

Frito-Lay pitches its chips as locally made

Campaign customized for each state cashes in on hot trend

USA TODAY
May 12, 2009
By Bruce Horowitz

Here's proof-positive that more shoppers must seriously want to know where their food comes from: Frito-Lay, the world's biggest snack-food maker, is getting into the act.

Tuesday, Frito-Lay unveiled an unlikely marketing strategy for its Lay's brand chips that focuses on the 80 "local" farmers from 27 states who grow the potatoes used to make its chips. In a new world of better-for-you food concerns, it's not about chips being fun to eat. It's about chips being local.

And trackable. A tech toy at Lays.com dubbed Chip Tracker will let folks see where any bag of chips was made. Type in the first three digits of the product code on the bag and your ZIP code and out pops the location of the plant.

"Knowing where food is made and grown is important to consumers," says Dave Skena, vice president of potato chip marketing at Frito-Lay. "Sharing with consumers how regional we are is relevant and compelling."

TV spots will be focused to make that point. Michigan farmer Brian Walther appears with his brother, Gary, in a spot to air in that state and tells viewers: "Next time you grab a bag of Lay's in Michigan, think of us."

"Lay's Local" will be the brand's biggest 2009 campaign, Skena says. It also features 40,000 in-store displays cus-

tomized for each state. Ads and regional store displays use such phrases as "locally made in Texas."

With good reason. A national survey of restaurant chefs by the National Restaurant Association found "locally grown" food to be the hottest industry trend for 2009. Frito-Lay does not claim its products are "locally grown," a popular and hotly debated industry term without a clear definition.

Some say Frito-Lay is trying to fool folks. "They're trying to confuse consumers with something consumers already are confused about," says Dawn Brighid, marketing manager at Sustainable Table, a group in support of "green" eating. "Most of their products are obviously grown on industrial farms."

Frito-Lay's new positioning for Lay's is not authentic, says Kate Newlin, consultant and author of *Passion Brands*. "They're trying to take a big, huge brand and make it look tiny. It's a shell game."

But, to Frito-Lay's credit, says ad consultant Allison Cohen at PeopleTalk, the campaign reminds folks that Frito-Lay is an American brand that supports American farmers in tough times.

Says Skena, "Our intention is solely on celebrating the contributions people and communities across the country have made to the Lay's brand."

Frito-Lay pitches its chips as locally made

Campaign customized for each state cashes in on hot trend

Assessment Questions

1. Why does Frito-Lay's new marketing campaign stress that the company uses local farmers?
 - A. People oppose foreign imports of potatoes.
 - B. Consumers want to know the origination of their food.
 - C. Use of local farmers lowers the cost of Frito-Lay products.
 - D. Frito-Lay wants other companies to follow their lead and help the environment by cutting down on emissions caused by transporting products long distances.
2. In the fourth paragraph of the article, the word "relevant" means
 - A. respectful
 - B. fun
 - C. appropriate
 - D. dull
3. What is one effect of the "Lay's Local" campaign?
 - A. Critics are saying that Lay's is not really a local company.
 - B. More snack companies are creating marketing campaigns that focus on local producers.
 - C. Interest in "locally grown" food became the hottest industry trend.
 - D. More American farmers are choosing to grow potatoes.
4. Dawn Brigid, marketing manager at Sustainable Table, say that Frito-Lay is trying to "confuse consumers" because
 - A. Consumers actually want food grown in their states.
 - B. Lay's brand chips only focuses on 80 local farmers from 27 states.
 - C. The chips may be "locally made" but the potatoes are not "locally grown."
 - D. Lays' campaign implies the chips are healthier
5. Why does the reporter conclude the article with a quote from Frito-Lay Vice President Dave Skena?
 - A. Because the author agrees with Skena's statement.
 - B. Because the statement shows that American businesses are feeling optimistic about the future.
 - C. Because the author had nothing else to add to the article.
 - D. Because the statement summarizes Frito-Lay's new campaign.
6. What would be another good headline for Frito-Lay's "Lay's Local" campaign?
 - A. *Lay's Cares About You*
 - B. *Dip Into Our Chips*
 - C. *Think Local: Think Lay's*
 - D. *Chips are Hip*