consumer Study (NCS) data used in the report specifically define the two categories of consumers involved in weight management activities as follows: those watching their diet to maintain weight and those watching their diet to lose weight. For the sake of convenience, when referring to these Simmons NCS categories the report uses the terms those on a weight maintenance diet or those on a weight loss diet, and can also refer to weight losers and weight maintainers. Weight losers are further categorized as those who are 30 or more pounds overweight (or significantly overweight) and those who are not 30 or more pounds overweight.

In referring to national Online Consumer Survey data the report analyzes those who are taking steps to lose weight (weight losers). Weight losers are further divided into those who are on a specific diet plan or eating strategy (or weight loss dieters) and those who are not.

Methodology

The consumer data in this report come from several sources. These include the national Online Consumer Survey conducted in July/August 2014. These surveys reflect a panel of 2,000 U.S. adults (age 18+) that is balanced to the national population on the primary demographic measures of gender, age bracket, race/ethnicity, geographic region, marital status, presence or absence of children in the household and household income.

Another source is Simmons National Consumer Study (NCS) for Winter 2014 from Experian Marketing Services, which was fielded from January 2013 through March 2014. (The report uses the Winter 2009 NCS in the case of 5-year-trend tables and figures.) On an ongoing basis, Experian Marketing Services conducts
booklet-based surveys of a large and random sample of consumers (approximately 25,000 for each 12-month survey compilation) who in aggregate represent a statistically accurate cross-section of the U.S. population.

Retail sales figures credited to IRI (Chicago, IL) are based on IRI aggregated multi-outlet (MULO) sales tracking, which represents sales through U.S. supermarkets, drugstores (including Walgreens, CVS, and Rite Aid), mass merchandisers (Walmart, Target, Kmart, and Shopko), warehouse clubs (Sam's Club and BJ's, but excluding Costco), dollar stores (excluding Dollar Tree), and military commissaries.

The report is also based upon data collected from a wide range of industry sources, including company websites, trade publications, business newspapers and magazines, consumer blogs and releases from public companies.

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