Consumer Trends: Shoppers Worried About Energy Drink Safety

CHICAGO (PRNewswire) — As a new year begins and consumers return to work, many will be looking for an energy kick. But according to new research from Mintel [1], nearly six in 10 Americans (59%) who are current energy drink or shot users say they worry about the safety of energy drinks and energy shots. However, despite allegations of health hazards and government scrutiny, users continue to partake in these flavorful energy enhancers.

Despite fears over safety, the energy drink, shot, and mix category has beat back detractors to show consistent annual growth from 2008 to 2013 (est.) sales. The market reported two years of 17% increases in 2012 and 2013 (est.) and is expected to continue a steady upward trajectory to 2018.

"Energy drinks and shots faced significant scrutiny following lawsuits and proposed legislation that began in 2012. The media attention publicly challenged the safety and health effects of this pick-me-up category," says Jenny Zegler, global food and drink analyst for Mintel Food & Drink. "However, loyal users continue to drink the products because they are viewed as more effective than other beverages. This continued level of activity in the face of adversity has helped the category's rise to continue."

More than half of Mintel [2] respondents (56%) who use energy drinks and/or shots do so because they are more effective for energy and alertness than other beverages. Just more than one-third (35%) say they are convenient and 31% like the taste.

When it comes to cutting down on energy drinks, health and cost are the leading reason. Indeed, 39% of Americans say they are not good for their health and 35% say they have heard negative information about their health effects. In addition, 35% say they are just too expensive.

"Manufacturers must address these health issues in order to retain current users, while concerns about price should be addressed by promotions and limited-time discounts," adds Jenny Zegler.

When marketing to energy drinkers, men and women should be viewed differently. More than three-quarters of women aged 18-34 (79%) who drink energy beverages agree that companies should include recommended daily consumption limits on the packaging of their energy drinks versus 71% of men. In addition, 62% of women aged 35+ say they worry about the safety of energy drinks and shots compared to only 51% of their male counterparts.

"People's desire for additional energy to accomplish everything in a given day will

continue to fuel positive sales growth for the energy drink category. However, because even a portion of current users are cutting back due to health and safety concerns, companies must educate the public on the health, safety and global use of energy drinks, shots and mixes. Innovations in serving size and/or format could keep users active in the category and perhaps inspire new entrants," concludes Jenny Zegler.

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