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Produce price less of a concern for millennials

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They've grown up in a world with numerous options, where health and fresh food are priorities, information is available 24/7 and the Internet has been ever-present. And, as millennial ages span 22-37, they have wide-ranging concerns stretching from post-college futures to the well being of their young families.

These factors are evident in millennials' produce planning, buying and consumption habits, particularly their barriers and motivators, as revealed through Category Partners' and Beacon Research Solutions' recent Barriers to Purchase study.

The study surveyed 4,000 produce shoppers nationwide, evenly split among millennial, Generation X, baby boomer and silent generations.

"The study's purpose was to better understand what prevents shoppers from eating and buying more produce and what suppliers and retailers can do to positively influence their behaviors and increase produce consumption," said Adam Brohimer, president of Category Partners. "We believe the study points out numerous actionable ideas that can be implemented to increase produce purchases."

Overall, the study revealed that millennials are less concerned than other generations with the top general obstacles to buying produce — price, appearance/quality and spoilage — and more deterred than other generations by production methods and usage, including uncertainty around how best to cook/prepare and lack of organics.

Millennials' barriers are reflected in what encourages them to buy produce, in addition to awareness,

merchandising and their children's habits. While health/nutrition and flavor are still the leading purchase drivers for millennials — yet, less so than other generations — millennials also consider the following factors, more so than other generations, in their purchase decisions: organic, package and signage information, attractive displays, convenience and recipes, and good example to children.

Before entering the store — and, they favor superstores more than other generations — they are most likely to utilize digital modes to plan their produce purchases, with food/recipe websites their preferred resources. Social media and TV were millennials' second and third mediums, respectively.

Millennials' digital tendencies differ from all other generations, who chose circulars/store flyers as their primary planning tools.

Millennials are more inclined to eat fruits and vegetables throughout the day — and outside the traditional “three squares a day” — including morning/afternoon snacks and lunch.

“At home, millennials' cooking seems to be for pleasure vs. need, as nearly three-quarters cited cooking for enjoyment, including preparing more time-consuming and ingredient-heavy meals,” said Cara Ammon, Beacon Research Solutions principal. “But, they're also less liable than other generations to make dinner at home five or more nights per week.”

The study concluded that as millennials outnumber baby boomers, and simultaneously age, start families and often forgo larger households, it is essential the produce supply chain considers their diverse needs and habits, particularly via product assortment, information provided/how delivered and merchandising.

“Supplier and retailer marketing efforts require balance. A focus on one generation could spell a missed opportunity with another group of consumers,” Brohimer said. “We'll be providing additional generation insights in future releases, to ensure the demographics with the most purchasing power today are addressed.”

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