The 2026 Consumer Outlook

Strategies for a Marketplace in Motion

December 4, 2025

NielsenIQ powered by GfK intelligence

Your presenters today

Rachel Bonsignore
VP, Consumer Life

Steve Zurek
VP, Thought Leadership

Kenny Juskowiak
Head of North America Marketing

Today's Discussion

Where We Stand Today

Consumer Reaction: Mass Divergence, Predictable Apathy

Reinventing the Brand-Consumer Relationship

Seamless Commerce: The Omni Revolution Continues

Disruptive Trends to Watch

NIQ

Today's Insights Sources

Data-driven insights to power your year ahead

Consumer Life

- **Longest-Standing Consumer Trends Study in the World**
- *Data from 30,000 consumers in 25+ countries collected annually with a 50+ year history*

Category Shopping Fundamentals

- **A full path to purchase map of your shoppers**
- *Covers 130+ categories sold across 130+ retailers*

Consumer Outlook Report

- **A strategic guide to 2026 for brands and retailers**
- *Marries survey + purchase data for a comprehensive outlook*

Where we stand today

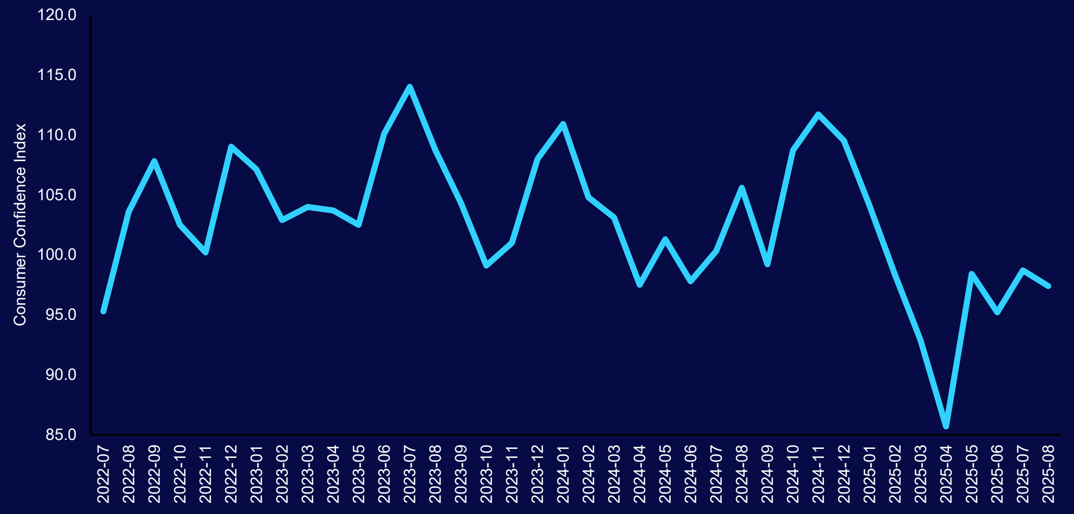
NIQ

Consumers remain wary as inflation, job insecurity, slow income growth, and political instability dampen economic outlooks

Consumer Confidence

94.2

▼ **-3.6 pts** (Sept ‘25 vs. YA)



Unemployment

4.4%*

▲ **+0.1 pts** (Oct ‘25 vs. Sept '25)

Consumer Price Index

▲ **+3.0 pts**

(Sept ’25 +0.6 pts vs. YAGO)

Jobs Added

+42,000

(Oct ‘25 vs. Sept '25)

Retail Job Openings

-21,300

(Oct ‘25 vs. Sept '25)

Source: NielsenIQ, POS/RMS, 52W data ending 10.25.2025; *Chicago Fed estimate

NIQ

Big picture concerns – food, economy, war – are on the rise

Still, US is generally more positive than the rest of the world

		July 2025	% change vs last year	Global
1	Increasing food prices	14%	-6.1	15%
2	↑ Economic downturn *(was #3 in 2024)*	11%	3.2	10%
3	↑ Global conflict/War *(was #12 in 2024)*	11%	-6.9	14%
4	Political unrest	11%	3.2	5%
5	Increased housing costs	5%	-2.2	5%
6	↑ Job security *(was #13 in 2024)*	5%	1.3	6%
7	↓ Ability to provide basics *(was #2 in 2024)*	5%	-2.9	5%
8	↓ Increasing utility bills *(was #6 in 2024)*	5%	-2.3	7%
9	↓ Self/Family welfare/ Happiness *(was #8 in 2024)*	4%	-1.0	6%
10	↓ Immigration *(was #7 in 2024)*	4%	-2.4	3%

Source: NIQ 2025 Consumer Outlook survey , Global, Note: In China, verbiage reflects the following: "Geopolitical uncertainty", "Economic environment"

Stretching spend across total trip is causing stress – constant risk of brand switching, variable across categories

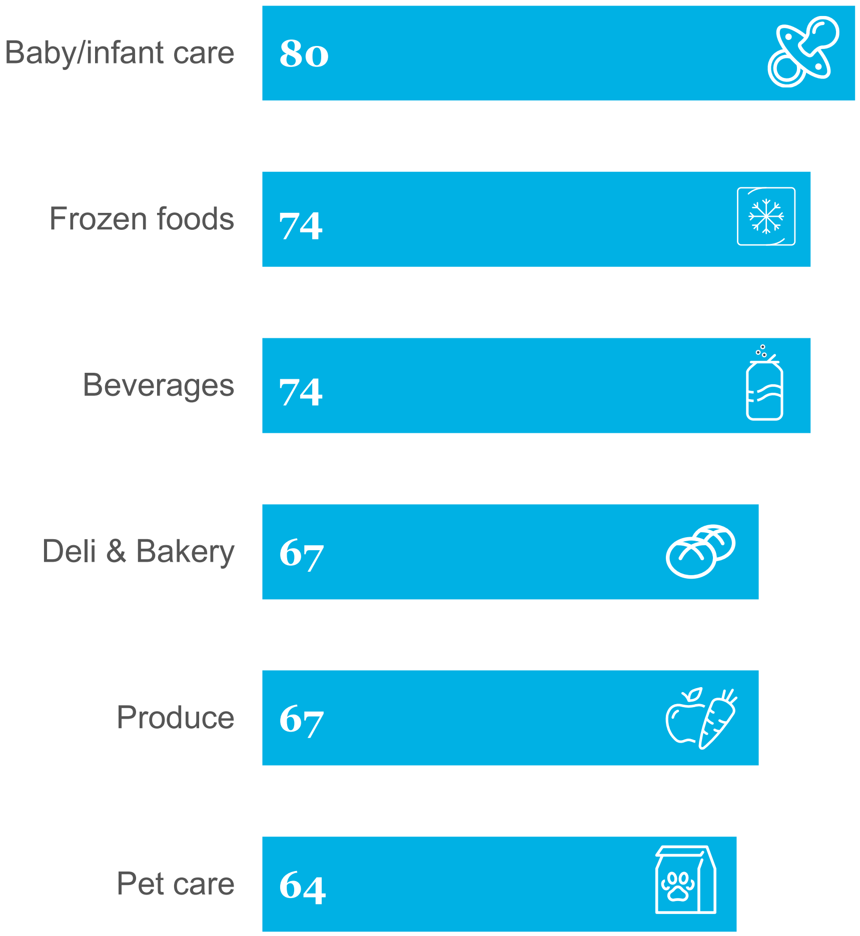
71%

Have done something to response in changing prices

Top activities:

- *Monitor trip cost*
- *Stock up*
- *Switch to lower-priced options*
- *Only buy essentials*

% 'done something to deal with changing prices' by category



3 years ago we said...

Consumers won't pay full price for non-necessities

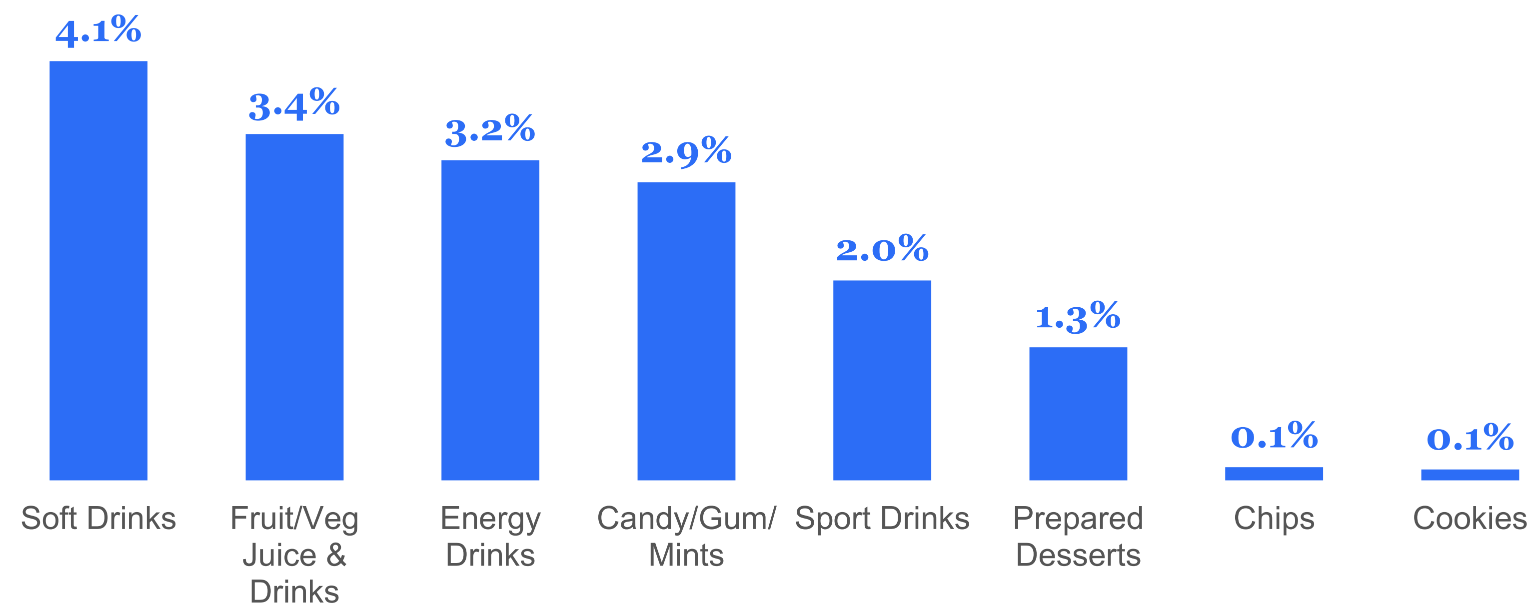
Source: NIQ 2025 Category Shopping Fundamentals

SNAP restrictions may reduce US sales ~1–4% in impacted beverage and snack categories

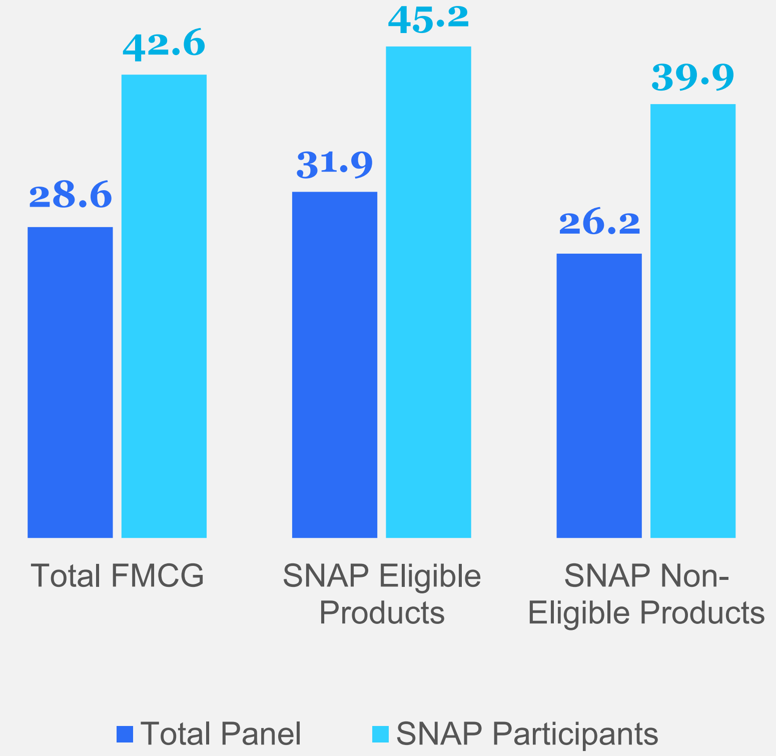
Those who rely on SNAP lean more heavily on value retailers to stretch food dollars

SNAP USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Putting Healthy Food Within Reach

Estimated Annual U.S. Sales Risk from Confirmed 2026 SNAP Restrictions*



*% $ Value Retailers**

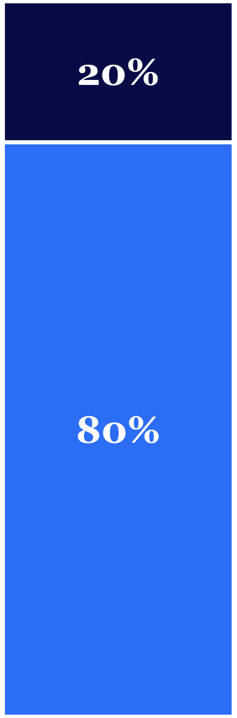


*SNAP State Eligibility Sources: FMI, The Food Industry Association. Current as of 10/2/2025; Further restrictions may be announced as eligibility finalized; Syndicated NIQ Category Definitions
Source: NielsenIQ Expanded Omnishopper Panel, PAT, Total US Total Outlets, SNAP Survey, 52WE 08/09/2025

Private Label dollar is growing at a faster pace than national brands

In August ‘25, Private Label Dollar Share rose slightly to 19.6%, after remaining virtually constant for the past 4 months

Dollar share



Private Label

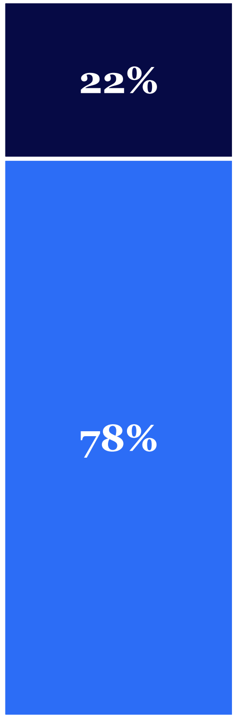
↑4.6%

vs 2024

National brands

↑2.6%

Unit share



Private Label

↑1.8%

vs 2024

National brands

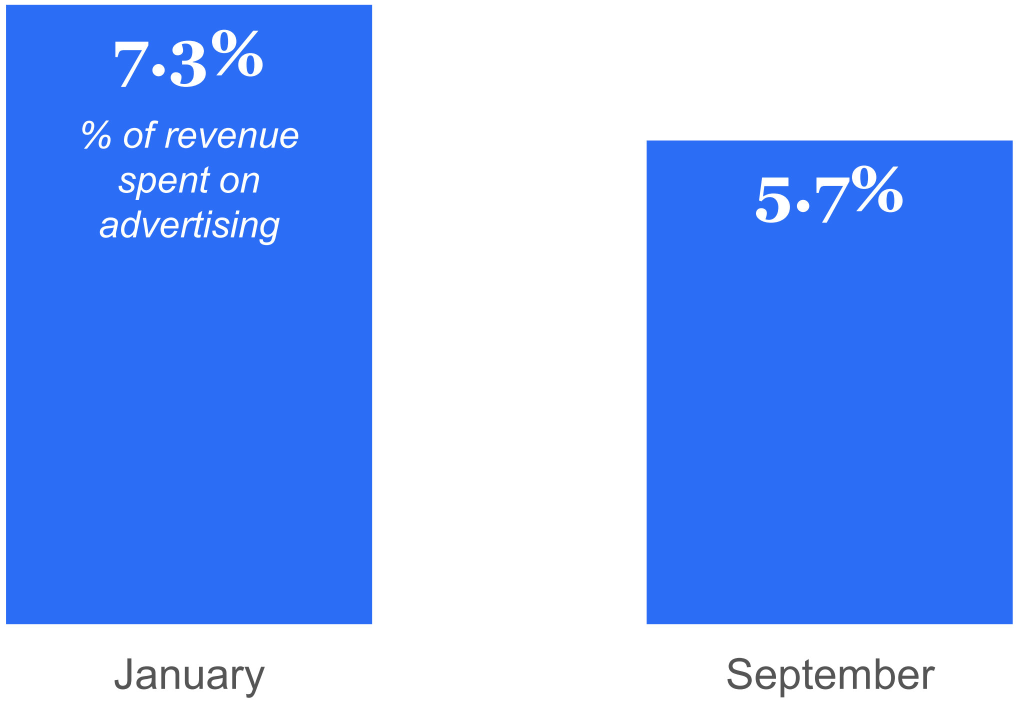
↑0.6%

vs 2024

During the most recent year, Private Label prices have increased at a faster rate (+2.7%) than National Brands (+1.9%)

Source: NielsenIQ, Total US Full View, Private Label Dollar Sales, 4 weeks ending Aug 23, 2025

Media buyers plan to spend **1.6 pp less** than what they expected at the start of 2025



As growth in media spend is projected to continue slowing through the end of 2025, consumers may not get as much brand reinforcement, leaving room for new entrants, value, and private label

Thoughts On...

Where we stand today

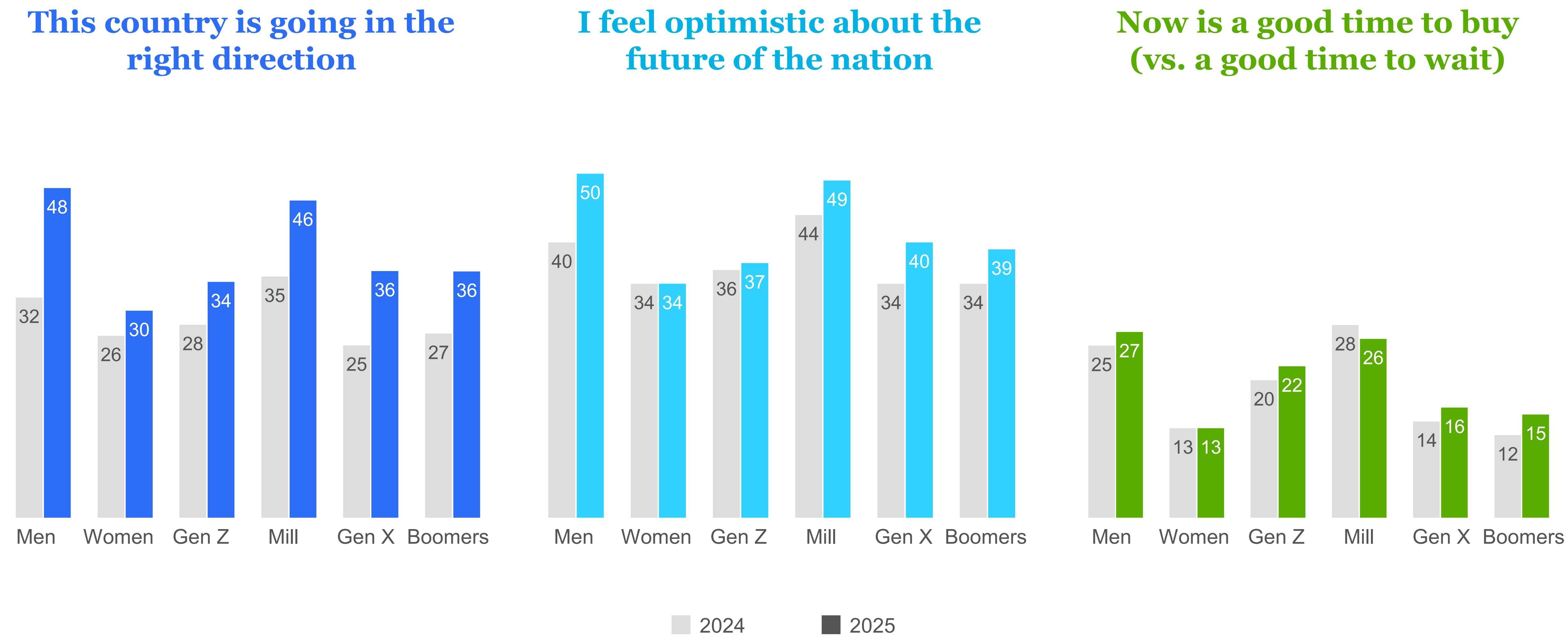
NIQ

Consumer Reaction: Mass Divergence, Predictable Apathy

NIQ

Consumers are split on all key indicators of mood

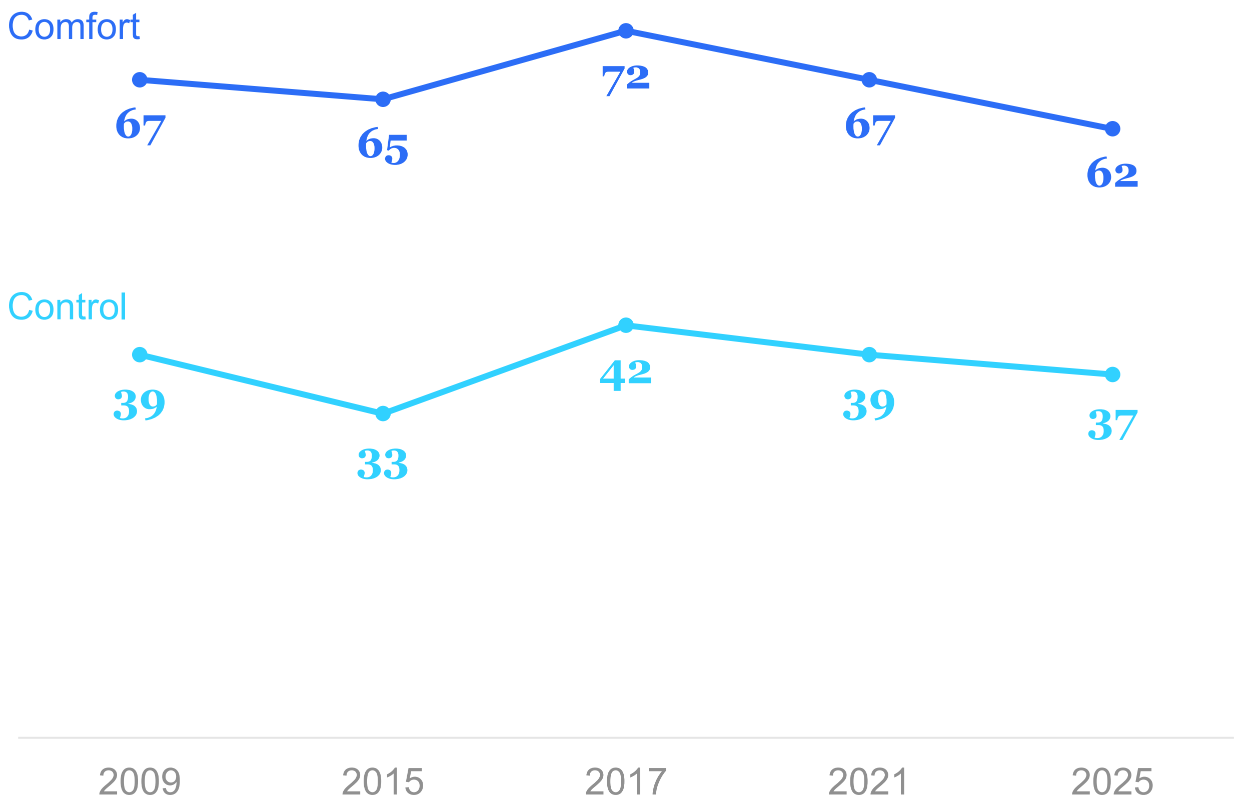
National trends cannot be taken at face value



NIQ Consumer Life US A7, A12, A6

An economy in constant flux = doubt in the American promise of upward mobility

What money represents



Only **31%** believe the **US economy is generally fair at providing opportunities to get ahead**

Unchanged since 2016; Lowest for women, Gen Z, low earners

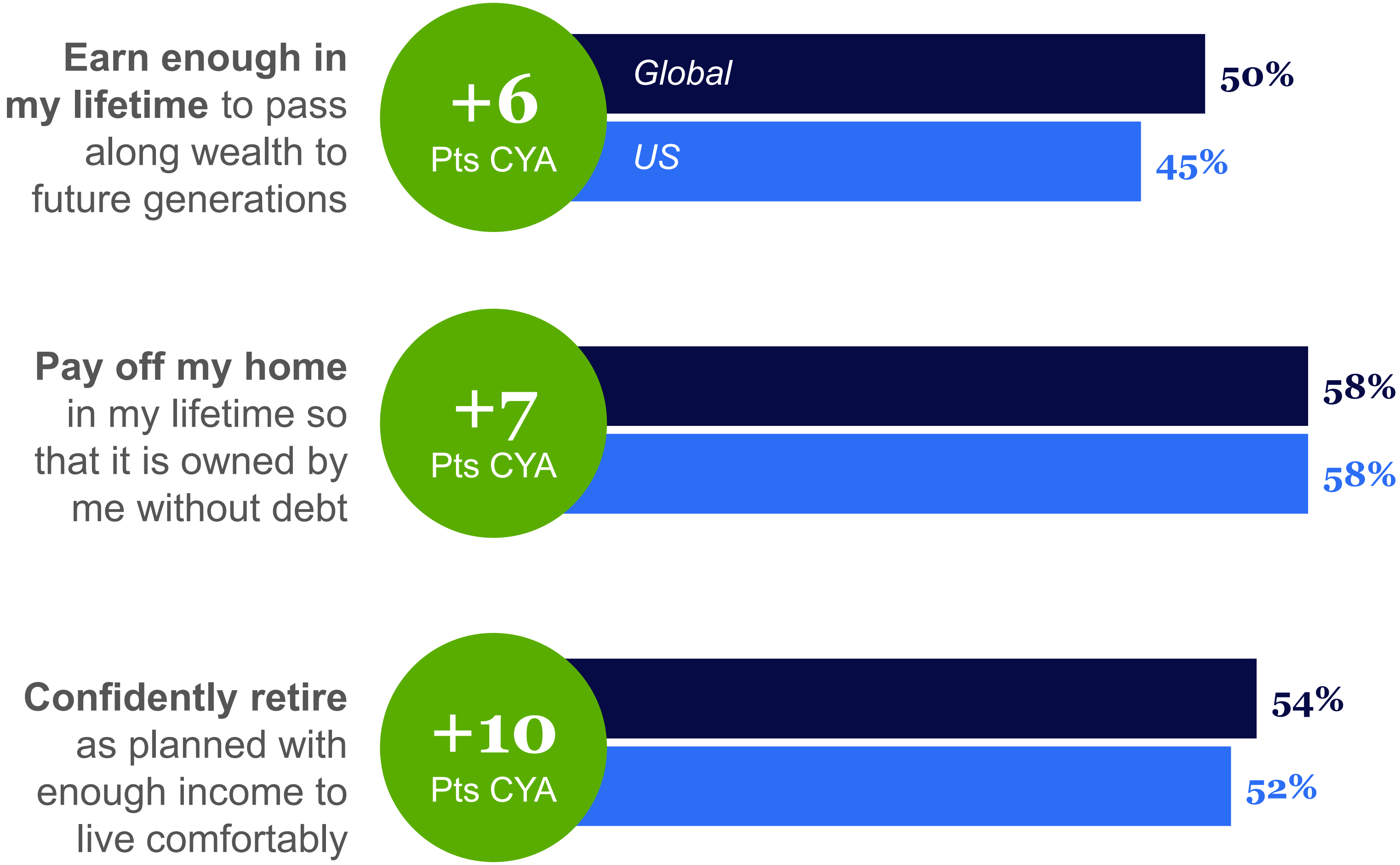
57% think **no more than 5 years ahead** when considering the future

+15 pts from 2014; Led by Gen Z, low earners

NIQ Consumer Life US L18, A48, A23

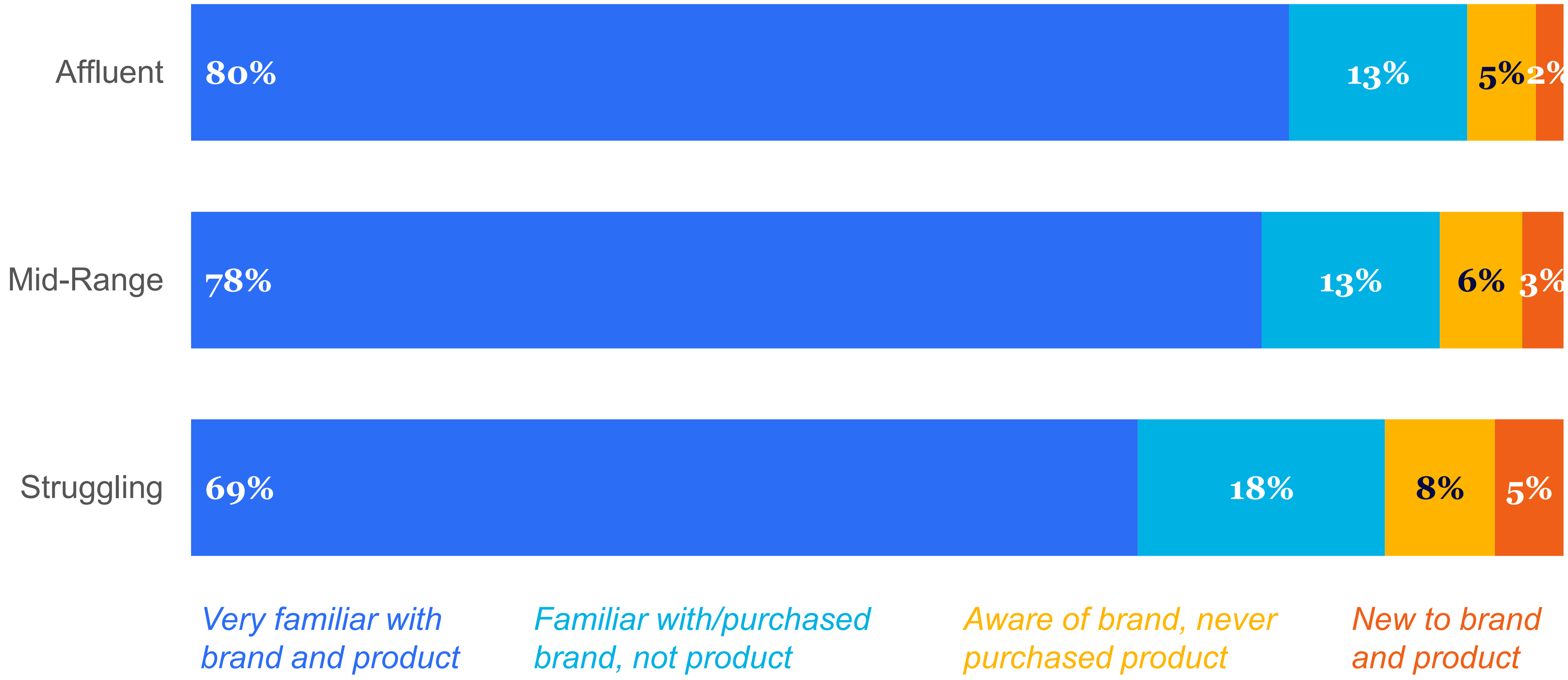
With this volatility, consumers are prioritizing smart investments

Focusing on wealth and reducing debt may be to mitigate future risk in uncertain times



While most shoppers continue to buy products that are familiar to them, financially struggling shoppers are the most open to new offerings

Product Trial by Financial Situation (Food)



Source: NIQ 2025 Category Shopping Fundamentals – Product Trial, Food Categories

Thoughts On...

Consumer Reaction

NIQ

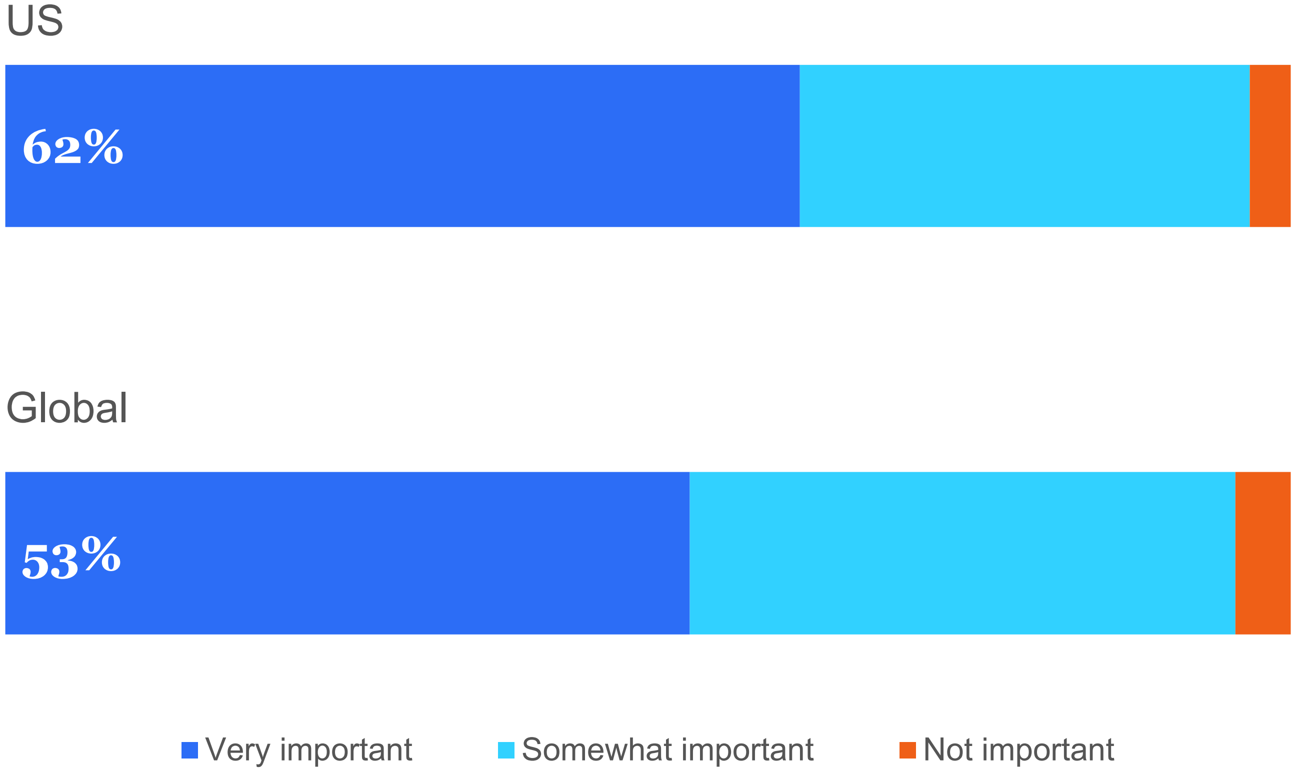
Reinventing the Brand-Consumer Relationship

NIQ

As consumers become more intentional with their savings strategies, brands have a greater emphasis on earning trust

Nearly **two-thirds** of US Consumers say it is ***very important to trust brand*** they are buying

Brand trust importance



Source: NIQ 2025 Consumer Outlook survey

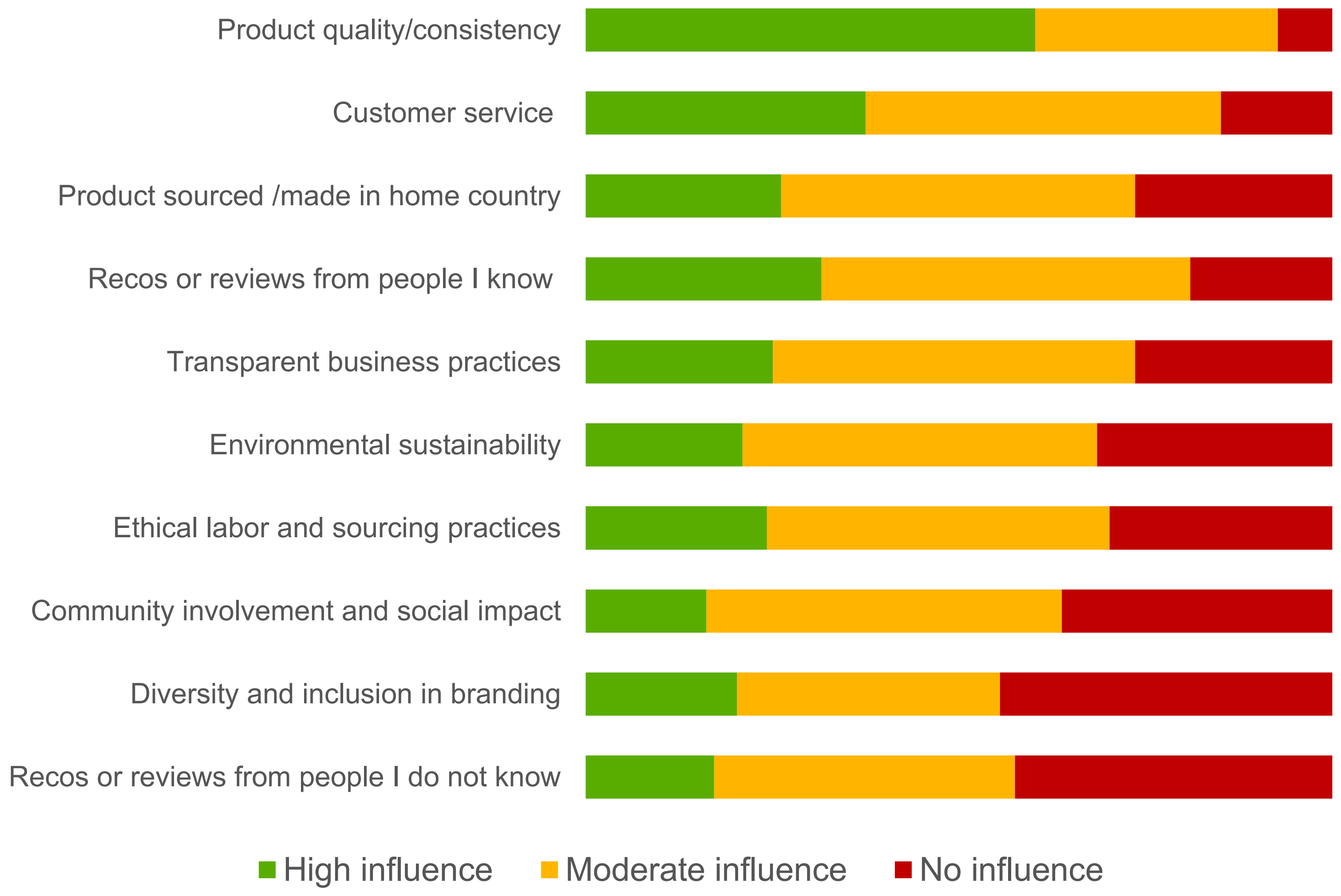
Reliable quality is most important to consumers in brands earning their trust

For me, the most important thing about a brand is that it offers ***good value for the money***

#3 attitude on a list of 43 tracked

+6 ranks from "Price is the most important factor in my purchasing decisions"

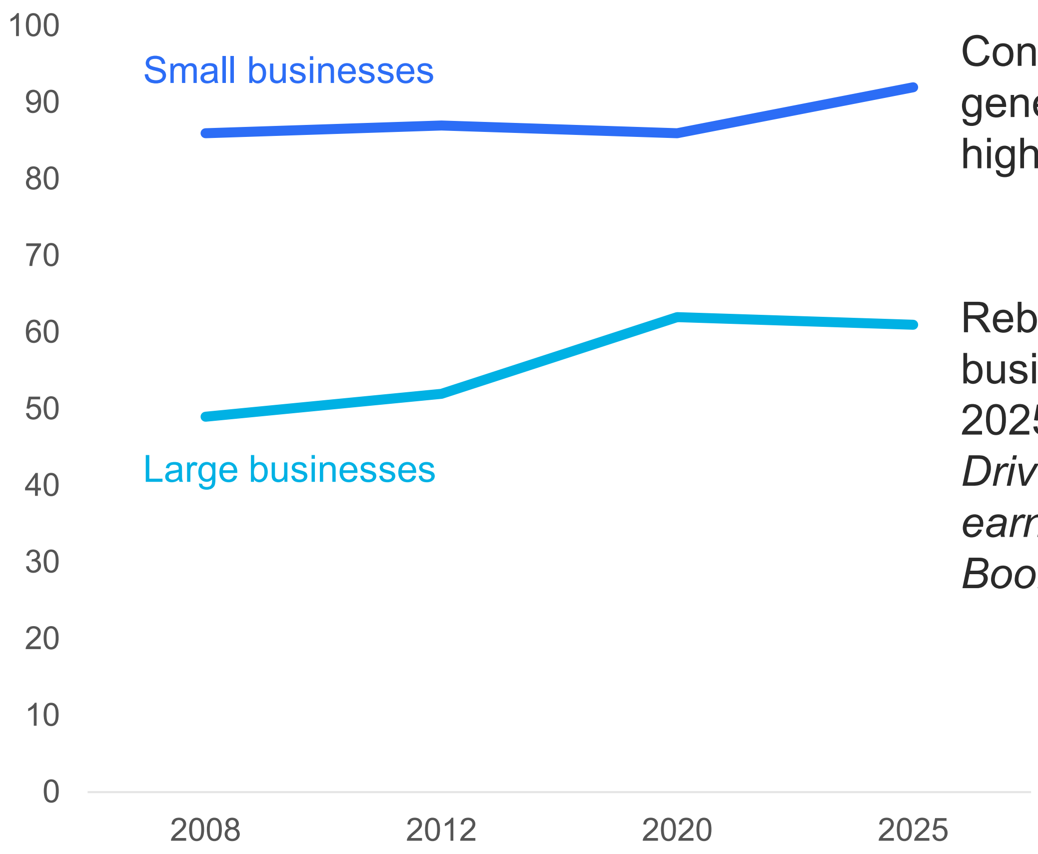
Durable and **high-quality** are the top 2 definitions of value, followed by **makes my life easier**



Source: NIQ 2025 Consumer Outlook survey

Environment more challenging for large companies as goodwill towards small brands continues to dominate

% who have a favorable opinion of…



Consistent across generations and rising among higher income levels

Rebound in unfavorability for large businesses (+6 pts from 2020-2025) after declining pre-2020
Driven mostly by women, low earners; highest for Gen Z, Boomers

In the past year…

only

9%

of companies grew their innovation sales

while only

50%

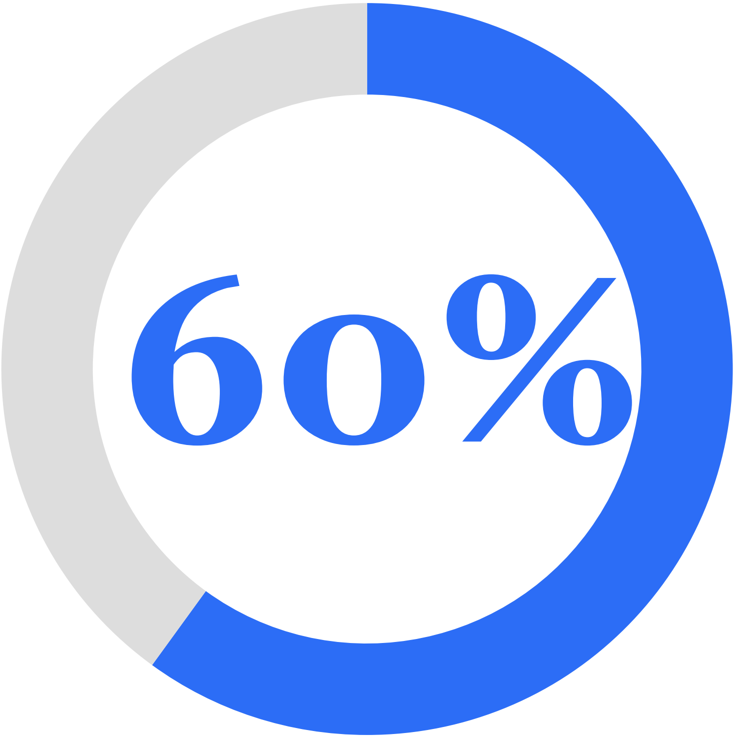
of innovations grew in their second year

Source: NIQ Innovation Vitality Multi-year Meta-Analysis 2025; NIQ Innovation Measurement comparison of Total Sales & Innovation Sales growth across 70K+ manufacturers, 130 syndicated categories in 15 global markets comparing latest 52 weeks with previous 52 weeks

NIQ

Renovation is also essential to brand health

Declining sales is the #1 trigger to motivate a restage



of restages do not recover from their downward trend

If your buyers start leaving, it's too late

Thoughts On...

Reinventing the Brand-Consumer Relationship

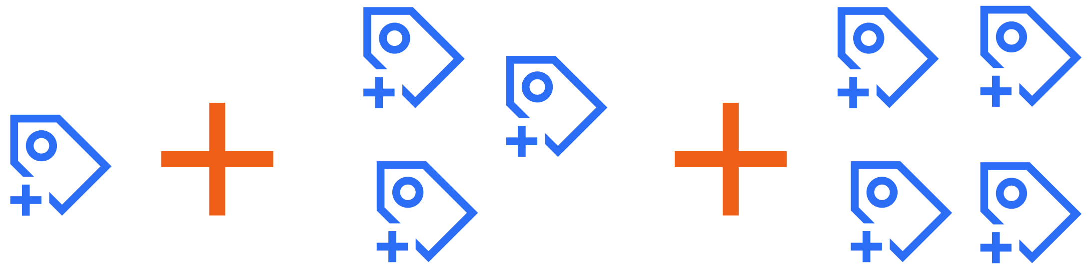
NIQ

Seamless Commerce: The Omni Revolution Continues

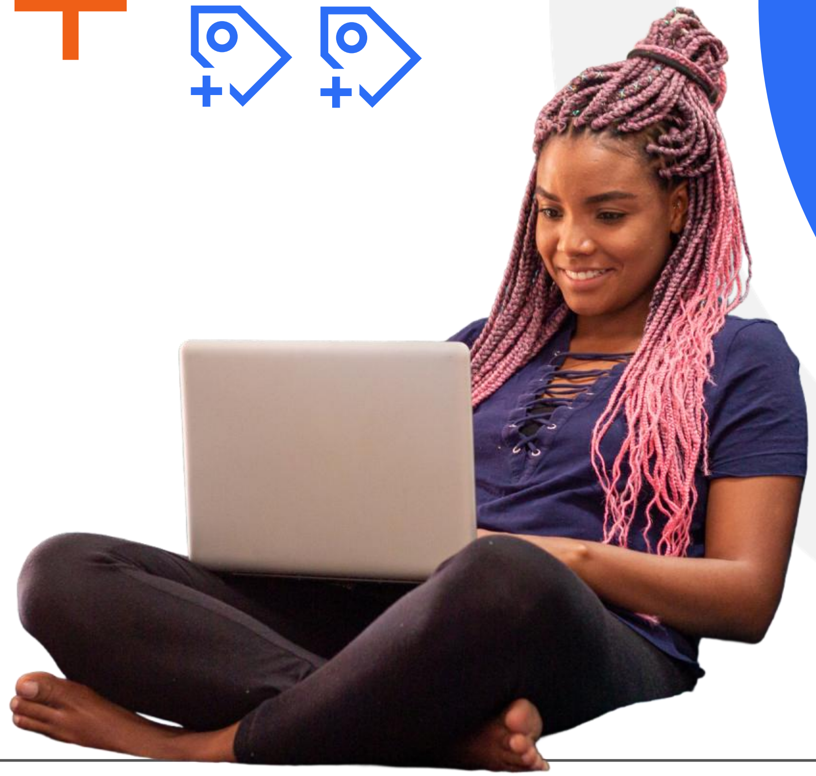
NIQ

The consumer path to acquisition is no longer linear…

How many ways does the average consumer use to shop?



= 8

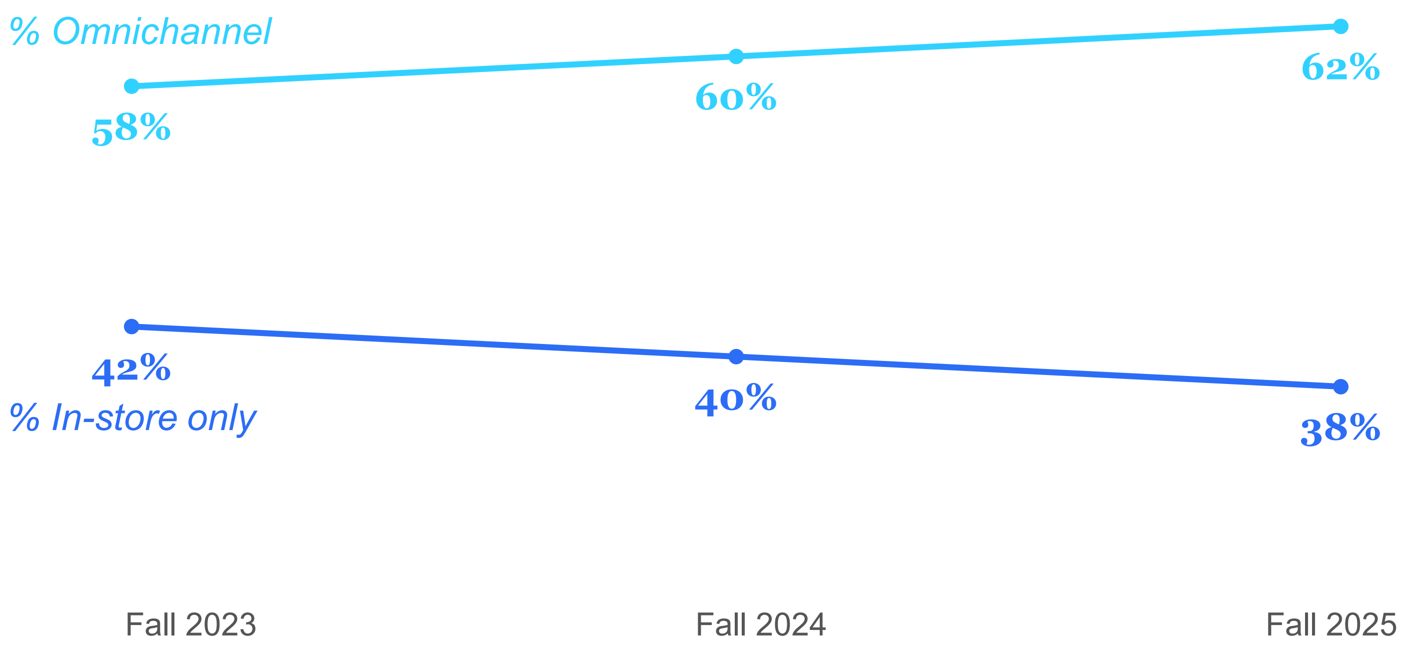


To grow in a challenged market, you need to reach consumers where they are

Source: NielsenIQ Omnishopper Panel, Total US

The shift from In-Store Only purchasing to Omnichannel purchasing continues to creep along

Percent of Purchases Made In-Store Only vs Omnichannel



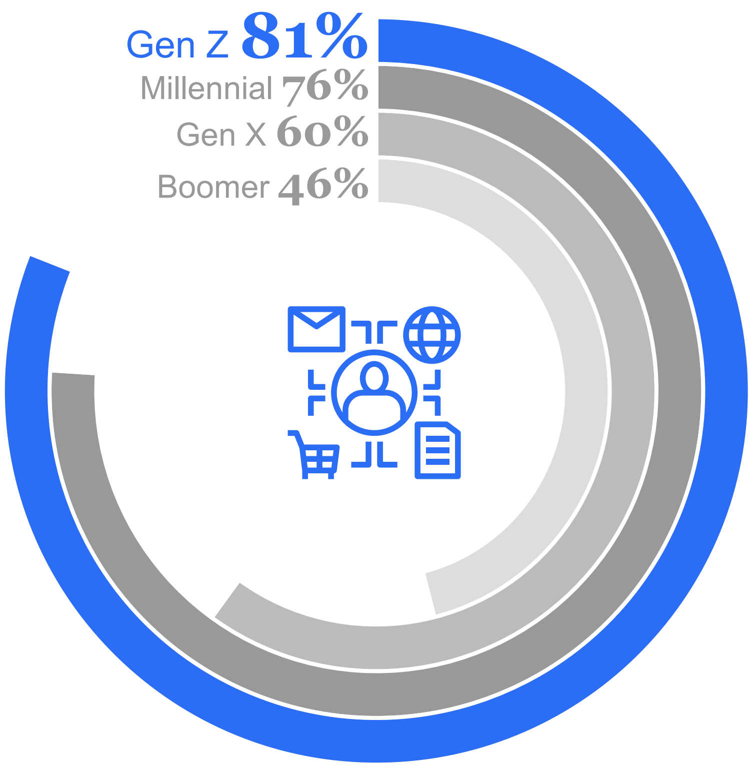
Source: NIQ BASES Omnichannel Shopping Fundamentals 2025 and previous Waves. Omnichannel: Purchases made only online, mostly online, equally online/in-store, and mostly in-store (but sometimes online)

Gen Z digital natives most comfortable in omnichannel settings

Smartphones help them bridge online and offline shopping

% stating omnichannel behavior

Saw product online, bought in-store;
saw product in-store, bought from store site;
Saw product in-store, bought online elsewhere

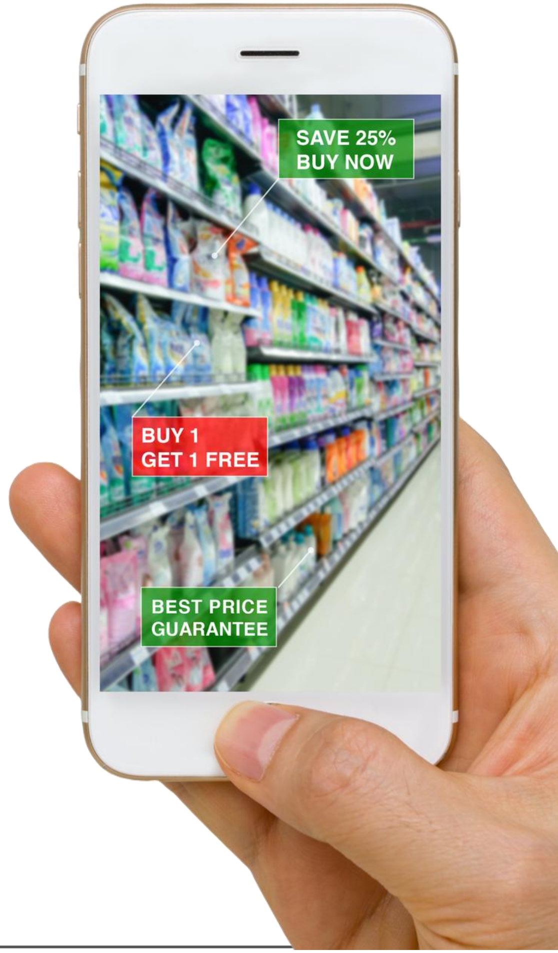


% Gen Z agreeing
"I often use my mobile device in-store to…

69% "…help me **make purchase decisions**"
+7 pts from total, +7 pts from 2019

69% "…**get information** about the products sold there"
+5 pts from total, +4 pts from 2019

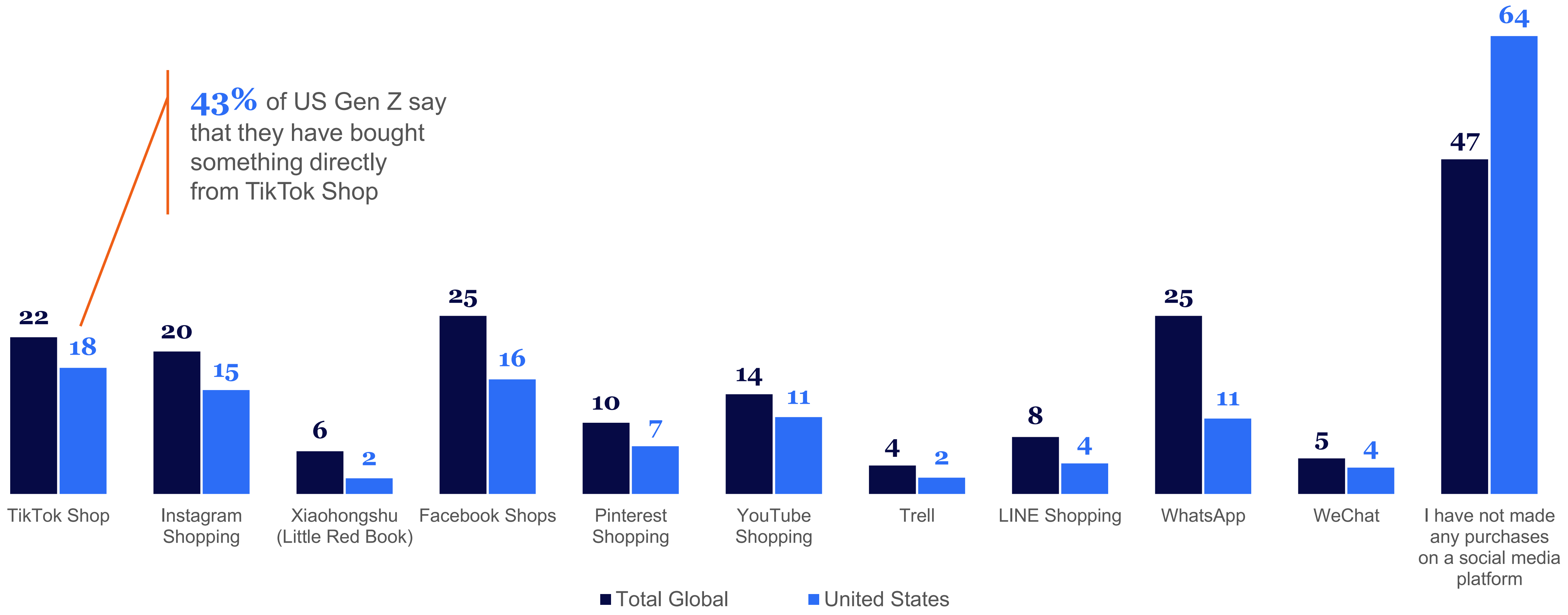
65% "…**look for coupons** or other offers"
+8 pts from total, +7 pts from 2019



NIQ Consumer Life Global R7 (US filter), MRI-Simmons 2024 Fall

Seamless commerce carries into commercializing social media, although the US trails Global

Have you ever purchased a product directly through any of these social media platforms?



Source: NIQ 2025 Consumer Outlook survey

The transformational power and potential of retail media networks

for retailers

Boost overall growth potential

for consumers

Personalize shopping experiences and seamless product discovery

for manufacturers

Leverage new data for precision targeting

+$1.3T

of enterprise value from retail media in US by **2026**

Source: McKinsey & Co

Thoughts on…

Seamless Commerce

Disruptive Trends to Watch

NIQ

The anti-obesity medication effect goes global

Commodity volatility is the new constant

Private label is no longer a trade-down

AI rewrites discovery and search

Your Growth Playbook

Today's main takeaways as we look to 2026

Consumers are prioritizing smart investments.
Financial struggling shoppers are most open to new offerings.

Brand loyalty is in flux. Reliable quality and innovation are most important in earning consumer trust.

The consumer path to purchase is no longer linear.
To grow, you need to reach consumers where they are.

Questions?

Rachel Bonsignore
VP, Consumer Life
Rachel.Bonsignore@NielsenIQ.com

Steve Zurek
VP, Thought Leadership
Steven.Zurek@NielsenIQ.com

Kenny Juskowiak
Head of North America Marketing
Kenneth.Juskowiak@NielsenIQ.com

Thank you for joining us for…

The 2026
Consumer Outlook

Register for our upcoming Omnichannel webinar!

Omnichannel Acceleration: Data-Driven Strategies for Brands & Retailers in 2026

December 9th @ 2:00 PM ET

NielsenIQ