

## Executive summary

# *The X Factor: How Generation X is quietly driving trillions in consumer spending*



## About this report

*The X Factor: How Generation X is quietly driving trillions in consumer spending* provides a global analysis of Gen X consumer behavior and spending trends, based on proprietary NIQ and [World Data Lab](#) (WDL) data, including WDL's consumer spending forecasts. This report will show why the next decade represents a **once-in-a-lifetime opportunity** for manufacturers and retailers to capture Gen X loyalty and customer lifetime value. It forecasts key areas of growth and underscores the differences in Gen X behavior by region and country so brands can better understand what motivates this generation today—and into the next decade.

## Why you can't afford to overlook Gen X

Millennials and Gen Z may dominate the headlines, but **Gen X has quietly become the engine of global consumer spending—and the cohort manufacturers and retailers should be targeting if they want to maximize ROI today.**

Now in their peak expenditure years (ages 45–60), Gen Xers have been leading global consumer spending since 2021. **In 2025 alone, Gen X is expected to drive \$15.2 trillion (USD) in global spend.** If you treated them as their own “country,” Gen Xers would form the world's second-largest consumer market—second only to the US and roughly twice the size of China's total spending. They will remain the global consumer spending leader until 2033, and their **annual global spend will peak at \$23 trillion in 2035.**

**The bottom line: Manufacturers and retailers still have a few years to capture the highest possible share of the Gen X wallet.** But they must pivot their strategies now to maximize incrementality.

## What's driving Gen X spending?

Gen Xers are educated global leaders at the peak of their careers who also sit at the center of both their family and economic lives. As consumers, they are digital pioneers, household tech influencers, and pragmatic buyers who have been ignored in marketing campaigns and underestimated in brand strategy. If you're going to tap into their trillions, you're going to need to overcome your current blind spots to understand what drives their spending.

### *Factor #1: They're the CFO of three generations*

Gen X is referred to as "the sandwich generation" because many of its members are financially supporting children while also caring for aging parents—meaning that much of their wealth is being spent on others. They look for value and convenience to help them juggle enormous responsibilities and financial priorities, and as a result, they tend to be brand-trusting and loyal. They're willing to pay a premium for products that assist their stretched realities.

**To capture Gen X shoppers' attention and earn their business, focus on the value and convenience of your products and services.**

### *Factor #2: They dominate higher spending groups*

While Gen X may not be the wealthiest generation (in terms of total assets)—a title that still largely belongs to Boomers—they dominate in daily discretionary spending, and they represent the greatest consumer ROI in large-basket, multi-category purchases (especially across the Grocery, Household, and Wellness categories). Gen X is smaller in population than Generation Alpha, Millennials, and Gen Z, but it currently has more consolidated wealth—especially in developed markets like Canada, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the US.

**For companies looking to maximize incrementality, Gen X is comprised of the most dependable, active spenders across the most profitable consumer segments.**

### *Factor #3: The time is now*

Gen X consumers aren't just in their peak earning years; they're in their *recalibration* years. They're redefining what value means in a number of product categories. Invest in premium and practical now, and anticipate a pivot to wellness, security, and ease-of-use for the long term.

The next five years (2025–2030) represent an opportunity for brands to capture additional Gen X spending across Food & Non-alcoholic Beverages (+\$507 billion), Beauty (+\$80B), and Alcohol (+\$42B). Though these will be standout categories, they are far from the only categories that will benefit.

**To win Gen X globally, you need localized data that reflects how regional realities shape what they buy—and why.**



## Four strategic considerations for Gen X shopping

Gen X spans cultures, economies, and life stages. Their behavior in high-income markets looks nothing like their path in emerging ones, so it's crucial to have a nuanced view before going to market.

However, there are some commonalities in Gen X shopper traits to keep in mind:

1

### Bigger might be better

72% of Gen X respondents say they usually buy "name brands" made by a big national or international manufacturer when buying a well-known, large brand

2

### They're open to automation

35% of Gen X respondents allow smart devices to automatically order new products, 39% accept product recommendations from an AI assistant, and 40% leverage AI to automate and speed up daily tasks

3

### Technology needs to earn their trust

58% of Gen X respondents say they avoid sharing details in virtual interactions because they don't trust AI data privacy, but **more than one-third** say they are likely to purchase a product or service they have experienced solely through an augmented or virtual reality platform

4

### Certain sustainability claims still resonate

Gen X shoppers, like younger generations, are starting to deprioritize ESG claims in purchasing decisions. But they're **17%** more likely than Boomers to switch retailers or providers to purchase options that offer recyclable packaging, clean ingredients, or energy efficiency.

Source: NIQ 2025 Private Label & Branded Products report global survey



## The big takeaways for manufacturers and retailers

**Gen X isn't a transitional generation—it's your present-day profit center.** This cohort is in its prime earning and spending years, wielding outsized influence despite its smaller population size.

Sandwiched between two larger generations, **Gen X is punching above its weight—leading households, shaping workplace dynamics, and guiding purchasing decisions for themselves and for the Boomers and younger generations they support.**



## *What to remember about Gen X:*

- Gen X is “the forgotten generation.” Retailers and manufacturers are underestimating their spending power. The Gen X decade began four years ago (in 2021), and **the time to leverage their pole position is now.**
- Gen Xers are “caretaker consumers.” They support their parents and children, leaving them with less discretionary spending but influencing purchasing decisions for Gen Z, Millennials, and Boomers. **They are the CFOs of their households.**
- Gen X spending differs across countries and regions. **Retailers need to apply a generational country and city lens to their outreach efforts.** Gen X only dominates in developed markets and in China. Gen X will gain further traction in the US, parts of Europe, and Latin America.

## **Go deeper with country-specific insights**

Over the next five to 10 years, Gen X will hit its **peak consumption era**, especially in mature markets critical to global brand and retailer growth. Its habits are stable, measured, and relatively high-value—making Gen Xers an ideal audience for CPG and T&D brands, as well as the retailers that carry their products. Members of this generation don’t chase trends; they invest in what works for them and those they support. **If you fail to prioritize them now, you’re not just missing a moment—you’re risking a decade of loyalty and lifetime value.**

To help companies accomplish this, the full *The X Factor: How Generation X is quietly driving trillions in consumer spending* report **includes much more in-depth analysis of consumer responses** to NIQ’s 2025 Private Label & Branded Products report global survey. The report **also includes granular country-level breakouts of Gen X spending across North America, Western Europe, Asia Pacific, and Latin America.**

[Download the full report.](#)

# Generation

*Forgotten  
no more.*