



Market Research Writing Sample

Nutraceuticals World
March Issue Feature Report: Digestive Health
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What are some recent trends in the digestive health market (probiotics, prebitoics, enyzmes, fiber, others)?

To get a good idea of where the digestive health market is headed, all one has to do is visit the dairy section of their local supermarket.

The probiotic yogurt category accounted for \$294 million in U.S. sales according to Euromonitor International. Moreover, sales are projected to grow to \$500 million by 2010. In January 2006, Dannon™ launched its Activia® yogurt, the country's first mass-market probiotic. To say it has been a hit would be an understatement. Activia® accounted for \$125 million of Dannon's \$678 million U.S. yogurt sales in 2006. In 2007 Dannon introduced DanActive™, a probiotic drink designed to strengthen the immune system, and Danimals, its yogurt drink for children. Other companies have also benefited from the increasing demand for probiotics. Two years ago CoolBrands International Inc. launched its Breyers Light! Probiotics Plus Yogurt. Sales of a “cool”\$33 million in its first year accounted for about a third of CoolBrand's total yogurt sales. Kraft took probiotics a step further with its Breakstone's & Knudsen LiveActive. Its cottage cheese made with prebiotic fibers.

Speaking of prebiotics, the same supermarket will show the fiber section is more than just the boring, bulk-forming laxative psyllium. In 2006, Procter & Gamble, maker of Metamucil introduced Fibersure, featuring a natural, soluble fiber called inulin. This multi-purpose fiber along with fructoOligoSaccharides (FOS) can be found in an increasing number of digestive health products.

One thing is for certain, as the scientific evidence behind prebiotics and probiotics continues to grow, the demand for such products will too.

Describe consumer behavior when it comes to purchasing products for digestive issues - are consumers able to understand probiotics on a "strain" basis, for example? Do companies understand probiotics on a "strain" basis - do they need to? Describe some other issues posed by digestive health products.

Many consumers have never heard of probiotics let alone understand the different strains. However, since the research behind probiotics continues to strengthen, more American physicians are recommending them to their patients. As a result, more consumers are learning about probiotics and their role in the prevention and management of intestinal issues. Given this scenario, companies would be wise to stay on top of the latest probiotic research. We know the intestines range from a relatively alkaline environment (pH) of the small intestine to an increasingly acidic environment in the large intestine. No one strain of bacteria can provide benefits throughout the entire length of the alimentary canal. Therefore, companies should be knowledgeable of the different strains of probiotics and their function in the body.

This not only applies to probiotics but, enzymes as well. It is probably safe to say that most people don't have any idea what enzymes do in the body, or the benefits they offer. Although enzymes are a little more complex than other dietary supplements, companies should understand the importance of enzyme activity and be able to explain its significance to its customers.

Consumers have become very open in recent years when it comes to discussing digestive ailments. What caused this? Will this trend continue?

Consumers have become more open in recent years when it comes to discussing digestive ailments. Then again, they may have had no choice. According to the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), digestive diseases affect 60 million to 70 million people. That's a lot of people to keep quiet. Hence, more people are talking about indigestion, gas, bloating, constipation etc. As the aging of the baby boomers and the overuse of antibiotics and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines continue, the likelihood of more people experiencing digestive issues is almost certain. Let's just say the discussion of digestion is no longer closed.

Given the heavy competition from pharmaceuticals, how do nutraceuticals (dietary supplements and functional foods) fit into the digestive health market - particularly probiotics since they seem to have some backing in the medical community?

A case of heartburn? Indigestion? Diarrhea? Sure, most people will be reaching for the Pepto Bismol® for relief and not a probiotic. Yet, more people are learning about probiotics and the beneficial role they play in several medical conditions. Probiotic therapy is not a new idea; it dates back almost 100 years to Elie Metchnikoff, who suggested that Bulgarian peasants lived longer lives because of their yogurt consumption. Nonetheless, researchers are just now discovering the broader effects probiotics may have on improving the health and wellness of both adults and children. Thus, physicians are increasingly recognizing that probiotics are beneficial and are introducing them to their patients. Besides, the safety record of probiotics is remarkable considering that more than 20 billion doses are estimated to be used each year.

Offer some insights on the most recent science surrounding various digestive health ingredients - probiotics, enzymes, fiber, prebiotics.

Prebiotic and probiotic therapies are slowly but surely being used to treat different gastrointestinal diseases,

such as irritable bowel syndrome, diverticular disease and inflammatory bowel diseases.

A recent meta-analysis published in the journal *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease* found several probiotics (*Saccharomyces boulardii* and a mixture of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium bifidum*) were very successful in preventing traveler's diarrhea. Another current review published in the journal of *Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics* found that supplementation with probiotics could be effective in increasing eradication rates of anti-*H. pylori* therapy and displayed a positive impact on *H. pylori* therapy-related side effects.

Finally, although certain fibers in the diet are known to bind specific nutrients in the digestive tract and prevent their absorption, inulin does just the opposite. Consisting of relatively short chains of sugar molecules, inulin provides the type of bulk that aids the body's absorption of calcium and magnesium. In fact, a recent double-blind, placebo-controlled, cross-over design study found a mixture of chicory oligofructose and long-chain inulin improved calcium and magnesium absorption and maintained healthy bone density in fifteen postmenopausal women. It is obvious that inulin is not your ordinary fiber and its benefits extend beyond digestive health.

Digestive health has become a popular platform for functional foods recently. Is there a way to compare the size of the digestive health functional food market vs. the market for supplements geared toward digestive health? Is a "functional food" geared toward digestive health the same as a dietary supplement positioned for the same indication? Why or why not? Do consumers prefer to remedy their digestive ailments through foods or supplements?

In a way it is hard to compare functional foods and supplements geared toward digestive health. For one, there is significant overlap between functional foods and dietary supplements. For example, probiotics that have long been used in functional foods are now available in pill form as supplements. Likewise, plant sterols that started out as supplements can now be found as active ingredients in many functional foods.

In the end, both can be used for the same indication with equal efficacy.

Most consumers probably rely on food for their digestive health. However, in the case of probiotics, the majority of scientific evidence indicates that specific bacteria do not increase unless subjects consume very high dosages of probiotics in the form of supplements, not those naturally found in foods. This may explain why most consumers look to resolve their digestive ailments through supplements rather than food.

What do you see happening for the future of this market? Offer a few predictions.

Dietary supplements that promote digestive health are receiving increasing consumer attention. Of course, this has been helped to some extent by the wide availability of probiotics and functional food items on supermarket shelves.

Today, a lot of companies are turning to prebiotics as a way to enter the digestive health market. Prebiotic soluble fibers such as inulin and FOS are not only convenient to add to foods and beverages but, they also have solid scientific evidence to support their variety of health benefits.

No matter what, the potential benefits beyond digestion that can be provided by the use of prebiotics, probiotics, enzymes and fiber should make for a very profitable future.

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1500 Words