3451°

Consumer Digest

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

Balancing Act: Wallet & Wellness





Consumer Digest



Welcome to the second annual 84.51° Consumer Digest 2024 Year in Review, where we provide insights into shopper trends and attitudes that defined the year. In 2024, the economy and personal finances were a chief concern for shoppers as they continued to seek sales, deals and other ways to stretch their budgets, exhibiting a "value mindset." They also prioritized health and were seeking new and innovative products with nutritional benefits.

External factors such as the economy and demographic shifts coupled with expectations for innovative and value–driven products will persist in driving shopping behaviors. Additionally, shoppers are predicting an evolution in grocery shopping that will be driven by technological advancements.

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TRENDING... Inflation & the consumer response, financial comfort, health concerns

Over the past three years, we've kept a pulse of shopper attitudes and spending to understand how those behaviors trend over time in response to ongoing economic uncertainty. While concern over inflation has leveled out over the past two years from a peak in mid-2022, shoppers are still feeling the pinch and are adjusting their buying behaviors as they keep a watchful eye on prices while balancing health and other priorities.

Concern over inflation: April '22 - Nov'24

Looking back at the past two years of tracking consumers' concern over inflation, January of this year saw the lowest concern at 56% while June '22 saw its highest concern at 73%.



Shopper concern over inflation – % of Households Extremely Concerned (T2B on 7-point scale April '22 – Nov '24)

 $68\% \ 68\% \ 73\% \ 71\% \ 71\% \ 66\% \ 65\% \ 69\% \ 66\% \ 67\% \ 66\% \ 65\% \ 64\% \ 63\% \ 61\% \ 65\% \ 64\% \ 65\% \ 65\% \ 64\% \ 65\% \ 64\% \ 62\% \ 56\% \ 64\% \ 62\% \ 62\% \ 59\% \ 66\% \ 67\% \ 63\% \ 62\% \ 58\% \ 64\% \ 65\% \ 64\% \ 65\% \ 64\% \ 65\% \ 64\% \ 65\% \ 64\% \ 62\% \ 64\% \ 62\% \ 62\% \ 62\% \ 64\% \ 62\% \ 64\% \ 62\% \ 64\%$

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Q: How concerned are you with inflation/consumer prices right now?

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Shoppers' response to inflation

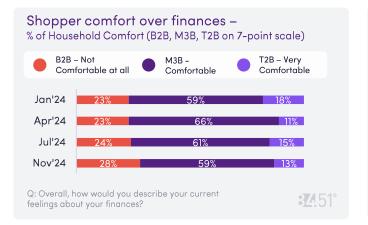
Shoppers responded to inflation over the past year by looking for sales/deals/coupons more often (year average of 67%), cutting back on non-essentials like snacks, candy, etc. (year average of 53%), as well as switching to lower cost brands more often (year average of 50%).





Financial comfort & financial comfort level drivers: Jan'24 - Nov'24

Most shoppers felt moderately comfortable with their finances this past year



Financial comfort level drivers – (Quarterly Average Jan'24, Apr'24, Jul'24, Nov'24)

Top 5 reasons that impacted shoppers feeling not comfortable at all about their finances...

- Inflation
- Grocery prices
- Monthly bills
- · Credit card debt
- Current budget

Q: What is driving your current level of comfort with your finances?

Top 5 reasons that impacted shoppers feeling very comfortable about their finances...

- · Savings, retirement fund or security net
- Current budget
- Current job
- Monthly bills
- · Grocery prices

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Categories where shoppers have most noticed price increases

Quarterly average for Feb'24, May'24, Aug'24 and Nov'24

cheese, etc.)

fish counter

Q: In what categories are you noticing an increase in price at the grocery store?

(soft drinks, juices, etc.)

Paper products (toilet paper, tissues, paper towels, etc.)

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Category Switching

Categories shoppers are willing to switch to a lower cost brand (Quarterly average Feb'24, May'24, Aug'24 and Nov'24)

Paper products (toilet paper, tissues, paper towels, etc.)

(canned goods, pasta, etc.)

Household cleaning (dish soaps, surface cleaners, laundry detergents, air fresheners, etc.)

(soft drinks, juices, etc.)

(milk, cheese, etc.)

Q: In what categories are you willing to switch to a lower cost brand?

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What drives the shopping modalities?

Share of grocery modalities/why shop certain modality – (Quarterly average Feb'24, May'24, Aug'24 and Nov'24)



76% Why shop in-store?
• Don't trust someone

picking out my products Sales/promotions



for delivery

Why shop online for delivery?

 Convenience Easy to use website or app for shopping



Why shop online for pickup? Convenience

· Reduce impulse purchases

Q: Thinking of the upcoming month, what percentage of your grocery and household item shopping will be done the following way/s...?

Q: Why do you shop this modality for your groceries and household items?

3/45





Front and center for consumers: Mind, body, wallet!

Consumer Digest: January, March, May, April, June

- Shoppers prioritized physical health, finances and emotional wellbeing for their New Year's resolutions.
- Managing heart health, weight and cholesterol were universal concerns for all age segments.
- Overall, consumers had a thrifty outlook; they planned to cut back on discretionary items and increase savings while maintaining the essentials.



In January, shoppers had a frugal outlook on the year ahead – claiming they'll spend less on discretionary costs like dining out, the same on necessary costs like prescriptions and more on savings/investments.







Food as Medicine – managing heart health, weight and cholesterol

are the most universal concerns by all age segments

How important do you believe the food you eat is, if at all, when it comes to the following?

| AGE | Energy | Heart Health | Gut Health | Sleep | Brain Health | Weight | Blood Sugar | Stress | Bone Health | Dental Health | Met abol ism | Manage cholesterol | Manage blood pressure | Protect Against Disease | Skin Health | Muscle Repair |
|-----------|--------|-----------------|---------------|-------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|--------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 18- 24 | 76% | 61% | 46% | 46% | 77% | 61% | 61% | 46% | 23% | 54% | 61% | 62% | 61% | 54% | 61% | 46% |
| 25- 34 | 70% | 68% | 66% | 56% | 64% | 62% | 60% | 58% | 62% | 56% | 42% | 60% | 54% | 54% | 50% | 48% |
| 35- 44 | 68% | 73% | 66% | 49% | 60% | 72% | 59% | 47% | 50% | 60% | 51% | 66% | 63% | 50% | 54% | 48% |
| 45- 54 | 61% | 80% | 56% | 40% | 59% | 72 % | 58% | 41% | 49% | 55% | 48% | 66% | 65% | 48% | 49% | 43% |
| 55- 64 | 41% | 75% | 66% | 38% | 55% | 69% | 58% | 35% | 62% | 49% | 38% | 66% | 68% | 48% | 48% | 45% |
| 65- 74 | 61% | 85% | 44% | 32% | 53% | 69% | 64% | 32% | 53% | 47% | 40% | 7 1% | 75 % | 56% | 37% | 43% |



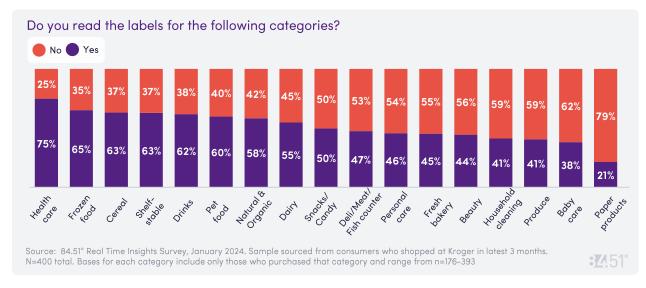
% Importance Top Two Box

Reading Labels...

It's what's on the inside that counts

Shoppers read labels in categories that include ingestible products like medicines and vitamins in Health Care, along with Frozen Foods and Shelf stable products.

Fresh food categories Deli, Bakery, and Produce are the exception and more in line with Personal care, Beauty and Household Cleaning



How important are the following when it comes to food product labels?

LABELING Nutrition Facts

| Serving | 1 Healthy Body |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Sample (per serving) | |
| Kroger Shoppers | n=400 |
| | (Top 2 Box %) |
| <u>Guaranteed fresh</u> | 43% |
| Good for your health | 43% |
| Nutritional value | 42% |
| Gives you energy | 39% |
| Strengthens immunity | 37% |
| Free from an ingredient | 33% |
| 100% Natural | 32% |
| Non-GMO | 30% |
| Premium | 28% |
| Grade: Choice | 26% |
| Natural | 26% |
| Where the product was sourced from | 25% |
| Sustainable sourced | 25% |
| Wild caught | 23% |
| Cage free | 22% |
| Certified organic | |
| Grass Fed | 21% |
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Label claims centered around how the food was raised are ranked lower in importance.



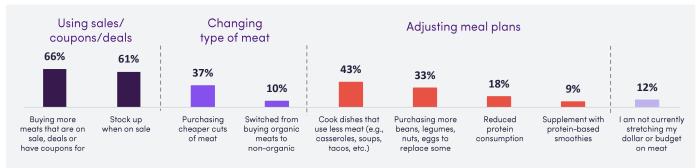






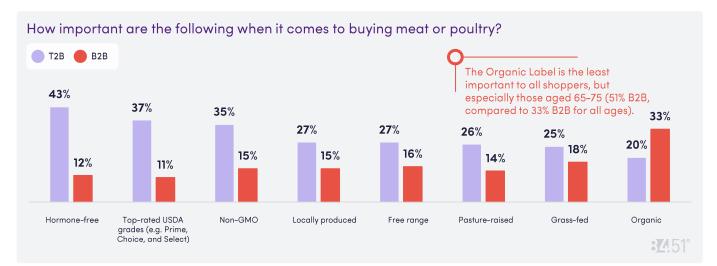
Stretching the meat dollar

When asked about how they are stretching their dollar to fulfill their meat needs, shoppers are relying on discounts, changing the type of meat they purchase and adjusting their meal plans.



Q: How have you stretched your dollar and budget to fulfill your meat needs?

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Proteins: The building blocks of life

Shoppers include protein in their diets for a variety of reasons and leverage multiple food sources to achieve their protein consumption goals.

Protein consumption has remained flat vs. last year with 66% of households reporting they are consuming about the same amount of protein, and 17% of households state that they are consuming less/more protein.

For households who reported declining consumption, they claim that the cost of groceries is making it difficult to afford protein.

When it comes to including protein in their diets, shoppers are...



Most concerned with (T2B):

- Good taste 60%
- Good value for the price paid 55%
- Keep me feeling full 50%



Least concerned with (B2B):

- Permitted by my religion 61%
- Plant-based protein 45%
- Accommodating multiple family members 39%

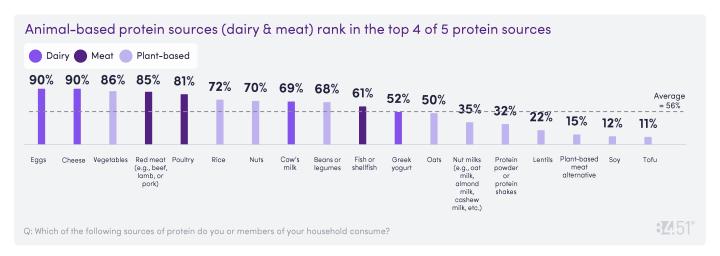
Q: How important are the following when it comes to your diet?

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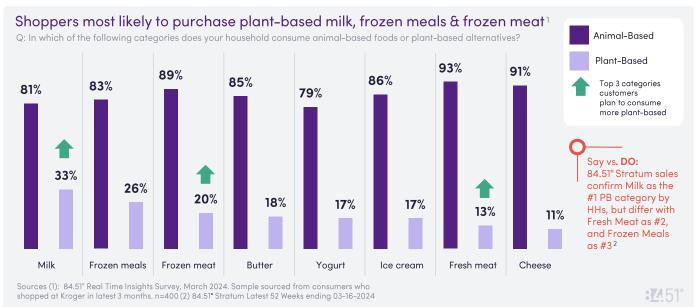


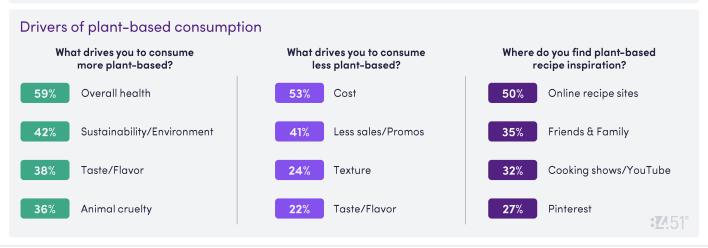




Plant-Based Consumption

As shoppers seek better health and environmental stewardship, many turn towards plant-based alternatives to traditional meat and/or dairy foods. Often, shoppers "enter" plant-based with milk, then expand consumption to additional categories.







Consumers shopping sustainably for an eco-friendly lifestyle



Q: How much do you agree with the following statements when it comes to shopping for groceries?

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Does sustainability drive shopping behavior?

19% of shoppers say they often/always seek out sustainable products.

22% of shoppers find sustainability extremely important when it comes to choosing which products to purchase.

Q: When shopping for groceries, which actions do you take?

49%

Buy **LOCAL** and **SEASONAL** produce

45%

Bring REUSABLE PACKAGING to use while shopping **37**%

Avoid SINGLE-USE PLASTIC 22%

Buy SUSTAINABLY FARMED PRODUCTS (organic, fair trade, etc.)

Q: When shopping for groceries, what is most helpful to shopping sustainably?

45%

DISCOUNTS for bringing REUSABLE BAGS 34%

Offering DISCOUNTED SOON-TO-EXPIRE FOOD (online/in-store) 27%

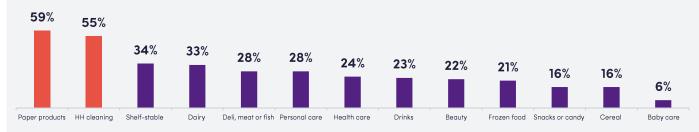
RECYCLING or COMPOSTING facilities (in the store) 27%

More **PROMOTIONS** or **COUPONS** for sustainable products

T2B - Top 2 boxes on 7-point scale.

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Categories where customers seek sustainable products when shopping for groceries:



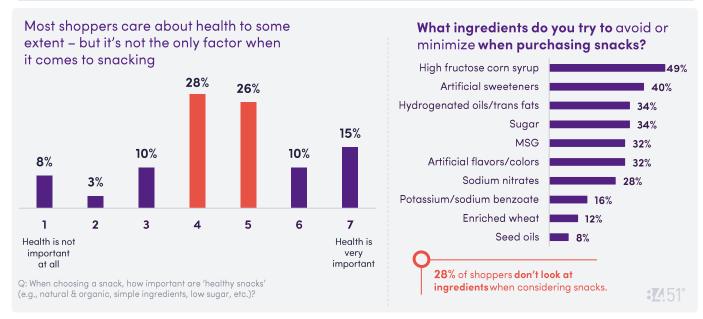
Q: In what categories do you actively seek out sustainable products when shopping for groceries?

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A rise in budget-friendly, conscious snacking options

More shoppers (27%) reported snacking multiple times a day, up from 15% in 2023. When selecting snacks, price, quality and flavor were the most important attributes for shoppers, with sales and coupons being major drivers. Health was a consideration for many, but not the primary factor. Snacks, traditionally an impulse item, were more likely to be purchased in-store rather than online.



Price Matters: Sales and coupons are primary drivers for snacks

Price, Quality Product and Flavor are the three most important attributes shoppers look for in their snacks to ensure they're getting a good value.



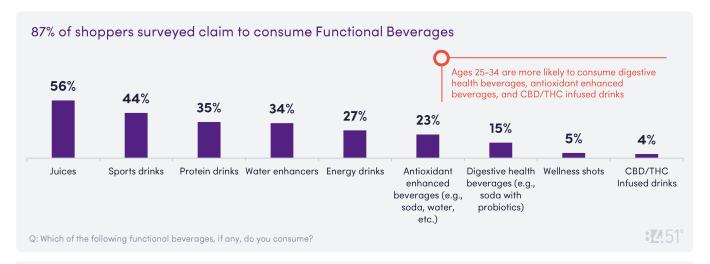




Functional Beverages



A functional beverage is a drink that provides additional health benefits. These benefits can include added vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, probiotics or other nutritional supplements. Some functional beverages may also contain ingredients that boost energy, enhance focus, or aid in weight loss. **Examples include fortified water, energy drinks, protein shakes, etc.**



What product attributes are most important when purchasing a functional beverage product? (T2B)



83%

TASTES GREAT

*Consumers' wish list:

- Focus on natural, appealing flavors
- Flavors that are recognizable and enjoyable all year long
- Minimize artificial flavors & sweeteners that lead to undesirable aftertastes



72%

Offered at a FAIR PRICE

*Consumers' wish list:

- Competitively priced product
 Consider larger sizes to provide better value
- Promotional pricing strategies to attract budget-conscious customers



60%

Made with HIGH QUALITY INGREDIENTS

*Consumers' wish list:

- Focus on natural ingredients and sourcing, organically certified
- Consumers want high protein, vitamins, & minerals but with less sodium, sugar, & artificial ingredients.



58%

Has **CLEAR INFORMATION** on the package

*Consumers' wish list:

- Highlight clear health benefits, ensuring claims are substantiated and easily understandable
- Consider ecofriendly /sustainable packaging

Q: How important, if at all, are the following product attributes when it comes to purchasing a specific functional beverage product? (n=347) *Consumers' wish list are summarized from open-ended responses to Unmet Needs

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Top benefits motivating shoppers to consume functional beverages:

1. **74**%

Hydration



Source of vitamins



Energy boost 4.

. **34**% Source of protein 5.

30%

Convenience

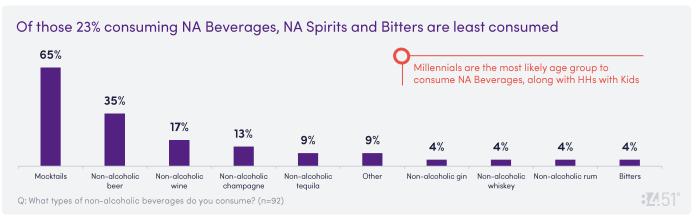
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Non-Alcoholic Beverages

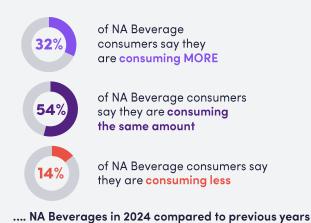


A non-alcoholic beverage is a drink that mimics the flavor and experience of traditional alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine, tequila, etc., but contain no or very minimal alcohol content.



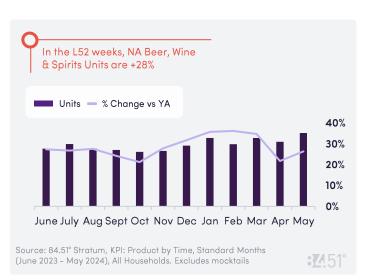


"Say" vs. "Do"



Q: Which of the following best describes your consumption of nonalcoholic beverages in 2024 compared to previous years? (n=92)





Reasons for consuming Non-Alcoholic Beverages

55%

NA beverages help me to reduce alcohol intake

55%

NA beverages are a healthy alternative to alcohol

55%

I consume NA beverages when I am a designated driver

43%

Drinking NA beverages has become more socially acceptable

41%

I consume NA beverages to avoid a hangover "I have been thinking that non-alcoholic beveraaes would be a healthier and better option"

> "More options and trying to cut back on the alcohol and the effects it has"

Q: What are the reasons for increasing nonalcoholic beverages consumption in 2024?

"Non-alcoholic drinks are cheaper"

Only 29% of respondents agreed that NA beverages taste better

Q: Thinking about your consumption of non-alcoholic beverages, how much do you agree with the following statements? (n=92)







Brand & Retailer Loyalty

Consumer Digest - August

Shoppers exhibited varying degrees of brand loyalty across different product categories. They were most loyal when it came to pet food and baby care. Conversely, they were more willing to try other brands for paper products, shelf-stable and cleaning products.

How do consumers define brand loyalty?

Shoppers tend to think of purchase consistency when they think of brand loyalty

60%

The brand I buy most often

16%

The brand I buy exclusively

12%

The brand I want to buy the most

12%

My preferred brand, but I am willing to try others Shoppers with household incomes less than \$50K are more likely to be open to other brands (20%).

Q: Which of the following best describes what it means to be loyal to a particular grocery and household use item brand?

How do consumers define retailer loyalty?

Shoppers tend to think of consistency when they think of retailer loyalty

Retailer I shop most often

Preferred Retailer, but open to shop others

Only Retailer I shop for all my needs

Retailer I want to shop the most

Q: Which of the following best describes what it means to be loyal to a particular grocery and household use item retailer?

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Shoppers value tangible dollars off their groceries more than they value delayed discounts and donations

Most Valuable Rewards

Least Valuable Rewards

Digital coupons

% or \$ off total purchase

% or \$ off my favorite brands

% or \$ off product categories purchased frequently

Digital rebates

Fuel-point related discounts Donation to charity

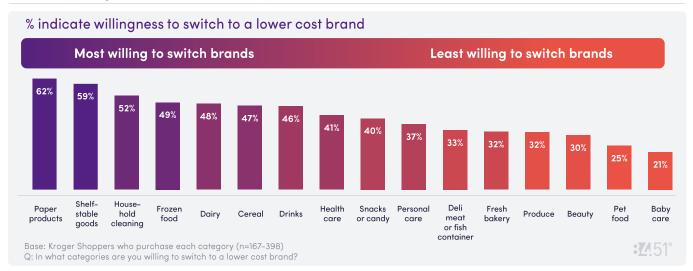
Q: How valuable are each of the following grocery retailer rewards or discounts to you?



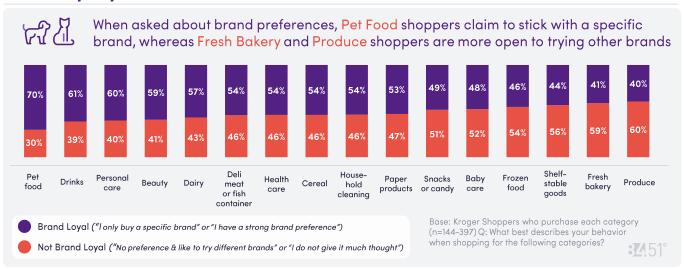




Shoppers are least willing to compromise when it comes to shopping for children and pets



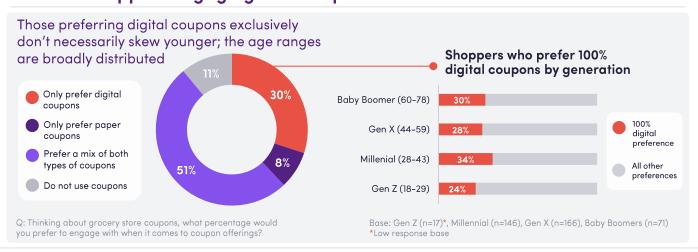
Brand loyalty looks different in each aisle



How are shoppers engaging with coupons and discounts?

Source: 84.51° Real Time Insights Survey, August 2024. Sample sourced from

consumers who shopped at Kroger in latest 3 months. n=400.





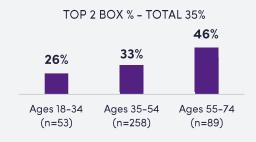
Al and the grocery experience: Shaping today, envisioning tomorrow

Consumer Digest – October & July

From grocery planning to meal preparation and more, today's shoppers identified several opportunities to shape the grocery experience of tomorrow – making it easier, more convenient, personalized and innovative.

TODAY

Grocery shopping planning is easier for older than younger shoppers.



Q: How would you rate the ease of planning for grocery shopping?

TOMORROW

How grocery planning could be made easier:

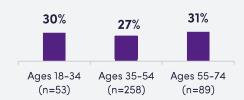
- Improving online shopping list functionality, including real-time inventory updates.
- Providing a broad range of digital coupons, with a preference for automatic application.
- Offering recipe suggestions linked to shopping lists, catering to diverse dietary preferences.
- 4 Ensuring accurate pricing and stock information on apps and websites.
- Maintaining consistent store layouts and clear signage to improve the ease of locating products.

Q: What improvements or tools could a brand or grocery retailer offer to make planning for grocery shopping easier?

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The ease of **meal prepping and cooking** is somewhat consistent across age cohorts.

TOP 2 BOX % - TOTAL 28%



Q: How would you rate the ease of meal prepping or cooking?

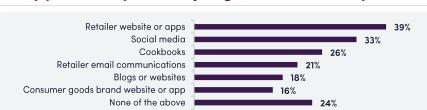
How meal prepping and cooking could be made easier:

- Increasing the variety and affordability of meal kits and grab & go options, catering to different HH sizes and dietary restrictions.
- Providing recipe ideas or cards conveniently placed in-store and offering digital recipes tailored to customers' purchases and preferences.
- 3 Offering better deals on prepared foods and meal kits.
- Selling competitively priced pre-cut or prepared ingredients to save customer's time.
- Enhancing the selection of healthier and dietaryspecific ready-made meals to meet the needs of various customers.

Q: What improvements or tools could a brand or a grocery retailer offer to make meal prepping or cooking meals easier?

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Shoppers use primarily digital tools to help build grocery lists



An average of 24% of shoppers claim to not use any of type of social media or AI for their grocery shopping

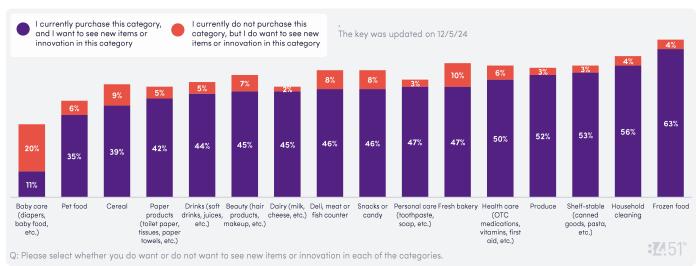
Q: Thinking of the past year, which of the following platforms or tools have you used to find inspiration for your grocery shopping lists? Source: 84.51° Real Time Insights Survey, Feb. 2024 – Nov. 2024, among users of each type of media/element.

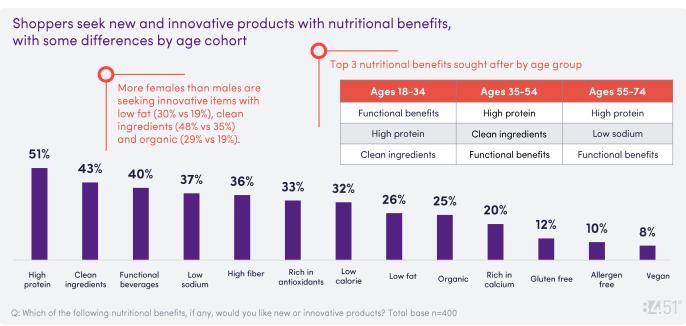
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Categories where grocery shoppers are seeking innovation





From app to aisle: Shoppers are using tech-savvy tools

| | | [ch | PY | (\$) | YOP | | |
|--|-----|------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| Digital Coupon Apps | | Cashback Apps | Recipe Apps | Price Comparison Apps | Meal Planning Apps | Smart Carts | |
| % currently using and will continue to use in the future | 48% | 43% | 38% | 13% | 10% | 11% | |
| % not currently using but will use in the future | 31% | 31% | 31% | 45% | 44% | 41% | |

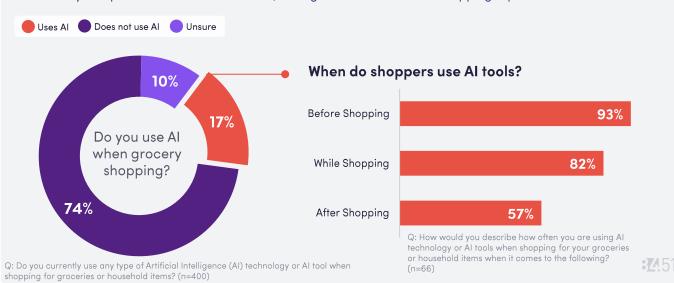


planning and grocery shopping (both in-store or online)?

Artificial intelligence for grocery shopping

Only 17% of shoppers were using Al tools in 2024, suggesting significant growth potential for Al in grocery. The tools were primarily used for finding deals, building shopping lists and getting product recommendations. Shoppers who didn't use Al tools were looking for features that help them save time and money but were not interested in the current features.

There is growth opportunity for Al in grocery, with only 17% of shoppers currently using Al tools These "early-adopters" use these tools before, during and even after their shopping trips



Early adopters are focused on finding deals and building their shopping list

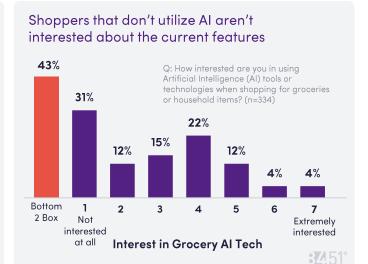
"I am using the store's app to get coupons, alerts and recommendations on products that I buy on a regular basis."

"I use them to make a list and search for coupons and sale prices."

"I use it to pinpoint items and get details with prices. Al allows me to be more efficient without the hassle"

Q: How are you currently using Al technology or Al tools when shopping for your groceries or household items? (n=66)

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Shoppers who do not currently use AI are looking for features that help them save time and money

71%

Finding sales/deals/ coupons on items **58**%

Comparing prices across retailers

44%

Building your shopping list

42%

Meal planning/ suggesting ingredients for meals

Q: Which of the following ways would you consider using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology or AI tools when shopping for groceries or household items? (n=140)

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Looking forward

Customers predict an evolution in grocery shopping over the next 2–3 years, primarily driven by technological advancements. A common theme is an increased reliance on and expectation of innovation in digital channels. Many anticipate using smartphones, apps and online platforms more frequently for both shopping and meal planning to make it easier and more convenient.

Using technology is believed to contribute to a more automated yet personalized shopping experience, including smart carts to facilitate faster checkouts and Al integration which suggests grocery items or recipes.

Cost-conscious behavior is another recurring theme, as many customers anticipate shopping for deals, using more coupons and shifting towards bulk purchasing and generic brands due to rising prices.

Brands and retailers that stay connected to their customers and understand their mindset, wants, needs and expectations will be better positioned to adapt and thrive in an ever-evolving retail landscape.

Overall, customers foresee a more personalized, efficient and technology-driven approach to grocery shopping while also being mindful of their budgets.





Click here to see all the issues of Consumer Digest



About us

84.51° is a retail data science, insights and media company. We help the Kroger company, consumer packaged goods companies, agencies, publishers and affiliates create more personalized and valuable experiences for shoppers across the path to purchase. Powered by cutting edge science, we utilize 1st party retail data from over 62 million U.S. households sourced through the Kroger Plus loyalty card program to fuel a more customer-centric journey using 84.51° Insights, 84.51° Loyalty Marketing and our retail media advertising solution, Kroger Precision Marketing.

About Consumer Digest

This editorial is developed by the same consumer research and insights experts who provide consultation to help grow your business. 84.51° Stratum shows "what" people buy, and Real Time Insights provides the "why."

84.51° STRATUM

This analytics solution combines rich customer behavior insights with retail performance measures to deliver science-powered insights in a platform to help drive results.

84.51° REAL TIME INSIGHTS

This opt-in survey measures the attitudes, perceptions and stated behaviors of 400 people verified to have shopped at a Kroger banner (over 20 grocery retailers) in the past 3 months.

