

Why manufacturers should have more than just a millennial mindset

By [Carolyn Heneghan](#) | July 5, 2016

Dive Brief:

Move over, millennials: Baby boomers and Gen Z are also influencing massive changes in the food and beverage industry, though their eating behaviors and attitudes differ, according to a Summer Fancy Food Show presentation from Melissa Abbott, vice president of culinary insights at the Hartman Group. Marketers tend to give millennials credit for the movements toward fresh, less processed and organic food. But baby boomers have actually "led" and "shaped" these industry trends because of their perception of food as a way to live a higher quality of life for longer, Abbott said. Often credited to millennials, ethnically diverse and innovative flavors are a banner of Gen Z, with nearly 50% of Gen Z Americans non-Caucasian, compared to 28% of boomers, according to Abbott. Also, because of their exposure to digital tech at an early age, Gen Z has also pushed for ingredient transparency.

Dive Insight:

Consumption is increasingly driving the economy more so than production, Abbott said. This has led to a combination of the fun and experiential nature of modern eating with an upending of certain related traditions, such as a decentralization of meal planning, shopping, and cooking.

Throughout these shifts, one common trait among all generations is the increasing link between food and health. That link may look different between generations, but the mental association is strong across the board. For example, Gen Z tends to perceive organic foods as healthier or even tasting better, while boomers perceive organic foods as having fewer negatives and not necessarily tasting any different.

Millennials have received much attention from marketers in recent years, but baby boomers and Gen Z each comprise 23% of the population, according to Abbott. That's nearly half of the population to whom food and beverage manufacturers do not always first target their products and marketing toward.

But unique opportunities lie in targeting products and marketing for these generations. As the large baby boomer population ages, [medical foods \(http://www.fooddive.com/news/are-medical-foods-the-next-big-trend-for-packaged-foods/420155/\)](http://www.fooddive.com/news/are-medical-foods-the-next-big-trend-for-packaged-foods/420155/) have become a way for manufacturers to strengthen the connection between food and health by using food as a conduit for medical treatments for chronic illnesses. [Nestle \(http://www.fooddive.com/news/how-medical-foods-offer-growth-opportunities-for-nestle-packaged-foods-ind-1/417339/\)](http://www.fooddive.com/news/how-medical-foods-offer-growth-opportunities-for-nestle-packaged-foods-ind-1/417339/) and [Hormel \(http://www.fooddive.com/news/hormel-takes-cue-from-nestle-with-new-medical-foods-line/418505/\)](http://www.fooddive.com/news/hormel-takes-cue-from-nestle-with-new-medical-foods-line/418505/) have both recently announced efforts to produce medical food lines, and other manufacturers are likely to follow.

Recommended Reading

Food Business News: [How boomers and Gen Z are changing food \(http://www.foodbusinessnews.net/articles/news_home/Consumer_Trends/2016/06/How_boomers_and_Gen_Z_are_chan.aspx?ID=%7BCCE7E5EBD-336B-49A7-8FE4-7B3D4641B1E1%7D\)](http://www.foodbusinessnews.net/articles/news_home/Consumer_Trends/2016/06/How_boomers_and_Gen_Z_are_chan.aspx?ID=%7BCCE7E5EBD-336B-49A7-8FE4-7B3D4641B1E1%7D)

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