

SALSIFY & DIGITAL SHELF INSTITUTE (DSI)

Ecommerce Pulse Report: Q4 2025

EXPERT INSIGHTS, CONSUMER RESEARCH, AND TOP INDUSTRY TRENDS



Q4 Hot Takes: How To Top the Digital Shelf in 2026

Topping the digital shelf in Q4 — and 2026 thereafter — takes more than just a strong holiday performance, tweaking a few product detail pages (PDPs), and an organizational rest and reset. To capture the attention of both consumers and the all-important artificial intelligence (AI), you gotta give ‘em something to talk about.

AI might be increasingly influencing or outright telling shoppers what to buy, but where does it get its intel? Large language models cite the highly human-powered web domain Reddit more than 40% of the time, according to [Statista](#). Generative AI (GenAI) tools like ChatGPT also love to feed on authentic conversations cultivated in rating and review sections.

The great news is that shoppers simply can’t keep their comments to themselves, and many leave ratings and reviews to help other consumers make informed purchasing decisions. This influx of testimonials illustrates a new sort of social responsibility.

With these audiences in mind and your brand’s overall digital shelf health at stake, what’s an organization to do to start the new year right? The ticket to success is understanding your shoppers’ motivations: Why do they choose one brand over another? Why do they write reviews? How do they use AI to find and purchase products?

The latest Salsify and the Digital Shelf Institute (DSI) survey of more than 1,000 shoppers from the U.S., U.K., and Canada offers answers to these tough questions, as well as tips from ecommerce experts on enacting internal changes in Q1 to start the new year.

Dig into these deets in the latest quarterly report — your answer to keeping up in an ecommerce landscape susceptible to even the most subtle market changes.

It’s not just about the big milestones. Here’s what’s cooking in Q4.

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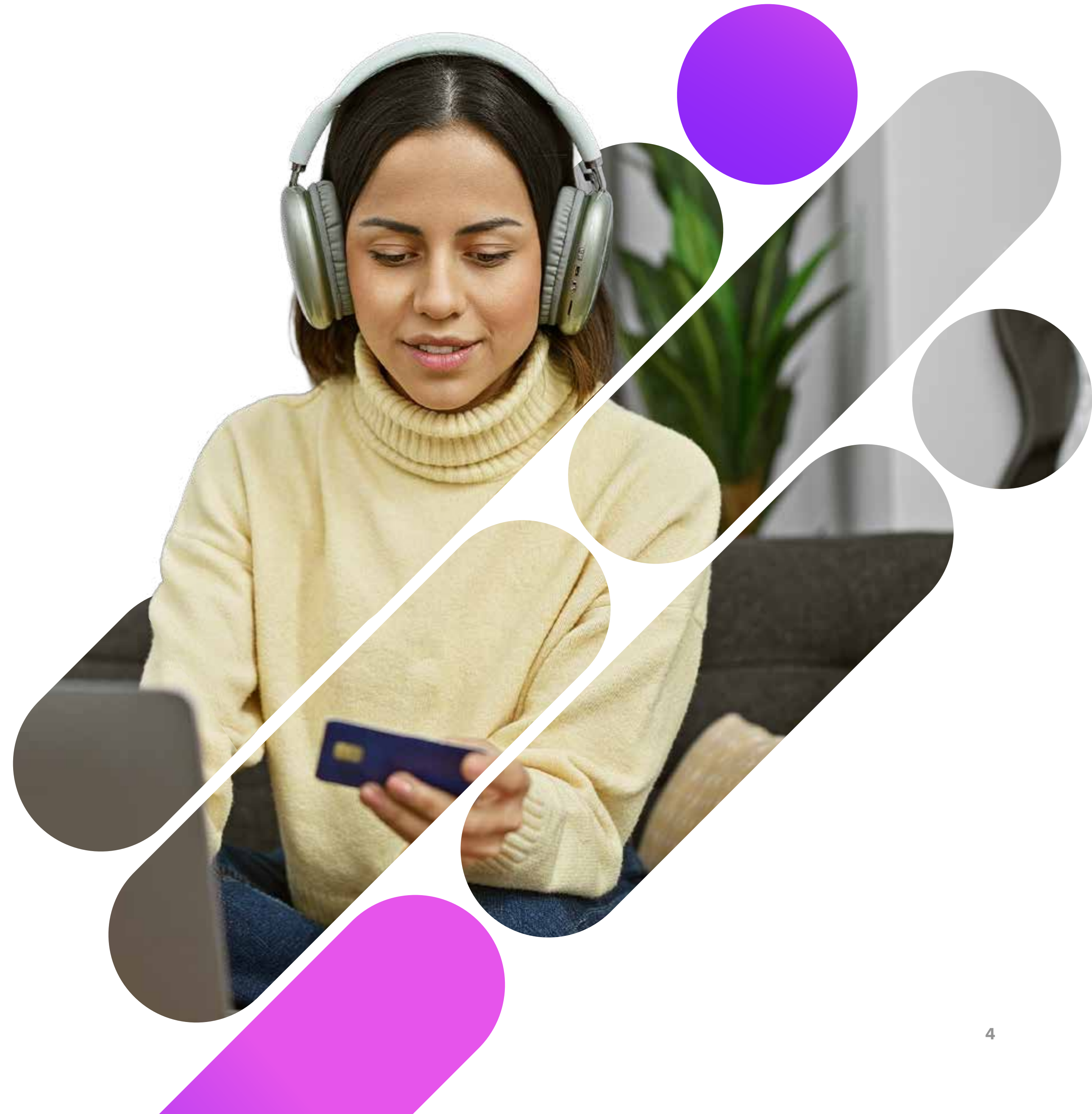
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Ecommerce Milestones

Alignment, Role Distribution, and Resetting for the New Year

Q4 is as pivotal for sales and personal performance as any. However, it can also be the perfect time to center both yourself and your organization; evaluate role and responsibility distribution; and check that your tech stack is AI-ready.



Individual and Organization-Wide Alignment

Personal Strength Makes for Strength in Numbers

How Can Your Organization Support Employees and Align on Company-Wide Goals?

Many of us need to be reminded of the value we bring to a room — and that need is a little more dire during the demanding holiday season and the subsequent cleanup. It’s an all-hands-on-deck moment.

A good support system, especially in the workplace, can make all the difference, according to Tricia Montalvo Timm, bestselling author of “Embrace the Power of You: Owning Your Identity at Work.”

“Surround yourself with people [who] see the value in you, whether that’s a friend, a partner, a therapist, a community, an employee resource group, or a mentor,” Timm says.

In a recent episode of the “Unpacking the Digital Shelf” podcast, “[Unlocking Peace, Power, and Impact by Owning Your Identity at Work](#),” Timm shed light on her experience as a first-generation Latina of Salvadoran and Ecuadorian heritage who spent years trying to avoid talking about or signaling her background at work.

Meet Everyday Needs, Create Greater Returns



“You have to start with the foundations. What is the thing that everyone needs every day? Where are the places you’re going to get the greatest return? But you still have to prioritize the rest of these [processes] too. I think it goes back to, ‘How do we run today and create tomorrow?’”

— **Andrea Steele, Area Vice President of Ecommerce and Customer Marketing, Kraft Heinz**

SOURCE: SALSIFY

Her advice to managers, in particular, is to show up with vulnerability, which will give “space to others to not have to live up to [a] standard of perfection.”

“Vulnerability creates an invitation for others to show their vulnerability and [for you] to humanize yourself as a manager,” she says.

Beyond fostering strong employee-employee or employee-manager relationships, organizations also grapple with pervasive silos. Break them, and you'll foster better collaboration, says Diana Macia, director of ecommerce for U.S. Salty at Kellanova.

In Macia's podcast episode, "[Those Silos Ain't Gonna Bust Themselves](#)," she shares how streamlined internal processes enable global and regional teams to work together to execute campaigns.

For brands that want similar success, it's critical to bring like-minded stakeholders together to not only analyze performance metrics, but also to tell a story with key data.

"You need to measure, and you need to have storytelling," Macia says. "You need to show those numbers because that's the only way others in the organization are going to rally behind you."

Busting silos doesn't just benefit your employees or your org, according to Macia. It also benefits the consumer.

"We're coming out now with ... fully integrated experience plans, meaning they're really accounting for every touch point and every channel that our brands are going to be lived through," she says. "It's bringing the shopper and the consumer to the center."

Why Authenticity Generates High-Quality Work



"When employees can show up as their authentic selves, they come to work with excitement and purpose. All of that energy wasted on hiding can instead be harnessed into producing high-quality work."

— **Tricia Montalvo Timm, Bestselling Author**

SOURCE: DSI

Role and Responsibility Distribution

A Different Kind of R and R

How Well Are Roles and Responsibilities Defined and Distributed in Your Organization?

According to [Digital Commerce Global \(DCG\)](#) research, clearly defined roles and responsibilities could mean 5% faster growth than others in your industry — that’d be a pretty sweet start to 2026.

However, DCG’s research also indicates that 61% of manufacturers don’t clearly define the roles and responsibilities of various digital commerce functions within their organization.

“If you don’t know what it is that you’re meant to be doing or how you’re meant to be going about doing it, it’s impossible for you to actually deliver your objective,” says Gregor Murray, vice president of strategy and chief “So What” officer at DCG.

During a presentation at the 2025 Digital Shelf Summit, Murray likened digital commerce roles and responsibilities to a Formula 1 racing team — every single task contributes to optimizing the team’s performance.

Reframe Focus From Roles To Desired Goals and Achievements



“The most common question I get when organizations are building out a team is, ‘What level should this role be?’ I challenge brands to instead ask, ‘What are the jobs that need to be done?’ Even one step up from that, ‘What are our goals, and what are we trying to achieve?’”

— **Lauren Livak Gilbert, Executive Director, DSI**

SOURCE: SALSIFY

“Everybody knows exactly what it is they’re meant to do,” Murray says. “In digital commerce, we need to have exactly the same thing because if we don’t, processes fall apart really, really quickly.”

Maybe your organization’s first step precedes redistributing responsibilities, however. First, you might need to develop your winning digital shelf team.

Lauren Livak Gilbert, executive director of the DSI, and Sheri Stoller, director of ecommerce at Trilliant Food and Nutrition, provided a game plan for brands that want to build or reimagine their teams during a webinar and podcast, “[The Digital Shelf Playbook: Develop a Winning Team.](#)”

“Things in the environment are going to happen that will change your strategy and your long-term vision,” Stoller says. “So, try to think about, ‘Today we’re here. In six, nine, 12, or 18 months, we want to be here.’ [Think about] the type of resources and team members that you need to get there.”

To Remain in Sync as an Org, Keep Learning New Moves



“Digital is never set-it-and-forget-it. That may be part of the education you need to do within your organization. It’s ongoing. Ecommerce changes very fast. Digital changes fast, and the consumer is changing even faster, so you really have to make sure that you are in lockstep.”

— Sheri Stoller, Director of Ecommerce, Trilliant Food and Nutrition

SOURCE: DSI



New Year Tech Reset

All Systems Go

In the Age of the Omni-Shopping AI Enthusiast, Is Your Organization Ready?

Knock, knock, it's AI (again). Ensuring your existing tech is ready for implementation — and not getting too overzealous about AI's capabilities — is crucial to success. In other words, you should view AI as a strategy for specific outcomes, not a blanket solution.

"It needs to be tied to a view to value," Parth Raval, chief strategy and transformation officer for PepsiCo North America, shared at a 2025 Digital Shelf Summit session. "If a generative AI solution — or any AI solution — isn't solving or redesigning a workflow, activity, or an entire process in our business, I'm not interested."

For example, forgoing a search engine optimization (SEO) strategy and relying on generative engine optimization (GEO) to generate content or serve up your products in search isn't it. Instead, brands should focus on driving immediate customer value in addition to keyword rankings.

A Realistic (But Still Optimistic) AI Outlook



"Some of the initial shine has worn off now about just how incredible AI is. But we're now coming into a time where we're seeing what the next generation of this technology means."

— Lauren Livak Gilbert, Executive Director, DSI

SOURCE: SALSIFY

Then there's agentic AI, which is semi- or fully autonomous AI that's empowered to make decisions independently, unlike earlier forms that rely more heavily on human guidance.

"The difference of what agentic means is that it starts to take on an ability to do real work," Steve Engelbrecht, chief executive officer (CEO) and founder of Sitation, shared at a [2025 Digital Shelf Summit session](#).

According to Engelbrecht, AI agents’ biggest advantage may be their ability to enhance human ingenuity.

“We, as humans working with them, can start to think about these [AI agents] as human-like colleagues,” he says. “We can speak to them. We can train them. We can give them feedback.”

But how can you effectively integrate this tech without shifting too much focus away from what’s already working? Healthcare giant Philips has a distinctive approach.

Sara de Oliveira Lima, senior consumer experience manager at Philips, says that the company approaches **business transformation** with the end in mind and works backward. Throughout that process, the brand prioritizes data control and integrity, which is critical when using technologies like AI that rely on organizational data to automate and streamline processes.

“I think our primary KPI [key performance indicator] — and probably the reason why we’re all here — is how can we increase speed to market? That’s really the main driver we’re looking at when we’re thinking about where we want to fix things,” she says.

Reaching AI Success Requires Detailed Roadmapping



“We need to move away from — at least from my organizational perspective — this operations-only perspective and look at the end-to-end. It really comes down to driving change from beginning to the end ... really roadmapping and planning, ‘Where do I want to take this, and how do I get the most out of this tool?’”

— Sara de Oliveira Lima,
Senior Consumer Experience Manager, Philips

SOURCE: SALSIFY

Attend Q1 Conferences and Events

Hot Locales Await: Abu Dhabi, Las Vegas, and Palm Springs

Major Ecommerce Events in Q1 2026: NRF, Shoptalk, eTail, Adobe Summit, and More

Connecting once a year with like-minded industry professionals to share, learn, and build camaraderie isn't enough. These events allow you to dive deeper into what it means not just to create richly engaging digital retail experiences, but to shape what's next.

Whether you're seeking collaborative strategizing, growth opportunities, or just a change of scenery from the home office, Q1 has plenty of ecommerce events to offer.



Conferences and Events



EVENT

DATES

LOCATION

NRF Big Show ↗

NRF offers “priceless connections, practical education, and futuristic solutions” for “The Next Now” to help you write your retail success story.

Hear from iconic speakers like Tommy Hilfiger of Tommy Hilfiger Global, Joe Preston of New Balance Athletics Inc., and Artemis Patrick of Sephora.

Jan. 11–13, 2026

New York City,
New York,
United States

Shoptalk Luxe ↗

Want to help define the future of premium retail?

Shoptalk Luxe addresses the global luxury sector and all those across the retail ecosystem dedicated to delivering elevated customer experiences.

Jan. 27–29, 2026

Abu Dhabi,
United Arab Emirates

Ecommerce Berlin Expo ↗

Leading industry players and sought-after national and international customers gather for this conference and expo.

Join 14,000 visitors, 340 exhibitors, 150 speakers, and 50 masterclasses and help shape the future of online business.

Feb. 17–18, 2026

Berlin, Germany



EVENT

DATES

LOCATION

eTail West ↗

More than 25 years running, this conference offers a space to connect with industry leaders, share ideas, and decide what’s next.

Attendees include brands such as Asics, Levi’s, L’Oréal, and Lego, as well as retailers like Amazon, Ulta, and more.

Feb. 23–26, 2026

Palm Springs,
California,
United States

DX3 Canada ↗

DX3 is Canada’s biggest retail, marketing, and technology event, offering interactive installations and provocative content.

Explore a retail summit, a marketing innovation summit, and exhibitions on the latest technology, all at one event.

March 24–25, 2026

Toronto, Ontario,
Canada

Shoptalk Spring ↗

Prepare to address the entire retail ecosystem, with a primary focus on the North American market.

Enjoy extensive networking with brands and retailers, tech companies, investors, media, and analysts.

March 24–26, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada,
United States

Adobe Summit ↗

Gather with industry leaders from world-class brands for innovation, insights, and more.

On-demand sessions and keynotes are available, with top speakers from a wide range of industries.

April 19–22, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada,
United States

Ecommerce Trend Spotlight

Spending Forecast, Reviews, and AI in Product Research

A potential cure-all to those holiday and new year blasés: Shoppers have some interesting things to say in response to spending plans, what makes them abandon their go-to brands, when they leave ratings and reviews, and how they use AI.



2026 Spending Forecast and Shopper Choice

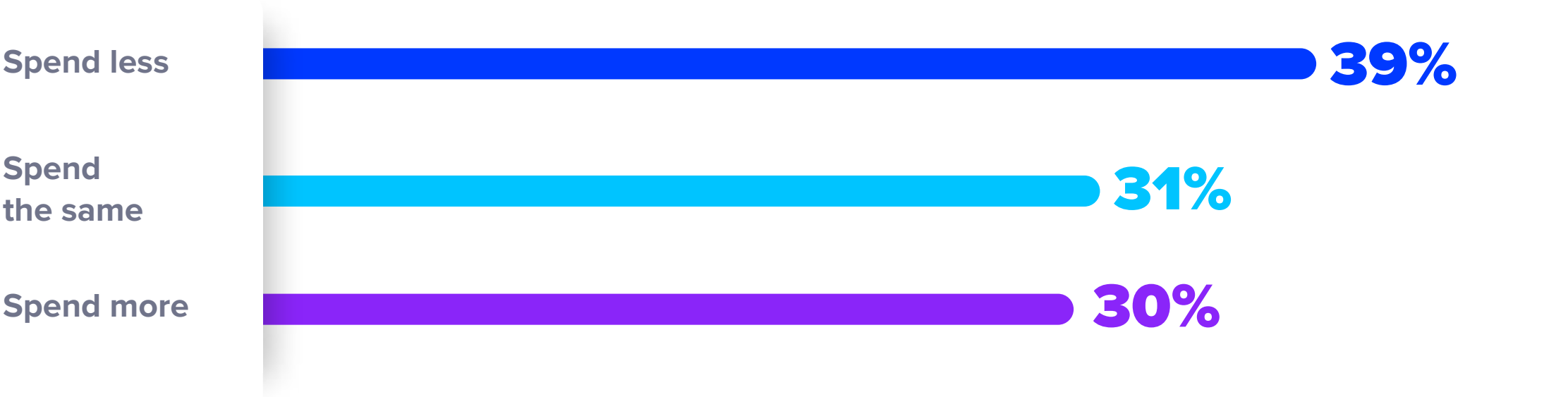
Will Shoppers Make It Rain — or Just Have To Learn How To Dance in It?

Fewer Shoppers Plan To Spend Less in 2026

Only 39% of shoppers say they'll spend less in 2026 — a distinct contrast to the 69% of shoppers who said they'd make a New Year's resolution to cut back on spending in some way in 2025, according to Salsify's ["Ecommerce Pulse Report: Q4 2024."](#)

What still tracks, however, is that just under a third (30%) of shoppers say they'll spend more. The question is, will they spend more because they want to or because economic pressures make them feel it's inevitable?

How Will Shoppers' Spending Habits Change in 2026?



QUESTION: HOW WILL YOUR SPENDING HABITS CHANGE IN 2026? BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

Does Price Reign Supreme? It's Contextual

Shoppers are about evenly split regarding their predicted spending habits in 2026 (with just slightly more saying they'll spend less), but that doesn't negate the prevalence of the price-conscious consumer.

Rather, it makes the importance of price contextual.

The reason shoppers will opt for another brand instead of their go-to more than half of the time (55%) is for a better price or promotion, but a large majority of shoppers (87%) will pay more for products because they trust the brand, according to Salsify consumer research.

Price matters — but lower prices don't always secure the sale.

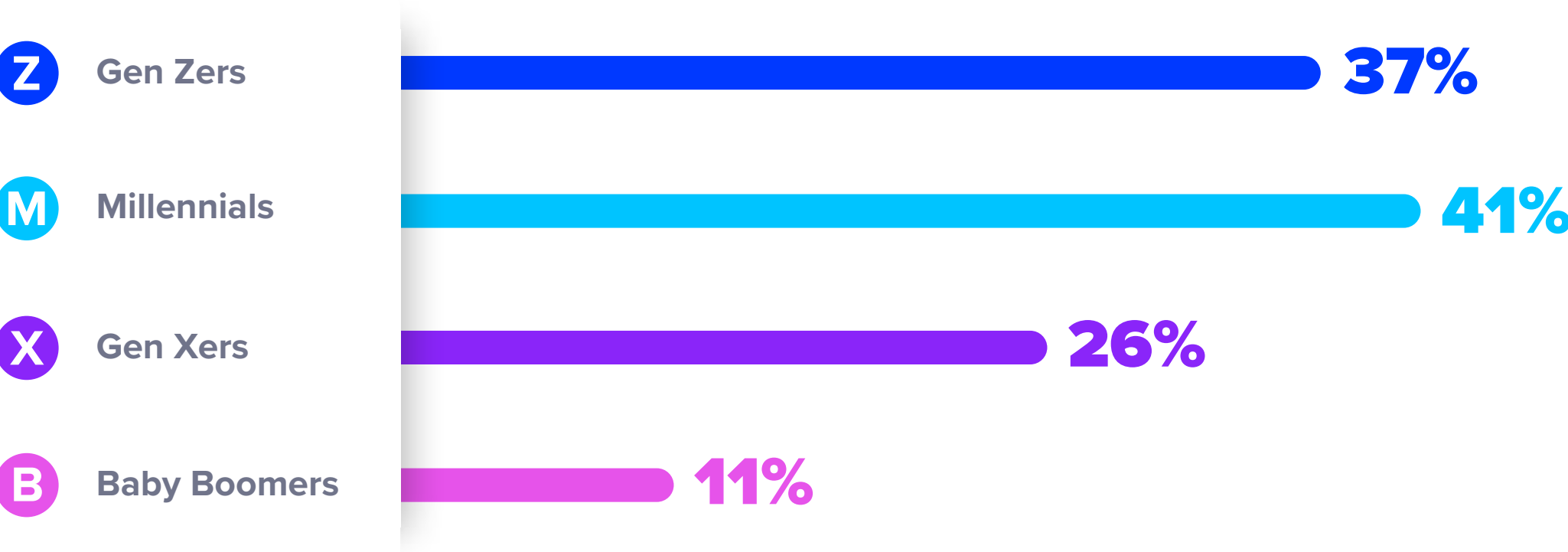
Millennials, Gen Zers Again Anticipate Increased Spending

Baby boomers overwhelmingly say they'll spend the same in 2026 (50%), while only 33% of Gen Xers and 24% of Gen Zers say the same. All generations report about the same likelihood (38% to 41%) of spending less in 2026.

Millennials, Gen Zers, and Gen Xers have changed their tune the most from last year: Eighty-two percent of millennials, 79% of Gen Zers, and 68% of Gen Xers said they wanted to cut back on spending in 2025, according to the “Ecommerce Pulse Report: Q4 2024.”

30% of Shoppers Will Spend More in 2026

GENERATION GROUP BREAKOUT



QUESTION: HOW WILL YOUR SPENDING HABITS CHANGE IN 2026? BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

It's Q4 — Do You Know Where Your Shoppers Are?

The higher buying motivation of millennials and Gen Zers continues, but it's important to know where every age group prefers to shop. Here's a glimpse at each generation group's top two gift idea discovery channels from the Q3 holiday pulse report:

- ✓ **Gen Zers:** Physical retail stores and social media (e.g., TikTok)
- ✓ **Millennials:** Physical retail stores and search engines (e.g., Google)
- ✓ **Gen Xers:** Physical retail stores and online marketplaces (e.g., Amazon)
- ✓ **Baby boomers:** Physical retail stores and online marketplaces (e.g., Amazon)

As the holiday season approaches, your brand can focus efforts here to capture the attention of shoppers looking to grab gifts for loved ones (or themselves).

The Majority of Shoppers Lean Brand-Agnostic

Nearly three-quarters of shoppers (72%) have purchased a product from a new brand instead of their go-to favorite.

This figure could mean a few things: Shoppers are increasingly brand-agnostic, meaning they’re always open to what brand best fits their needs of the moment, or their loyalty is easily superseded by other factors, causing them to shop elsewhere.



QUESTION: WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU PURCHASED A PRODUCT FROM A NEW BRAND INSTEAD OF YOUR TYPICAL GO-TO BRAND? BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

Shoppers Are on the Move, in More Ways Than One

According to Salsify’s “[Ecommerce Pulse Report: Q2 2025](#),” more than half of shoppers (59%) prefer shopping on smart-phones more than other devices like desktops, laptops, and tablets.

These shoppers might participate in webrooming, where they view a product online before buying it in a physical store. Or they might partake in a bit of showrooming, where they look at a product in a physical store and then buy it online.

Shoppers might even purchase from their smartphones while shopping in a physical store, as 30% report doing so, according to Salsify research.

The sale can come from anywhere, so for digital shelf success, your brand still needs a strong physical presence, especially with increased competition.

Most Millennials and Gen Zers Sample New Brands

A whopping 80% of millennials have purchased a product from a new brand instead of their typical go-to brand, followed by 76% of Gen Zers, 72% of Gen Xers, and 57% of baby boomers.

Trying something new for the sake of it can be tempting for some age groups — whether shoppers are responding to a targeted ad, something they read in a thread, or an influencer’s video they saw on their social platform — but there are other key reasons for switching from good ol’ reliables.

Shoppers Who Purchased a Product From a New Brand — Instead of Their Typical Go-To Brand

GENERATION GROUP BREAKOUT



QUESTION: WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU PURCHASED A PRODUCT FROM A NEW BRAND INSTEAD OF YOUR TYPICAL GO-TO BRAND? BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

Are Influencers Really That Influential?

They can be: Thirty-nine percent of shoppers purchased a product online because a social media influencer recommended it, according to Salsify’s “2025 Consumer Research” report.

But just how susceptible are different age groups to influencers’ charms?

- ✓ Gen Zers: 43% made a purchase
- ✓ Millennials: 48% made a purchase
- ✓ Gen Xers: 34% made a purchase
- ✓ Baby boomers: 28% made a purchase

Furthermore, nearly half of men (48%) and just under a third of women (31%) reported making a purchase.

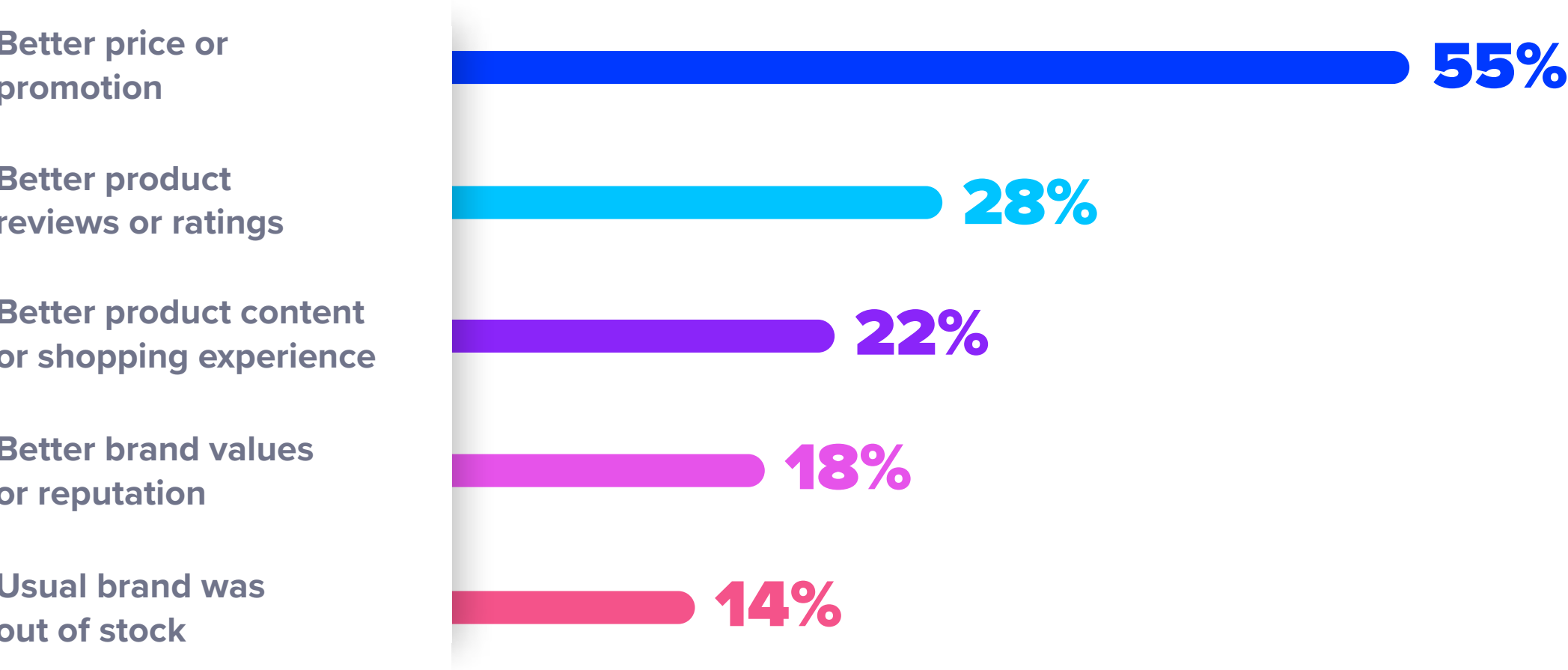
This shows brands that it’s not necessarily what you know, but who you know. The first quarter is the perfect time to test out some new influencer partnerships. You don’t necessarily need the biggest name or a big-dollar deal to make an impact.

Better Price or Promotion Top Customers’ Reasons for Brand Switching

It might be a given, but better prices or promotions are the top reason increasingly price-conscious consumers across regions and generations switch to a new brand — even if the other brand in question is their go-to.

In other words, loyalty can be bought (by saving consumers money, that is). However, there’s seemingly a big exception to this: Nearly two-thirds (61%) of holiday shoppers prioritize personal values over price when choosing holiday gifts, according to Salsify’s “2025 Holiday Pulse Report.”

Shoppers’ Reasons for Switching to a New Brand



QUESTION: IF “YES” TO “WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU PURCHASED A PRODUCT FROM A NEW BRAND INSTEAD OF YOUR TYPICAL GO-TO BRAND?” WHAT WAS THE REASON(S) FOR THE BRAND SWITCH? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.
BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

Not All Discounts Count — 3 Types That Drive Online Purchases

Not all deals and discounts are equal in shoppers’ eyes. According to Salsify’s “Ecommerce Pulse Report: Q2 2025,” the top three discount types that drive the most online purchase decisions are:

- ✓ Limited-time discounts (e.g., flash sales or daily deals) (62%)
- ✓ Product bundle discounts (e.g., buy one, get one free offer) (45%)
- ✓ Membership or loyalty program discounts (e.g., unique offer for loyalty tier) (39%)

Diversify the types of discounts your brand offers to pique the interest of new and returning customers.

Millennials and Gen Zers Read Into Better Product Reviews or Ratings

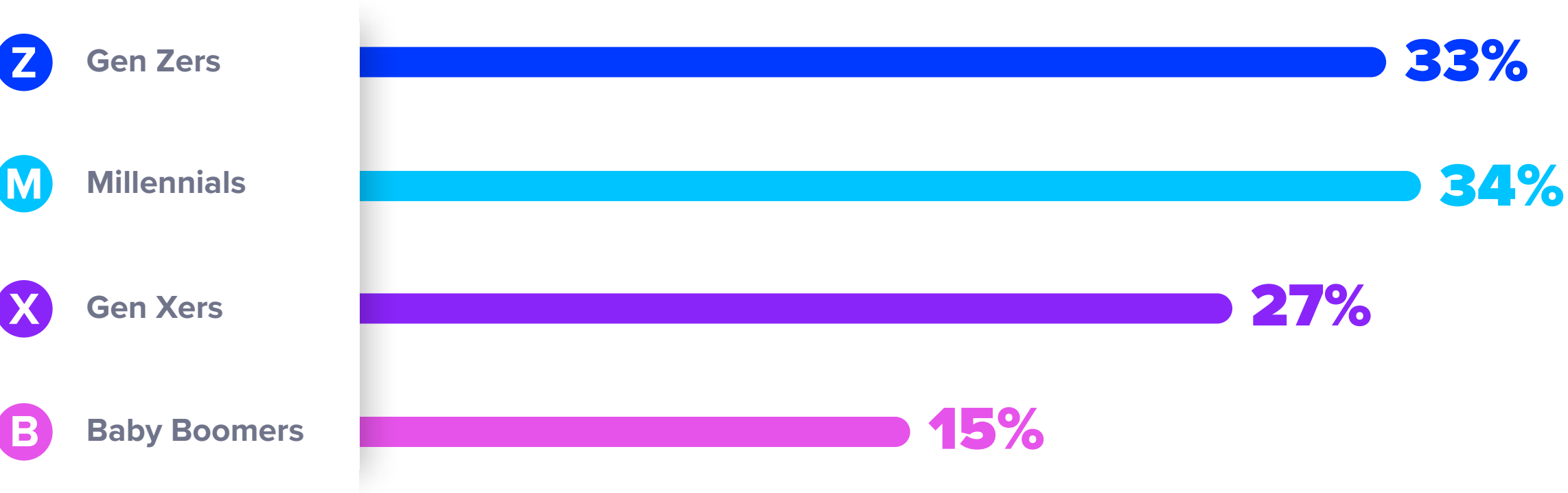
About a third of millennials (34%), Gen Zers (33%), and Gen Xers (27%) have purchased from a new brand instead of their go-to due to better product reviews or ratings. Only 15% of baby boomers have done so.

Furthermore, 30% of millennials and 28% of Gen Zers can be swayed by better product content or shopping experience, with Gen Xers (19%) and baby boomers (9%) less so.

Millennials are also the most likely to care about better brand values and reputation (26%), followed by Gen Zers (22%), Gen Xers (18%), and, finally, baby boomers (5%).

28% of Shoppers Have Purchased a New Brand Instead of Their Go-To Due to Better Product Reviews or Ratings

GENERATION GROUP BREAKOUT



QUESTION: IF “YES” TO “WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU PURCHASED A PRODUCT FROM A NEW BRAND INSTEAD OF YOUR TYPICAL GO-TO BRAND?” WHAT WAS THE REASON(S) FOR THE BRAND SWITCH? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY. BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

Encourage Unfiltered Reviews, but Implement Review Filtering

Building a friendly Q&A section between your brand and customers on your direct-to-consumer (D2C) site and other channels (especially social) is one of the best ways to foster authentic engagement. In fact, you should encourage unfiltered discussion.

However, integrating filters into review sections — or, if nothing less, a search bar — can help shoppers find like-minded product users and better determine if your products will be a good fit.

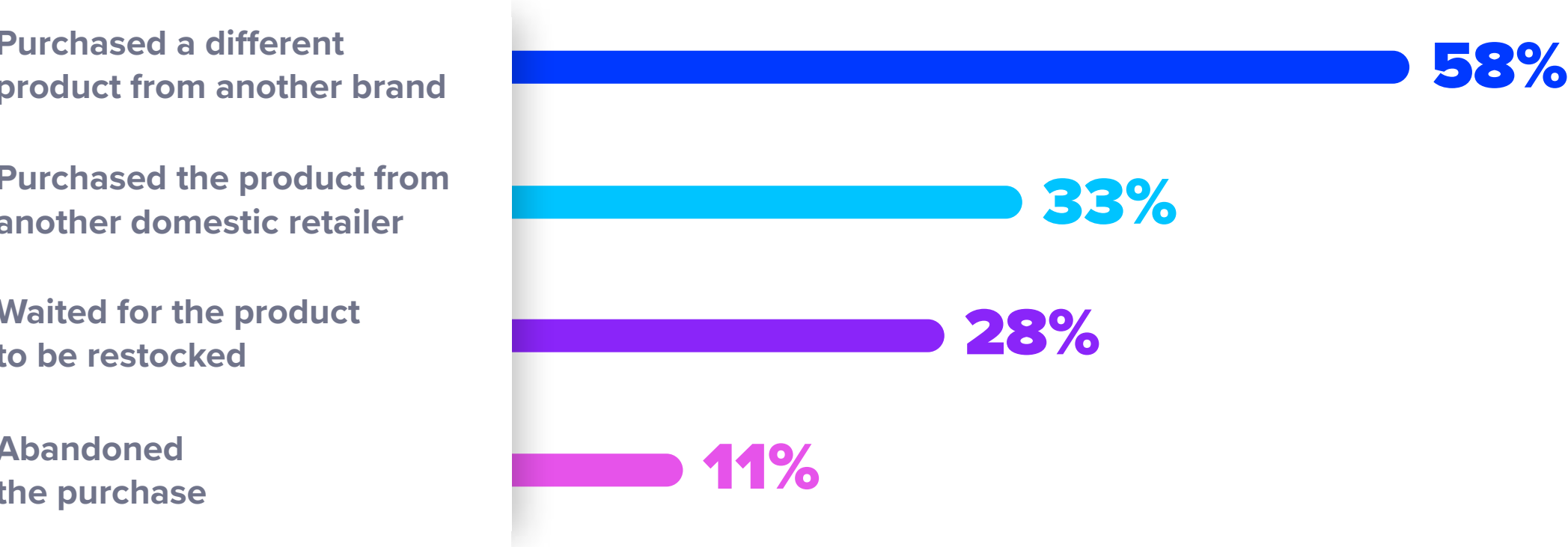
Say someone is curious about the moisturization level of a certain skincare product, for example. They might look to reviews to assess how other shoppers’ climate, skin type, or age group impacts the efficacy of the product.

Product Out of Stock? Most Shoppers Brand-Swap for Another Option

More than half (58%) of shoppers will purchase a different product from another brand if a product from their typical go-to brand is out of stock.

However, not all love is lost — a third (33%) of shoppers will purchase the same product from another domestic retailer, and almost a third (28%) practice patience, waiting for the product to be restocked.

What Do Shoppers Do If Their Typical Go-To Brand Is Out of Stock?



QUESTION: WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, IF A PRODUCT FROM YOUR TYPICAL GO-TO BRAND WAS OUT OF STOCK, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS DID YOU TAKE? BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

Overcome Search Ranking Dips: Speak to Unique Product Use Cases

It shouldn't come as a surprise that shoppers might not use the exact same terms as typical PDPs when they're searching for products.

While it's important to meet retailer requirements with your product content, it's equally important to call out the benefits of your products conversationally on your PDPs or FAQ sections.

Brainstorm different ways — both expected and unexpected — your products fit into your buyer personas' lives.

Do shoppers want a healthy snack for school lunches or before run club? Are those shoes comfortable but supportive enough to last long hours on the walking pad? Does that sunscreen actually leave no white cast on darker skin tones?

A conversational tone helps boost readability and authority — two markers to gain favorability with GenAI results.

Customer Ratings and Reviews Prove Critical To Buying Decisions

Nearly a third of shoppers (32%) cite customer ratings and reviews as most helpful for making final buying decisions online, illustrating the continued influence of others’ opinions and experiences.

Though product titles, descriptions, images, and videos still hold weight, consumers are increasingly interested in user-generated content (UGC) — even twice as much as pricing and availability.

Which Part of the Product Page Helps Shoppers Make Final Buying Decisions?

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE	CHANGE FROM 2024
Customer ratings and reviews	32%	+7%
Product title and description	18%	No Change
Product images and videos	17%	-5%
Pricing and availability	16%	-3%
Enhanced product content (e.g., comparison charts, feature tours, brand content)	12%	-1%

QUESTION: WHICH PART OF THE PRODUCT PAGE HELPS YOU THE MOST IN MAKING A FINAL BUYING DECISION ONLINE?
BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH
HACK

No, Seriously, More Shoppers Are Turning Their Attention to Ratings and Reviews

A shift is afoot: Shopper sentiments from just a few months ago in Salsify’s “2025 Consumer Research” report included 84% of shoppers who shared that pricing and availability were “extremely” or “very” important when deciding to complete a purchase. However, customer ratings, reviews, and UGC lagged slightly at 71%.

Additionally, in last year’s Q4 pulse report, shoppers shared that customer ratings and reviews influenced final buying decisions 25% of the time — that’s now at 32%.

It seems that higher or inevitable price changes are causing shoppers to prioritize brand and product reputation, again highlighting the importance of regularly collecting, sharing, and updating reviews on product pages.

What Drives Brand Advocacy, Ratings, and Reviews?

The Rise of Consumer Social Responsibility

Consumers Are Eager To Share Product Experiences With Others

While arguments can be made that the digital world leaves us more or less authentically connected than simpler eras in human history when fireside storytelling prevailed, there’s something to be said about shoppers’ predilection for leaving ratings and reviews — and trusting other shoppers’ thoughts.

Most shoppers (63%) across regions and generation groups have left a product rating or review in the last year. Call it modern cave painting.

Shoppers in the U.S. (70%) left more reviews than those in the U.K. (63%) and Canada (57%), but the hobby — obligation, pastime, duty, however you slice it — seems to be popular across regions.



QUESTION: WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU LEFT A PRODUCT RATING OR REVIEW?
BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



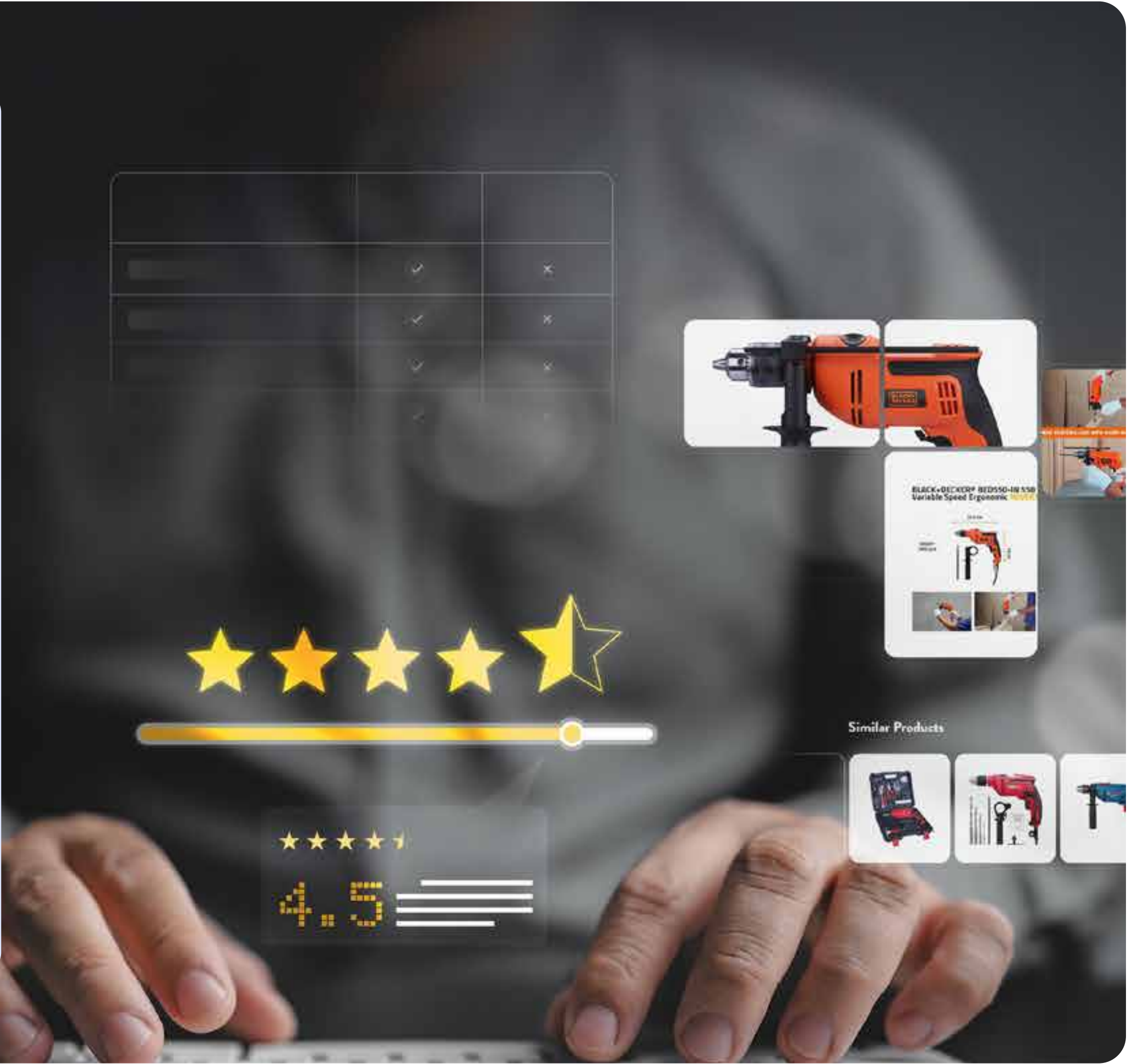
GROWTH
HACK

Enhanced Content Always Proves Helpful

Always? Yep, and it’s not even that bold of a statement: Eighty-seven percent of online shoppers find enhanced content helpful, according to Salsify research.

Enhanced product content includes product content that goes beyond the basic parts of a product page, including comparison charts, feature tours, extensive image galleries, downloadable materials, videos, and longer, more customized product descriptions.

Enhanced content isn’t just helpful for shoppers. It’s vital for your brand to withstand the evolution of GenAI-powered shopping and product search. (It’s just itching for more in-depth content about your products.)



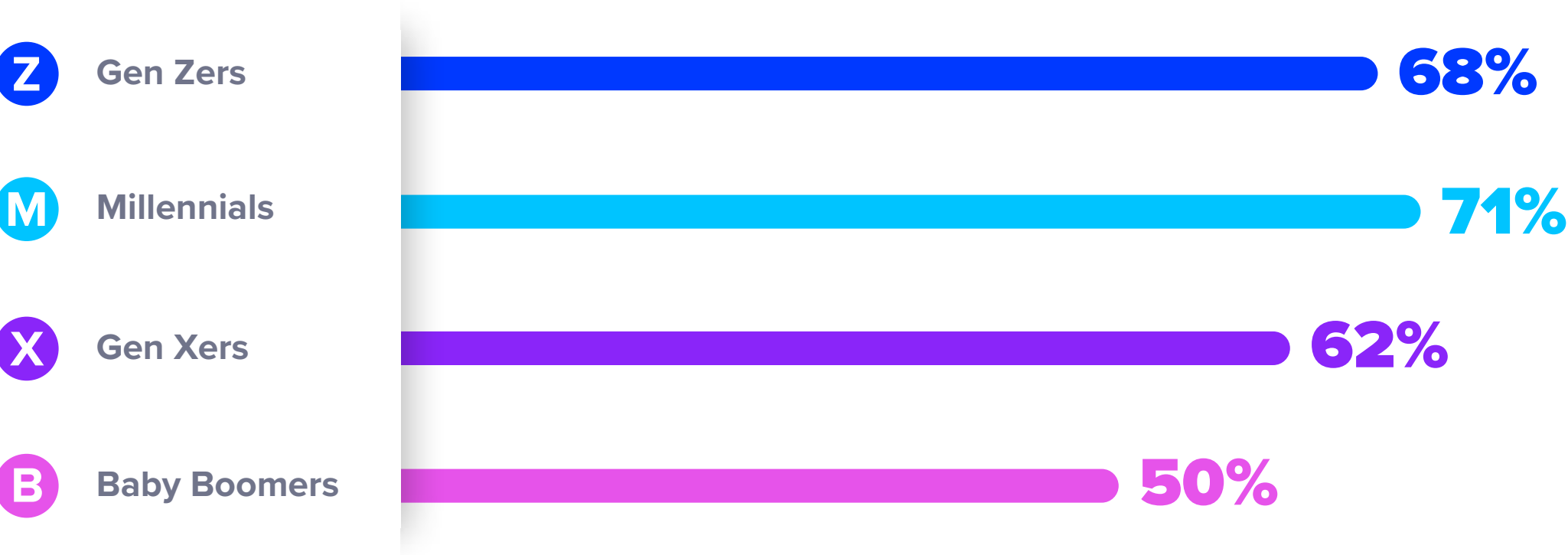
Millennials and Gen Zers Rate and Review Like It’s Their Job

The majority of millennials (71%), Gen Zers (68%), and Gen Xers (62%), as well as half of baby boomers, have left a product rating or review in the last year.

These numbers reveal that shoppers across generation groups are highly engaged in providing product and brand feedback. They also mean that shoppers of all ages can hear about their peers’ experiences before they purchase.

Shoppers That Have Left a Product Rating or Review in the Last Year

GENERATION GROUP BREAKOUT



QUESTION: WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU LEFT A PRODUCT RATING OR REVIEW?
BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH
HACK

For Me? You Should Have! (How Personalization Impacts Purchase)

Shoppers want to feel seen and understood by brands, to the point that their needs aren’t just met, but anticipated.

Many shoppers across generation groups buy more often because of personalized product recommendations, according to Salsify research:

- ✓ Gen Zers: 53%
- ✓ Millennials: 48%
- ✓ Gen Xers: 34%
- ✓ Baby boomers: 12%

Not sure where to start? Personalization efforts are a great way to incorporate your new-old pal AI. It can help you make sense of shoppers’ (permissible) data, such as browsing history, past purchases, and so on.

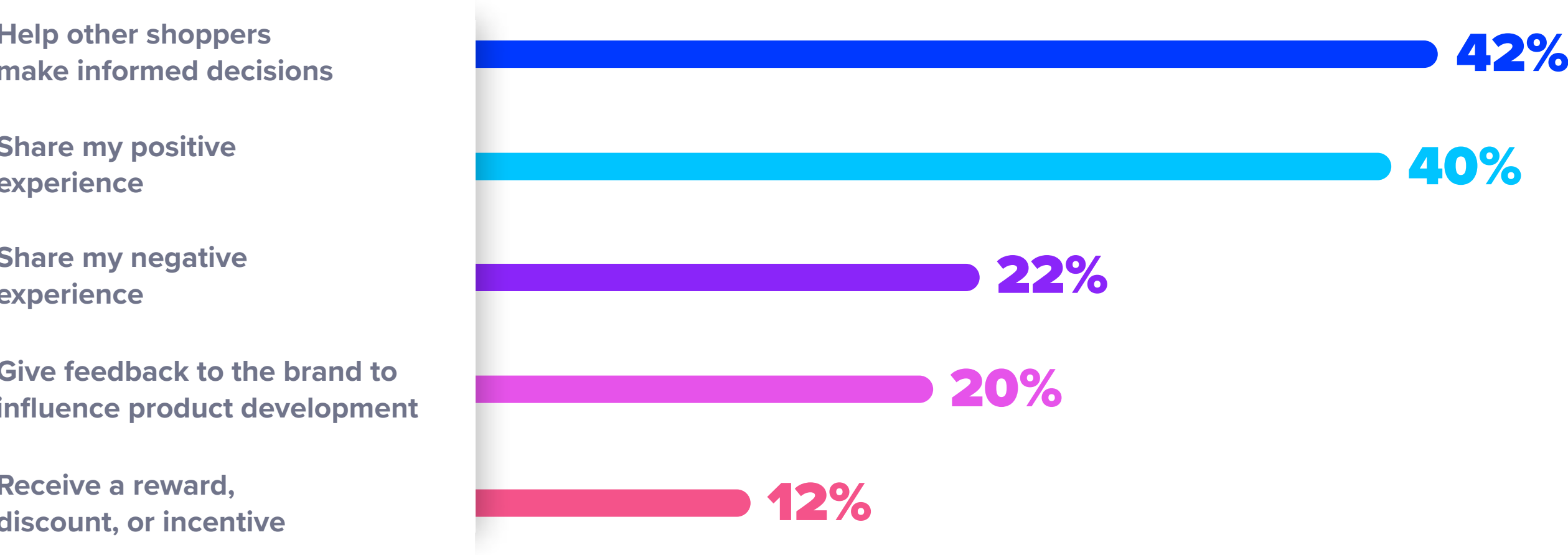
The New CSR? Consumer Social Responsibility

While rewards, discounts, and incentives are nice, shoppers across regions and generation groups are most motivated to leave reviews simply to help other shoppers make informed decisions.

Beyond that, shoppers might slightly abide by, “If you have nothing nice to say, don’t say anything at all,” as nearly twice as many consumers are motivated to share a positive experience (40%) as a negative one (22%).

While posting reviews of all angles bodes well for creating an authentic brand presence, it might be easier than you think to exhibit favorability — all you have to do is ask.

Shoppers’ Motivations for Leaving a Rating or Review



QUESTION: IF “YES” TO “WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU LEFT A PRODUCT RATING OR REVIEW?” WHAT WAS YOUR MOTIVATION(S) FOR LEAVING A PRODUCT RATING OR REVIEW? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY. BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

Loyalty, Love, and Lasting (Customer) Bonds

Everyone should feel like they matter — and shoppers want to feel special. Is this the year you roll out (or revamp) your loyalty program?

Salsify research shows that 39% of shoppers purchase because of membership or loyalty program discounts (i.e., unique offers for their loyalty tier).

It’s in your best interest to treat shoppers right — there are plenty of other brands that they can run off into the sunset with.

How AI Influences Product Discovery and Research

The AI-Shopping Revolution Is Nigh

AI and Shopping Becoming Increasingly Linked for Product Discovery and Research

With the rise of Amazon’s Rufus, successive iterations of ChatGPT, and more, the adage rings true: Build it and they will come. Well over half of consumers (64%) are using AI shopping tools to discover or research new products.

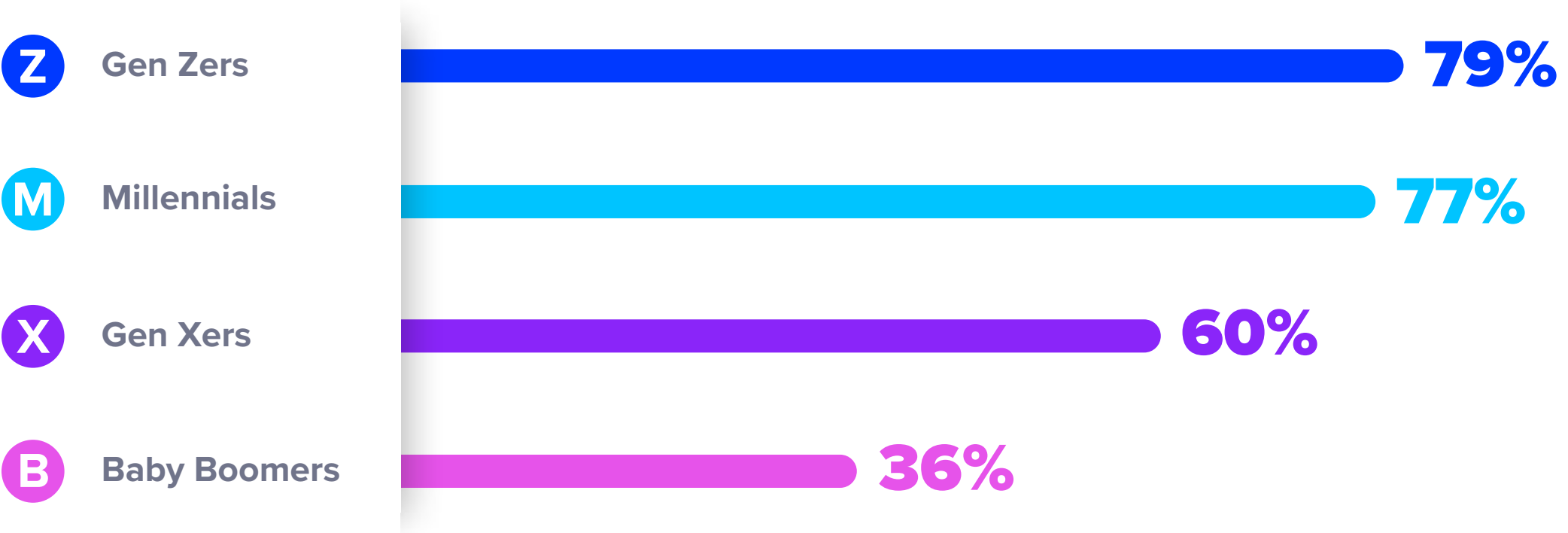
It’s not all cut and (AI) dry, however. As far as holiday shopping goes, more than half (55%) of shoppers say they discover gift ideas in physical retail stores, and just 9% cited AI chatbots in Salsify’s third quarter, “[2025 Holiday Pulse Report](#).”

More shoppers across generations are experimenting with AI. Your parents are using AI, your kids are using AI — and that’s just the shoppers who are cognizantly reporting it. There’s really no hiding anymore.

Seventy-nine percent of Gen Zers, 77% of millennials, 60% of Gen Xers, and 36% of baby boomers use AI shopping tools to discover or research new products, and it’ll be interesting to see how AI usage shifts across the buying journey — and maybe even shifts the buying journey as we know it.

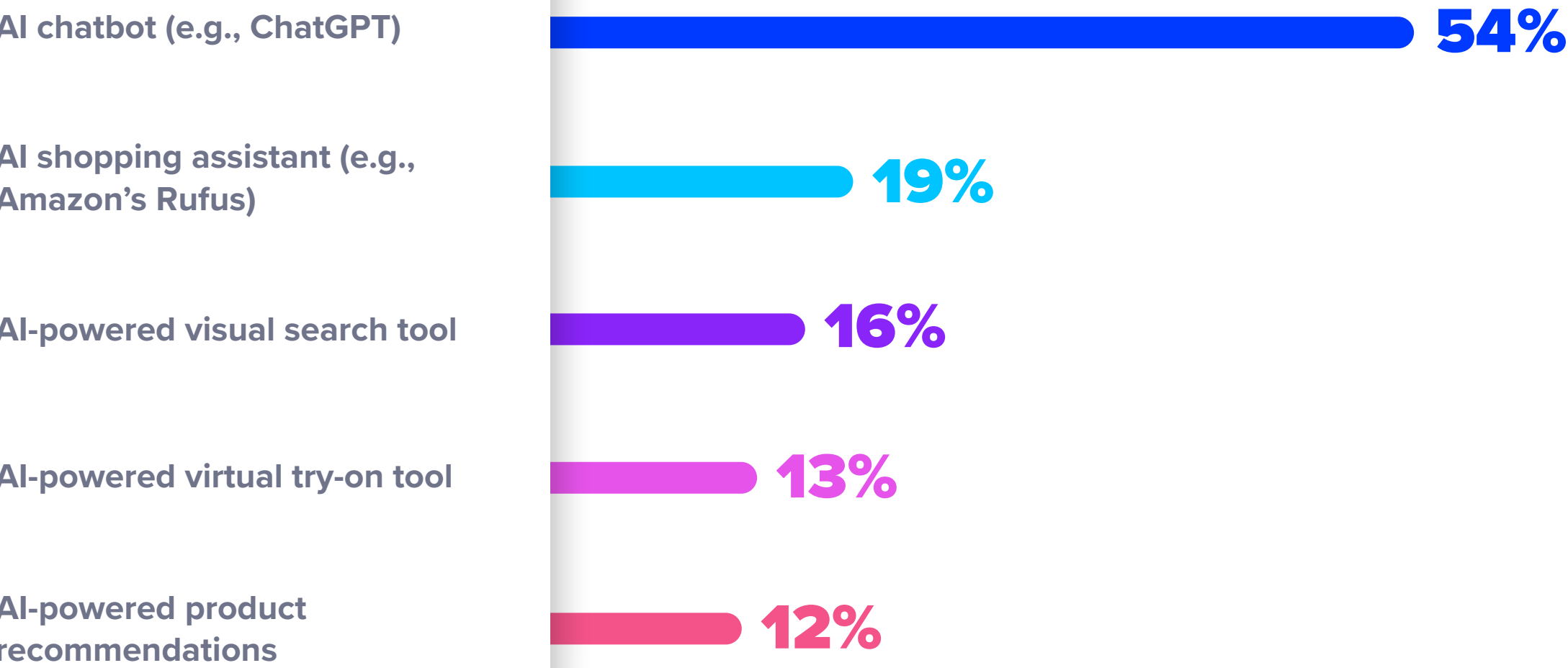


GENERATION GROUP BREAKOUT



QUESTION: WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU USED AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-POWERED TOOL (E.G., CHATGPT, AMAZON’S RUFUS) TO DISCOVER OR RESEARCH A NEW PRODUCT? BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)

Popular AI Shopping Tools



QUESTION: IF "YES," WHICH AI-POWERED TOOL(S) DID YOU USE? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.
BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH HACK

It's Not Just Discovery and Research: AI Fuels Purchases, Too

If you think AI's influence has only crept into product research, you're wrong. According to Salsify consumer research from early 2025:

- ✓ **17% of shoppers** have purchased a product because it was recommended by an AI shopping assistant or chatbot
- ✓ **17% of shoppers** also shared that they purchased a product online after using a virtual try-on or placement preview tool

This asserts the importance of not only showing up in AI-generated search results but also infusing AI tech further along in the funnel to help provide recommendations for customer nurturing or re-engagement.

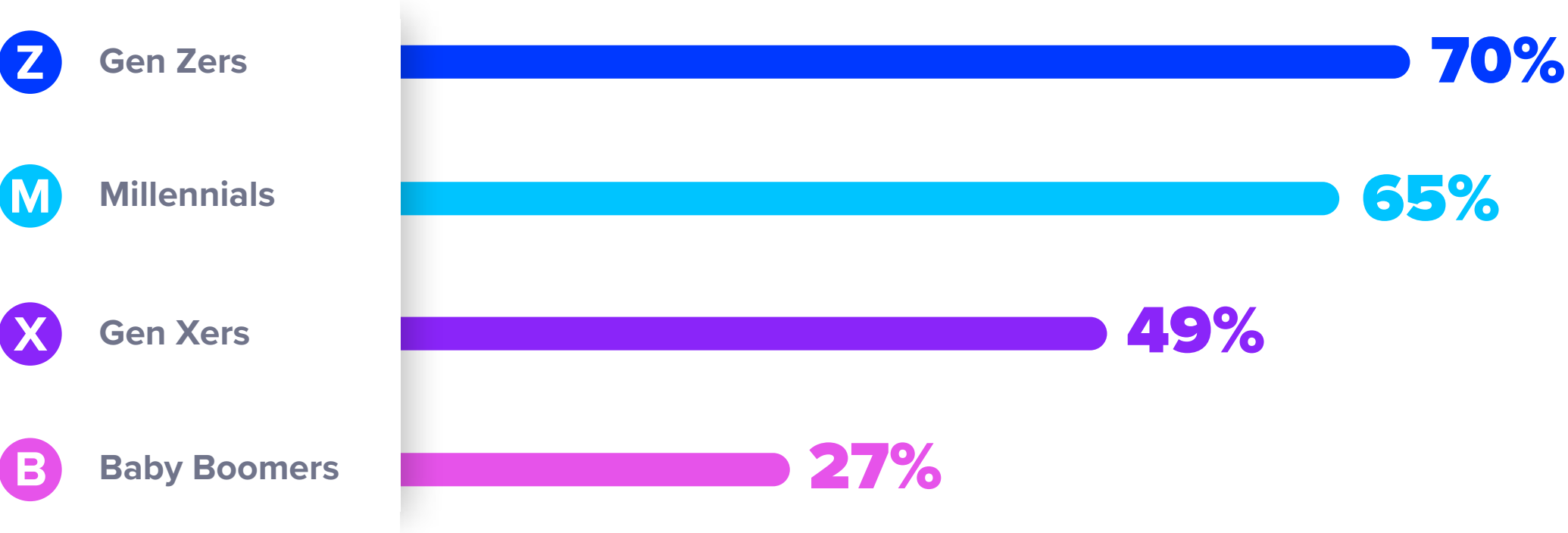
AI Chatbots as Shopping Tools Woo Every Generation

The coziest among AI shopping companions seem to be chatbots like ChatGPT, with at least half of Gen Zers (70%), millennials (65%), and Gen Xers (49%) using them. Even nearly a third of baby boomers (27%) claim to use chatbots. According to Bloomreach, 46% of shoppers say they trust AI to give more honest advice than friends.



Shoppers are still warming up to AI shopping assistants like Amazon’s Rufus, though, with just 19% of shoppers using them. Millennials are the most likely to tag them into their shopping endeavors (25%), followed by Gen Zers (21%), Gen Xers (19%), and baby boomers (10%).

GENERATION GROUP BREAKOUT



QUESTION: WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU USED AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-POWERED TOOL (E.G., CHATGPT, AMAZON’S RUFUS) TO DISCOVER OR RESEARCH A NEW PRODUCT? BASE: ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES (N=1,069)



GROWTH
HACK

Sayonara, SEO? How To Tackle Content Optimization

SEO as we know it isn't going by the wayside — but if you haven't already prioritized GEO, you're running a bit behind.

Keywords, the basis of SEO, still fit into the optimization picture, as do metadata, AI readability, and relevance.

However, GenAI tools are more interested in how pages display data and evaluate product content based on:

- ✓ **Readability:** Keep content easy to digest and concise — but still creative.
- ✓ **Authority:** This is determined by clear, confident language and webpage rankings. Keep creating relevant content to rise up.
- ✓ **Accuracy:** Since AI can fact-check, it's important to keep data and content accurate and consistent.

Feed the Beast: Building Content That's Consumable for AI

AI is a picky eater — and because of that, your content might not rank effectively or show up in search. Here are five tips for building content that AI can consume:

- 1 **Leverage reviews** — both positive and negative — to give shoppers and AI tools a holistic view of your products and reputation.
- 2 **Use social listening** (especially on Reddit and TikTok) to better understand what questions shoppers are asking about your products to cultivate conversation and fill out FAQs.
- 3 **Incorporate lifestyle imagery, videos, and UGC** with detailed descriptions and appropriate alt text.
- 4 **Optimize PDPs and brand content** for mobile to allow for seamless shopping experiences.
- 5 **Maintain authenticity and consistency** across your brand's digital and physical shelf presence.

Top Takeaways for a Successful Next Quarter

Ready To Rate Atop the Digital Shelf in 2026?

The holidays are upon us — and hopefully you're feeling festive. A new year and a new quarter are right around the corner, though, and there's plenty your brand can do to ensure you come out on top.

Listen to and leverage ratings and reviews, and remember, it's not always about price. Elevate what your brand does best, and don't be afraid to dig into the dirty details: AI will eat it up, and so will curious consumers.

Here are the top four takeaways for a successful next quarter.

Get aligned within yourself, with your org, and with your tech.

Take a deep breath — Q1 is a crucial time to ensure your employees and organization are primed for success internally, externally, and with your tech stack. When you're ready, take necessary action to adjust.

1

Understand what drives choosy consumers.

Consumers are bound to bounce around to different brands, but understanding what keeps them interested (e.g., aligned values, good reputation, etc.) helps plenty of new and returning customers feel eager to share their experiences.

2

Look, listen to, and leverage ratings and reviews.

You can't afford not to listen to what consumers across regions and generation groups are saying about your products. Pay attention and thoughtfully respond via witty banter, further product development, or revamped loyalty and reward programs to thank them. And be sure to share these interactions for all to see.

3

Use (and heed) AI and other automated tech wisely.

The all-seeing AI? It's curious about what customers are saying about your products and how they meet the needs of the moment. Double down on the quality of information available about your brand to show up in the era of search (and see your digital shelf presence soar to new heights).

4

About the Authors



Salsify helps thousands of brand manufacturers, distributors, and retailers in more than 140 countries collaborate to win on the digital shelf.

The Salsify Product Experience Management (PXM) platform enables organizations to centralize all of their product content, connect to the commerce ecosystem, and automate business processes to deliver the best possible product experiences across every selling destination.

Learn how the world's largest brands, including Mars, L'Oréal, The Coca-Cola Company, Bosch, and ASICS, as well as retailers and distributors, such as DoorDash, E.Leclerc, Carrefour, Metro, and Intermarché, use Salsify every day to drive efficiency, power growth, and lead the digital shelf.

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The Digital Shelf Institute (DSI) shapes the future of the commerce industry and contributes to its growth through community, content, and education.

Become a member of the DSI to unlock career growth, drive organizational improvement, and foster industry advancement through collaborative leadership and problem-solving.

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Methodology

Salsify surveyed 1,069 participants, comprising 368 shoppers from the U.S., 350 from Canada, and 351 from the U.K. Salsify administered the survey using SurveyMonkey and collected data between July 31 and August 1, 2025.

The research employed a stratified sampling method to encourage balanced, comprehensive, and diverse representation, including a goal of 25% of survey respondents for each age group (ages 18–28, 29–44, 45–60, and 61–79), a balanced gender ratio, and a balanced division between the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.

- U.S. margin of error: +/- 5.213%
- Canada margin of error: +/- 5.345%
- U.K. margin of error: +/- 5.338%

The research objective was to comprehensively understand consumer preferences for spending and ongoing commerce trends, including AI-powered shopping tools, brand loyalty, and more, and how they relate to the modern buying journey.

U.S. Consumer Survey: 368 Participants	Canada Consumer Survey: 350 Participants	U.K. Consumer Survey: 351 Participants
Age		
18–28: 83 (23%)	18–28: 82 (23%)	18–28: 88 (25%)
29–44: 115 (31%)	29–44: 94 (27%)	29–44: 101 (29%)
45–60: 83 (23%)	45–60: 91 (26%)	45–60: 99 (28%)
61–79: 87 (24%)	61–79: 83 (24%)	61–79: 63 (18%)
Gender		
Female: 178 (48%)	Female: 175 (50%)	Female: 175 (50%)
Male: 190 (52%)	Male: 175 (50%)	Male: 176 (50%)
Nonbinary: 0 (0%)	Nonbinary: 0 (0%)	Nonbinary: 0 (0%)
A gender not listed here: 0 (0%)	A gender not listed here: 0 (0%)	A gender not listed here: 0 (0%)
Prefer not to answer: 0 (0%)	Prefer not to answer: 0 (0%)	Prefer not to answer: 0 (0%)