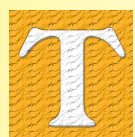


A broad functional ingredient portfolio is the key to cross-generational appeal

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here's a trend sweeping TikTok at the moment called 'Gen Z writes the marketing script'. To those readers whose eyes glaze over at the mere mention of TikTok, it involves brands posting videos where older members of staff film a promotional video peppered with Gen Z slang.

The humour comes from our tendency to culturally separate Baby Boomers from Gen Z. It's a simple joke. But it's one that highlights how rare it is that trends cross-pollinate between age demographics. That means when there is a genuine cross-demographic trend, it's worth taking notice.

The trend towards functional foods and ingredients is one of these trends. While there are some nuances that differentiate the demands of older and younger consumers, broadly speaking,



interest has never been higher in high quality functional nutrition products from all age demographics. That means the need to build a broad portfolio of innovative ingredients to meet consumer demands has also never been higher.

Keeping up with an aging market

The crucial thing to remember about the European market is that it is aging fairly rapidly¹. While there is a tendency to view young people as the key drivers of many market trends, it is important to remember that the number of young people is shrinking. According to Eurostat data, there will be 13.5% fewer people aged under 55 living in Europe by 2050.

This might be why heart health represents the largest segment of the functional food market², accounting for almost a quarter of the total market share. As you might expect, older consumers tend towards foods that can make claims addressing age-related health concerns. This includes heart health as well as foods that support cognitive function, meaning dietary supplements and fortified foods that incorporate added fibre or protein are growing in popularity.

While it's important to consider what older consumers are eating, it's just as important to look at what they are avoiding. Studies show they are focused on taking a more proactive approach to health by avoiding sugar and fat – particularly the latter – in food³. They are willing to accept sugar- and fat-modified foods, opening the door for

novel ingredients like Synevo that can be used to reduce sugar and fat content in a variety of foods.

Grab-and-go wellness

This is mirrored in younger consumers, who are also driving the trend towards preventative health. However, younger generations tend to consume their functional foods in the form of snacks and beverages as part of their busy lifestyles⁴. While older consumers may have more time to take in functional breakfast food such as fortified cereals and porridge, many younger consumers may opt for functional shakes, snack bars, and baked goods. Where older consumers may appreciate the value of bulk buying products for home storage, younger consumers may favour single-serve options that they can consume on the go.

The type of ingredients younger consumers gravitate towards are also subtly different. The pre- and probiotic segment, for example, is experiencing growth across all demographics⁵. However, younger consumers are driving growth in the gut health segment⁶, while older consumers are driving explosive growth in intimate feminine health⁷. Both can be catered to using different pre-, pro-, and post-biotic ingredients, which can be included in recipes for products like yoghurts or formulated into nutraceutical supplements.

It is easy to lump all prebiotics or probiotic ingredients in together and assume they only support gut health. However, the right expertise





can connect manufacturers with ingredients that can be used to provide more specific benefits, enabling targeted, personalised messaging that resonates with consumers in different demographics. This can be used to create products that support athletic performance and digestive health for younger consumers, or kidney and bone health for Baby Boomers.

This means that it pays to partner with a supplier that has a broad range of ingredients in multiple formulations, enabling the creation of a range of products that offer a variety of wellness-boosting benefits. Using protein as an example, partnering with a distributor like ACI Group offers manufacturers access to a variety of protein-rich ingredients in a range of forms, ranging from flour to crisps to grains and more. This can meet the nutritional demands of both older and younger consumers.

Tailoring products with specific health claims

As awareness of the link between diet and health continues to grow, consumers will increasingly demand highly specific health claims from functional foods. To be able to provide these claims, manufacturers must partner with suppliers who have both the portfolio and the expertise needed to incorporate ingredients into food properly.

Finding ingredients such as polyphenols is not difficult – but finding polyphenols that do not compromise a product's taste or texture while also offering the antioxidant-boosting properties required to make specific health claims is more challenging. Consumers will not accept functional foods with substandard taste or texture, so consideration needs to be given to how functional ingredients are incorporated into recipes.

Again, a distributor can help manufacturers connect with the right ingredients that can be incorporated into existing recipes with little to no reformulation. This ensures manufacturers can add specific functional properties to their products without compromising on product quality. Functional ingredients should add value, not create compromises.

All consumers, in every age demographic, respond well to products that they feel are made for them. Functional ingredients have the unique ability to instil this feeling, as they can address consumers' specific health and wellbeing needs. Distributors like ACI Group have the expertise and connections to help manufacturers navigate this evolving trend, catering to all ages with products made for them.

References:

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