



Top 13 Supplement Industry Trends

The nutritional supplement industry is always evolving. Consumers have access to infinite amounts of topical information like never before – information that educates and influences their perceptions and actions. So you better make sure your brand stays relevant!

Fueled by new ingredient discoveries, advances in health research, and changing consumer desires, the supplement industry is undergoing a growth spurt. That means new products and new brands are constantly entering the market to claim their share of the multibillion dollar industry.

What was popular a decade or even a year ago may be boring and irrelevant to today's supplement user. Make sure your brand doesn't get lost among your competitors by staying on top of these industry trends.

1) Transparency

Over the last five years we've seen a customer-lead drive for better transparency across most consumer good categories. This desire to know more about products doesn't stop at where they come from, how they're made, and quality of ingredients. Also on the minds of conscious consumers are standards of safety and testing, truth behind product claims, factory and labor conditions, and third-party verifications.



After recent headlines of supplement bands getting in trouble for selling adulterated products and making unsubstantiated claims, now more than ever is the time to reaffirm consumer trust in your products. Transparency helps to breakdown the feelings of mistrust when bad press tarnishes the supplement industry.

There are no disadvantages to becoming more transparent. In fact, not being transparent is a liability. Consider that consumers are willing to pay more for transparency and that brands who take active steps to improve transparency become their first choice.

You should expect customers to ask about ingredient sources (non-gmo, organic, etc.) testing (heavy metals, microbiology, botanical identity), and facility certifications. So be prepared to answer.

Without giving away trade secrets and proprietary information, brand owners can and should take steps toward transparency. Doing so will impact your brands' standing in the market and help you gain favor with consumers.

2) Clean Labels

These days more and more consumers pay attention to product labels. They're scrutinizing ingredients and nutritional content based on how they impact health and the environment. We've seen this happening in the food and beverage industry, so it's logical that the same clean ingredient trend has crossed over into supplements.

"Consumers want clean labels with words they recognize."

- Natural Foods Merchandiser

Consumers want formulas that are less processed, contain fewer ingredients, and have words they understand.

When your customers read your supplement label, what will they find lurking under **Other Ingredients**? This is where you find the manufacturing agents, or excipients, that have no nutritional or functional purpose.

Flow agents are time savers for the manufacturer – they keep ingredients from sticking to the equipment and speed up production time. This keeps production costs low, a perk that is often passed on to you, the client.

But why add such ingredients that hinder absorption of active ingredients and make the body work harder to break down? These are the unnecessary ingredients that consumers don't want to see in their supplements.

If you absolutely have to use flow agents, some cleaner alternative do exist. Organic rice derivatives are more appealing than magnesium stearate on your label.

Making supplements without flow agents and junk fillers is possible if you work with the right contract manufacturer. Just ask **PureNSM** – manufacturing without flow agents since 1993!

Avoid these common excipients if you want to appeal to the clean label crowd:

Magnesium stearate
Titanium dioxide
Silicon dioxide (silica)

Monocrystalline cellulose
Stearic acid
Croscarmellose sodium

3) Organic & Non-GMO

Thoughtfully-sourced ingredients fall under the clean label umbrella, and two of the most sought after “clean” verifications are **Organic Certified** and **Non-GMO Certified**.



A growing number of consumers want reassurance that they are purchasing a product that exemplifies a commitment to social and environmental consciousness.

Displaying one of the coveted trademarked organic or non-GMO seals (USDA Organic, Non-GMO Project Verified) on your supplement label boosts your brand’s presence in a post clean label world. But even if you don’t go through the process of having your finished product organic or non-GMO certified by a reputable organization, consider sourcing raw materials with these verifications anyway to put customers at ease when they ask – because they will ask.

Time will tell if Glyphosate Residue Free certification (launched in March 2017 by The Detox Project) grows in demand that rivals organic and non-GMO certification.

4) Natural vs. Synthetic Nutrients: The Debate Continues

A vast number of vitamins and minerals on the market are synthetic and have been for years. While they mimic the way natural nutrients act in the body, they’re artificially made in a laboratory through industrial processes, and often from petrochemicals.



Informed shoppers are looking into where their vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients come from. And due to the growing clean label movement, synthetic nutrients may be challenged with retaining their dominance in the supplement industry.

Threatening to take the place of synthetics are nutrients derived from yeast, algae, and bacteria. These join the burgeoning pool of nutrients derived from food.

Over the past few years, we’ve seen more finished products utilizing these naturally derived ingredients. But consider that these too often undergo extensive processing involving harsh solvents. So are they truly *cleaner* than synthetic nutrients?

“Cultured” nutrients grown in yeast or algae are said to be more bioavailable than their synthetic counterparts, based on the theory that yeast/algae provide the nutrients found in a whole food complex. Examples include B vitamins, chromium, and selenium from brewer’s yeast (*Sacharomyces cerevisiae*).

Genetically altering certain bacteria produce nutrients as by-products. Examples of this process produce viable coenzyme Q10, vitamin D2, vitamin K2, and vitamin B12. But will nutrients derived this way be able to escape the criticism of genetically modified foods? Only time will tell.

When you consider cost and availability, synthetic nutrients are likely to be the more practical choice.

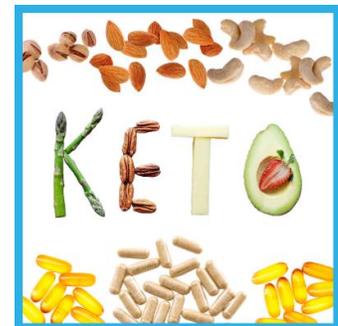
Naturally derived nutrients are more costly and not as abundant.

As the debate continues over whether synthetic nutrients provide the same benefits as those derived from whole food sources, the reality is that synthetics are going to be around for a while.

Just exercise transparency regarding your ingredient choices, whatever they may be.

5) Keto Approved Supplements

It was inevitable that diet trends influence the supplement market. As of 2019, the ketogenic diet is one of the top lifestyle trends with proven results.



The ketogenic diet emphasizes healthy fats and strictly reduces carbohydrate intake – less than 30 grams of total carbs per day. So if you're playing to the keto crowd, watch the carbohydrates in your supplement formula. This includes sugars, regardless if they're naturally derived alternative sweeteners.

The keto diet black lists a number of food options, so followers will want to supplement missing nutrients and ones that help the body function better on a low-carb diet. Some pro-keto nutrients to consider in your formula include:

Medium Chain Triglyceride (MTC) Oil – MTCs are used as fuel by the brain and muscles since they have limited glycogen to burn on a keto diet. MTC oil is quick-digesting fat that helps keto dieters stay in ketosis.

Electrolytes – Due to increased electrolyte (sodium, potassium, magnesium) loss.

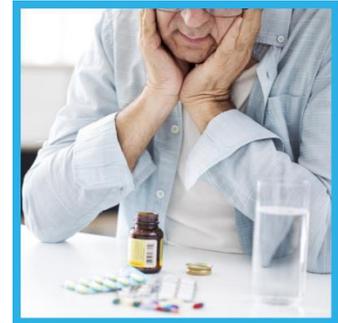
Digestive Enzymes – The high fat, moderate protein, keto diet is tough on the digestive system. Specialized enzymes for fat and protein digestion (lipases and proteases) can minimize the digestive issues.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids – Omega-3 rich fish and krill oil supplements can maximize the keto diet's impact. They also help to balance the omega-3 to omega-6 ratio, which is important when following a high fat diet.

Greens Powders – Following the low carb mantra of the keto diet may take a toll on vegetable consumption. Greens powders offer an easy way to boost veggie intake. Concentrated whole food powders like spinach, broccoli, wheatgrass, kale, spirulina, and chlorella can easily be added to drinks, shakes, and smoothies.

6) Beating Pill Fatigue

The most ubiquitous delivery format for dietary supplements is the pill, either as a tablet or capsule. But consumers are exploring other delivery systems to beat pill fatigue, especially if they take multiple pills a day.



Depending on how your product will be used – frequency of dose, with food or on an empty stomach, per or post workout, age of your consumer, etc. – you may have the opportunity to think outside the pill when formulating your next supplement.

Here are some things to consider:

Will your active ingredients survive the acidic stomach environment without the protective barrier of an outer capsule shell or protective coating of a tablet?

Who is your target audience? For children and the elderly who may have trouble swallowing whole tablets or capsules, consider a chewable or liquid delivery. Gummies, chewable tablets, and liquid formulas can be made more palatable with natural flavors and colors. If you need to sweeten your formula, experiment with natural alternatives to sugar, such as stevia, or monk fruit extract.

Or perhaps powders would delight your clientele. Bulk powders or single-use stick packs or sachets make easy nutritional drinks or provide an extra boost to health shakes and smoothies.

Have you ever considered a transdermal application? As a whole, the skin is a great barrier for keeping harm away from your fragile organs and tissues, but the porous surface allows quick access to the bloodstream. This means the active ingredients in transdermal supplements spring into action significantly faster than oral supplements that have to pass through the digestive system. Transdermal electrolyte applications are a growing market, especially for athletes. A number of electrolyte-rich sprays, creams, and soaking salts are already gaining fans.

years! Some product formulas can get around this by being relabeled as a food instead of a supplement. For example, liquid vitamin D can be marketed as olive oil fortified with vitamin D.

Cross border e-commerce is another option with great success. Online sales in China have grown significantly as more citizens of the world's most populous country use the digital marketplace.

Tmall Global, owned by the Alibaba Group and a sector of Tmall, the largest B2C online platform in China, allows international business with no physical presence in mainland China (no warehouse, store, or Chinese business license) to sell directly to Chinese consumers. Just be sure you understand the fees associated with your product category, as they can be pricey.

9) Sustainable Packaging

Single-use plastic is an environmental nightmare! And the supplement industry is part of the problem.

Plastic offers many benefits for dietary supplements – lightweight, durable, an excellent oxygen and moisture barrier. But plastic is fossil fuel derived and it never goes away.

What can brand owners do to be part of the solution to this global crisis?

If you're using plastic bottles or tubs, consider switching to glass. Glass is more likely to be recycled properly, but it's heavier to ship and more fragile during transit.

Think outside the bottle. Have you noticed more supplements being sold in pouches? This is no longer limited to bulk powders. Stand up pouches, too, are made from plastic films, but often require less plastic than bottles.

Post-consumer resin (PCR) plastics give certain types of recycled plastic renewed life as something else. A handful of packaging suppliers are turning recyclable PET and HDPE plastics into post-consumer bottles that may be suitable for supplements. It's not a plastic-free solution, but using recycled material keeps plastics in the supply chain instead of in landfills and oceans.

Compostable packaging is still in its infancy and there's not a lot of data regarding how product shelf life is affected. But expect more innovation in compostables, including plant-based plastics.

Just be forewarned that sustainable packaging costs more than traditional options. And it's still an emerging field for the packaging industry, so supplies will be limited until sustainability becomes the norm.

The supplement industry's over reliance on plastic will be an ongoing topic of concern for some time, but with greater demand for sustainable packaging at the consumer and manufacturer level, better solutions will be born.



10) Sleep & Relaxation Formulas

With all of our personal devices synced, we're just a finger tap away from emails, calendar reminders, news, and updated social media feeds. It's no wonder that we're stressed and sleep deprived.

But tired consumers are looking past prescription strength sleep aids and mood enhancers for natural alternatives. To make your relaxation-inducing product stand out, think beyond melatonin, lavender, and valerian root, or at the very least create a unique blend of calming nutraceuticals.



GABA - Gamma-aminobutyric acid is a brain chemical that has a calming and relaxing effect on the brain. GABA promotes alpha waves that occur when the brain is relaxed, and offsets the beta waves that occur when the brain is a buzz with activity.

Sendara® – A branded proprietary blend of Indian gooseberry and ashwagandha extracts that reduces stress-related hormone levels.

Minerals – Both calcium and magnesium help to relax tense muscles.

Botanicals – Plant-based relaxers include passion flower, lemon balm, California poppy, and hemp.

11) Brain Health Formulas

The cognitive health category is growing exponentially. You too can get in the brain game with an innovative formula featuring nootropics for enhanced cognitive function. The brain only accounts for 2% of your body weight, but it needs a whole lot of care and the right nutrients to operate on all cylinders.



The brain has different needs during different life stages. There's opportunity to create something truly mind-blowing for your target clientele. Young minds need nourishment that supports focus, concentration, and nervous system development during the formative years of learning. In young and mid adulthood we're all about managing stress and beating mental fatigue. In our golden years we're concerned with preventing neurodegenerative diseases that result in memory and motor skill decline.

Think beyond ginkgo biloba (although still a contender) and formulate with clinical data backed ingredients that increase blood flow to the brain, support neurotransmission, protect against brain cell damage, and promote memory optimization.

Curcumin
Omega-3s
Phosphatidylcholine

Huperzine-A
BioPQQ®
SerinAid®

AlphaSuze

12) Enhanced Digestive Health Formulas

The human body never ceases to require vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients from a wide variety of foods. Unfortunately, our ability to digest those foods and absorb vital nutrients declines with age.

As we age, our ability to produce adequate digestive enzymes and stomach acid (hydrochloric acid) diminishes. The result? A whole host of indigestion symptoms including gas, bloating, heartburn, acid reflux, and stomach cramps.



Supplemental digestive aids are increasingly popular. Not just by the 60+ year old crowd as more of us live longer, but millennials and gen Xers who have fallen into a pattern of poor eating habits need help digesting too.

Consider a digestive formula beyond the standard digestive enzymes or at least include specialized enzymes needed for the Western diet, food sensitivities, and current diet trends (e.g. Keto followers need help digesting higher amounts of protein and fats). Appeal to eaters across the board with a broad spectrum of enzymes.

Betaine hydrochloride (betaine HCL) helps to restore stomach acid losses. Despite what most people think, it's a lack of stomach acid, not too much acid, that triggers discomfort after eating for the majority of the population. You need sufficient stomach acid to activate the protein digesting enzyme pepsin. Stomach acid is also the body's first line of defense against food borne pathogens, including *H. pylori*, the ulcer-causing bacterium.

Don't forget about probiotics and prebiotics. Create a formula that has both!

13) Vision Formulas

Vision supplement sales were stagnant until we learned that the blue light emitting from digital screens would be a leading cause of vision problems down the line.

Let's face it, we're getting far more screen time than is healthy for us because we live in a digital world where most of us *need* our smart phones, computers, tablets, e-readers, and televisions. Even energy efficient lighting (compact fluorescent and LED bulbs) emits blue light.



Vision health is no longer just a concern for the baby boomer generation. Digital screens are being introduced to toddlers and follow us through adulthood. Short-term effects of blue light exposure include blurry vision, dry eyes, eye strain, and headaches, but long-term where talking gradual loss of visual function. Blue light penetrates the eye deeper than UV light from the sun.

The resulting photochemical and photo-oxidative damage to the retina contribute to age-related macular degeneration.

You can't go wrong with lutein and zeaxanthin, the standards in eye health nutrients for years. But make your product stand out with other winners in the vision support department:

Astaxanthin
Omeg-3s
Copper

Zinc
Chromium
Bilberry

Black Current
Vitamin A
Vitamin E

Our dependence on digital screens and the effects of blue light exposure mean consumers are looking for long-term supplementation. So create a unique and effective formula to gain loyal followers.

Let **PureNSM** help you navigate these supplement trends to keep your brand relevant and top of consumer minds.