

Family Dining - UK - December 2009

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What is this report about?

Family life has been going through many changes in the last few decades. Certain factors have played a significant part in shaping these changes such as the increased participation of women in the workplace and changes in the composition of the 'traditional' family unit. This is having an effect on eating habits with busy lifestyles increasing the demand for convenience food options.

This report examines how the change in traditional family mealtimes and meal occasions is impacting on people's shopping behaviour and how convenience foods and a snacking culture are changing family dining habits, and understand what this means for marketers, retailers and suppliers.

What have we found out?

- Almost two-thirds of families eat something light for lunch, but have a proper evening meal. With the evening meal being so important, retailers must offer families quick and easy-to-prepare meal solutions.
- Because a third of families plan what they eat on a day-to-day basis, food advertisers need to reach consumers when they are most receptive to the advertising message, such as using outdoor media (billboards) and radio advertising (during drive-time shows) .
- At the weekend, a quarter of families eat together more often, opening up opportunities for manufacturers not just to catch the consumer's eye in the run-up to the weekend but to take ownership of it.
- People in families are more likely to feel inclined to sit at the dinner table as a result of having children, making this an opportune moment for parents to reinforce the healthy eating message.
- Retailers should look to expand their meal deals, such as M&S Dine in for £10, to target families who need larger portion sizes, particularly as families are more likely to have cut back on eating out.
- Two-fifths of families can be described as "Convenience Rulers": they value family meals, and they also value convenience meal options making them key targets for cooking sauce, ready meal and other such manufacturers.

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