The Politics of Food: Understanding the Relationship between Food Policy Issues, Societal Impact Factors and Consumer Food Behaviors
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Overview

• Food policy trends and consumer reactions
• Surveys and reflections
• What it all means? Take-aways for educators and advocates
Menu Labeling

U.S. Consumers Want Menu Labeling

Several surveys have found that a large number of consumers want and use menu labeling when it is available, and a variety of restaurant, movie theater, convenience store, and supermarket chains already are successfully providing calorie information.

RWJF Comments to FDA, July 2017
Parents favor nutrition standards for all food sold to students

- 72% favor national standards for school meals.
- 72% support standards for school snacks.
- 75% think salt should be limited in meals.
- 91% support requiring schools to include a serving of fruits or vegetables with every meal.
The majority of parents are concerned with the state of children’s health and childhood obesity.

- 80% are concerned about the state of children’s health.
- 74% are concerned about the issue of childhood obesity.
Seattle Becomes the Eighth U.S. Locale to Pass a Sugary Drink Tax

posted by JAMES KRIEGER | 69sc
June 07, 2017
National Polling Over Time
Key Findings

• Over last decade, public and policy maker awareness that policies impact obesity has increased significantly
• Attribution of obesity/diabetes more of a combination of personal behavior and policy/environment – not just personal
• Divide between D’s and R’s not as extreme
• Overall, D’s and R’s AGREE that policy makes a difference in health and obesity
National Polling Over Time

Key Findings (cont’d)

• Divide shows itself in specific policies
• Across board, both parties view policies to promote, enhance, strengthen as positive (building sidewalks, healthy food incentives)
• Words like Ban, Tax, Restrict met with less support mainly with R’s
• Policy makers and people - consistent
2016 Food Temperance Survey in America

- Tracks opinions on food policy among registered voters and Opinion Leader Shoppers (politically aware, socially active, primary shoppers)
- 684 Opinion Leader Shoppers
“While food policy approaches differ between Democrats and Republicans, there has been a significant shift since 2010 in Opinion Leader Shoppers’ thinking about who holds the primary responsibility for making the right food choices to stay healthy and avoid obesity.”
Who holds primary responsibility for healthy choices

In your opinion which of the following groups holds the PRIMARY responsibility for making sure the public makes the right food choices to stay healthy and avoid obesity?

January 2010
- Individuals: 63%
- Society (government, food companies, health care system, educational system): 37%

September 2016
- Individuals: 48%
- Society (government, food companies, health care system, educational system): 52%
Individuals still #1; Gov’t #2

Republicans are more likely to place responsibility on the individual; while nearly two-thirds of Democrats place blame on entities other than the individual.
Is it all about HOW you ask the question?

Republicans most strongly oppose tax-based food policies, and most strongly support banning SNAP program (food stamp) purchase of high calorie, low-nutrient foods.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 2016</th>
<th>Strongly Favor</th>
<th>Strongly Oppose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax soft drinks, other foods high in sugar and calories, low in beneficial nutrients</td>
<td>Democrat 35%</td>
<td>Republican 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican 20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax, limit marketing of foods based on cost to society</td>
<td>Democrat 36%</td>
<td>Republican 7%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban advertising, marketing of prepared foods, beverages to children and young adults</td>
<td>Democrat 39%</td>
<td>Republican 5%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No use of food stamps for purchasing soft drinks, foods high in calories, low in nutrients</td>
<td>Democrat 34%</td>
<td>Republican 13%</td>
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4 point scale – 4-strongly favor, 3-favor, 2-oppose, 1-strongly oppose
What does it mean for educators/advocates?

- Policy and environment matter
- Defend and protect the gains
- Highlight successes & build the evidence base
- Communicate-story telling through data
- Policy maker engagement: FB, Twitter, face-to-face
- Messaging is key
Thank You!

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The Importance of Societal Factors on Influencing and Impacting Consumer Habits and Behaviors

Susan Finn, PhD, RDN, FADA
Principal, Finn/Parks & Associates
Today’s Goals

• Highlight societal issues and changes that impact nutrition education and behavior

• Provide my views on communication strategies to address them

• Facilitate discussion among attendees regarding personal experiences and solutions that remove barriers and create opportunities
Societal Trends: Challenges or Opportunities

- Demographic shifts
- Complexity in the marketplace
- Confusion about science
- Erosion of authority
Demographic Shifts

Projected population by generation

In millions

Note: Millennials refers to the population ages 18 to 34 as of 2015.

Complexity of the Marketplace

AND Food System Arc

where we work now

AND Food System Arc

where we will work in the next century
Confusion About Science

Conflicting Advice Abounds

8 in 10 find conflicting advice about what to eat or avoid, many doubt their food choices

Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
- "There is a lot of conflicting information about what foods I should eat or avoid." (n=1,092)
- "The conflicting information about what I should be eating makes me doubt the choices I make." (Of those who agree about conflicting information, n=775)

2017 FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY
The more data we collect, the more falsity grows. The haystack gets bigger and what we’re looking for - the needle - is buried deep.

-David Brooks
# Social Media Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Activity Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>70 million monthly US users in Q1 of 2017, 7% increase over 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>1.94 billion worldwide users in March 2017, 18% increase over 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>167 billion monthly searches worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>300 hours of video uploaded every minutes, Almost 5 billion videos watched daily</td>
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Erosion of Authority

While the internet has allowed more people to access more information than ever before, it also has given them the illusion of knowledge when in fact they are drowning in data and cherry picking what they choose to read.

-Thomas M. Nichols, The Death of Expertise
Societal Trends: Challenges and Opportunities

- Demographic shifts
- Complexity in the marketplace
- Confusion about science
- Erosion of authority
Recommendations

• Join forces with like-minded professionals and organizations
• Communicate compelling messages and solutions through social media
• Keep current with what’s happening in the marketplace
• Try to understand others’ views and where they come from
Discussion
Thank you!

For more information, contact: susan.finn@outlook.com