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FEATURED CONTENT

WHAT CONSUMERS THINK WHEN THEY THINK ABOUT HEALTH AND WELLNESS

By Denise Lee Yohn

Exclusive to Marketing Magnified



The food and beverage industry is undergoing a seismic change. Whether on the shelf or on restaurant-lined streets, health and wellness is all the rage.

17,038 new beverage products launched worldwide in 2006 with strong growth seen in fortified beverages, reports Beverage World magazine – among them were 58 beverages containing Omega-3 fatty acids, 85 with a weight control claim, and 130 featuring prebiotics and probiotics.

Many companies want to tap the exploding consumer demand, but it's not as simple as adding some healthy-sounding ingredient to an existing formulation or re-branding your product.

To stand out among the myriad of choices and make meaningful connections with customers that lead to purchase and loyalty, marketers must understand and navigate through the numerous and widely-differing health and wellness mindsets among consumers.

To today's consumer, wellness is more than just lack of illness. It means different things to different people. Here are 4 perspectives on "wellness" that have arisen in my research.

Wellness as proactive life management.

People of this mindset want to ward off the fallout of their 24/7 always-on lifestyles. They know they put their health at risk everyday and they desire products and services that enable them to maintain a sense of control and stability.

They respond to brands that help them prepare for the unexpected and make wise choices on the spot. Re-sealable and/or portable packaging and shelf-stable products that can be prepared on-the-go, like Lipton To Go iced teas, are good directions for packaged foods marketers.

Restaurants can provide services that give customers information and make them feel more confident in their decisions. For example, with Diet.com's Nutrition on the Go service, people can use their cell phones to text "diet1", the name of a restaurant, and menu item and within seconds they get a reply listing the nutritional profile in the requested item. It's the perfect tool to serve those seeking to proactively manage their lives.



Wellness as permission to enjoy food.

This mindset is shared by people who want to experience more pleasure, less guilt. They believe having a "healthy" perspective on food and eating is more important to their well-being than is counting every calorie. And they are looking for brands that share this understanding.

Marketers like Hershey's have learned that tapping into this mindset is more effective than touting health benefits. They recently launched Bliss, a line of treats "for those who appreciate the everyday joys of chocolate." Hershey's previous efforts tried appealing to consumers by promoting a product's antioxidant composition but they fell short in making an emotional connection.

By positioning their new product line as an everyday indulgence and serving it up in individually wrapped bite-sized pieces, Hershey's appeals to customers who relate to wellness along more psychological lines.

Wellness as the ability to use your body.

This mindset is about feeling good physically and being ready for whatever they want to do in life. These people are motivated by food's functional benefits.

To appeal to this group, the smoothie chain Jamba Juice overhauled their menu, adding new products, changing existing ones, and organizing their offerings by consumer benefit. They satisfy the growing – in number and variety – demand for health and performance benefits with smoothies ranging from the 3G Energizer for more energy and the Coldbuster to combat feeling under the weather.

It's important to note fitness may mean the ability to run the Boston marathon, while wellness may mean simply running the everyday marathon of life.

Wellness as holistic care.

Those who relate to their world more holistically tend to adopt this mindset. Wellness isn't just about taking care of themselves; it's about promoting balance, integrity, and peace in their world. They want to buy from companies that share these values.

Products and services that help parents care for their children are effective with this group. Clif Bar & Company provides an example. They have 3 different lines of products for kids and, using the acronym LUNCH, they offer simple and easy-to-remember tips for parents looking to pack healthier lunchboxes (e.g., the "U" stands for "Use variety – Keep it interesting and fun with shapes, colors, textures and flavors.")

Frito-Lay recently introduced a new platform for its Sun Chips snacks, "Healthier Planet. Healthier You." It highlights the company's solar energy efforts and encourages consumers to take their own steps to live "a brighter life." By incorporating the power of the sun in everything from advertising to producing the product, Frito-Lay is facilitating a powerful connection with people who see wellness as holistic care.

Beyond these 4 perspectives are many others ranging a full spectrum of consumer needs and wants. Smart marketers like those mentioned above have investigated the consumer demand landscape, identified a specific mindset to target, and tailored their offering accordingly.

The old adage "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" might now have a corollary in "wellness is in the mind of the consumer."

Denise Lee Yohn is a "brand as business" consulting partner who has helped companies like Frito-Lay, Jamba Juice, and Road Runner Sports operationalize their brands to grow their businesses. She can be reached at mail@deniseleeyohn.com.

