

INNOVATION

How to Avoid Getting Fooled By Trends

These three common misinterpretations can lead to false hopes and product failures in the healthy and wellness industry and beyond.



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Earlier this month, [bottled water consumption overtook soda as the number one drink](#) in the U.S. [Forbes reports](#) that fresh-pressed juices have boomed into a \$3.4-

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worth \$502 billion dollars and expected to grow by almost 50 percent over the next five years.

As an entrepreneur in the health and wellness industry, it's easy to look at these growing micro and macro trends and assume that you're on your way to a creating a successful business -- regardless of your product or service.

But, as I write in my book *Reinventing the Egg: To Win the Game It to Change It*, it's this very thinking that has derailed some of the smartest entrepreneurs and the most innovative brands.

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Trends are important indicators. But, when misinterpreted and misread, they can lead you down a destructive path of false hope and incorrect assumptions.

Here are three of the most common mistakes entrepreneurs make when interpreting a trend and how you can avoid them.

1. Mistaking a trend for a fad

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Drunkseve wines, “fads are about products, whereas trends are about what drives consumers to buy products.”

The largest differentiator is that trends are based on a growing change in consumer behaviour, whereas fads tend to be linked to products that don't necessarily respond to a particular change in consumer behavior or solve a consumer problem.

Remember Crocs, the colorful rubber shoe manufacturer turned overnight success after celebrities were spotted in them? They were a fad. The firm's stock soared to \$75 in October 2007 and then, when consumers were on to the next thing, fell to just \$0.79 eighteen months later.

You want to build a sustainable business beyond one product or ingredient. Kale, one of the biggest health fads to hit the U.S., is served at salad chains Sweetgreen and The Little Beet. But, their consumer proposal goes beyond kale, or any of their specific ingredients, and instead appeals to people who want healthy, seasonal, local food.

The question to ask yourself here is: Am I building a business based on consumer behaviour or am I building a business based on a specific product? If the later, consider rethinking your strategy to reflect the consumer behavior at the heart of the robust trends you're seeing in the market; not just the fads.

2. Identifying the right trend but offering the wrong solution

In the early '90s, as consumers were becoming more health conscious and looking for diet-friendly foods and beverages, McDonald's introduced the McLean Deluxe Burger. McDonald's correctly interpreted its customers' changing eating habits as a trend towards healthy eating and created a low-fat burger to meet those changing needs. Which would have been a smart interpretation of the trend and a great plan until it did two things. First, McDonald's named it the McLean Deluxe

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51 percent of the burger's fat and replaced it with water. According to consumers, it tasted awful and quickly failed.

Right trend, wrong solution.

On the flip side, Vitaminwater is a powerful example of what this looks like when a company gets both the right trend and the right solution. Before it came on the scene, the beverage industry was responding to the healthy eating and drinking trend by offering diet and zero calorie options for its most popular drinks. Instead, recognizing that there was a micro trend around paying more attention to people's moods and energy levels, Vitaminwater created a drink based on consumers' lifestyles. Feel tired and need an energy boost? There's a drink for that. Want to relax after a tough day at work? There's a drink for that.

In 2007, [Coca-Cola purchased Vitaminwater for a then company high of \\$4.2 billion.](#)

The key here is to do your due diligence. Understand the behaviors that are driving the trends, create products that offer solutions to the problems or frustrations people are facing and then test, test, test.

3. Assuming people no longer want the opposite of the trend

Reading about the micro and macro trends in the health and wellness space would lead you to rightly assume that consumers are moving away from indulgent foods. But, they're not abandoning them completely.

For example, In-n-Out Burger has grown massively by focusing on made-to-order burgers using high quality ingredients and non-frozen beef patties (a micro trend in the burger industry!). If it interpreted these health and wellness trends and began offering salads and wraps, it'd be offering what consumers were looking for -- but ruin its brand as the go-to for cheat days in the process.

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throw in the towel just yet. Here, you want to ask yourself (and research.): Are people still spending money on what I want to bring to market? Are they still buying soda, for example, even if they're buying more water?

If the answer is yes -- and consistently stays at "yes" -- there's still a market for you to explore and own.

According to [The Hartman Group](#), "The 'new healthy' is a consumer journey of contradiction and discovery." In other words, it doesn't always make sense. Which is the last crucial tip to keep in mind when interpreting trends. While the data may be pointing to an upward trajectory, that data is based on human behavior -- which is unpredictable and ever-changing. Your best bet? Use the trends you're coming across to inspire what comes next, not to decide it.

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Roger Cusa is an international marketing executive and author of the book *Reinventing the Egg -- To Win the Game is to Change It*. Cusa believes the key to growing and innovating successful businesses isn't about incremental ideas or d... [Read more »](#)

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