

The Value of the Anecdotal: Listening to Gen Z - Our Next-Gen Consumers

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The Value of the Anecdotal

Listening to Gen Z

Our Next-Gen Consumers

Cynthia Barstow

UMass Isenberg Marketing
Faculty

ShelfSense Podcast Host

Marigold Averill

UMass Isenberg Student
ShelfSense Podcast Marketing
Associate



Meet

the next gen students

UMassAmherst | Isenberg School of Management

490 Marketing for Health & Wellness

424 Influencer Marketing

422 Advertising Strategy

410 Consumer Behavior

464/564 Sustainable Product Innovation

470/570 Sustainability Marketing

496 Protect Our Breasts - BCPP

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Emerging adulthood

Ages 14-29 Gen Z

Ages 18-25/29 Emerging adulthood

- identity explorations
- instability
- self-focus
- anxiety
- possibilities

“Emerging adults (roughly ages 18–29) in 2026 are experiencing a “cumulative mental health burden” resulting from the long-term, intertwined impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating climate-related disasters.”

– JJ Arnett

Stats & Anecdotal

- **On Side Hustles:** (48% have them)
 - Building businesses (80% online)
 - Internships & Certificates
 - Jobs & Soft Skills (Clubs)
- **On NOT Drinking:** (63% decreased interest)
 - Cannabis access
- **On Social:** (90-95% use)
 - On it constantly
 - wish they weren't - it's addictive
 - reinforces lack of trust particularly influencers
- **On Money, Meaning & Wellbeing:** (52-89%)
 - Eliminates non-profits
 - Contribution in some way
- **On AI Use:** (60%-70% use)
 - Fear job loss
 - Fear of "cheating"





Life Stages



- college/university
- move back home
- job changes (age 20-29=7)
- apartment with friends, then mate
- marriage (age 27 for women/29 for men)
- first child (age 28-32)



Free of-
fragrance...

Shopping on the outskirts
of the store; artificial
foods make us uncertain.

Price unfortunately
wins due to
being overwhelmed

Chat GPT

**Shelf
Confidence**

Classroom Question Sets

convenience usually wins
we don't want to waste time
going anywhere else

**Values vs. \$
Convenience**

Known
Brands

few ingredients

brands we've
had before

Influencers

cheaper prices
because we are
college students

Willing to spend
more on what we're
educated or
influenced on
social

Peer interviews



turn you off?

"sugar free"
"diet"
"zero calorie"
"animal tested"
"fragrance"
"artificial"
"protein everything"
"anything owned by a
celebrity"
"food dye"
"reduced fat"
"Red 40"
"Keto"
"lite"

What phrases do
you hear from
brands that
instantly...

*Language
Capture*

grab your attention?

"#1 recommended by..."
"Natural"
"Local"
"Grass fed"
"cage free"
"cruelty free"
"fragrance free"
"organic...confused by what it
means"
minimal ingredient list
whole grains
high in protein
(for the right products)
"ethically sourced"
"Non-GMO"



Direct from our Gen Z

What's one thing you wish brands understood about your generation, but don't seem to be hearing?"

“Win, Win, Win Commerce”



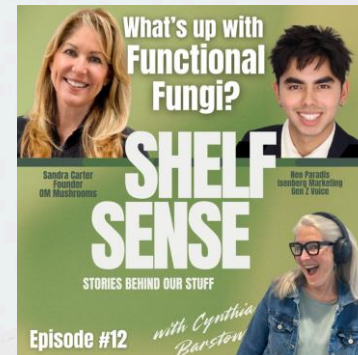
Gary Hirshberg
Co-Founder &
Chief Organic
Optimist
Stonyfield Farm



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SHELF SENSE

STORIES BEHIND OUR STUFF

with Cynthia Barston

