

The Intersection between Health and Wellness and Sustainability at Grocery Retail

Though often represented as distinctly different when it comes to corporate programs within grocery retailing, the conceptual and literal intersection between initiatives falling under the umbrellas of “health and wellness” (H+W) and “sustainability” is in fact fairly common sense, especially when viewed from the consumer side of things. Consider, for a moment, the assumptions that consumers will make about a retailer when they view extensive retail merchandising and communications relating to organics, local agriculture and fresh products—quite often, when we speak to shoppers about such stores, it’s not too hard for them to assume that such retailers are actively involved in sustainability initiatives or in health and wellness programs that might benefit their communities or themselves and their families. One of the pragmatic reasons behind such consumer reasoning is the fact that sustainable foods and beverages are a primary gateway for entrance into sustainable lifestyles—thus the easy connections consumers will make between “sustainable” foods and beverages (e.g., local, fair trade, organic, etc.) and health and wellness.

At a conceptual level, we can learn more about this intersection between sustainability and H+W by unpacking some of the specifics of consumer health and wellness lifestyles, where we see a cultural shift occurring from “health” toward “quality of life.” Related to concepts linking to *quality*, other “dimensions of consumption” (a term created by The Hartman Group in the development of its World Model 15 years ago), drive the values that inform consumer behavior in the World of Health and Wellness and include Price, Convenience, Brand, Experience, Expert Opinion, Fun/Enjoyment, Knowledge, Authenticity, and **Sustainability**. So, from the health and wellness side of things, we would say that sustainability is a key element of values that inform consumer behavior. Yet, this doesn’t typically include all consumers, just those most active in H+W lifestyles, namely Core consumers who are more likely to consider Sustainability and Authenticity in purchase decisions. Specifically, when we say “sustainability” we mean:

Sustainability: Relates to the importance given to environmental, social and economic impacts of production, distribution and consumption of consumer goods and services. Core H+W consumers are the most heavily influenced due to the holistic perspective they possess in which personal H+W goals intersect with broader notions of well-being (e.g., in the body, on the body, around the body).

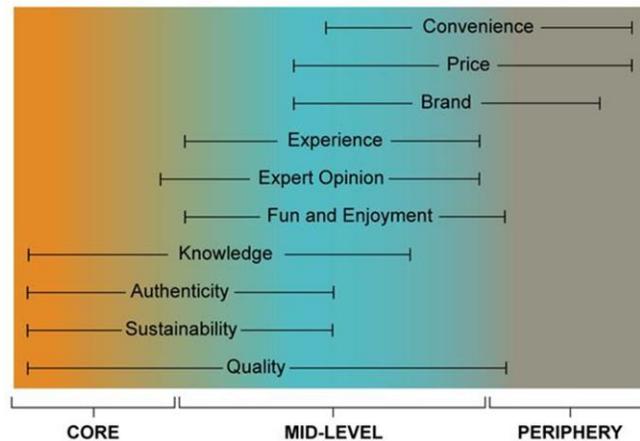


Figure 1: Dimensions refer to the values that inform consumer behavior in the World of H+W. The influence of certain dimensions on consumers' behavior depends on where one is situated in the World. For example, Periphery consumers are far more likely to be Price sensitive, while Core consumers are more likely to consider Sustainability in purchase considerations. Note that Sustainability is not exclusively a "Core" value—it is also a topic of great interest to Mid-level consumers. Source: *Health and Wellness Deep Dive*, 2011, The Hartman Group

When communicating H+W in food and beverage categories offered in grocery retail, we can see how dimensions of consumption (and sustainability) can be used to "speak" to the most relevant consumers:

Core H+W Consumers (e.g., "the most involved"): Key dimensions include Authenticity, Sustainability, Knowledge. Position products as simple, authentic, and sustainably sourced, made with integrity and pure ingredients that indulge and inspire.

Mid-level H+W Consumers (e.g., on a journey into H+W): Key dimensions include Experience, Expert Opinion, Fun and Enjoyment. Position products as fresh, less processed and nutritious foods that are familiar and of high quality.

Periphery H+W Consumers (e.g., least involved): Key dimensions include Price, Convenience,

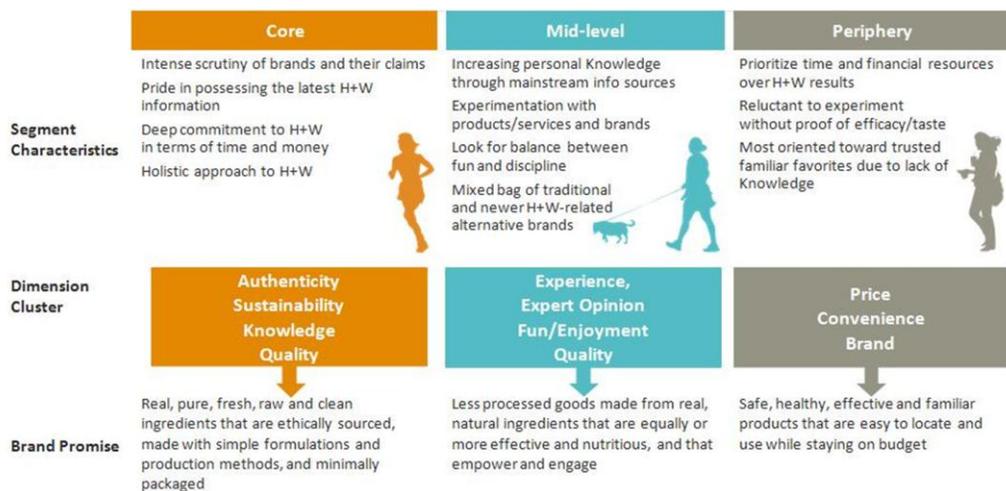


Figure 2: Distinct clusters of dimensions work together in each segment to drive consumer behavior in the World of H+W. Source: *Health and Wellness Deep Dive*, 2011, The Hartman Group

and Brand. Position products on taste and good value, with moderate quantities of sugar, fat and sodium.

Building on the intersection of health and wellness with sustainability, retailers today can demonstrate sustainability through an SKU mix that offers both “health and wellness” as well as sustainable products and brands. Retailers can create a theater of engagement by using employees and in-store communications for sharing knowledge and sensory elements that cue both “health and wellness” as well as “green.” Within the context of communicating health and wellness and sustainability, supermarket retailers should:

- Treat flyers and other literature as more than just a means to promote merchandise in terms of the Price dimension (e.g., communicate authenticity, sustainability, quality).
- Leverage *Knowledge* and *Experiential* dimensions in order to help consumers navigate the new and exciting possibilities within the World of H+W such as recipe and ingredient guidance
- Signage elements should cue natural, local, minimal, fresh and simplicity