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Snackification Takes Hold

Consumers are looking for snacks to satisfy both need and want states, while on the go.

July 12, 2017, 10:41 am By Danielle Romano, Convenience Store News

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JERSEY CITY, N.J. — Gone are the days of traditional, three-meals-a-day consumption.

Today's consumers are riding a new wave called snackification. Eating and drinking what they want, when they want and anywhere they want, today's consumers are forging a fresh landscape of snacking that works best for their complicated lifestyles.

With 21 percent of consumers snacking more today than they were five years ago, snacks are playing an increasingly diverse role in people's food lives and

food culture. Modern-day consumers have a checklist when it comes to their snacks, which must fit multiple criteria, like convenience, portability, innovation, versatility and variety.

Snacks provide today's consumers with the ability to fill up before their next big meal, or simply serve as the meal itself.

"Modern-day snacking is driven by the on-the-go, time-starved lifestyle of today's shopper. They don't have the time to carefully plan, prepare and then sit down to eat a traditional breakfast, lunch or dinner," Brooke Steeneck, senior manager, category strategy and insights, c-store, for The Hershey Co., told Convenience Store News. "Instead, they have to grab convenient, easy and widely available snacks throughout the day to supplement their smaller main meals."

However, that's not the only contemporary purpose snacks serve. Snacking still carries with it a customary undertone, like satisfying an afternoon-pick-me-up, indulging in a late-night sweet tooth craving, or serving as a special daily treat for consumers.

In fact, Steeneck guarantees that confection will remain one of the largest and advantaged snacking categories. "The growth of indulgent snacks and our own consumer research give us confidence that this category remains relevant," she concluded.

What Makes Up Modern-Day Snacking?

The modern-day snacking spate can be akin to asking William Shakespeare's legendary question: "What's in a name?" With shifts in lifestyle, culture and values, the makeup of modern-day snacking is increasingly blurring.

Existing outside the boundaries of meals in a more fluid space, snacks can be anything and found anywhere, according to today's consumers. A whopping 91 percent of modern-day consumers partake in snacking multiple times throughout the day, revealed the *Future of Snacking 2016*, the latest snacking report from Bellevue, Wash.-based The Hartman Group. Additionally, a net total of 50 percent of all eating occasions today are snacking.

"In turn, the structure of meals is changing, creating new gray spaces," explained Tamar Barnett, vice president of strategic insights for The Hartman Group. For instance, 50 percent of "mini meal" eaters say the occasion replaced a traditional breakfast, lunch or dinner, while 20 percent say the occasion is in addition to a meal.



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Future of Snacking also found that today's associations with meals are: normative daypart occasions that mark the beginning and end of the day; being shared (ideally) with other people; and satisfying a balance of nutrition, calories and quantity. On the other hand, snacks have fewer cultural underpinnings. Snacks are seen as in-between meal fillers; not required for nutritional balance; happening fluidly; and an individualized and personalized experience.

Paving their own way in the shifting snacking paradigm, more consumers are incorporating a snack food as part of a main meal. The latest research from The NPD Group, based in Chicago, found that although snack foods are eaten between meals, snack foods eaten at main meals now represent 24 percent of all snack food eatings, which is up from 21 percent five years ago.

In fact, by 2024, annual eatings per capita of snack food at main meals is forecasted to grow by another 12 percent, according to NPD's *Generation Study: The Evolution of Eating*.

"Although consumers are not adding new snacking occasions to the day, there is a shift in what's eaten at main meals and how snacking is viewed. Consumers today expect snacks to work for them; the snack is no longer just a reward," said David Portalatin, vice president, industry analysis, NPD Group. "Snack foods that offer consumers flexibility on price, portion size, and portability allow them to compose an eating occasion that fits their specific needs at the time, whether they look at it as a snack, meal replacement or part of a main meal occasion."

Some consumers choose to forgo meals altogether in favor of all-day snacking. This is especially true of millennials. A survey commissioned by Welch's Global Ingredients Group, a division of Concord, Mass.-based Welch Foods Inc., found that 92 percent of snackers aged 18-35 said they often eat a snack instead of having breakfast, lunch or dinner at least once a week. Half of these consumers said they replaced a meal with a snack at least four times a week, while 26 percent said they do so at least seven times a week.

Among the top drivers for millennials to snack are taste (80 percent), nutrition and health (52 percent) and convenience (49 percent). But another factor is seeking whole food ingredients like whole grains (43 percent), real fruit (42 percent) and nuts (39 percent).

No matter the snack, transparency plays a significant role in consumers' snacking choices. With an emphasis on better-for-you snacking, consumers are conscious of a snack's ingredient list and check to see if the list is recognizable and easy to read. This holds true for even indulgent snacking, according to research from General Mills Convenience & Foodservice.

How C-stores Can Capitalize

By 2020, snacking will be a \$200-billion industry, according to predictions from IRI, a Chicago-headquartered market research company. This opens many doors of opportunity for convenience stores, which remain a snacking destination for consumers.

One tip The Hershey Co.'s Steeneck has for c-store operators is to not send customers on a wild goose chase when they're looking for a snack.

"Don't make your customer search the entire store to see your snack offering. Organize your store so that snacking categories are located together and on the shopper's path to purchase," she advises.

According to the supplier executive, c-store snacking solutions should also reflect the modern-snack model consisting of snacking throughout the day. With 56 percent of snacking purchases being made from a secondary location in the store, it is imperative retailers have the right snack categories on the right displays.

"Having a variety of snack categories represented for every daypart ensures the display will be shopped through the day," Steeneck expressed.

C-store operators should also take advantage of seasonal products and promotions. Steeneck noted that seasonal offerings represent an important opportunity for retailers to present additional usage occasions, and drive incremental sales.

"Household penetration peaks for categories like snacks and confection during seasonal periods, expanding the shopper base and bringing infrequent users into the category. Many shoppers make several trips throughout the season, so having product on display early each season is important to maximizing the opportunity," she stressed. "Letting your shopper know that you are 'in the season' with signage and dedicated seasonal display locations will help drive excitement for the shopper and growth for the category."

Check out *Convenience Store News'* Guide to Candy & Snacks in our [July issue](#) for more snackification insights.

By Danielle Romano, Convenience Store News



About Danielle Romano

Danielle Romano is associate managing editor for EnsembleIQ's Convenience Store News and CSNews.com. Prior to joining CSNews full-time in January 2015, Romano served as a freelancer for CSNews, with a concentration on social media, while working as product content copywriter/editor for Myron Corp., a promotional product company. Romano has a bachelor's degree in print journalism from William Paterson University.

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