

# Opportunity opens to mine consumers' heightened awareness

**d**espite the large variety of pre-packaged meals available, most Australians (53 per cent) prefer to do their own cooking, according to a new report by Sydney-based market analysts Good Business Sense (GBS).

GBS managing director, Anne Roze, said her fourth report on the eating and food purchasing habits of Australians, "Eating Habits of Australia", based on interviews with 1800 people in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, revealed that people would be much more receptive to new products if manufacturers were aware of their motivations more clearly.

For example, she said most people are concerned about healthy nutrition, but react in contradictory ways to new packaging. They want labeling, but are more receptive to that information when it is combined with an educational component and, while there is a lot of talk about genetically modified foods (GM) in the media, consumers are generally ignorant (60 per cent) that these products even exist.

With respect to GM foods, Ms Roze told *Retail World* that the main reason GM foods face extinction before ever reaching the table is because people don't understand the benefits of the product.

She said only 40 per cent of respondents were aware of genetically modified foods; 71 per cent said they would never buy GM foods, mostly (62 per cent) because they were unsure of what the modifications have done to the product. Their other concerns included the fear that the addition of GMO would affect the flavour (21 per cent); that it may cause disease (42 per cent); that there was not enough testing (46 per cent) and 31 per cent were concerned that GM foods may get into the food chain without labeling.

Ms Roze said manufacturers should state clearly what consumers should expect as benefits or drawbacks from these products. "My conclusion is that they (manufacturers) have to educate the consumers," she said.



Anne Roze, GBS managing director and author of *Eating Habits of Australia*.

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Ms Roze said people with higher disposable income were generally price driven in their buying habits and were interested in buying bulk, while those in lower socioeconomic groups were attracted by smaller, colourful packaging.

The GBS director warns that most consumers have moved on from being impressed by 'healthy' ingredients in the products into what she called 'global content awareness'.

Manufacturers and retailers could mine this new awareness, she said, by offering recipes, and other information packages, as well as by reorganising super-

ception of taste and on serving size," she said. "Who wants to eat by themselves!"

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And education, includes a totally new approach to labeling and packaging, according to the GBS director. Labeling should be clear, with the minimum of scientific jargon, with an appealing image of the 'good' ingredients. Packaging should be aimed at a target market.

The survey found that people from different socioeconomic groups react differently to size, type and colour of packaging. For exam-



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Manufacturers and retailers could mine this new awareness, she said, by offering recipes, and other information packages, as well as by reorganising supermarket aisles into breakfast, lunch, and dinner groupings.

Ms Roze said the disappointments in the HMR market in Australia are a clear indication of the fact that there is miscommunication between producers and consumers. "Last year the reasons for buying fresh was convenience, good taste and good price. But the problem is that everyone got it wrong on size, on the per-

ception of taste and on serving size," she said. "Who wants to eat by themselves!"

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Ms Roze said the key to success is to be open with consumers. "There is nothing wrong with being an open company. It's the worst thing if you deceive them," she said.

"Eating Habits of Australia" is available for \$5000, which includes a presentation and workshops.

**BY ELIZABETH BAN**