

Dieting Trends - UK - November 2012

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"Despite rising levels of obesity and the large swathes of the population who are trying to lose weight, the diet and weight control food market is stagnating. Although the overriding perception that 'light' products are overpriced is undoubtedly limiting their appeal, consumers' scepticism over their healthiness is also a major barrier. In order to win consumers' trust and compete with naturally low-calorie foods it is vital that manufacturers offer consumers greater transparency in terms of their ingredients and what constitutes them being 'diet'."

– Emma Clifford, Senior Food Analyst

In this report we answer the key questions:

- What do consumers do to lose weight and what can diet food brands learn from this?
- What effect is the Responsibility Deal having on the diet and weight control food market?
- What factors are stunting uptake of diet and weight control foods?
- How can diet food brands leverage technology to engage consumers?

The UK is in the midst of a so-called obesity epidemic. The majority of the population are classified as either overweight or obese, and worryingly Britons are continuing to get bigger. As such dieting is commonplace and over half of adults, corresponding to some 27 million consumers, have tried to slim down in the last 12 months. Despite this, the weight control food market is struggling; sales of selected core categories have risen by a conservative 10% to £1.6 billion over the 2007-12 period, with the market at a standstill in 2012.

In the current era of austerity, the market is undoubtedly marred by the overriding perception that products labelled as 'diet' or 'light' are overpriced. However, another major barrier is consumers' scepticism over the healthiness of these products, amid concerns about the ingredients or sweeteners they contain. Accordingly, dieters are gravitating towards food carrying more specific and tangible claims and many prefer to exercise more, reduce their portion sizes and cut back on unhealthy foods rather than eating more 'diet' products.

This report looks at consumers' attitudes and behaviours related to dieting primarily for weight management, mainly with the use of weight control foods. Mintel's definition of weight control foods includes products designed specifically to help the consumer lose weight and food products that have a reduced fat, calorie or sugar content compared with standard products.

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