


Baby boomers are the past and present of the nutraceuticals industry, millennials and Gen Z are the future

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Organizers of Vitafoods Europe asked 196 industry professionals to identify the two age groups most important to their business. Nearly three-quarters (72%) chose baby boomers followed by Generation X (ages 36 to 48), and 35% said millennials were the most important age group to their business.

When asked what generation would be most influential in ten years, responses were split between boomers at 55% and millennials at 50%.

“... I would agree that baby boomers are a key driver behind the explosion in condition-specific supplement formulas for joints, heart, cognition, immunity, and will continue to propel the market as they (Boomers) age,” Hilton told NutraIngredients-USA.

However, it is the millennial and Gen Z generations that will have the most influence on the future of the industry, Hilton added.

“There is no question that Millennials will have the most significant influence by far on the future of dietary supplements and functional foods moving forward, specifically in terms of personalization and customization of supplement offerings to meet the validated – DNA, blood, saliva – needs to specific consumers,” he said.

“Boomers account for significant volume, don’t get me wrong, but they are not the future. They are the past and present.”

Millennials’ nutrition agenda

Millennials are the “*most passionate demographic*” when it comes to overarching industry trends such as clean label, sustainability, and transparency, Hilton noted.

Millennials may not have adopted supplement usage to the degree of their parents’ generation (45% of millennials said they take supplements or vitamins on a regular basis compared to 69% of baby boomers, according to the Hartman Group), but their needs will come into focus over the medium to long-term.

“What is significant about Millennials is that they are re-writing the rules of human nutrition in terms of benefits, delivery and lifestyle applications,” Hilton said.

Millennials’ interests in the nutrition space will also revolve around convenience, personalization, and innovation in delivery formats of nutrients like gummies, stick packs, and fast melts, he added.

As this younger population ages, consumers will gravitate towards specialized supplements to fulfill their individual health needs such as digestion, energy, and skin care, the Hartman Group predicts.

“They don’t look at supplements the same way as boomers. They prefer food forms and delivery rather than a pile of pills.”

Digital native consumers

The digital realm is a major force already shaping nutrition demands of younger generations and companies will need to elevate their online marketing presence in order to compete and capture this emerging consumer audience, Hilton added.

While millennials are part of this digitally connected crowd, so too is Generation Z (currently 22-years-old and younger). One in five companies said this group is already a key market for them, according to Vitafoods Europe research.

“They prefer to use their smartphones for everyday purchases. The watchword will be ‘meet your customers where they are’, and increasingly that means online and social media through web forums, blogs, and influencers,” he said.

In fact, the vitamins and dietary supplements industry has seen a greater adoption of e-commerce purchases compared to other consumer goods industries like packaged food, according to Euromonitor. Global online purchases of vitamins and dietary supplements accounted for 14% of sales in 2016, compared to 2% for packaged food, the market research firm found.

“This vast and explosive digital landscape is the new marketplace opportunity for nutrition products,” Hilton said.