Consumer Innovation Shout Out: Have it Your Way - Viome Leverages AI for a Custom Diet

by David Laborde

Burger King coined the phrase “Have it your way” back in 1974 and started a trend of customization in food that has continued today. From Subway to Starbucks, consumers are creating unique combinations to perfectly suit their preferences. And now, with the help of emerging technology, you can even perfectly customize your diet to match your body’s individual needs, by just mailing in a few samples.

Viome, a healthcare start-up, uses metatranscriptomic sequencing to see every strain, the activity of these organisms, and whether they are producing nutrients or toxins inside the gut from stool samples the customer mails in. Then Viome leverages AI technology to run multiple analyses of your results across a massive industry database of scientific literature, biological testing, and customer feedback. The result? A report accessible on your smartphone displaying the ideal foods and supplements just for you.

Habit, a company from Campbell Soup, also analyzes customer data through a mail-order kit. Instead of gut samples though, customers fill out a questionnaire, swab their cheeks for a DNA test, and submit a blood sample. The results are then analyzed and the customer gets 7 reports, again on their smartphone, about how their body responds to different foods and even if you are predisposed for weight gain or caffeine sensitivity.

And now, Viome just bought Habit to combine technologies, providing an even more accurate picture of their customer’s biological needs. What’s the most interesting to me? Neither of these companies sell supplements or vitamins, just the kits. As consumer data becomes more and more valuable, I can only imagine what a company could create if they understood not only their consumer’s preferences, but also the optimal nutrients their body needs. I look forward to seeing the next wave of innovative products that might result from these breakthroughs.
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