

SA shoppers' penchant for healthy, organic food an opportunity for brands

According to a new report released by big data and predictive analytics provider IRI, South African shoppers buy more healthy and organic food than their European counterparts.



Looking at consumer attitudes to shopping in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, the IRI Shopper Survey shows that over three-quarters of shoppers in South Africa purchase healthy food compared to 70% in Europe, and around two-thirds (65%) buy organic compared to just over half (53%) in Europe. The same number (39%) in both regions buy vegetarian food, although food intolerances appear to be a bigger issue in South Africa with 47% of shoppers saying they buy 'free-from' options, such as lactose-free, yeast-free or gluten-free products, compared to a third in Europe.

Concern for general wellness

According to the report, a general sense of wellbeing is driving these buying habits, with nearly three-quarters (72%) of South African shoppers saying this is why they buy these types of products. However, weight loss is also a significant factor, with 43% indicating this is influential in their purchasing decisions. Around a quarter (26%) do it for health reasons, but only around one in five (22%) say it is in order to protect the environment (compared to 26% in Europe).

With more awareness about how food influences general health and wellbeing, alongside high profile incidents that raise questions about the safety of the food chain, more people are paying attention to the quality of the food that they eat. When asked what they thought was the most important thing to do to follow a healthy diet, nearly two-thirds (64%) of shoppers say 'eat more fruit and vegetables', while 30% cite the importance of reading nutritional labels and also changing the way they cook.

"Concern for general wellness is clearly a major influencer for consumers buying healthier food options," comments Kevin Kruger, managing director, IRI South Africa. "It seems they are much more concerned with the quality and healthiness of the food that they buy, any intolerances to certain foods or just the need to lose weight. With obesity levels rising globally, it is encouraging to see that nearly half of consumers want to lose weight."

The opportunity for manufacturers, retailers

IRI believes there is a big opportunity for food manufacturers to highlight the health benefits of their products or introduce

new, healthier lines. Kruger adds: “There is a huge opportunity for brands to innovate and for retailers to give more shelf space to healthier food options, including own label ranges. A focus on health and wellbeing could bring people back into supermarkets and stop shoppers drifting into bio stores, street markets and online for their healthy food choices.”

According to the report, around a quarter (24%) of shoppers in South Africa shop in Bio stores to purchase healthy food, while 9% use a street market and 16% a pharmacy, while 6% go online.

About the survey: The IRI Shopper Survey was undertaken to provide high-level information and insight across seven European countries and New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

The survey was focused on three main areas of investigation: Is grocery shopping turning into a multichannel path? Is digital experience changing the way for grocery shopping? How is food wellness in Europe, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand?

The quantitative online survey was conducted in these countries with a sample of 3,500 shoppers, of which 300 were based in South Africa.

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