# 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 <u>Al Personas</u> and custom-built <u>segmentation</u> 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 The labels of "drinker" and "teetotal" have been replaced by context-driven habits.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 <u>attitudinal studies</u> and <u>conjoint analysis</u> 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:

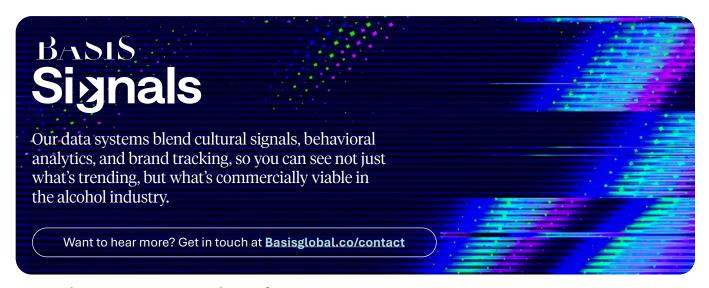
The rules of discovery have shifted. Almost half of Gen Z search TikTok or YouTube instead of Google, and 30% consider themselves content creators.

## 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 <u>social listening</u> 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.



# 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' <u>Hubspot Consumer Trends Report</u>