

Changing Behaviour

Converting Awareness into Action

MARCH 2007

Since its inception as an all-island body under the Belfast Agreement of 1998, **safefood** has developed a range of campaigns to promote food safety and healthy eating among the population of the island of Ireland. To evaluate the effectiveness of our campaigns on an ongoing basis we developed **safetrak**, a consumer research programme that measures public awareness of **safefood** campaigns along with any food related concerns and their impact on consumer behaviour.

Methodology

The research is conducted every six months by Amárach Consulting. Interviews are conducted throughout the island of Ireland, with 800 participants, aged 15-74, on a face-to-face basis in their own homes. Interlocking quotas (where each participant reflects several variables, such as age, gender, socio-economic class and area) are implemented to ensure the sample is representative of the population.

Objectives of the safetrak research

To explore current consumer concerns in relation to food safety and nutrition (fat, salt and sugar), and to gain a deeper insight into specific concerns about these issues.

To measure consumer awareness of **safefood** campaigns and marketing activities.

To gain an understanding of the impact of **safefood** campaigns and marketing activities on consumer behaviour.

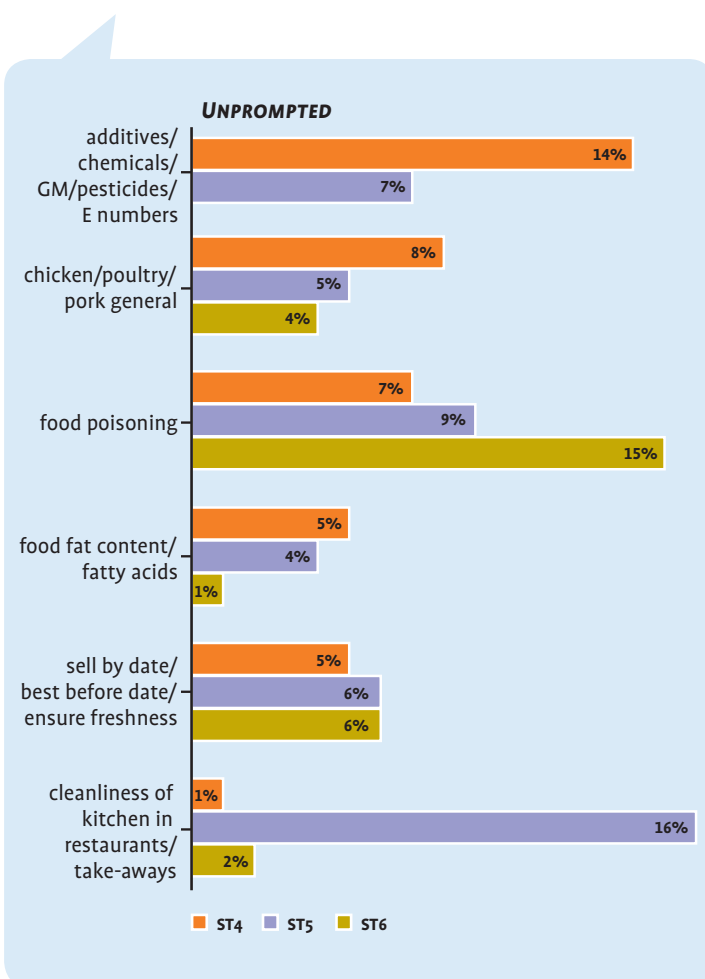
To gain a deeper understanding of consumer awareness of the **safefood** brand and perceptions of the brand attributes.

This briefing document describes background levels of concern about food safety and healthy eating, and then explores the roll out of two particular campaigns, the *Treats* and *Salt* campaigns. Through the tracking research we demonstrate how the use of effective messaging succeeded in changing and shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours.

Concerns about food safety

Food safety concerns have remained somewhat consistent since January 2003 when **safefood** carried out the initial benchmark survey, with consumer concerns strongly correlating with key

environmental changes. In January 2003, for instance, just over two in three adults (68%) claimed that they were concerned about food safety issues. This figure peaked in *safetrak* 4 to 75%, an increase in line with the growing spread and media coverage of avian flu. By *safetrak* 7, food safety concerns had returned to 62% indicating food safety remains a prominent consumer issue.



Key consumer concerns about food

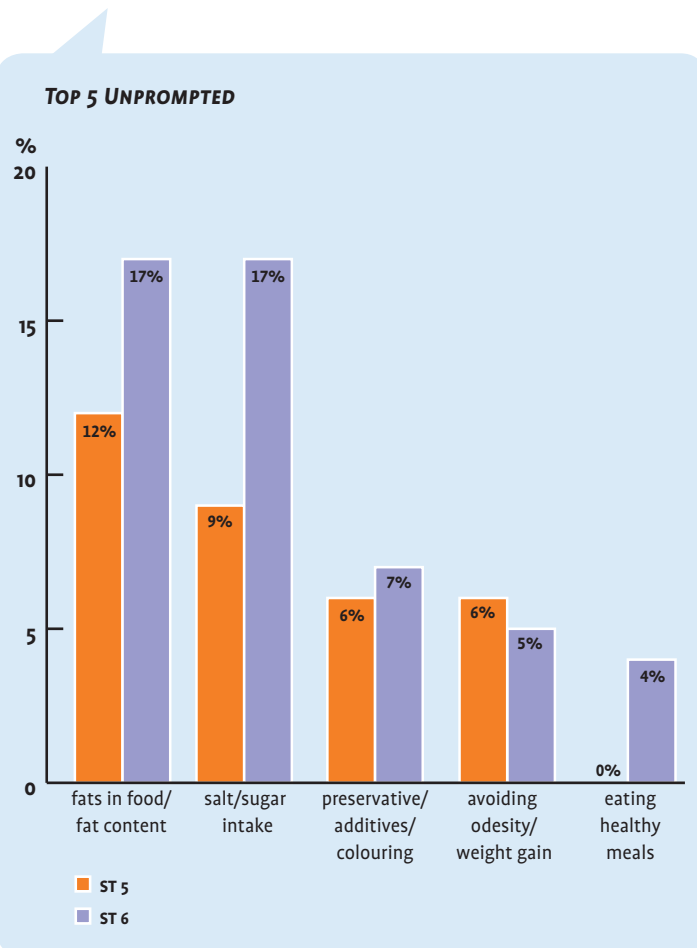
- During the period between *safetrak* 5 and *safetrak* 6, there was an increase of 100% (7% to 14%) in the number of adults who said they were concerned about the composition of foods, including the amount of additives, chemicals, pesticides and E numbers added to food and whether the food had been genetically modified.

- At an unprompted level, consumer concerns change over time. For example, in *safetrak 4*, only 2% of adults claimed that the issue they were most concerned about was the cleanliness of kitchens in restaurants and take-aways. Six months later in *safetrak 5*, 16% of adults reported that they were concerned about this issue.
- Similarly, while 15% of adults had said they were concerned about food poisoning in *safetrak 4*, this fell to 9% in *safetrak 5*.

Concerns about healthy eating

More than three in five (64%) adults on the island of Ireland claim they are concerned about healthy eating. Overall, concerns about healthy eating have heightened since previous waves, with the number of adults reporting they were very concerned advancing from less than one in five (18%) in *safetrak 5* (July 2005) to one in four adults (24%) in *safetrak 6* and *safetrak 7*.

Healthy eating issue most concerned about



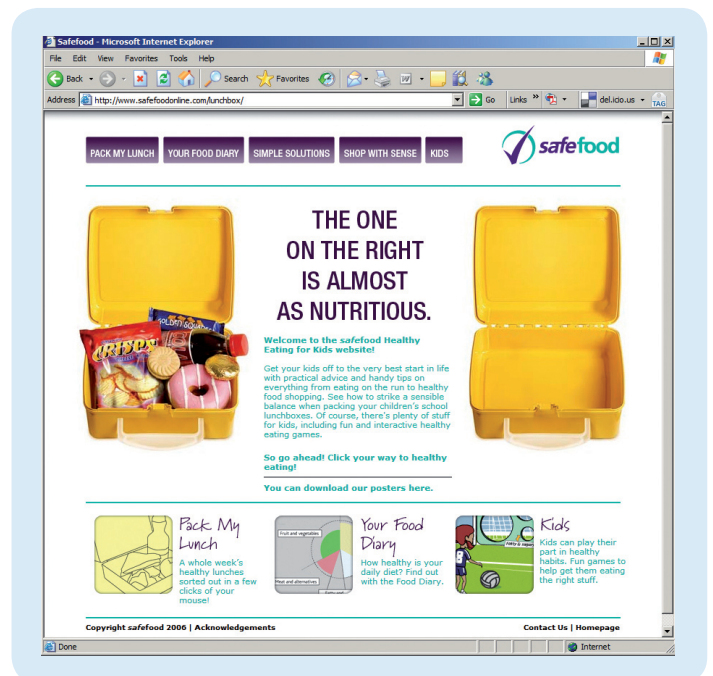
In *safetrak 6* the highest levels of unprompted consumer concern were fat content (17%), salt and sugar intake (17%), preservatives/additives/colourings (7%), weight gain (5%) and eating healthy meals (4%).

During *safetrak 5*, more than one in ten adults (12%) claimed fat content in food was the issue that they were most concerned about, while in *safetrak 6*, this had increased to almost one in five

adults (17%). Similarly, during *safetrak 5*, just under one in ten adults (9%) claimed that the healthy eating issue they were most concerned about was their salt/sugar intake. Six months later in *safetrak 6*, this had also risen to 17%.

Treats campaign

One fifth of the calories in children's diets come from foods that are high in fat and sugar, according to the National Children's Survey. The research also found that 20% of boys and 23% of girls are either overweight or obese – a situation that is likely to have detrimental effects on their health in the future. Amid growing concern about the long-term threat of heart disease and diabetes in these children, in November 2005 **safefood** launched the multimedia *Treats* campaign with the main goal of promoting the importance of healthy eating to parents and children.



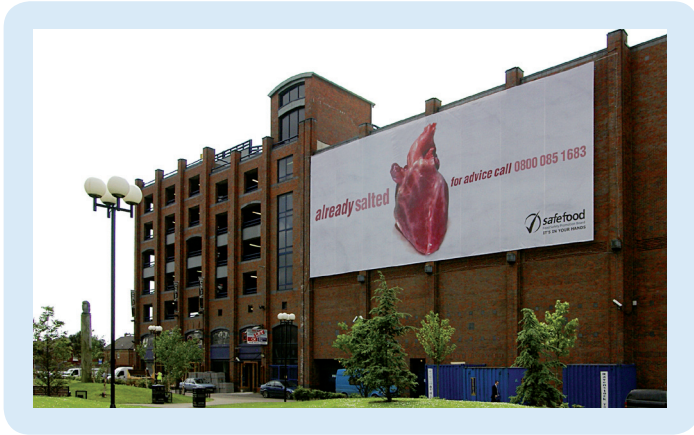
Nutritious Lunch campaign

- The campaign was recalled by more than one in two (53%) adults on the island of Ireland.
- The main message that they recalled was the importance of not giving children too many treats.
- One in four (24%) of those who recalled the campaign said that they had already changed their behaviour as a result of the campaign, while a further one in three (32%) said that they were planning to change their behaviour.

The success of this campaign can be attributed to the use of traditional media such as poster, print and television advertising, supported by a microsite on the Web. This provided both information and practical tools for parents, as well as games and activities about nutrition designed to engage children.

Salt campaign

A diet high in salt is linked to high blood pressure and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. Most people are surprised to discover that even if they stopped adding salt to their food they would still be consuming twice as much as they should be. Why? The culprit is 'hidden' salt in processed foods.



Already Salted campaign

To raise awareness of the levels of salt already in food, and to provide people with tips on how to reduce the amount of salt they eat, in May 2005 **safefood** launched the *Salt* campaign on radio, in the press and on billboards.

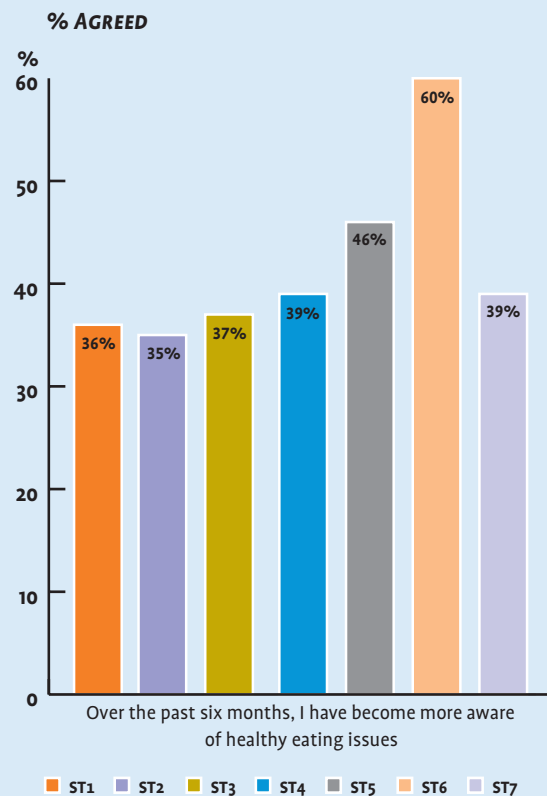
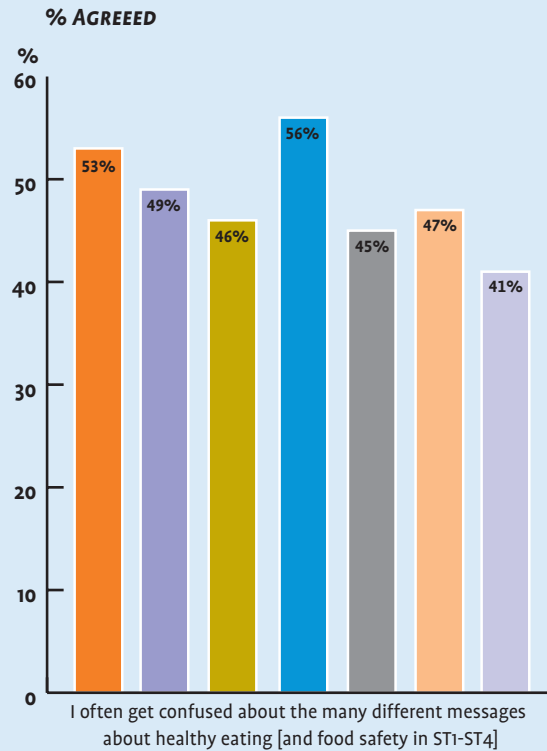
- In June 2005, more than one in four adults (28%) recalled having heard the radio advertisement.
- When the campaign was repeated in November 2005, this had increased to more than two in five adults (43%) claiming that they had heard the advertisement.
- When asked why they thought the radio ad was effective, almost 4 out of 5 people (78%) said it was because it informed them about the high levels of salt in processed foods.

Interestingly, *safetrak 7* results showed a decline back to one in four adults (28%) recalling the *Salt* campaign. This may be because, as a result of continuous media messaging, this information about processed food was no longer 'news'. Nevertheless, *safetrak 7* also revealed that one in four adults (25%) on the island of Ireland claimed they had changed their behaviour as a result of the *Salt* campaign, and more than another one in four (28%) said they planned to change their behaviour.

This research suggests that the key factor in the success of the *Salt* campaign was that it gave consumers new and concrete information about the source of salt in their diets, thereby enabling them to take positive steps to reduce their consumption.

Awareness of food safety and healthy eating issues

Interestingly, consumer confusion regarding healthy eating and food safety messages reduced from almost 5 in 10 people in *safetrak 6* (January 2006) to 4 in 10 people in *safetrak 7* (July 2006).



Overall, adult awareness regarding the importance of healthy eating increased substantially between *safetrak 1* and *safetrak 6*, peaking at six in ten people in *safetrak 6*. It is likely that **safefood** communications are contributing to increased awareness levels.

It is important to note, however, that this figure fell back substantially in *safetrak 7* to just four in ten adults. There are various reasons proposed for this drop: one suggestion relates to information 'wear out'. Although individuals have become more knowledgeable, they reach a saturation point in which information uptake may not occur as quickly as the initial campaign, hence the stabilising out of the *safetrak 7* figures.

Summary of key changes in consumer attitudes and behaviours

- Top of mind concerns for adults change over time, and findings from the *safetrak* research demonstrate that concerns can change as often as every six months. This is especially apparent in the area of food safety, where changes in concerns shifted from food poisoning as a primary concern to the cleanliness of kitchens in restaurants/take-aways. These changes correlate with the campaign cycles.
- When it comes to healthy eating, adults are becoming increasingly concerned about the fat content in food and also their salt and sugar intake.

- Considerable progress has been made in changing consumers' perceptions and behaviours through effective campaigns and continual communications: more than half (53%) of those who recalled the Salt radio campaign and even more (56%) of those who recalled the Treats campaign, said they had already changed their behaviour, or that they planned to do so.

Implications for others seeking to change consumer behaviour

- Communications directed at adults need to be clear, concise and relevant to the target audience intended, and indeed reflective of current consumer lifestyles and attitudes. This research indicates single messages can work best.
- Campaigns aimed at changing consumer behaviour must also include practical advice to facilitate the change in behaviour. 'Can do' messages are found to be recalled overall and tend to be more positively received by their target audiences.
- The challenge is to minimise message wear out and keep the consumer engaged for further positive behavioural changes in the future.



safetrak survey dates

Benchmarking	February 2003
<i>safetrak 1</i>	June 2003
<i>safetrak 2</i>	February 2004
<i>safetrak 3</i>	August 2004
<i>safetrak 4</i>	February 2005
<i>safetrak 5</i>	August 2005
<i>safetrak 6</i>	April 2006
<i>safetrak 7</i>	October 2006