

# Socially aware, female professionals dominate vitamin sales

Women are the biggest consumers of vitamins, minerals and supplements in this country, according to Roy Morgan data.

Roy Morgan general manager Pip Elliott shared the latest data on natural health products consumption with around 140 delegates at the Natural Products New Zealand Industry Summit (20 March).

According to the latest figures, 62% of supplement users are women and only 38% are men. In addition, 53.1% of people who take supplements are between the ages of 35 and 64.

In the past year, 1.3 million New Zealanders have consumed supplements at some point.

People who take supplements are also likely to be professionals, married, big spenders and socially aware, Ms Elliott says.

Interestingly, the majority of people who use these natural health products are not taking them because they are unwell – 82% of people who take supplements say they were healthy at the time of taking them.

Accordingly, 76% of supplement consumers take these products to help them keep up with their busy lifestyle.

Over the past three years, in both New Zealand and Australia, there has been a decline in the sale of herbal products but an increase in the use of supplements.

In the past six months in New Zealand, people have purchased supplements most frequently from supermarkets, followed by



Pip Elliott

pharmacies (22.2%).

Conversely, in Australia, pharmacies are the top retailer for people buying supplements, at 40.5%.

Ms Elliott refers to recent Roy Morgan research which shows New Zealanders generally feel more time-poor than Australians, and this could account for why more New Zealanders opt for the “one-stop shop” supermarket option.

On the plus side, New Zealand pharmacies have the third-highest satisfaction rating (89%) of the 24 products and services categories Roy Morgan measures.

In the 2013 calendar year, 8.5% of New Zealanders who purchased health products online in the past three months also bought supplements from a pharmacy in the past six months.

## Trust essential for keeping consumers

To compete with online retailers, pharmacists should use their position as trusted advisors to their advantage, Ms Elliott says. People may prefer to get advice from health professionals rather than purchasing online without this advice.

Pharmacists should also have an online presence, including social media, which she describes as “word of mouth on steroids”.

“Most traditional retailers have seen the digital universe as a curse and not a blessing – most have been relatively slow to embrace the internet and have seen it as a thing that won’t go away.” **MN**