



The Gen Z Shopping Report: Authentic perspectives for the future of the grocery aisle

#Shelfie: Go in-store with Gen Z consumers to uncover the brands, messaging, and experiences that resonate.



Contents.

01

Trolley talk: Gen Z's guide to what slaps (and what flops)

02

#Influenced: Food on the feed

03

Vegan(ish): The Flexi Effect

04

Ultra-processed life:
Balance isn't just for pilates

05

Borderless bites:
tastebud tourism

06

Value and values:
Gen Z vote with their coin

07

Human insight. Enhanced with AI.

Overview

The Gen Z Shopping Report

Meet Generation Flex: the 13-28 year-olds who collapse traditional categories of the grocery shop. They're influenced but intentional. They're vegan-ish. They're well-versed on the dangers of ultra-processed food – but still love a little treat.

From TikTok-fuelled cravings to flexitarian fridge raids, Gen Z is tearing up the traditional shopping list. This generation isn't just changing what we eat – they're changing how we shop, why we buy, and who we trust.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

01

Trolley talk: Gen Z's guide to what slaps (and what flops)

In our latest deep-dive, we go in-store with Gen Z to see through their eyes at point of sale, speaking with 300 UK shoppers and tapping into real-time video content for an unbiased perspective of the end-to-end supermarket experience. Via video diaries, they show us the brands, messaging, and media that motivates them.

So, what did we uncover? The five big forces shaping their shopping habits: influencers, flexi eating, ultra-processed indulgence, global flavours, and value-led choices.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

This is grocery shopping – but not as we knew it.

Read on to discover how Gen Z shops.

[Click to unlock access to the in-store videos from Gen-Z!](#)



#Influenced: Food on the feed



[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

02

#Influenced: Food on the feed

Vibe Check Aisle 3!

You've no doubt seen the Stanley Cup. You've probably been plagued by ads for accessories for it too - a strap that turns the water cup into a handbag for on-the-go hydration, a plastic snack plate to attach to the lid so you can munch while you sip, keyring style accessories that dangle down the side. You might even be wondering why a simple water vessel is now a stamp of status - that keeps you as cool as your water.

Well, the Stanley is more than just a cup. It's a sign of the times. For Gen Z, viral popularity and social proof is the most dominant driver.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

Repeat exposure, hype, and online FOMO galvanise Gen Z to put down their phones and pick up their wallets.

A staggering 85% of Gen Z shoppers say they've bought something because it went viral. Three in four have made a purchase based on a TikTok trend. And half have followed an influencer's recommendation straight to the checkout.

Food is the most influenced category (51%), followed by fashion, beauty, and haircare (each at 50%). We're talking Dubai chocolate, feta pasta, KSI and Logan Paul's Prime drinks, and Mr Beast's Feastables. And if they buy once, they buy again - 84% of trend-led shoppers have done it more than once.

Only 15% remain uninfluenced - and even then, it's not apathy, it's skepticism. Quality concerns and influencer credibility were the biggest turn-offs.

The feed shapes their food, and even in-store experiences are shaped by online influences. Hype creates hunger. And word of mouth has them eating those words.



"It was actually the Dubai chocolate and what made me try it was because how enlightened people were acting after having it."

"I kept seeing videos of the long teddy fleece pillows and they just kept appearing and then I caved in and bought 1."

"The Stanley Quencher Tumbler. It trended on TikTok thanks to influencers praising its size, aesthetic, and ability to keep drinks cold for hours."

"Dubai chocolate - was popular so wanted to see if worth the hype."

"I bought a lip scrub and lip oil due to TikTok influencers saying how amazing it was."

"Another big one is the Revlon One-Step Hair Dryer and Volumizer. It blew up on TikTok and YouTube for giving salon-style blowouts at home with minimal effort. I've made two purchase cos of the trend."

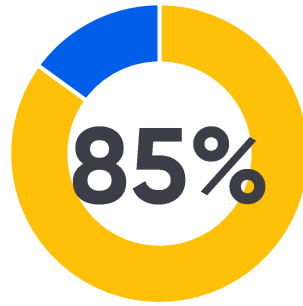
"I saw a feta baked pasta. I bought the ingredients because it looked tasty."

"It was a tool that easily slices a potato into chips."

"Air fryer because it was advertised very well and it looked helpful and attractive."

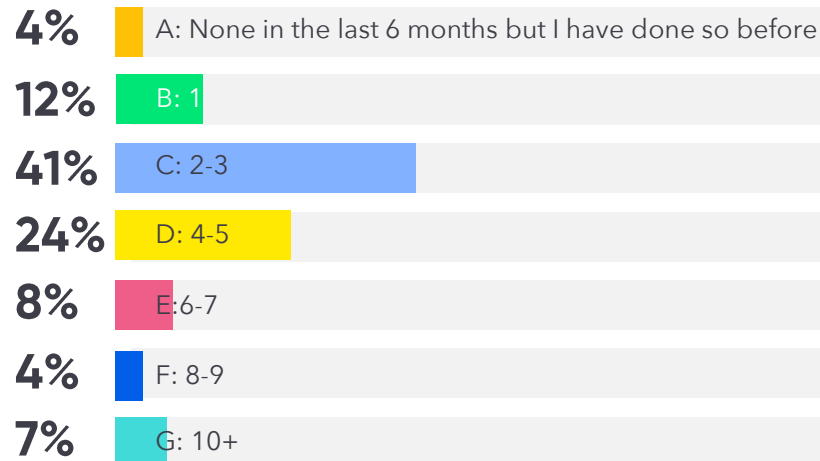
[Click here and discover how Asahi connected to in-store shoppers via video](#)

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)



of Gen Z have bought something because of virality

For the 15% who aren't influenced by social trends or influencers, a lack of trust was the main blocker



Trending products: Dubai chocolate | Stanley cup | Sustainable cleaning products | Rainbow projectors | Squat proof yoga pants

Influencers to watch

- Lydia Fowler
- MKBHD
- Valeria Lipovetsky
- Alexandra Fullerton
- Ama Muland
- Nara Smith
- Moyo
- Mikayla Nogueira
- Madeline Argy



Food and drink

"Dubai chocolate - was popular so wanted to see if worth the hype."

"The most recent thing I purchased was a chocolate bar (M&S chocolate Rice Crispy) because I saw someone eating it with a positive review."

"Wotsits mac and cheese because it looked tasty in the video."



[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

Home

"I purchased steam hoover that clean the furniture."

"It was zoflora cleaning spray. It looked really effective at cleaning!"

"Air fryer, because it was advertised very well and it looked helpful and attractive."

"A brush that allows you to use it on carpet and it brings up all the things stuck in carpet."

"The air fryer exceeded expectations, delivering crispy, healthy meals with ease. Its trendy design and influencer-endorsed features made it a worthwhile purchase."

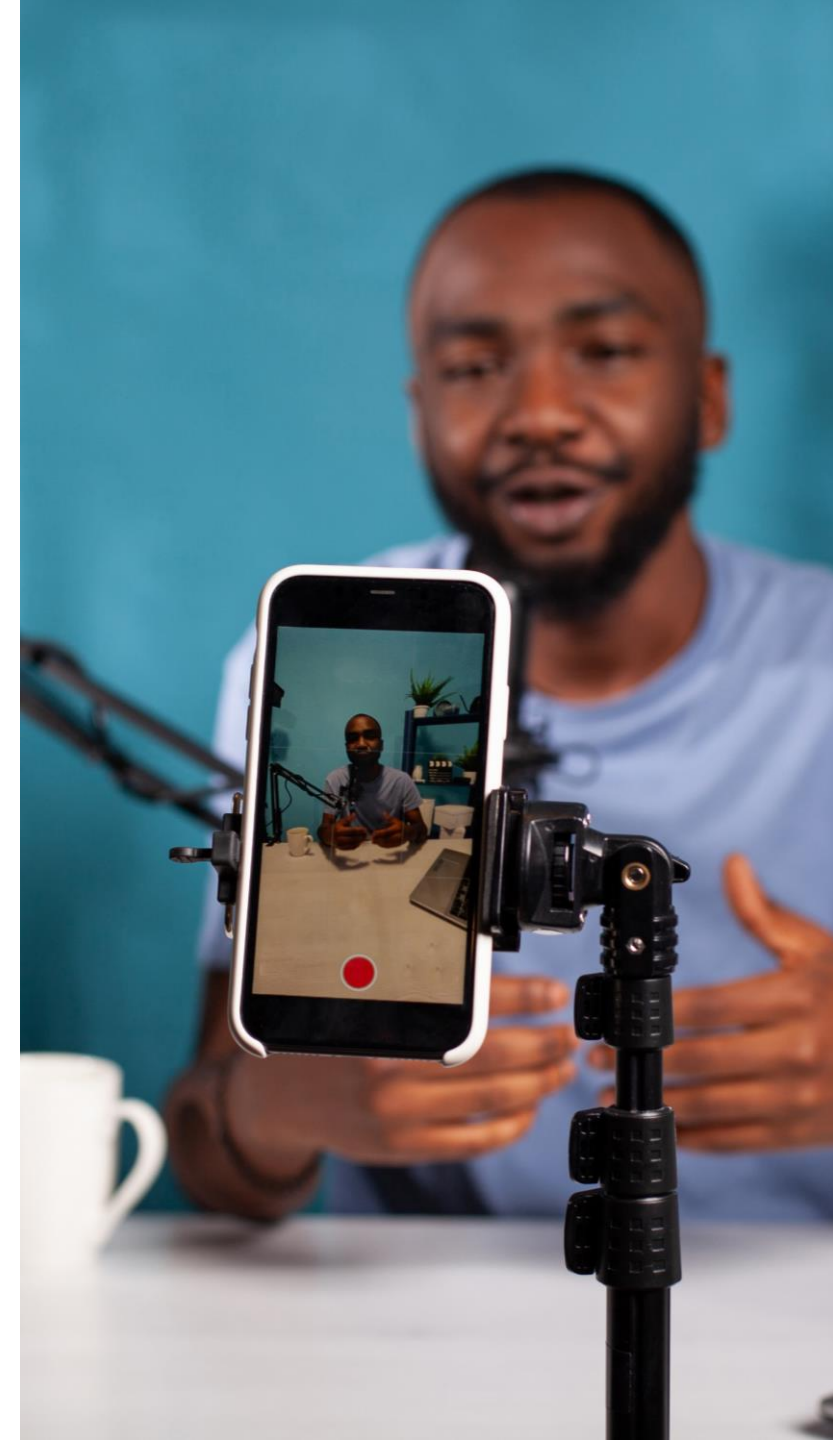
Fashion and Beauty

"The viral make up products like Charlotte Tilbury setting spray."

"As a sensitive skin girlie, I bought Cetaphil moisturising lotion and Advanced snail 96 mucin essence serum because it met my needs."

"I purchased wide leg jeans because I saw many influencers normalise it and liked the concept."

"I bought a gym two-piece set."



Vegan(ish): The Flexi Effect



[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

03

Vegan(ish): The Flexi Effect

The meat-free movement isn't just for January. From oat milk matchas to jackfruit tacos, plant-based eating has gone mainstream – but for Gen Z, it's less about labels and more about choice.

Interestingly, two thirds of Gen Z are meat eaters - leaving a whole 34% exploring other diet and lifestyle choices. 16% are flexitarians, 8% are vegetarians, 5% are pescetarians, and 5% are vegan.

Today's younger shoppers aren't militant about being meat-free – but they are open, flexible, and increasingly plant-curious. Just over 1 in 10 always purchase free-from or plant-based products when they shop.

A third often do, another third occasionally, and only a small minority (1 in 10) never pick up a plant-based item at all. In short: most Gen Zers are dabbling, even if they're not fully committed to the cause.

And they're not short of options. Half of Gen Z say the current free-from range meets their needs, with a third even going so far as to say there's more than enough. Just 1 in 10 think the shelves are lacking – a pretty strong endorsement of UK supermarkets' evolving plant-based offer. Far from plant basic, then!

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

TREND REPORT



So, who's getting it right? When it comes to brands, Gen Z is backing the classics. Quorn leads the pack with 17 mentions, followed by Alpro (8) and Beyond Meat (5) to name a few. Supermarket-wise, Tesco takes the vegan crown with 32 shout-outs, followed by Asda (19) and Sainsbury's (18). Even budget retailers like Aldi and Lidl, and digital giants like Amazon, are getting a slice of the plant-based pie.

The bottom line? Gen Z isn't here for tofu tokenism or bland lentil burgers. They want flavour, variety and plant-based products that feel like a natural part of everyday eating – not a compromise.

[Click to unlock access to the in-store videos from Gen Z!](#)

9 out of 10 Gen Z consumers shop plant-based – with 1 in 10 always buying plant-based products

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

"Asda has best section because they're contain a lot of vegan choices."

"Waitrose is pretty great - not only a lot of options but they look so tasty... just hard to get through them all on a budget."

"Aldi because their vegan range seems more adventurous."

"Lidl used to lag behind and you'd struggle even to find tofu. These days, they have a full fridge of options. Maybe not as many as a major supermarket, but enough for my weekly top ups."

"Quorn mince as it tastes exactly like meat."

"Yes, I love Oatly Barista oat milk because it froths well and tastes great in tea and coffee."

"Oatly chocolate milk – I have found that this is the highest quality chocolate milk based from alternative dairy."

"Beyond meat for realistic plant-based burgers."

Gen Z's fave brands for free-from / vegan food:

Quorn - 17 mentions
Alpro - 8 mentions
Beyond Meat - 5 mentions
Wicked Kitchen - 4 mentions
Oatly - 3 mentions
Linda McCartney - 2 mentions
Violife - 2 mentions
Toofoo - 2 mentions
This Isn't - 2 mentions
OMV! - 2 mentions
Bol - 1 mention

Gen Z's fave retailers for free-from / vegan food:

Tesco - 32 mentions
Asda - 19 mentions
Sainsbury's - 18 mentions
Waitrose - 9 mentions
M&S - 8 mentions
Aldi - 8 mentions
Lidl - 6 mentions
Iceland - 5 mentions
Morrisons - 4 mentions

[Click here and get closer to Gen Z consumers with an insight community.](#)



Ultra-processed life: Balance isn't just for pilates



[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

04

Ultra-processed life: Balance isn't just for pilates

Welcome to the Little Treat Economy – where snacks aren't just snacks, they're tiny acts of self-care. For Gen Z, it's less about gluttony and more about micro-rewards. A fizzy drink to get through the workday. A sugar hit after the gym. A late-night crisp binge that softens the existential dread.

Ultra-processed foods (UPFs) – think crisps, sweets, ready meals and fizzy drinks – are the indulgences powering this feel-good culture. And while Gen Z knows they're not exactly health food, that's not stopping them from tucking in. A fifth of Gen Z are eating UPFs daily, with nearly half indulging a few times a week.

Awareness is high: a third say they're very familiar with the concept of UPFs, while two-thirds are somewhat aware. And concern is bubbling under the surface. One in six are highly concerned about the impact on their health, and two-thirds are somewhat concerned. Just 7% said they're not bothered at all.

But here's the twist: most aren't cancelling snacks – they're recalibrating. Two-thirds believe UPFs can be part of a healthy lifestyle if consumed in moderation. It's not all or nothing – it's about balance.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)



"I consume them as part of snacks after a stressful day while waiting for a proper meal ,I consume them while watching football games,I consume them as snack in between meals and I also consume them as quick snacks when late for a program."

"Look for short ingredient lists that are easy to understand and contain mostly whole foods."

"I tend to consume them in the evening after my dinner as a snack."

"I try to consume them as little as possible however with them being so cheap it's hard to not purchase them."

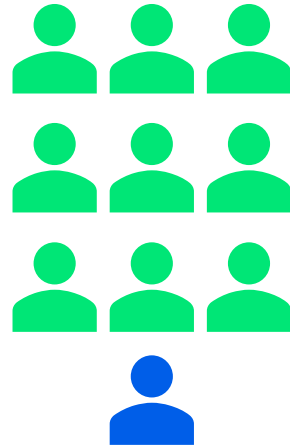
"Ultra-processed foods are industrially made products containing ingredients not typically used in home cooking like artificial flavors, preservatives, and emulsifiers. They are often high in sugar, fat, and salt."

"UPF are basically industrial formulation made with multiple ingredients not typically used in home cooking. Products - sweetened drinks, packaged snacks, breakfast cereal, processed meat."

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)



1 in 5 Gen Z consumers eat UPF daily



BUT 9 in 10 are concerned about their health impacts

**Ready to connect with Gen Z?
Click here to start your insight community journey now.**



Borderless bites: tastebud tourism



REQUEST A DEMO

05

Borderless bites: tastebud tourism

Gen Z's taste buds have passports. From Korean corn dogs to Caribbean patties, this is a generation that snacks globally and has a hunger for more diverse plates.

Only 3% of Gen Z say they stick to familiar cuisines, while a whopping one in four describe themselves as very adventurous eaters. The rest? Pretty open too – two thirds say they're quite adventurous when it comes to trying international foods.

But this isn't just about wanderlust – it's about word of 'mouth'. Friends were the biggest food influencers in our data, with 53 mentions of mates introducing Gen Z to new cuisines.



"I tried an African platter and it was very spicy!"

"i eat Nigerian jollof with ofada sauce and it was so nice and hot"

"Pad Thai from a local Thai restaurant. Absolutely loved it!"

"Filipino food, it's adobo and lumpia, it's taste great"

"Mexican—I absolutely love it! 🤤 I went for some delicious tacos with marinated chicken..."

"I had Japanese food , it was vegetarian sushi, it tastes nice and fresh"

"It's a chicken biryani which is an Indian cuisine"

"Pierogi: These dumplings are a staple of Polish cuisine..."

"I tried tabbouleh, it tasted strange but good"

"The last new international cuisine I tried was Ethiopian food—specifically injera with a variety of stews..."

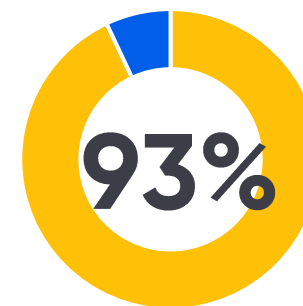
Curiosity itself followed close behind, with 38 mentions of just wanting to try something different. Social media had its usual sway, with 21 mentions, while 15 pointed to the growing availability of global foods in UK supermarkets. Even real-world travel got a shout-out – 13 times, to be exact.

When asked directly, 46% said that recommendations from friends and family influenced what they tried. In other words: the food chat group is alive and well. Influencer shout-outs also sparked action for 34%, while product displays in-store piqued curiosity for 30%.

Enjoying the trends? Click here and discover more in our Next-Gen report!

REQUEST A DEMO

For Gen Z, global food isn't niche – it's normal. Diversity isn't just a buzzword for them, it's something they live, breathe, and eat! They're tasting the world, one bite at a time, and they're doing it with friends, phones, and flavour in hand.



of Gen Z are open to trying global cuisines, snacks, and drinks



Value and values: Gen Z vote with their coin



[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

06

Value and values: Gen Z vote with their coin

It's not just about what's in the basket – it's about what's behind it. For Gen Z, what a product does is key, but also what it stands for. Ethics and sustainability aren't bonus features. They're baked into the purchase decision.

Over half of Gen Z consumers say they're willing to pay more for a product that aligns with their values. Another third say they'll consider it – if the price is right. That leaves only 1 in 10 who wouldn't pay a premium for ethics. A clear signal: values are value.

And when it comes to shopping habits, 1 in 5 always prioritise sustainability and ethics.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

TREND REPORT

A third do so often, and another third occasionally. The intention is there – even if the follow-through depends on what's on offer (and how much it costs).

So, what makes something 'ethical' in Gen Z's eyes? The top green flag is eco-friendly packaging, closely followed by whether something can be recycled or upcycled. But animal welfare made a major showing – not only as a consistent priority, but as the top choice when Gen Z were asked to pick just one ethical factor that matters most. Cruelty-free beauty, free-range meat, animal-safe testing – all of it matters.

For this generation, a product isn't just a purchase. It's a vote – for the planet, for people, and for the kind of future they want to buy into.



"I paid more for a reusable stainless steel water bottle from a sustainable brand because it reduced my need for single-use plastic."

"I paid more for a meatless food product because it was packaged in eco-friendly materials."

"I paid more for some bananas because their packaging was more recyclable."

"I pay more for free-range eggs during my usual grocery shop as I prefer eggs sourced from freer chickens than caged chickens."

"I paid more for a meat-free product because I don't agree with the way animals are slaughtered."

"I paid more for halal meat as it aligns with my spiritual beliefs regarding humane treatment and proper slaughter methods."

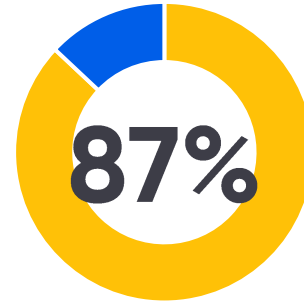
"I pay more for grass-fed chicken because it aligns with my values regarding animal welfare."

"I buy from brands like Bol because they are a B Corp and they care a lot about the environment and ethical production."

"I paid more for Tony's Chocolonely because the product is not only very good, but a large part of its marketing is that they pay the farmers fairly for their product."

"Vegan products often cost more, but I'm still willing to pay them because they are better for the environment."

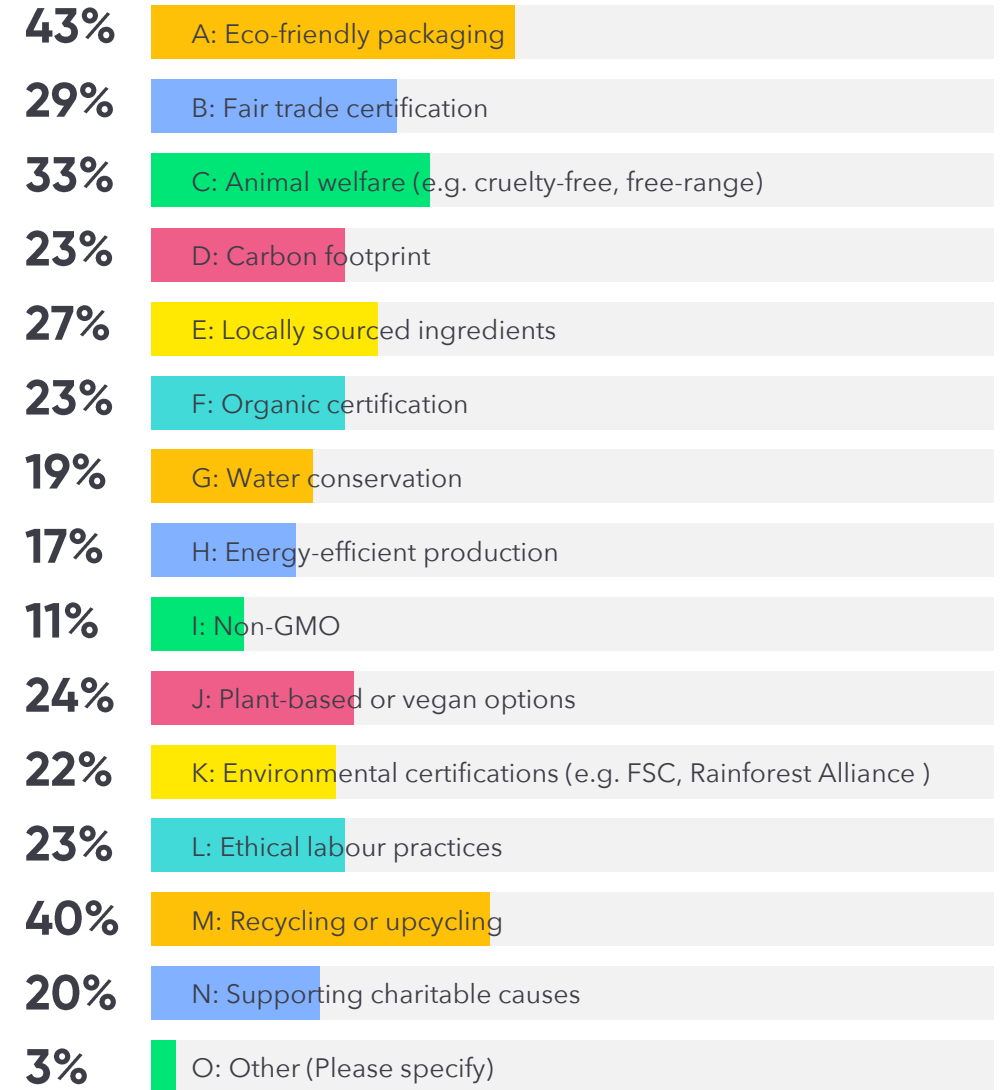
[REQUEST A DEMO](#)



87% of Gen Z would pay a premium for ethical products

Animal welfare is the leading concern for Gen Z shoppers

Want to watch the full playlist of in-store videos from Gen Z? Reach out to get deeper!



Human insight. Enhanced with AI.



07

Human insight. Enhanced with AI.

Bulbshare brings the world's biggest brands closer to their customers than ever before. By building always-on global consumer communities, we put customer voice at the heart of operations, enabling more successful products and services with better market fit. And as pioneers in generative AI, we are transforming how insight teams do their jobs.

Bulbshare's global insight communities drive 1000s of real-time responses every day in over 50 markets worldwide – allowing the organisations we work with to make more agile, reactive and customer-led decisions.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

From product heat-mapping to virtual workshops to AI-driven data analysis, our technology is changing the face of consumer insight and revolutionising how brands develop products. And our model for customer advocacy is reshaping the landscape of influencer marketing.

We build customer communities anywhere in the world, from any consumer segment. And, with clients ranging from Nestlé and Unilever to eBay, Samsung, L'Oréal and Coca-Cola, we deliver daily insights that change the way the world's biggest businesses operate.



Talk to Kevin about how Bulbshare can revolutionise your customer connections. Click [here](#) to get one step closer to your own Gen Z insight community...



[Click here for your free tour of Bulbshare](#)

Discover your next Bulbshare report [HERE](#)



Kevin

