By Hippo Zourides

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Macro snacking

Macro snacking is not the same from country to country

IRI, an American research outfit, through its South African office, has shared some very interesting data on global and South African shopping patterns, while delivering some great insights of how manufacturers and retailers can get ahead of the game.

Compare the growth of healthy alternatives to the regular options in a given range.

Category	Normal item growth	Growth in healthy alternatives
Chocolates	5,0%	13,0%
Yoghurt	1,2%	26,1%
Cheese	8,2%	99,0%
Salty snacks	10,8%	43,9%
Biscuits	3,9%	4,0%
Ice cream	0,2%	61,4%

Recent research, both locally and globally, focused on snacking (i.e. eating between meals) and IRI has coined the phrase 'macro snacking'. This is because consumers go beyond their traditional between meals snacks like chips, biscuits or sweets. They found that the snacking phenomenon is now covering a variety of new items such as smoothies, sushi, or pizza slices, over and above the usual nuts or biltong or biscuits.

World trends

In Australia, shoppers look for functional and healthy snacks, followed by popcorn and baked products.

In Spain, preferences range from dried fruit to ice cream to chocolate bars and baked goods. Greeks are looking for more balance, but the major trends indicate a preference for waffles, count lines and ice cream.

In the UK, snacking has dropped a little, but yoghurt and cupcakes still dominate the category.

Why do people snack and when?

The market can be split into three major categories:

- **Wellness** – those who look for healthy alternatives, including GMO-free or gluten-free products
- **Permissible indulgence** – eating some snacks consciously, even though the ingredients may not be as healthy as the wellness ones
- **True treats** – here it covers 'loaded' products such as donuts and confectionery

Snackers snack the most during the middle of the day (67%), followed by late afternoon (58%) and less so in the morning (23%).

SA trends in snacking

In our country, traditional items are at the forefront of snacking, namely, corn chips (12,9% increase in value) to chips (13%) to salty extruders (8,1%). The rest of the market still snacks on chocolates (5,1% growth), yoghurt (3,2%), sweet biscuits (4,3%) and sugar-based confectionery (5,1%).

The main driver to increase this category appears to be innovation, such as the Bakers Good Morning range, as well as snack packs (nuts and dried fruit combinations) and some yoghurts (kiddies line extensions).

However, the healthy lifestyle snacking is the area that requires focus by retailers.

The banting eating trend is growing apace and one example of its influence on healthy eating is full cream yoghurt, which has doubled the brands on display as compared to five years ago.

Another trend to consider is convenience. Customers are looking for combo packs (biltong and nuts), some beverages (milk modifiers, smoothies, etc…) as well as portability and the ability to seal the packaging for later use. There is also a pronounced trend away from CSD's (carbonated soft drinks) to bottled water. In 2017 CSD's grew by 5,1%, while bottled water grew by 33%.

How do manufacturers cash in on these trends?

IRI recommend several options to be considered when developing new products and/or line extensions.

- **Wellness** – is a well-established trend to follow
- **Innovation** – clever options that are not 'me too' products should be developed
- **Millennial generation** – these young people are savvy and are looking for new lifestyle options
- **Niche segments** – some categories are very small now, but have the potential of growing the market exponentially
- **Unique channel strategies** – the supermarket channel must be developed to compete more with the pharmacy/health food channel
- **Packaging** – innovative and informative packaging should be considered
- **Social media voices** – listen to what is being said on the ether and develop products accordingly

Macro snacking is not an area to be neglected at store level. Retailers should analyse their displays and create snacking opportunities throughout the store. SR

For further information on this research go to www.iriworldwide.com

Soups & sauces

- The major trends are premium products, vegan and reduced sugar options
- Latin America and Asia have launched the most new products in this category
- Ethnic recipes such as Moroccan Harissa, American mustard and Spanish tomato sauces are prevalent
- 'Low' and 'Light' options are increasingly popular

Yoghurts & desserts

- High protein and the re-introduction of culture options are trending globally
- Digestive health (probiotics and specific bacteria) is going through a revival
- Low fat, low or no added sugar continue to be the most popular health claims
- Fruit flavours continue to dominate the launch of new products

Source: Food Ingredients magazine, December 2018 edition