

NIQ Perspective

Social commerce is where online impulse happens

“Social commerce is fundamentally changing how brands compete for relevance. In the future, competitive set analysis will extend far beyond traditional retail because consumers are discovering products through algorithms that surface innovation faster than shelves ever could. The next billion-dollar brand may build loyalty, trial, and scale before most major manufacturers even realize they exist.”



Chris Costagli
Vice President,
F&B Thought Leadership

For brands...

Brands need to compress the distance between discovery and conversion while building trust fast enough to prevent abandoned purchases. That means designing products and packaging for social visibility, partnering with creators who accelerate credibility, monitoring emerging competitors outside traditional retail channels, and ensuring fulfillment, reviews, and authenticity cues can turn algorithmic attention into sustained demand.

For retailers...

Retailers should treat social media as an early demand signal rather than a direct assortment strategy. Winning retailers will monitor what consumers are discovering online, react faster to emerging trends, and create flexible pathways for shoppers to buy into viral moments in-store without needing to stock every trending SKU, allowing retail to remain the most trusted and convenient place to convert social discovery into purchase.

Implications for Confectionery Brands

TikTok Shop is reshaping how snack demand forms

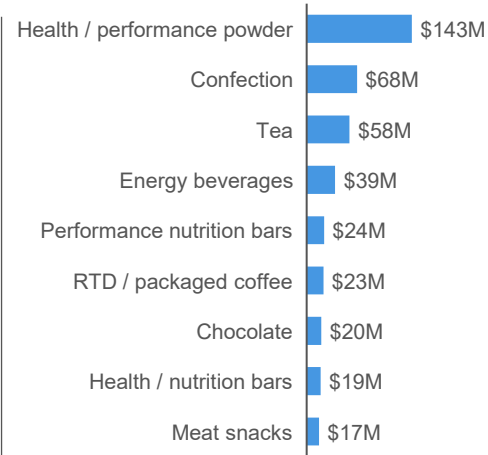
TikTok Shop food & beverage sales have reached \$643M and continue to scale at breakout speed with momentum that far outpaces traditional channel development. TikTok is transforming innovation into a continuous, content-driven cycle, where relevance resets daily. Confection ranks as the second most purchased category, proving indulgence formats can win when discovery and impulse converge.

CURRENT TIKTOK SHOP
SALES PERFORMANCE¹

\$643M

Food & Beverage sales made through TikTok Shop
+24% Vs. YA
+255% Vs. 2YA

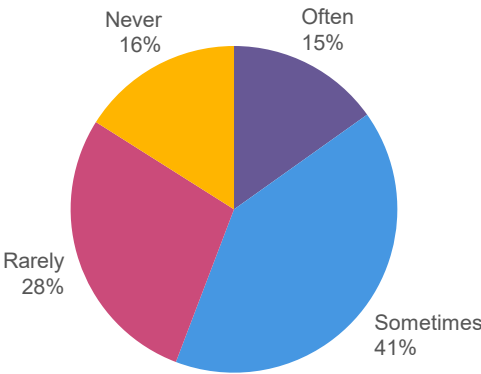
LARGEST FOOD DEPARTMENT
CATEGORIES ON TIKTOK SHOP¹



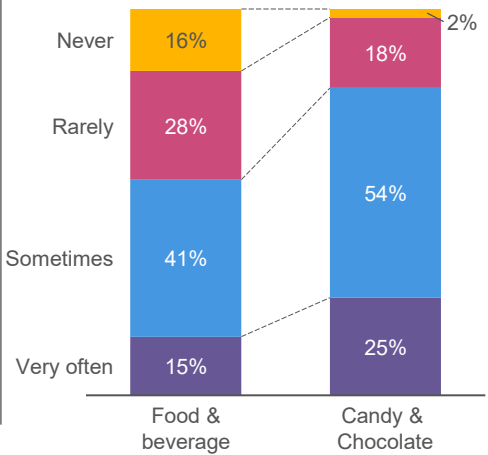
Social media discovery works harder for confection

Social platforms have become a primary engine for product discovery rather than occasional inspiration. Candy and chocolate over-index because they align with short attention spans and rapid gratification. Frequent resurfacing reinforces impulse behavior instead of planned consideration. This dynamic favors categories that can convert curiosity into immediate desire.

FREQUENCY OF F&B DISCOVERY
ON SOCIAL MEDIA²
(AMONG THOSE WHO USE SOCIAL MEDIA)



FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL
MEDIA-DRIVEN DISCOVERY²
(AMONG THOSE WHO USE SOCIAL MEDIA)



Industry Analysis Sources:¹NIQ, Omniscient+, Total TikTok, Food Department, 52 w/e 04/25/2026; ²NIQ, BASES Social Commerce Survey, n=2,006, January 2026
Author: Chris Costagli, Vice President, Thought Leadership, F&B Insights Lead; Maria Camila Garrica, Full Industry Analyst

The takeaway...

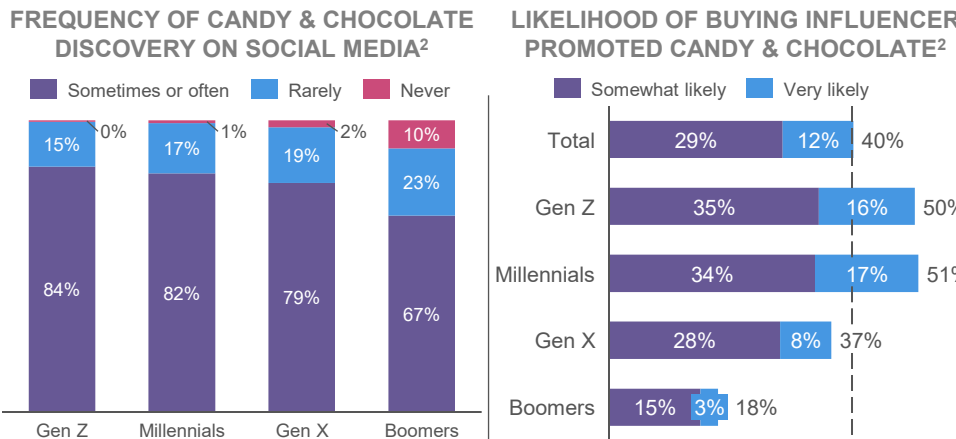
- Social commerce is not replacing retail, but it is fundamentally changing how demand forms, how quickly trends spread, and which brands earn attention first.
- Social commerce is accelerating the speed of consumer relevance, creating an environment where trends, brands, and demand can emerge faster than traditional retail systems were built to respond to.
- Algorithm-driven discovery is redefining competition by exposing consumers to brands far beyond the shelf, lowering barriers to awareness and giving small brands disproportionate influence.

Your next move...

- Build systems that monitor social velocity in real time so innovation, merchandising, and media teams can react before trends peak rather than after demand has already fragmented.
- Expand competitive intelligence beyond traditional category leaders by tracking emerging digital-first brands, creators, and viral products that are shaping expectations outside retail shelves.
- Reduce every point of friction between discovery and purchase by strengthening fulfillment speed, authenticity signals, reviews, and in-store availability so consumers can act on impulse with confidence.

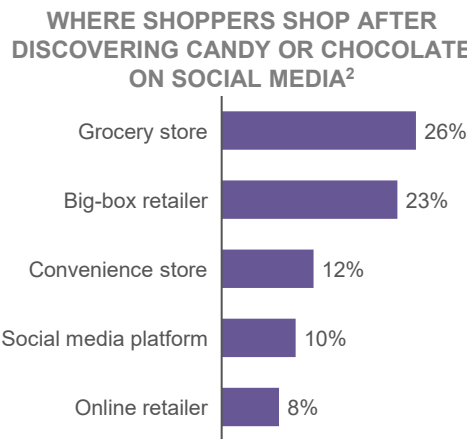
Influence is becoming a commerce lever

Social discovery spans age groups, but influence converts most effectively among Millennials and Gen Z. These consumers treat creators as validators and shortcuts to decision making while older cohorts participate in discovery but still rely on traditional trust cues. Therefore, influence works best when paired with low friction paths to purchase.



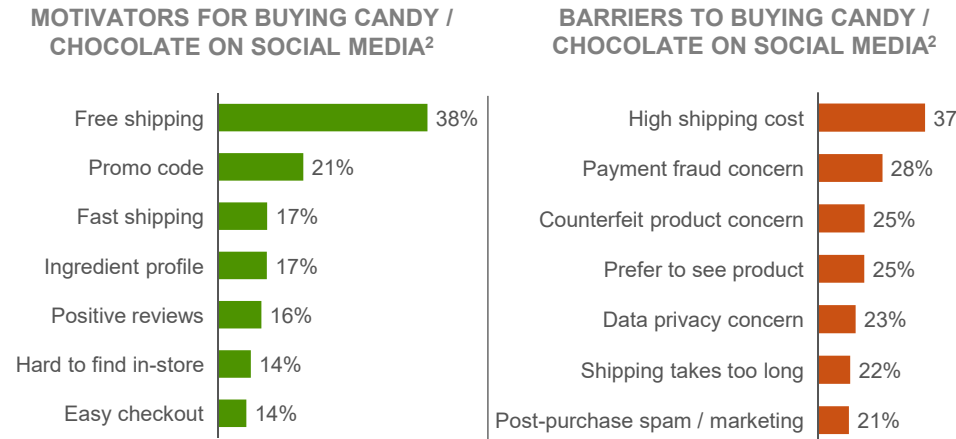
Social media creates desire, stores still close the sale

Confections thrive in social environments where novelty moves fast and discovery is constant. Yet when it comes time to buy, shoppers still turn to grocery and big-box retailers first. Social platforms spark intent, but physical retail provides validation and immediacy. The opportunity is not replacing retail but aligning discovery velocity with retail execution.



Trust limits how far social commerce can scale

Consumers are motivated by speed, value, and convenience, but blocked by concerns around cost and legitimacy. Candy and chocolate are low-consideration in-store but high-risk online. Until friction is systematically removed, shoppers will continue to discover socially and transact physically.



Looking for more?

Social media is becoming the new impulse aisle of commerce, but unlike a checkout lane, it is personalized to every individual consumer in real time. Algorithms now understand shoppers with a level of precision that allows emerging brands to appear alongside legacy players, giving consumers constant exposure to products they never would have discovered in a traditional retail environment. This shift is redefining competition, because consumers are no longer choosing only between brands that earned shelf space, they are choosing between brands that earned attention.