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 A CLEAR VISION AND NEW IDEAS FOR
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The key ingredient in the evolution of a trend

Marion Chan | May 02, 2016

I am often asked, “What are the latest food trends?”

Before I answer this question, I always have to clarify whether I am being asked about trends that are currently getting a lot of media attention, or whether they want to know about real, substantive change.

My business is not to point out passing fancies, but to identify real changes you can invest in for the next two-to-four years.

Trends often start out as quirky or quaint—maybe even radical ideas or behaviours that appeal to a small, but vocal population. If the idea or motivation behind that behavior can resonate loudly enough with the majority of shoppers, it has the potential to become something real and long-lasting. The final test is whether these ideas or behaviours are complementary to situations occurring in the macro-environment that will make it sustainable. Anything short of that is a mere fad. (Can anyone say “low carb”?)

Take the eat local movement as an example. A book called *The 100-Mile Diet*, published in 2007, was written by a Vancouver couple who restricted their diet to only foods available within a 100-mile radius of where they lived. They wrote about their motivations, challenges and potential benefits living by such an ideology.

Their ideas resonated with a small but growing number of people who were skeptical about where their food came from and the circumstances under which it was grown or

Marion Chan
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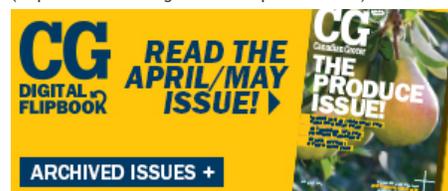
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manufactured. This sparked the evolution of the local food trend.

So how was this trend able to gain momentum and become the maelstrom we know today?

By the early 2000's the "healthy eating" movement had well-established roots in North America. The Boomers had passed middle age and were entering the second half of their lives, when healthy eating was of the utmost importance to vibrant longevity. The healthy eating trend was evolving.

Around this time, Michael Pollan wrote *Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006) and *In Defense of Food* (2008)—two books that were influential in making people think differently about what they ate. This led to a larger group of shoppers asking how their food was grown. These two books, along with the *100-Mile Diet*, received a lot of mass media attention. At the same time, the Boomers, who created the healthy eating trend as a result of their decadent lifestyles, were teaching their children about healthy eating. Those children were the millennials.

Fast forward a decade. Millennials, who grew up learning more about healthy eating than any other generation before them, are now in their early 20's and 30's.

They have become a driving force in the Canadian marketplace, controlling or influencing over \$255-billion in spending. Millennials have a strong concern about the origin of their food and the ingredients used. Finally, add to the mix the high profile publicity around significant job losses and soft economic outlook, high food inflation and the desire to support the Canadian economy.

The macro trends, which we have no control over, are the most important ingredient in differentiating between a trend and a fad. The evolution of the "eating local" movement, while no longer the 100-mile diet, continues to spread. But most importantly, it is changing consumer habits and their decision making process.

Just look at the recent press surrounding Heinz Ketchup and French's Ketchup. This is not a passing fancy, and the Canadian packaged goods industry will increasingly show "Made in Canada" or "Product of Canada" as a selling feature on packaging because that is what market research is telling us consumers want.

Game changing trends you can take to the bank will nearly always follow a similar path with the critical ingredient being the corresponding macro trends.

Apparent "trends" that don't have a root in macro-environment conditions will likely fade away as quickly as they appear.

So, if you take nothing else away from this blog, make sure your new product innovations and extensions are rooted in real change and not just a lot of noise, à la low carb. Then I feel I



have done my job.

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