

Best Practices in Marketing Healthy Food Products

The increasing consumer trends toward health provide food processors with an opportunity to take advantage of the growing healthy food market. Effective messaging is critical to reach your target audience. Knowing **how** to design your marketing message is integral to success.

A recent study on key success factors/best practices in the healthy food market was conducted¹. The study was based on 27 companies who received marketing and advertising effectiveness awards, based on consumer behaviour change outcomes such as change in market share, sales, attitude or awareness.

Six groups of success factors emerged from the analysis. These factors are important in the design of the marketing activity, the composition and implementation of the marketing approach and the consumer response to the messaging. Knowledge of these factors can help companies who market healthy food products to reach their target market. Here are the research findings:

1. Data and Knowledge

Knowledge can either be scientific nutritional evidence justifying nutrition or health claims, or market and consumer behaviour insights. These success factors were called “nutritional evidence” and “consumer insights”. This type of data is typically pursued by conducting research. Superior knowledge could also be more intuitive knowledge and awareness about emerging trends that allowed for ‘doing the right thing at the right time’.

Example: Danone conducted thorough consumer research to prepare the re-launch of its ‘Activia’ yogurt in the UK. On the basis of this research, the communication focused on the yet untapped insight that most women complain about feeling ‘bloated’ from time to time.

¹ Witzel, J A, J A Federico, P Cueto, B Niedzwiedzka, W Verbeke and T Bech-Larsen (2011), *Key Success Factors in Health-related Food Marketing: A case study approach*, MAPP - Centre for Research on Customer Relations in the Food Sector, Department for Marketing and Statistics, Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University, Denmark

2. Emotions

Several examples in the study derived their success from a communication approach where complementation of the factual information was largely focused on 'emotions'. Some of the characteristics that were emotionally appealing to consumers include 'simplicity', 'naturalness' and 'back to nature'. These types of success factors were called "simple naturalness".

Example: Polish water brand '*Kropla Beskidu*' belongs to the multinational company Coca-Cola. In these TV segments, simple moments of happiness in everyday urban life were shown linked to water and enforced by an emotional song called "touch of joy".

3. Endorsement

Endorsements were used to create trust and credibility. In several cases, the endorsement is granted by respected or well-known celebrities, role models or heroes on a commercial basis. This key success factor is called "**vertical endorsement**".

Example: UK-based start-up company 'Ella's kitchen': Ella is the daughter of the founder, who is a father wanting to produce healthy and tasty Smoothies for his children.

4. Community

This could mean that the underlying message addresses or appeals to general social values, interests and responsibilities and evokes a sense of '**common ground**' in consumers that encourages them to follow the campaign. A more direct version of the appeal to social communities involves triggering active participation of, or even interaction between, consumers and the campaign, often in connection with the use of new media and social network sites.

Example: Nestlé's baby food brands launch 'Naturnes' in Germany and Sweden. Mothers who tested the products were encouraged to share their experiences on the website, and they could connect to each other and follow up on news via Facebook.

5. Media

TV was the main and sometimes the only medium in a number of cases. Use of TV was justified by the rich possibilities to appeal to emotions. In other examples, a combination and often massive use of various media aiming at a '360 degree' approach seemed to be important for success. Media type and extensiveness of use might not exclusively be a matter of financial investment, as communication can also be approached in alternative ways.

Example: Re-Launch of 'Activia' used '360 degree' approach. The communication of "Bionade" was until recently entirely built on sampling at events and word-of-mouth among the trend-setters in Germany.

6. Why and How

This factor deals with conveyance of the marketing message, facilitation of the consumer's ability to understand the key message and, motivation and ability to act accordingly. In many cases the following three aspects were common.

1. **Clear Message** - Messages were simple and clear enough to be understood by an 'average' consumer.
2. **Close Benefits** - Motivation to act was encouraged by presenting long-term benefits like improved health combined with short-term benefits such as good taste, wellness or good looks that are closer to today's consumer concerns, and reflecting a success factor called "close benefits".
3. **Achievability** - How to achieve these benefits were clearly explained step by step and called "achievability".

Example: Kellogg's 'Special K' cereal brand campaign. The 'Drop a Jeans-size'-campaign focused on the related well-being and satisfaction of slimming as a benefit rather than stressing the health outcome. The use of the product was easily understandable and benefits could be achieved in a foreseeable time by following the formula 'two bowls – two meals – two weeks'.

For further information on marketing nutrition refer to the Food and Health Unit Marketing Nutrition Handbook