



FOODMIX HAS PAVED

— your —

PATH TO BRAND LOVE.

In March 2016 we conducted market research to identify and understand U.S. consumers' evolving relationships with their favorite food brands. Here are some of the insights we've unearthed through the Foodmix 2016 Brand Love Survey.

BACKGROUND

The research conducted in the Foodmix 2016 Brand Love Survey showed which food brands were America's favorites, determined how favorites break out by national, specialty and restaurant brands, and provided new insights into how consumers think and feel about favorite food brands. In addition, the research uncovered the extent to which consumers truly love food brands, the feelings and emotions that drive brand love, and the ways in which brand love impacts consumers' marketplace behaviors.

Data was collected using a national online survey of 1,000 consumers. The sample was representative of the US population by age, gender, income, ethnicity and region. The statistical margin of error is +/- 4 percent.

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FAVORITE FOOD BRANDS

The death of Big Food brands has been greatly exaggerated. Consumers overwhelmingly identify large, established mainstream brands as makers of their favorite food products. These brands provide a degree of familiarity and comfort unmatched by newer, upstart brands, even among younger consumers. As evidenced by this research, national food brands in traditional categories retain enormous equity and share of mind.

However, brands that are newer, smaller or that can offer more health-related benefits are also among consumers' favorites. This is particularly true in the Greek yogurt category, which has gone from niche to mainstream and now includes several of America's favorite food brands.

FEELINGS EVOKED BY FAVORITES

Consumers connect with their favorite food brands through a range of positive feelings and emotional benefits. This research tested consumers' level of agreement with a number of attitudes toward their favorite food that fell into broad categories of feeling states. Topping the list is a pleasure-related feeling, happiness, followed by feelings related to emotional intimacy and long-term commitment.

QUALITIES OF FAVORITES

The qualities that make food brands favorites fall into three tiers. At the highest level are price/ value, taste, freshness, convenience and consistency. Regardless of brand, a very high percentage of consumers expect these qualities in their favorite foods, whereas at one time these qualities might have been drivers of brand differentiation. Today, they appear to be price-of-entry attributes that any food brand must provide to get into consumers' set of preferred brands.

The second tier of qualities, less associated with favorites vs. those in the first tier, can be considered personality traits. These are the qualities that bring brands to life, define them in the marketplace and make them distinctive, and they include "authentic," "fun," "friendly" and "exciting."

The third tier of qualities, least associated with favorite food brands, include many of today's health related claims. The research suggests that qualities like high protein, low fat, and eco-friendly can help sell and distinguish brands, especially with health-conscious consumers, but in and of themselves these qualities generally do not create the strong emotional feelings that consumers have toward their favorite food brands.

BEHAVIORS TOWARD FAVORITES

Favorite food brands elicit positive marketplace behaviors that support manufacturers' sales and margins. As some examples, three-fourths of consumers recommend their favorite food brand to others. About the same percent of consumers are predisposed to trying new products from the brand. For their favorite food brand, more than half of consumers will pay a price premium, resist competitive offers and often purchase enough to keep it always on hand.

BRAND LOVE

The research explored the extent to which consumers love their favorite food brands – as opposed to merely liking them. The findings show that brand love is pervasive. Almost two-thirds of consumers report loving their favorite food brand. The incidence of consumers who love their favorite is consistent across demographic categories. For example, men are as likely as women to say they love their favorite food brand, as are Millennials and Baby Boomers.

We found that consumers who love food brands are significantly more likely to hold attitudes that drive positive marketplace behaviors. In comparison to those who only like their favorite, those who love it are more likely to make repeat purchases, resist competitive offers, be receptive to cross-selling opportunities and recommend the brand to others.

What qualities distinguish loved food brands? Brands that are loved are more likely to be associated with high quality and freshness. In addition, loved brands are far more likely than liked food brands to have emotional qualities, aspects of a differentiating brand personality and they include “authentic,” “friendly,” “creative,” “trustworthy” and “fun.” Non-differentiating attributes – those likely to be equally present in both loved and liked food brands – tend to be functional, and/ or related to flavor and health claims.

A NOTE FROM FOODMIX CEO DAN O’CONNELL :

“In the end, the research demonstrates there is a hurdle all food marketers face: steering their brands along the path from being liked to loved. Marketers need to consider the new realities of branding to enable their brands to organically evolve. Brand love must be earned; it cannot be bought. The brands that get over the hurdles and truly connect on an emotional level with consumers are turning customers to advocates. Those advocates not only will pay more for products, but will also go out of their way to find those products. Loved brands also benefit from a more loyal consumer. Not only will the consumer resist switching, they will also be more likely to accept other offerings, or line extensions, from their loved brands. In the Food Renaissance one thing is clear – there is power in going from the “cart to the heart.” The brands that can truly connect, in a truthful and meaningful way, will be big winners.”

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