



“Crowd-sourced” Consumer Voices Drive Manufacturers’ and Operators’ Go-to-Market Strategies



Bill Pizzico
President & CEO
Synergy Group

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Today’s consumers are for certain the ones with the real power to influence manufacturers’ advertising and marketing regarding what they produce and distribute for the menus of retail restaurants, foodservice operators, and retail “Super Delis.”

In much of what has been written, consumers have been portrayed as the centers of the food industry’s world and in the driver’s seat due to their vast purchasing power, while behind the curtains the REAL strings have been pulled by manufacturers and distributors. Often, it was more talk than action about fulfilling the needs of “end-user targets.” Not too long ago manufacturers produced what they, from their supply chain boardrooms, said was in demand based on consumer facts gathered from focus groups, market testing, and competitive analysis. Although thorough enough, the data was often flavored by what consumers found available for them to buy which did not always reflect what they wanted to buy. It is not like that today.

Today, consumers’ social media voices curtail the absolute production and distribution powers of the manufacturers. They and other supply chain players are listening and reacting much more intently to consumers’ cravings. Every demographic group, from millennials to

boomers, is taking its seat at the table, pushing the pro-action buttons of production and distribution strategies, consequently, impacting operators’ menu planning options.

With the communications power of multiple social media channels, these new consumers are in sync with the virtual means to communicate directly to those responsible



not only for development and distribution, but also for point of contact implementation, such as foodservice distribution, R&D, retail distribution, marketing, sales, communications, and merchandising. Together these groups are advancing influence with more proactive and competitive go-to-market strategies, in contrast to waiting until the other guys pave the way and establish the market.

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Some advice for manufacturers and operators looking to lean on someone else’s market trends research or to find guidance by peeking at what competitors are producing, you will find yourselves in second place or worse. Today, it is all about paying close attention to those tell-it-like-it-is social media voices, and being aware of cultural, regional, and ethnic influences in the flavors and recipes of those products in your own backyard. The changes are here.

You may as well address your production manifest, if you are a manufacturer. Check your menu options, if you are an operator. If you are a distributor or broker, you may not be driving competitive

influences much longer, if you have any influence left at all. The consumer appetites of the new food world order are right in front of you within the social media venue d’jour. If you are not paying attention you will pay eventually with lost customers, lost profits, and lost commissions.

For more information contact Bill Pizzico at bpizzico.synergy@gmail.com or 610-941-2113