

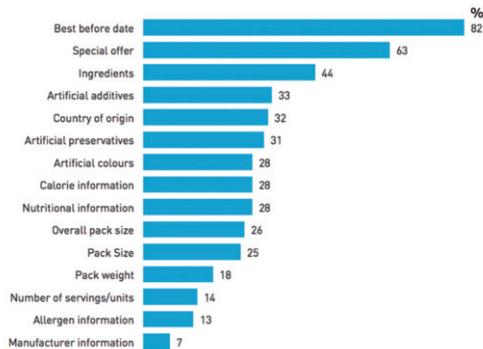
# Food Labelling

***This month's ShopperWatch study, produced in association with Behaviour & Attitudes, examines consumer attitudes to food labelling.***

As this month's *ShopperWatch* from Behaviour & Attitudes illustrates, from an online survey of 504 grocery shoppers, 82% of respondents said that the best-before date is important to them before they put an item that they buy on a regular basis into their basket or trolley.

When it comes to items that those surveyed buy occasionally, 68% agreed that the date when a product expires is the information they care about most on a label. It appears that the attitude towards this element on a package is conclusive, as the majority of those surveyed across all demographics (gender, age, class and region) agreed that the best-before date influences their purchasing decision.

## INFORMATION LOOKED AT ON PACKAGING: ITEMS BOUGHT REGULARLY

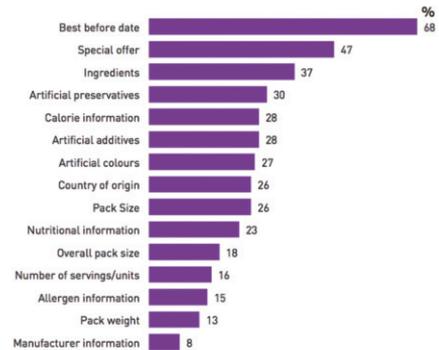


According to recent research, 82% of consumers read the best-before date on the label of an item that they purchase on a regular basis. The second most-read piece of information that grocery shoppers look out for on packaging is special-offer information.

Prior to putting an item into their basket or trolley, 44% of respondents said that they read the list of ingredients that the product contains. Some 33% said that they check to see if the item contains artificial additives. Similarly, 31% check to see if artificial preservatives appear on the label, and, finally, 28% look out for details on artificial colours. Despite the health boom that the grocery trade is currently witnessing, surprisingly, only just over a quarter of grocery shoppers read the calorie information. The same applies to the nutritional information. Overall pack size and pack size in general is

also of interest to a quarter of those surveyed. Information on the manufacturer is the least-read piece of information on packaging, it seems, as only 7% said that this is something that they always read on the label of an item that they purchase very often.

## INFORMATION LOOKED AT ON PACKAGING: ITEMS BOUGHT OCCASIONALLY



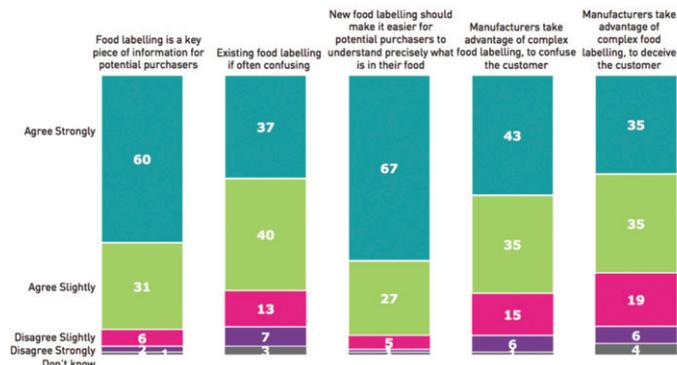
It appears that grocery shoppers have a similar attitude towards items that they purchase on an occasional basis as they do to items to which they are loyal and buy often, as 68% said that the best-before date is a deciding factor when it comes to making a decision about a product.

Next on the list is special-offer information, according to 47% of respondents. It appears that consumers are in a similar mindset when



it comes to all things artificial. Some 30% look at the artificial preservatives, 28% read about the artificial additives, and artificial colours matter to 27% of those surveyed. However, for products that are bought less frequently by shoppers, pack size is more important, as 26% agreed that they read this element of information over the 23% of those who care more about the nutritional information.

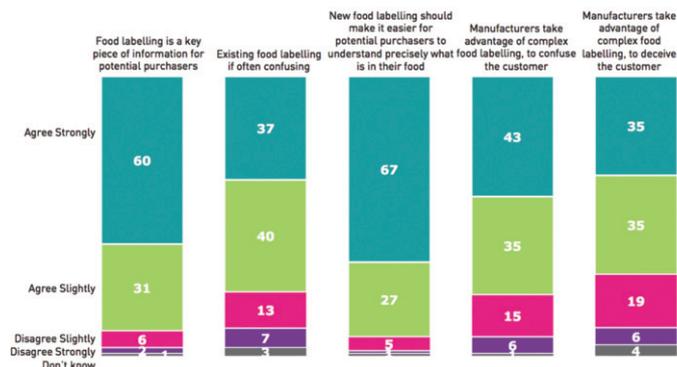
ATTITUDES TO FOOD LABELLING



During the market research, the respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with certain elements of information on a food item's label. When asked if they felt that 'food labelling is a key piece of information for potential purchasers', 60% strongly agreed, 31% agreed slightly, and only 2% admitted that they disagreed. Again, when grocery shoppers were asked if they found 'existing food labelling often confusing', 37% strongly agreed, 40% agreed slightly, and only 10% disagreed collectively.

Some 67% of those surveyed agreed strongly when asked if 'new food labelling should make it easier for potential purchasers to understand precisely what is in their food'. The possibility that 'manufacturers take advantage of complex food labelling to confuse the customer' appears to be a concern among many, as 43% strongly agreed and 35% agreed slightly with this point. Finally, when asked if 'manufacturers take advantage of complex food labelling to deceive the customer', over three quarters of the respondents agreed.

PURCHASING ITEMS [...] LABELLED WRONG



As this graph indicates, over half of grocery shoppers were misled by a label. Some 53% admitted that they purchased an item that they thought was healthy, which didn't turn out to be. Some 46% purchased a grocery item that they thought was Irish, only to discover that this was not the case.

When it came to buying a food item that was low in sugar, 42% of the respondents were misled at some point, as this claim turned out to be false. Almost a quarter of those surveyed purchased a food product that they believed was low in fat, which, again, turned out to be false.

A quarter of those surveyed purchased an item that they believed was free from artificial additives, 21% bought one free from artificial preservatives, and 18% bought one free from artificial colours, but this information, it seems, was incorrect and proven to be false. ■



Living Up To Labels

BY DONNA AHERN, NEWS EDITOR, CHECKOUT MAGAZINE

One of the most interesting findings in this month's *ShopperWatch* is that, despite the increased prevalence of healthy food options in the grocery industry, when it comes to the content on a label, nutritional information didn't rank as highly to consumers as I expected.

Only 28% of the respondents surveyed said that calorie and nutritional information is a deciding factor when it comes to whether or not they make a purchase. This piece of information was not as big a concern for them as, for example, the best-before date, which appears to be high on the list, as 82% admitted that this is the first item of information that they read on the label of a product.

It is quite alarming to see that this month's survey showed that many manufacturers have misled shoppers, and what was printed on a label turned out to be false. Seemingly, over half of grocery shoppers were misled by a label in the past, and, more worryingly, 53% highlighted that they purchased a food product that they thought was healthy, but it didn't turn out to be.

Overall, as we all know, Irish grocery shoppers are well known to be loyal to their favourite brands. (We're looking at you, Tayto, Barry's Tea and Guinness!)

Loyalty and trust are key in the grocery industry. Perhaps misleading information on a label may result in a once-off purchase for some manufacturers, but, in the long run, honesty will result in loyalty, winning over the heart of an Irish consumer.



Wrapping Trust

BY JOHN O'MAHONY, DIRECTOR, BEHAVIOUR & ATTITUDES

'Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters.'

While I suspect that Einstein wasn't thinking of food labelling, grocery shoppers may have cause to wonder. Shoppers are, of course, enamoured with big brands, but these results reflect their unease about compromises in production and how these may be packaged or otherwise.

Some 78% of grocery shoppers believe that manufacturers take advantage of complex food labelling to confuse the customer.

Some 70% believe that manufacturers take advantage of complex food labelling to deceive the customer.

Some 53% of grocery shoppers bought something that they thought was healthy, but it didn't turn out to be.

Some 46% bought something that they thought was Irish, which didn't turn out to be.

The results provide one of the explanations for the growing interest in small local and 'crafty' identities.