

Instant Noodles - China - March 2013

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“An increasing number of snack options in China continue to snare consumer interest. However, there is scope for premium and healthier instant noodles if they can meet the demands of the growing numbers of affluent consumers and an older demographic.”

– David Huang, Senior Research Manager

In this report we answer the key questions:

- Will tailoring offerings to address specific occasions broaden the appeal of instant noodles?
- How can convenient products address the demands of busy lifestyles?
- Will premiumisation encourage trading up?
- How can you cater to more affluent and adventurous customers?

With its establishment in the 1990s by Taiwanese interests the instant noodle market in China can be considered quite mature. Since the mid-2000s the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) has stood at some 5%, much weaker than in many other food markets in China.

The expansion of China's middle class at nearly 15% year on year echoes a rise in disposable income, which has enabled consumers to trade up also in terms of their food choices. Accelerated urbanisation – with nearly 800 million people living in cities by 2020 (compared to 650 million in 2010) – looks set to create growth opportunities for instant noodles, with increasing concentrations of ready buyers and economies of scale in terms of retail channels, transportation and storage infrastructure.

However, instant noodle producers for the mainland market have not kept up with the consumers' increasingly hurried, diverse and sophisticated lifestyles in terms of product innovation. In many ways, the products are much the same as they were 20 years ago.

The onus is on the manufacturers to meet increasingly vocal consumer requirements for convenience; for tastes and technologies that meet occasions for eating noodles that did not exist in China even ten years ago; for premium lines and new and bold flavours that cater for the increasingly adventurous palates of the well-travelled affluent consumers.

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