

Children's Eating Habits - UK - November 2009

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What is this report about?

The market for children's food and drinks has been strongly impacted by the measures in place to tackle childhood obesity not only in the classroom, but at home as well. Children and parents are both making efforts to improve kids' diets, with manufacturers also developing healthier formulations, however, in reality, confectionery and other snacks remain popular treats.

Children are generally aware of what constitutes a healthy diet, but that does not mean they like everything about it. Younger children are also buying more snacks on the go, since many of these have been banned from their school premises or lunchboxes.

What have we found out?

- Food and drink manufacturers looking to target their products at children are increasingly using internet advertising. Internet ad is less regulated than other media and children are already responding positively to it: thirty percent of 8-16 year-olds say that they try food or drinks after seeing them online.
- Children appear to be making the effort to eat more healthily. Girls and the children of better off groups are avoiding sweets whereas confectionery and crisps remain the most popular snacks with most kids.
- Parents tend to let children have a say when it comes to choosing what goes in the shopping trolley. But, generally, children's say is limited to choosing brands for treats and snacks. Meals remain the stronghold of parents.
- Parents' attitudes are rubbing off on their children when it comes to artificial additives. Nearly forty percent of 11-14-year-olds avoid these. Keen to respond to the preferences of parents and children, manufacturers are using fewer additives and preservatives: six in ten new launches targeting children now feature this positioning claim.
- Teenagers are a forgotten generation as far as food manufacturers are concerned. As a demographic group, teenagers won't increase in number between 2009 and 2014, yet they have more pocket money and more buying power than younger children..
- Some snacks - cereal bars, cheese snacks and vegetables - lose popularity as teenagers get older. Others - sandwiches, rolls, baguettes - become more popular. Manufacturers could be looking to develop brands and products in these categories, specifically targeting teenagers.

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