

Survey for National Vegetarian Week



PRESS RELEASE

National Vegetarian Week: Consumer health fears over meat-free diets. Significant numbers of vegetarians unimpressed with supermarket veggie ranges and fast food restaurants

New study of just under 6,000 UK consumers by MMR Research Worldwide for National Vegetarian Week (May 24th 30th) reveals valuable insights into UK vegetarians as food consumers

- 10 percent of lapsed vegetarians have moved away from a vegetarian lifestyle, primarily due to concerns over health and nutrition
- The majority of UK vegetarians feel the need to supplement their diet with vitamins and minerals
- Around a quarter of vegetarians are not satisfied with the choice of vegetarian options available to them in their supermarket
- A whopping 76 percent of vegetarians are not happy with the choice available to them in fast food restaurants

Research from food and drink research specialists, MMR Research Worldwide, conducted in May 2010 for National Vegetarian Week 2010 (May 24th 30th), has found that concern over the nutritional benefit of a vegetarian diet is turning vegetarians to dietary supplements and, in some cases, even back to meat. Furthermore, supermarkets are failing to satisfy around a quarter of vegetarians with their vegetarian and vegan product ranges. MMR, which advises leading food brands on product development and sensory research, urges food companies to address issues faced by the vegetarian market as well as by those people who are 'reluctant meat eaters', to maximise revenue.

Vegetarians are 27 percent more likely to buy vitamin and mineral supplements than non-vegetarians. With 50 percent of the vegetarian sample of 357 regularly taking vitamin supplements (compared with 36 percent of the 5,582 non-vegetarians) and 26 percent taking mineral supplements (compared with 15 percent of non-vegetarians), the majority of UK vegetarians are feeling the need to supplement their diet.

"Sales of dietary supplements and fortified food could be increased if brands adopted more targeted marketing towards vegetarian consumers who are more likely to be receptive to nutritional benefit messages" says Mat Lintern, managing director of MMR Research Worldwide. "Interestingly, lapsed vegetarians representing a surprisingly large 10 percent of our sample cite concerns over health and nutrition as the primary reason for eventually returning to meat. So, it might even be the case that more consumers would convert to vegetarianism if they were suitably educated about the role of fortified foods in maintaining a healthy meat-free diet."

Opportunity for supermarkets

An issue to the UK's grocery giants is the fact that 22 percent of vegetarians were not satisfied with the choice of vegetarian options available to them in their supermarket. The problem is much more acute in convenience stores, and less than half of the vegetarians polled were happy with the choice available. "The main issues are around ready meals, frozen foods and meat substitutes," says Lintern. "There is a huge opportunity for the likes of Tesco Express, Co-op and Spar to do more in terms of widening their vegetarian ranges and making sure they are visible on the shelves. Our survey revealed that plenty of non-vegetarians opt for vegetarian meals so these products should be appealing to all consumers."

Fast Food restaurants failing to provide choice

More than three quarters of vegetarians are not happy with the choice of foods available to them in fast food restaurants. Only three percent were very happy with the choice. Pubs and restaurants fair better almost half were happy with the choice but still with a considerable opportunity to better satisfy the vegetarian market.

The MMR Research Worldwide study provides a range of insights from UK vegetarians and vegans relevant to food brands. As may be expected, vegetarians are more likely to choose healthy products provided they are quick to prepare. They are motivated by products with no artificial ingredients and are less likely to buy ready meals because of health concerns. They are keen on ethical and quality food and attribute more importance than non-vegetarians to issues of free range and animal welfare, recyclable packaging, sustainable production, fair trade, carbon neutral, food miles, natural, low fat, wholegrain and organic.

"On average, the typical vegetarian is just a little more health aware and this obviously has implications on the food that's produced for them, and how it is packaged and marketed," explains Lintern. "They are also more likely to be reading ingredients labels than non vegetarians which suggests the importance of product labelling to indicate suitability for vegetarians. Finally, companies wishing to target vegetarians are advised to link their products with environmental, ethical and fair trade messages."

About MMR Research Worldwide

MMR Research Worldwide is a leading research partner for food, drink and personal care companies with offices in the UK and the USA. With profound expertise in sensory research, product testing, NPD and emotion-based research, MMR Research Worldwide provides

innovative, creative and scientifically robust research and is a trusted advisor on all product, brand and packaging strategy decisions. As part of the MMR Group, the company's clients have access to a variety of unique research assets including Brandphonics® a new emotion-based approach to identify what influences consumer choice an in-house sensory facility and MMR Pulse, a food and drink trend-tracking information resource. The MMR Group is a privately-owned research company employing in excess of 100 people. Founded in 1989 by Professor David Thomson, the Group is headquartered in Oxfordshire, UK and has a rapidly growing business unit in New York, US. www.mmr-research.com

About National Vegetarian Week

National Vegetarian Week (NVW) is the annual awareness-raising campaign promoting inspirational vegetarian food and the benefits of a meat-free lifestyle. Celebrated by the Vegetarian Society since 1992, the Week is now an established event that gets bigger and better every year. This year, it runs between Monday May 24th and Sunday May 28th.

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