

What's on Gen Z Shoppers' Menu?

Recent research decodes how retailers can appeal to younger consumers

Nothing against Generation X, but Z marks the spot when talking about the future of grocery shopping. A pair of new reports, from Chicago-based IRI and **Chicago-based Culinary Visions**, underscores the influence of these 21-and-under consumers who have different expectations, interests and preferences when it comes to buying and consuming products. They may have grown up in the digital age, but that doesn't mean this group isn't engaged.

According to IRI's recently released study, conducted in partnership with The Family Room LLC, older members of Generation Z (known as Gen Zers) are active participants in their family's grocery shopping.

While online shopping is a click away and often conducted that way, there are Gen Zers at the store and on retailers' websites, buying foods and beverages and looking at meal solutions, including foodservice at retail. Once they're there, there are ways in which grocers can appeal to these younger consumers through their product mix and merchandising.

As one might expect from the generation synonymous with devices that begin with "i," customization is important to them. Some might say customization is expected.

IRI's study found that 38% of Gen Zers believe it's good to get ads or promotions on their social media feeds based on their own interests and shopping habits, compared to 21% for millennials and 30% for older millennials.

Taking things personally doesn't just mean customized and targeted promotions and outreach: These young consumers are all about personal meaning. "Gen Z is deeply motivated by authenticity and a brand's 'emotional DNA,' which we define as how completely a product or brand aligns with the values shoppers attribute to it," said Robert Tomei, president of consumer and shopper marketing and core content services for IRI, in a statement.

That sentiment is confirmed by findings from the **Culinary Visions Panel's Mindful Dining Initiative**, which queried Gen Z members over the age of 18. Bringing it back to human vs. digital connections, the Culinary Visions Panel study found that **personal touches are important to Gen Z** as well as their millennial counterparts. More than two thirds (64%) of those surveyed between the ages of 18 and 35 claim they would love to go to a restaurant where the server calls them by their name.

In another finding of interest to grocers who have on-site foodservice operations, dining in groups is also a type of connection among a generation that's never been without technology. Culinary Visions' study reveals that **58% of young consumers say they like to take pictures to share on social media when dining together as a group**.

"With more and more restaurants and foodservice establishments turning to technology to solve labor shortage issues, it is important to understand the role of technology in consumers' dining experiences. Our studies show younger adults, in particular, enjoy the social aspects of dining out," said **Sharon Olson, executive director of the Culinary Visions Panel**.

Whether dining in groups or picking up something on the run, young consumers, like older shoppers and diners, appreciate variety. IRI's research emphasizes the importance of variety to this generation, noting that the number of UPC codes purchased in households with Gen Z members is substantially higher.