Small is the new big

How today’s lifestyles are influencing flexible snack packaging
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Foreword

Americans’ eating habits have changed. Although the idea of the family dinner table isn’t totally obsolete, cooking and eating together is no longer an everyday occurrence for many families. Americans feel busier and more distracted.

These customer lifestyle changes include:

1. Lifestyles that are increasingly fast-paced
2. Changing attitudes towards food & snacking
3. Desire for quality & freshness
4. Changes in shopping habits, overmarketing, & choosing the right brand

To learn more about how flexible packaging can support your brand’s success with today’s consumers, read on…
Trend 1

Lifestyles that are increasingly fast-paced and “on the go”
Numerous studies have shown that Americans feel busier and more stressed. Statistically, we spend about the same number of hours working, eating, and caring for our families as we did 5 years ago, but we perceive that we are busier.

A recent Ernst & Young study found that 1 in 3 Americans, particularly younger workers and parents, say that maintaining a healthy work-life balance has become more difficult in the last five years. This perception seems to be influenced by two factors – workplace flexibility and childcare activities.

In 2017, 34% of Millennials, 26% of Gen X, and 7% of Boomers report working full-time, flexible hours. Although this might seem like a good thing, approximately half of respondents (46%) are working 40-plus hour weeks. This may be partially due to our constant digital connections. The American Psychological Association reports that 45% of Americans are “constantly connected” to at least one device on a typical workday and 34% are “constantly connected” on a typical day off.

And although we are only spending about 6% more time caring for our children in the past, there are still only 24 hours in any given day.

These factors make cooking and eating together as a family more difficult, leading to more snacking.
The percentage of consumers snacking on a daily basis grew from 76% in 2014 to 83% in 2016.

The percentage of consumers snacking on a daily basis grew from 76% in 2014 to 83% in 2016, according to the Technomic 2016 Snacking Occasion Consumer Trend Report. Consumers desire snacks that combine portability and convenience.

Younger consumers are particularly fond of snacking rather than mealtimes. Half of Millennials report that they have no set schedule for meals and 62% say that they snack throughout the day.

Brands will need to respond by providing snacking options that can fill the role of the traditional breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
Trend 2

Changing attitudes towards food and snacking
Although Americans spend about the same amount of time on food preparation as they have in the past, younger adults spend less time in fine dining and quick service restaurants. Instead, they eat while participating in other activities.

Research conducted by the Private Label Manufacturer’s Association (PLMA) in 2016 found that 52% of Millennials work and eat at the same time; 31% often eat in the car; and 17% eat while playing sports or exercising.

Eating as one aspect of multitasking has led to high demand for resealable and on-the-go packaging.

This “snacking as a meal” trend extends beyond young adults. Over half of all meals are eaten alone, according to NPD. Portable, single-serve snacks are fueling these trends.

However, nobody says a snack has to be boring. As more worldwide flavors have been introduced to the American public, our tastes have changed. In Technomic’s 2016 Snacking Occasion Consumer Trend Report, nearly three quarters (71%) of consumers define a snack as any food consumed outside of traditional meal hours and 41% of consumers stated that any food can be a snack if the portion size is small.

This opens snack packaging up as an option for many food categories once considered suitable only for meals.
41% of consumers stated that **any food can be a snack if the portion size is small.**

**In fact, more than half of U.S. consumers snack in the morning,** supporting sales increases in categories such as granola bars, breakfast cookies, and bakery snacks.

Brands can respond by finding opportunities to downsize portions of foods that are typically not considered snacks and to use packaging that is easily carried, opened, and reclosed.
Trend 3

Desire for quality and freshness
Despite the affinity for single serve foods and all-day snacking, consumers are not willing to lower their standards on food quality or freshness.

Over the past decade, consumption of fresh foods has grown 20%, and 36% of consumers seek gourmet flavors in their snack choices.

Information Resources, Inc. (IRI) reported that sales of healthy snacks slightly outpaced indulgent snacks in 2015 and that refrigerated snacks experienced strong retail sales. In addition, consumers are increasingly choosing premium snack items rather than moderate or low-priced options.

Awareness of food waste has also increased. The EPA reports that one in five Americans are aware of the issue of food waste. U.S. households throw out about $2,200 worth in food annually, or 240 pounds per person per year.

Nearly 20 million tons of food into landfills, creating methane gas. Many consumers, particularly parents, actively work to reduce the amount of food wasted within their households.

The increasing popularity of fresh food snacks accompanied by a desire to reduce food waste presents an opportunity for smaller packaging in fresh food categories.

Brands can respond by choosing packaging films, modified atmosphere packaging, or reclosable seals that increase the shelf life of their foods.
Trend 4

Changes in shopping habits, overmarketing & choosing the right brand
Today’s consumers spend the same amount of time shopping as they did in 2013, but the way they shop has radically changed.

Shoppers can buy nearly anything, from eyeglasses to automobiles, online. The grocery category is not immune to this online trend.

Statistics released by NPD in February 2017 showed that 52 million American consumers shop for groceries online and that number was expected to grow by 40% within six months.

These consumers lack the ability to smell or touch their potential food purchases, increasing the importance of appealing and innovative packaging.

Food manufacturers trying to market their goods for online sales must also compete with the plethora of brands and advertising messages consumers receive every day.

Americans consume 36% more media and see 22% more advertising messages than in 1985.

Brands are competing for more than virtual shelf space, they are competing with a simultaneous barrage of ads running along the side or popping up on many e-commerce websites.

Brands must challenge themselves to accurately convey the appeal and flavors of the foods inside their snack packaging or risk losing sales.
How flexible packaging is the answer for your brand
Flexible packaging provides many benefits to food and beverage manufacturers interested in entering or more successfully competing in the snack industry.

It addresses the needs of today’s consumers and their busy lifestyles, food quality and convenience preferences, as well as their environmental concerns. Consumers recognize these advantages. In fact, nearly half of all Americans are willing to pay up to 10% more for goods packaged in flexible packaging.

Manufacturers’ margins are even greater when shipping costs are considered. The Flexible Packaging Association has calculated that 1 truckload of flexible packaging is equal to 26 truckloads of glass jars.

Flexible packaging also helps food manufacturers gain market share by providing an ideal canvas for packaging design creativity and the right flexible packaging equipment makes it all possible. The ideal flexible packaging equipment can accommodate a variety of bag sizes and be completely customizable with integrations such as easy open/close packaging, zippers, and spouts.

“Your snack packages are a direct representation of your brand so it is important to consider the sizes, shapes, and materials of the bags you want your machine to produce or use,” states Rick Leonhard, President at Viking Masek Packaging.
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- Rick Leonhard, President at Viking Masek Packaging

“People are visual. They process images faster and remember them better than words. Innovative packaging sells customers at the moment they are ready to buy. We work extensively with our customers to understand their packaging design goals. This allows Viking Masek to develop custom features for any base machine that incorporate packaging functionality and the latest design features into the bag. With the right adjustments, we can accommodate nearly any packaging configuration,” Leonhard continues.

The right packaging equipment balances your brand’s need to stand out on the shelf in the highly competitive snack industry with the need to generate return on a very significant investment.

If you’re wondering how investing in flexible packaging equipment can improve your businesses’ productivity and ability to compete at retail for many years to come, give us a call.

We can work with you to determine your needs, calculate your potential ROI, and show you how Viking Masek’s rugged flexible packaging equipment can meet your needs, the needs of your retail partners, and the concerns of the final customers.
Resources

About Viking Masek

Viking Masek Global Packaging Technologies manufactures, sells, and services custom automated packaging systems for a variety of industries across North America and around the world. Our cutting-edge approach and ability to adapt helps us quickly assess your situation and configure our machines to your unique fill, seal, and efficiency needs. From cheese and coffee, to raw poultry and fresh vegetables, to pharmaceuticals and dietary supplements, plus much more, Viking Masek can find the right solution for your greatest packaging challenge.

We offer rugged and economical VFFS baggers, high-speed continuous motion vertical baggers, stick pack and sachet packaging machines, and rotary premade pouch machines. Our baggers integrate seamlessly with weighers and fillers, infeed and outfeed equipment, metal detectors and X-ray systems, cartoners and casepackers, and other automated packaging equipment. Viking Masek has flexible packaging covered from Tote to Pallet™.

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