

Chapter 12

Edible Innovation: How Youth–Driven Trends Are Shaping the Future of Food Marketing

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ABSTRACT

The food market is undergoing changes, and consumers 2020 to 2024 are shaping a market segment with unique eating behaviours. Nowhere is the impact of transformative trends that are reshaping the present and near future of markets and populations so pronounced than in food marketing and consumption. Dates throughout 2020-2024 are being pondered in this chapter to explain what makes this current generation tick. It also contains an overview of new innovations and modern changes in products and process, promotional, and marketing activities. This chapter looks at how the strong will, character, and ambition of the new generation are paving new paths in the food industry, leaving outdated practices behind and hitting the reset button on standards of health and sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

The food market has experienced high transformations in the last two years between 2020 to 2024 bringing about significant changes in the way consumers behave among the youth. It is not about preferring diets but more about broad changes concerning the ways food markets operate. With the food landscape changing so rapidly, there is a need to understand the diverse factors behind these changes: digital connectivity, global consciousness, and a strong focus on health and sustainability (Tsochantaridou et al., 2023).

The pandemic led to a deep transformation of consumer attitudes towards food. As people spent more and more time indoors, people started cooking and experimenting with foods. This trend shifted the manner of cooking food but influenced purchases as well. Young consumers, which includes the millennials and Gen Z, focused on quality over quantity (Salam et al., 2024). These younger consumers have been finding the product meeting the individual needs, whether that involves health, ethics of sourcing, or an environmental factor (Alhujaili et al., 2023). This was a time when there was a growing need for transparency in food labelling so that consumers had all the information regarding the food production (Venciute et al., 2023).

This trend towards healthy eating has also been driven by growing awareness of the relationship between diet and health. Consumers are becoming more aware of the nutritional content of food and have responded by buying organic, non-GMO, and whole foods (Avi & Batra, 2023). The second is the plant-based food revolution, which is growing; many have adopted veganism or vegetarianism for health reasons but also for ethical or environmental reasons (Gil et al., 2024). This change in consumer preference reflects a broader societal need to focus on health and has forced brands to innovate and develop products and services for such shifts.

Through digital connections the food landscape has changed a lot fundamentally, offering consumers pioneering information. Social media now plays a very major role in brand engagement and brand development (Abbate et al., 2023). Food brands are increasingly using social media, including Instagram and TikTok, to reach a younger market through visually attractive content and influencer collaborations (Khan et al., 2024). In this process, influencers will have significant roles in diet decisions as their suggestions tend to determine consumer behaviour. This transformation in marketing mirrors the overall shift away from mass marketing towards a more focused and customized direction (Johnson et al., 2024). By engaging consumers through these media, brands can make them feel more attached and enhance brand loyalty in an increasingly competitive market.

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