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Predicting The Top Five Health Trends For 2012

Editor's Choice

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According to a leading national research group investigating health-related behavior and attitudes in the United States, some of the top consumer health trends expected in 2012 are improved sleep and energy drinks, as well as health-related smartphone apps.

In order to determine the top 5 health and wellness trends individuals in the U.S. are most likely to utilize in 2012, observational investigations were used by The Values Institute at DGWB, a social science research entity based in Santa Ana, California. The list is an expansion of the Institute's thorough work in social entrepreneurialism and value-based marketing, in addition to a long-term collaboration with the Iconoculture of Minneapolis, an international research organization.

Top 5 health trends for 2012:

- **Natural Energy Drinks** - over the last few years there has been an increase in the popularity of energy drinks, such as Monster, Red Bull, and 5-Hour Energy, which is expected to continue in 2012. These drinks are increasingly popular among seniors, as evidenced by 5-Hour's partnership with John Ratzenberger. However, there is potential for a backlash as more health conscious individuals seek to get the same boost from drinks that contain 100% natural ingredients, such as vitamins, whole grains, tea extract, bananas, and dates, as well as specifically designed products like v8 Energy Shots and Jamba Juice.
- **Sleep** - Studies have shown that not getting enough sleep is associated with hypertension, weight gain, lowered immunity and depression. In 2012, more Americans will associate sleep with health. 76% of individuals in the U.S. would like to enhance the quality and quantity of sleep they get. In addition, the National Sleep Foundation states that two-thirds of women have regular sleep problems. According to the World Association of Sleep Medicine, 45% of people in the world suffer from sleep deprivation.
- **"Flexitarians"** - Although the ratio of vegetarians and vegans in the U.S. will remain small, in 2012 more individuals will become "Flexitarians," individuals that consciously lower their intake of meat for health reasons, but still consume animal protein on occasion. One evidence of this trend is the increasing popularity and social media following of the nonprofit Meatless Monday initiative, created in

collaboration with John Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health.

- Digital Motivation - Although many individuals understand the importance of exercise, they often are not motivated enough or lack accountability to make it part of their everyday routine. However, current social media platforms provide this motivation digitally. Reebok Promise Keep awards users with a Twitter or Facebook "call-out" when they complete a scheduled workout, while StickK.com allows users to create "Commitment Contracts" to quit smoking, lose weight, or exercise regularly. In 2012, more products like Jawbone Up or FitBit Ultra will allow users to wirelessly track their progress and physical activity online.
- DIY health app - what began as a backlash to expensive medical costs and impersonal service, the DIY health movement will continue to surface in 2012 in the form of smartphone apps that allow users to track their health 24/7 365 days a year. Examples range from the Skin Scan, which scans and monitors moles over time, to Withering's Blood Pressure Monitor, which takes the user's blood pressure and sends it directly to a doctor. By the end of 2012, the 9,000+ health-related apps in the Apple App Store is expected to increase to 13,000.

Mike Weisman, president of the Values Institute at DGWB, said:

"These trends are consistent with the growing importance of health in America - If not yet as a daily routine than certainly as a primary goal in 2012 for three out of four consumers. It's not an exaggeration to say that health is the new prestige barometer in the country - meaning that the great majority of Americans would rather be considered healthy rather than wealthy.

Certainly, this trend will have major implications for marketers and retailers looking to sway consumer opinion in the New Year and beyond."

Written by Grace Rattue

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