



Volume 1

The World According to Carbs

Been to a supermarket or shopping center lately? It would not be hard to notice that the craze du jour products promising low or no carbs are everywhere! Makes sense, too.

According to the North American Association for the Study of Obesity, more than 64% of American adults are overweight or obese. In the UK, BBC News reported that if current trends continue, at least one third of adults, one fifth of boys and one third of girls will be obese by 2020.

Given the considerable evidence suggesting health risks ranging from diabetes and hypertension to heart disease and some cancers, there is genuine reason for concern. Food and beverage firms have already taken note—since 2000, over 800 new products making a low- or no-carb claim were introduced into the U.S. marketplace.

Retailers dedicated exclusively to the low-carb phenomenon are springing up in strip centers as are online shopping sites promoting brands like Atkins, Carbsense, and Cheeter Diet Treats. They sell everything from tortillas to taffy and many carb fans can even find trendy, low carb pastas. Most of these products are communicating good-for-you in a similar way, via product placement and package flashes.

So, if you are marketing a low carbohydrate product, is it enough to get your product prominent placement on the shelf? Is it enough to place a bright banner touting “Low Carb” on the front panel of your package? Well, it should not be and here’s why. Low- or no-carb is not a benefit...it’s an attribute. It is merely a characteristic, albeit a desirable, trendy one at the moment-- of the product being sold. And attributes, once they cease to be hot trends, do not sell.

What sells are benefits that are linked to underlying motivators or an emotional connection to something in the mind. Think FedEx, Hershey, Disney or Kodak. Almost five decades ago, an advertisement for Kodak appeared in The Saturday Evening Post circa 1959 advertising a projector and slides. There is a wholesome looking family sitting in a den, next to a ping-pong table smiling and looking at slides of their recent familial retreat. On the screen propped against the wall, is a photo of a woman smiling from a swimming pool. Granted, projectors and slides are retro, but the appeal to family, the image of a vacation, and a euphoric emotion are characteristics that Kodak marketers still use today.

That type of connection is what turns a trendy product into a lasting product. The marketers’ challenge is to stake out that territory in the consumers’ minds and claim it for their Brand. It comes from a carefully planned journey into the mind with a series of questions and probes led by an expert guide. And a skilled interpreter to process all the information, language, and linkages is critical.

The outcome of this adventure is a concise way to talk about your Brand by triggering just a few feelings – feelings that drive purchase decisions. It is about creating that strong and differentiated position for the Brand based on both rational and emotional elements that really matter to your target consumer.

Contact: Ellen Weiss
BrandFare LLC
eweiss@brandfare.com
www.brandfare.com

If a Brand is a low-carb product, maybe what matters to a parent is feeling healthy enough to play with his or her children. To others, it may be running around with a much loved pet or dancing with a significant other. Find a way to go beyond flashy labels and proper shelf placement, and the Brand will remain vital long after the craze du jour fizzles.