

CANADIANS CITE COST AS BIGGEST BARRIER TO EATING HEALTHY, NATIONAL STUDY SHOWS

Latest Consumerology Report examines evolving attitudes towards health and nutrition

TORONTO, ON – September 16, 2009 – Canadians consider obesity to be a serious health threat but many middle- and lower-income families are limited when it comes to providing healthy meals for their children. High food costs are preventing Canadians from doing the "right thing" according to Bensimon Byrne's latest *Consumerology Report*, released today. The quarterly study commissioned by the Toronto-based advertising agency and conducted by Gandalf Group revealed that the biggest obstacle to eating healthy that Canadians face is simply affordability.

Now in its sixth quarter, *Consumerology* tracks consumer opinions about the economy, personal financial expectations, buying intentions, and key national issues. The primary purpose of this edition was to understand Canadian attitudes towards health and nutrition.

"*Consumerology* this quarter reveals that food and nutrition is a significant concern in this country," said Jack Bensimon, President of Bensimon Byrne. "Canadians are worried about processed food ingredients and obesity, and are actively looking for ways to eat healthier."

Obstacles to Healthy Eating

This edition of *Consumerology* examined the gap between how healthy people wanted to be and how healthy they actually were on a day-to-day basis. Cost emerged as the largest barrier to healthy eating, with fifty-five percent of Canadian families with kids citing this as a significant obstacle. Expense was followed by insufficient willpower, availability of healthy foods, lack of time and inconvenience.

"We saw in a previous edition of *Consumerology* that cost was the main obstacle preventing most Canadians from acting in a more environmentally friendly fashion," noted Bensimon. "Cost is a significant barrier to healthier lifestyles for those making less than \$75K a year."

The Importance of Local Products

Consumerology highlights clear differentiations about food that is healthy versus food that is not. Local, natural, whole and unprocessed foods emerged as the most motivating attributes for consumers when they are assessing the healthiness of food. The local food movement has a strong following and is seen to be the healthiest. Its increased prevalence in grocery stores and on restaurant menus is seen as a positive development by more Canadians than any other development in food. Of the Canadians surveyed, ninety-six percent felt very positive about the availability of local products.

"We are seeing a notable shift in the importance of organic with the rising popularity of local products," remarked Bensimon. "Given the high level of concern about hormones, antibiotics and pesticide use, consumers appear to be feeling that local foods give them similar protection against these things as organic food. Retailers that are moving towards local farming are tapping into a very powerful consumer sentiment."

Food & Health

Processed foods, ready-to-eat meals, and preservatives to increase safe consumption came out as the least popular food developments. The healthier consumers considered their diet, the less favourably they viewed ready-to-eat foods. Canadians middle-aged and older view food additives and production methods involving sodium, hormones, preservatives, antibiotics and food contamination as a greater threat to health than do younger Canadians. Younger Canadians, however, are more concerned about obesity and lack of physical activity than with food additives and production.

Canadians eat healthier meals on weekdays than on weekends, with family as opposed to with friends or alone, when least stressed, and at home rather than at work or at restaurants. Forty-five percent of parents believe that the meals they eat at fast-food restaurants are not in any way healthy to eat.

Additional Survey Highlights

- Consumers are paying close attention to health and nutritional information on packages.
 - Eighty-three percent of Canadians express a level of confidence in nutritional claims.
- Nutrient fortification, portion size and calorie content are significantly less important than whether or not the food is fresh, whole and lacking unhealthy ingredients.
- Having a healthy diet is “very important” to a majority of Canadians – Eighty-five percent to be exact.
 - Almost a third of Canadians who think a healthy diet is very important don’t believe that they have a healthy diet.
- Canadians are largely aware of Canada’s Food Guide and have confidence in its recommendations; however, they find it more difficult to follow the Guide in their food choices.
 - Only seven percent of Canadians are not at all aware of the Food Guide.
 - Seventy-one percent of respondents are very confident in the Food Guide. Confidence is highest among women, Canadians 55+ and higher-income Canadians.
- Concerns about the health of what we eat each day are greater than concerns about swine flu, poor health care from providers, coal electricity production, and nuclear energy generation.
 - Two-thirds of Canadians consider obesity to be a very serious threat to them or their family, signalling a serious health issue in Canada.
- There is a strong relationship between physical activity and a healthy diet.
 - Canadians under 35 and with children at home are the most likely to describe themselves as physically active, and this likelihood increases even more in higher-income households.
- Higher levels of education and income increase the likelihood of eating healthier.

About the Survey

The *Consumerology Report* is a quarterly survey commissioned by Toronto-based advertising agency Bensimon Byrne. This quarter’s survey was conducted by the Gandalf Group amongst 1,627 Canadians. The questionnaire was conducted in French and English over the period of July 23-29, 2009. The *Consumerology Report* yields a margin of error of +/- 2.43% 19 times out of 20. Previous editions of the *Consumerology*

Report have covered a variety of topics including: The Impact of Macro-economic Trends; The Impact of Environmental Issues; New Canadians, New Consumers; and Economic Trends and Consumer Behaviour. All reports can be found at www.consumerology.ca

About Bensimon Byrne

Bensimon Byrne is a privately owned, full-service, Canadian advertising agency. Established in 1993, the agency has worked with a host of blue-chip companies and brands, producing some of Canada's most effective and memorable advertising.

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