CONSUMERS AROUND THE WORLD ARE NOW TAKING STEPS TO OPT FOR BETTER-FOR-YOU FOOD CHOICES

Vietnam, 30 August, 2016 – Around the world, consumers are increasingly opting for specialized diets that address their desire to eat organic, low-fat, low-carb, low-sugar or eliminate ingredients based on food sensitivities, allergies or personal convictions. Nearly two-thirds of global respondents (64%) in Nielsen’s new Global Health and Ingredient-Sentiment Survey said they followed a diet that limits or prohibits consumption of some foods or ingredients. And the rates were even higher in certain regions. For example, response rate in Asia-Pacific was higher than global average (72%). Vietnam has the same response rate with Asia-Pacific; 72% of Vietnamese said they followed a special diet that limits or prohibits consumption of some foods or ingredients.

Diets that limit the amount of fat or sugar are the most common type in Vietnam (46% and 25% each). Additionally, about one in five respondents say they follow a diet that limits the consumption of meats or carbohydrates (18% and 17% each). (Chart 1)

“Consumers choose the best products that fit their dietary needs and want to eat in ways that address those real needs, but they can’t do it alone. They need help from food manufacturers to offer products formulated with an eye towards food sensitivities and other specialized diets, and they need help from retailers to stock shelves with a proper assortment of foods that cater to a wider variety of consumer needs,” said Rakesh Dayal, Director of Consumer Insight, Nielsen Vietnam.

According to the report, key drivers of these “smarter” eating trends include:

**Sensitive ingredients that people avoid:** When it comes to ingredient trends, a back-to-basics mind-set, focused on simple ingredients and fewer artificial or processed foods, is a priority for the majority. Artificial preservatives (70%), colors (68%) and flavors (65%) top the list of ingredients that Vietnamese consumers try to avoid. In addition, more than half of respondents say they avoid antibiotics or hormones (59%) and artificial sweeteners (52%). Consumers aren’t just concerned about the ingredients in foods; they’re also concerned about food packaging. Six in ten respondents say they avoid food products contained in a package made with BPA, a chemical found in hard plastics and the coatings of food packages and drink cans.

Many consumers define healthful foods primarily by what they don’t contain, rather than the benefits they provide. Nearly 8 in 10 Vietnamese respondents say that they are willing to pay more for food and drinks that don’t contain the undesirable ingredients. (Chart 2)
Health-conscious consumers: Around seventy percent of Vietnamese respondents said that they pay close attention to the ingredients in the food and drinks they consume and they want to know everything that is going into my food.

“Informed and savvy consumers are demanding more from the foods they eat, and some are prioritizing ingredients over brands,” said Rakesh. “To many consumers, simple is beautiful, and foods with a short list of recognizable ingredients resonate strongly. Savvy manufacturers are responding to this trend by modifying product portfolios by simplifying food ingredient lists and creating natural and organic alternatives to existing offerings. Meanwhile, retailers are also prioritizing healthful foods and better-for-you brands in the center of the store, and emphasizing fresh and perishable foods around the perimeter in order to drive growth.”

Food as medicine: Seventy nine of Vietnamese respondents said they actively make dietary choices to help prevent health conditions such as obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol or hypertension. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), chronic disease such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer are expected to account for 73% of deaths globally by 2020, up from roughly 60% in 2001.

“The need to live healthily is strong among Vietnamese consumers. And it will open more opportunities for food and drink manufacturers. However, health and wellness is not a one-size fits all approach. Retailers and manufacturers need to identify high-potential segments and the drivers of engagement for these consumers and, then tailor their messages and products accordingly,” added Rakesh Dayal.

Chart 1: Top 3 types of dietary in Vietnam, compared with other countries in Southeast Asia
ABOUT THE NIELSEN GLOBAL HEALTH AND INGREDIENT-SENTIMENT SURVEY

The Nielsen Global Health and Ingredient-Sentiment Survey polled more than 30,000 online respondents in 63 countries to understand how consumers feel about the foods and beverages available on store shelves. We examined respondents’ self-reported dietary restrictions, including food allergies or intolerances, and the extent to which current offerings are meeting their needs. We also looked at consumer sentiment across 22 different ingredients to uncover what consumers want on store shelves.

ABOUT THE NIELSEN GLOBAL SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The findings in this survey are based on respondents with online access in 63 countries (unless otherwise noted). While an online survey methodology allows for tremendous scale and global reach, it provides a perspective on the habits of only existing internet users, not total populations. In addition, survey responses are based on claimed behaviour, rather than actual metered data. Cultural differences in reporting sentiment are likely factors in the outlook across countries. The reported results do not attempt to control or correct for these differences; therefore, caution should be exercised when comparing across countries and regions, particularly across regional boundaries.

ABOUT NIELSEN

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