

[Click to Print](#)[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Will Skinny Wallets Equal Lean Times for Weight Loss Vendors?

Dec 30, 2008

[-By Elaine Wong](#)



As with every year, the week between Christmas and New Year's is prime time for weight loss brands. But this year, some are wondering if consumers will put their wallets before their stomachs.

"In this economy, consumers are not going to indulge in delusions of sticking to diets that require extended financial commitments," said Denise Lee Yohn, who runs a brand consulting firm in San Diego. Instead, "We'll see people opting out of expensive programs and looking for more do-it-yourself options,"

Marion Nestle, a nutrition and food studies professor at New York University, agreed: "Everyone is facing bleaker sales. The only things that are doing well are comfort foods—huge portions for [less] money."

That hasn't stopped the biggest players—Weight Watchers, Slim-Fast and NutriSystem—from rolling out new ads. But unlike other food marketers of late, none of the three, except for Slim-Fast and only then via print, are mentioning price.

Slim-Fast's print ad, beckon readers to "Kick some cravings, get some savings." Additional copy reads, "Slim-Fast gives you free meal planning, online buddies and advice from registered dieticians—the things other weight loss plans charge up to \$29.95 a month for." Slim-Fast North America brand development director Virginia Blakewest said the value messaging appeals to dieters who are looking for "brands that can help them lose weight on their own terms with adaptable plans that fit in their lifestyle."

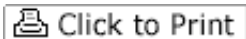
But price isn't mentioned in Slim-Fast's latest TV ads, which highlight HC4 optima shake—a blend of proteins, fibers and lipids. The campaign, via Ogilvy & Mather plays up the protein shake as a power drink that keeps hunger away for four hours. One ad shows a woman walking past a bakery and fighting off cravings, as she kicks and breaks apart a giant flying donut.

Similarly, Weight Watchers this week launched ads that promote its new "Momentum" program as a "fresh approach to weight loss." Those who sign up for the program receive instructions on how to choose filling foods and avoid bad snacking. Ads, via McCann Erickson, New York, show a furry orange monster tempting a female dieter with donuts, pizza and a cake. "Show hungry who's boss," the ad concludes as the hunger monster fails to tempt the woman.

NutriSystem, meanwhile, is betting that dieters will be able to pony up \$400 a month for a new deal with frozen foods home delivery provider Schwan's. Initially, the program cost \$300, although users can elect to stay with the current offering by not selecting the frozen food offering from Schwan's. The partnership goes into effect next month.

Find this article at:

http://www.brandweek.com/bw/content_display/news-and-features/packaged-goods/e3i2f608e22d68972d49167fddfceede87



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

© 2008 Nielsen Business Media, Inc. All rights reserved.