

Alcohol Signals: How to win Gen Z now

By 2030, Gen Z will account for nearly \$12.6 trillion in global spending. Despite being billed as the 'sober generation', Gen Z do drink. But they mix moderation with experimentation. It's about choice and new ways of socializing, and the brands that flex across premium, low/no, and experiential will win.

See the full story in [Basis Signals: Gen Z's New Rules for Growth](#) >



Three Signals disrupting Alcohol in 2026 and beyond

1. Moderation, not abstinence

The signal:

The share of legal-age Gen Z who've drunk alcohol in the past six months rose from 66% in 2023 to 73% in 2025, as habits evolve.

Why it matters:

Gen Z aren't "the sober generation." Uptake is climbing as more hit their mid-20s with higher incomes and social lives in full swing. But moderation still defines their habits: they want quality and control, not volume. Brands that assume abstinence will miss the rebound, while those that ignore moderation will lose loyalty.

How to explore this further:

Use [AI Personas](#) and custom-built [segmentation](#) to identify which groups lean into premium blends, which stick with low/no, and which prioritise social-first formats, so you know where to invest for growth and loyalty. Identity, or discovery, and design emotionally resonant pricing strategies to match.

2. No fixed rules

The signal:

While a third of Gen Z adults don't drink, for most it isn't about abstaining but about control and context, with 9 in 10 buyers of non-alcoholic drinks also regularly purchasing alcoholic ones.

Why it matters:

Drinking isn't binary for this generation. The labels of "drinker" and "teetotal" have been replaced by context-driven habits. Alcohol alternatives are increasingly an addition to their lifestyle, not a replacement. The winners will be brands that let people move easily between avoidance, moderation, and indulgence without hassle.

How to explore this further:

Use [attitudinal studies](#) and [conjoint analysis](#) to test which cues — price, flavor, vibe, or health — trigger switching between no-, low-, and full-strength options. This will pinpoint where your brand must flex to hold loyalty across occasions.

3. Social influence over legacy

The signal:

The rules of discovery have shifted. Almost half of Gen Z search TikTok or YouTube instead of Google, and 30% consider themselves content creators.

Why it matters:

Drinks aren't just consumed, they're performed. From canned cocktails to low-ABV spritzes, Gen Z gravitates to serves that look good on TikTok and Instagram, where peers (not legacy institutions) shape taste and credibility. For Gen Z, a shareable serve builds cultural relevance faster than any campaign ever could.

How to explore this further:

Use [social listening](#) to gauge which packaging, rituals, and formats spark organic sharing, and track how your brand surfaces across creator-led ecosystems to see which channels drive awareness, intent, and spend.

BASIS Signals

Our data systems blend cultural signals, behavioral analytics, and brand tracking, so you can see not just what's trending, but what's commercially viable in the alcohol industry.

Want to hear more? Get in touch at Basisglobal.co/contact

Signals sources in order of appearance

1. By 2030, Gen Z will account for nearly \$12.6 trillion in global spending
[Gen Z Will Be the Highest Spending Generation in History. Here's What to Know](#)
2. The share of legal-age Gen Z who've drunk alcohol in the past six months rose from 66% in 2023 to 73% in 2025, as habits evolve.
[Gen Z NOT the generation of moderation, survey reveals](#)
3. a third of Gen Z adults don't drink
[Gen Z: The Sober Curious Generation](#)
4. 9 in 10 buyers of non-alcoholic drinks also regularly purchasing alcoholic ones
[Non-Alcohol: A Mindful Moderator in the US](#)
5. Almost half of Gen Z now go to TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube instead of Google
[GenZ Dumping Google For TikTok, Instagram As Social Search Wins](#)
6. 30% calling themselves 'creators' and a quarter 'influencers'
[Hubspot Consumer Trends Report](#)