



PwC's Voice of the Consumer 2025: India perspective

A value recipe for the food industry

September 2025





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Overview

The food industry is navigating dual pressures: intensifying supply chain constraints and rapidly evolving consumer demands for healthier, tech-integrated choices. These challenges are compounded by consumer uncertainty around income growth and squeezed savings, while brands contend with fierce competition and market volatility. Yet this evolving landscape also presents compelling opportunities. Demographic shifts are giving rise to niche customer segments, unlocking potential for innovative stock-keeping units (SKUs) and new channel propositions tailored to emerging needs.

As businesses pursue diversification and industries reconfigure to stay ahead of the curve, new value pools are beginning to emerge. Simultaneously, evolving consumer preferences, behaviours and purchasing power will redefine where value is generated and where it diminishes in the decade ahead. Our recent research outlines how the reinvented global food ecosystem – what we refer to as the ‘How we feed’ domain – is poised to address both human and business needs, with companies combining their own capabilities and engaging with ecosystem partners in new ways.

By 2035, the ‘Feed’ domain in India could achieve a baseline gross value added (GVA) of USD 1.3 trillion, unlocking substantial growth opportunities for businesses.¹ To gain deeper insights into how consumer preferences are shaping the future of the food industry, our latest ‘Voice of the Consumer’ survey engaged over 21,000 participants across 28 countries, including 1,031 participants from India.

Our research indicates that consumers are prioritising nutrition, affordability and sustainability – embracing local produce, digital grocery platforms and wellness technologies. Climate concerns are rising, yet taste, price and nutritional value remain key drivers of buying decisions. The growing use of healthcare apps and openness to generative AI (GenAI) signal a new era of personalised wellness. As anxiety grows around food safety, waste, and additives, consumers are calling for greater transparency and trust from brands.

Interestingly, while more than half of the consumers surveyed believe that government and public health bodies should take the lead in promoting healthier food choices, the recent Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms appear to align with these expectations for stronger regulatory action.

The reforms have reduced indirect taxes on essential food items, while significantly increasing the GST on carbonated, caffeinated, and energy drinks from 28% to 40%.²

¹ PwC, Value in motion

² GST revamp introduces 40% tax rate: What are sin goods and why they are in highest slab? All you need to know

The convergence of these factors is unlocking opportunities for both established players and new entrants. For instance, technology companies, traditionally outside the food business, can help address growing concerns around pesticide usage by enabling AI-driven precision agriculture that minimises chemical use. Companies developing wearable technology are empowering users to monitor their nutritional habits, diets and calorie intake. Likewise, healthcare providers are foraying into innovative nutrition solutions. For example, one of India's oldest pharmaceutical companies offers a diverse range of nutritional products for people of various age groups and with different types of medical conditions.

This evolution signals a shift in value creation, as companies increasingly transcend traditional industry boundaries. By harnessing innovation and ecosystem partnerships, they are tapping into other growth domains to deliver differentiated value propositions. Going forward, we can expect new areas of convergence in the food industry to meet rising consumer aspirations around food safety, quality and nutritional value.



02

India research findings at a glance



Cost-conscious consumers are adopting saving behaviours

63% of consumers in our survey were concerned about the cost of food. Among those who were extremely, very or somewhat concerned about food prices, almost half are prioritising shopping in different stores to maximise savings through offers, switching to discount stores and seeking promotions to offset the increased food costs. Further, 44% of consumers are choosing to buy in bulk, while an equal percentage of consumers are growing their own food.



Food choices remain rooted in culture

74% of consumers stated that their food choices were deeply rooted in cultural heritage and longstanding traditions. This suggests that companies that provide functional heritage foods (e.g. aam panna and jeera-flavoured drinks) which appeal to culture, tradition and nostalgia will have an edge.



Taste trumps price, nutrition is also a key driver of food choices

Globally, for consumers, value (price, promotional offers, rewards) is the most important factor when choosing food items. In India, however, quality (i.e. taste of product) dictates which food items consumers are going to buy. Indeed, 40% of consumers ranked taste among the top three factors when selecting food items, while 39% ranked price and 38% listed high nutritional value as their top three decision-making factors.



Amid growing food safety concerns, higher nutritional value is the primary reason to switch brands

84% of consumers surveyed were extremely or very concerned about food safety. Respondents also expressed concerns over ultra-processed foods, pesticide use, and the levels of additives and preservatives in food. Health benefits, including higher nutritional value, were in fact cited by consumers as the primary driver for switching brands, followed by better taste and better value for money. Interestingly, half of the consumers believe that food producers and manufacturers are responsible for incentivising healthy and nutritious eating.



Convenience is fast reshaping consumer habits

More than 70% of consumers have used supermarkets for grocery shopping in the last year, 60% have used local retailers and 55% have used an on-demand grocery delivery platform. Moreover, 46% are buying ready-to-eat meals, 41% are ordering takeout, and 38% are eating out at least once a week.

With the implementation of the GST reforms, dining out is set to become more pocket-friendly. The GST on restaurant meals has been standardised at 5%, a reduction from the previous tiered rates of 12% to 18%, which varied by restaurant category.³



80% of consumers now use at least one healthcare app or wearable technology

80% of consumers are using healthcare apps or wearable technologies to monitor exercise, weight loss, and mental health and wellbeing. Globally, 70% of consumers are using these technologies. In India, 60% of consumers are open to using GenAI to create personalised diet plans and 56% are open to using it for meal planning. This signals a unique opportunity for companies to create a holistic wellness ecosystem merging food, health and technology.



Nearly half of the consumers prefer to buy food with sustainable packaging

92% of consumers said they were worried about climate change, with almost 47% admitting to worrying daily. Reducing their personal food waste (62%) and cutting down on personal consumption (60%) were the most common actions taken by consumers to cut down their impact on climate change. Further, 49% of consumers said they avoided buying products that were produced in a way that was harmful to the environment, while 49% said they preferred foods with sustainable packaging. Indian consumers seem to be more environmentally conscious than their global counterparts, with 73% of them (vs 44% globally) expressing their willingness to pay more to support environmental sustainability in food production.

Our research indicates that Indian consumers are increasingly cost-conscious, culturally rooted and tech-empowered. As health and nutrition take centre stage in consumer priorities, food and beverage brands are under intensifying scrutiny, risking a widening trust deficit. To remain relevant, brands must align their business models with value-driven choices, simultaneously prioritising innovation in nutrition.

3 New GST rates: How much will you save on your next restaurant bill?

03

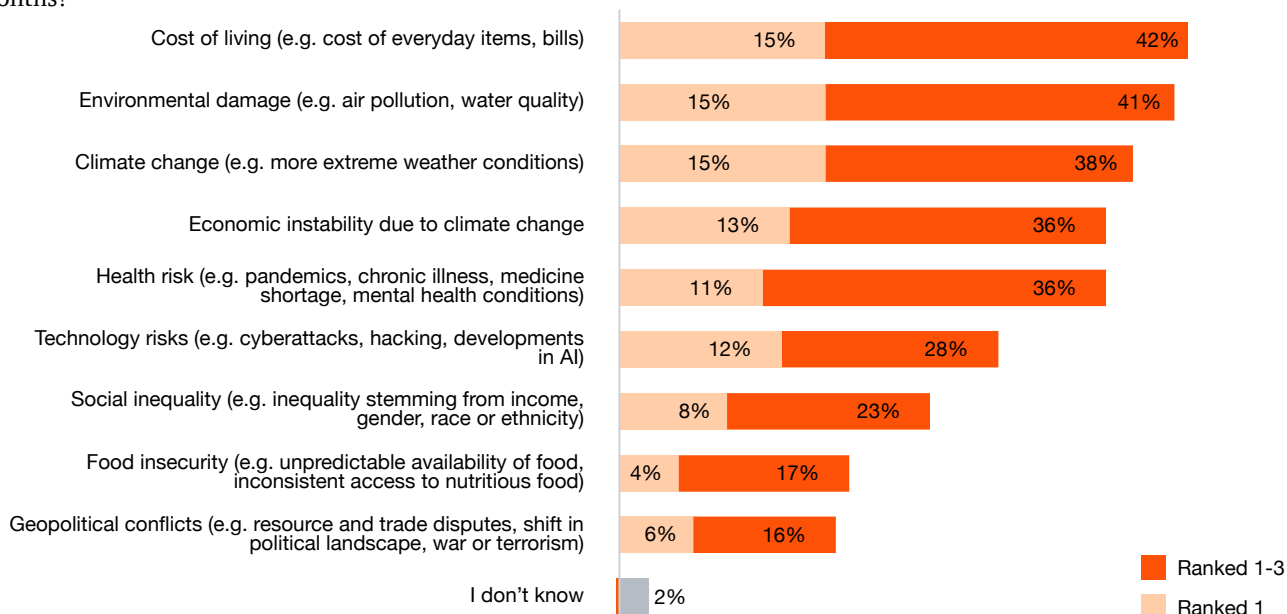
Key insights

1) Cost of living crunch is reshaping consumer behaviour

Consumers globally agreed that cost of living would have the greatest impact on their country over the next year. Latin America was an exception, with consumers in the region citing economic instability as the biggest risk. Environmental damage and economic instability due to climate change are also top of mind for Indian consumers. In our 2024 survey,⁴ Indian consumers ranked climate change as the topmost risk to the country, followed by health risks and inflation.

Threats/risks consumers believe could have the greatest impact on their country in the next 12 months

Q: Which of the following potential threats/risks do you feel could have the greatest impact on your country in the next 12 months?



In our research, 32% of consumers said they were 'financially coping', while 7% mentioned that they were financially insecure and struggling to pay bills. The GST relief is significant for families that previously faced fluctuations in vegetable prices and food inflation. With the revised GST rates, household budgets are likely to become more manageable.⁵

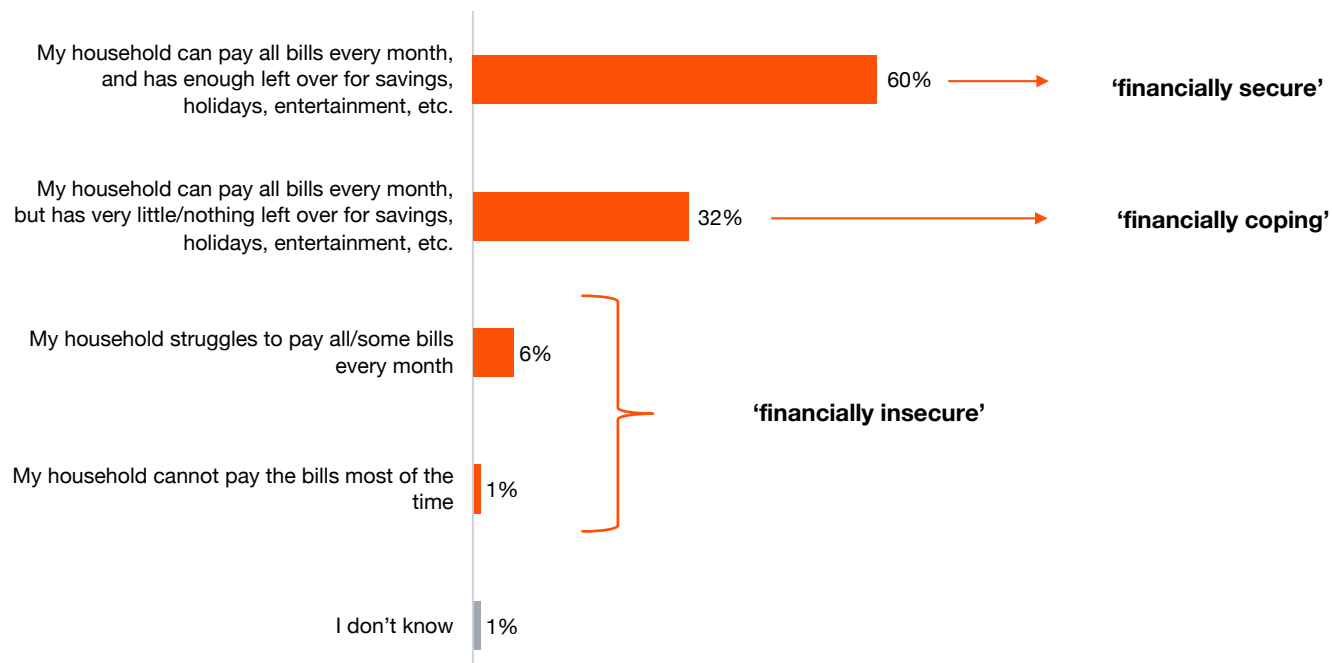
Consumers nonetheless are adopting money-saving behaviours such as shopping at different stores, switching to products with discounts or using coupons and promotions. Brands need to respond by institutionalising regular promotional cycles and enhancing loyalty programmes. These mechanisms not only support short-term conversion but also foster long-term consumer retention in a volatile pricing landscape.

⁴ PwC, Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024: Insights from India

⁵ Sitharaman & co just slashed your food bill with GST 2.0

Current financial situation

Q: Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?



Steps to offset the effects of increased food costs

Q: You've noted that you're concerned about the cost of food. What actions, if any, are you taking to reduce or offset the effects of food cost?



Key takeaway

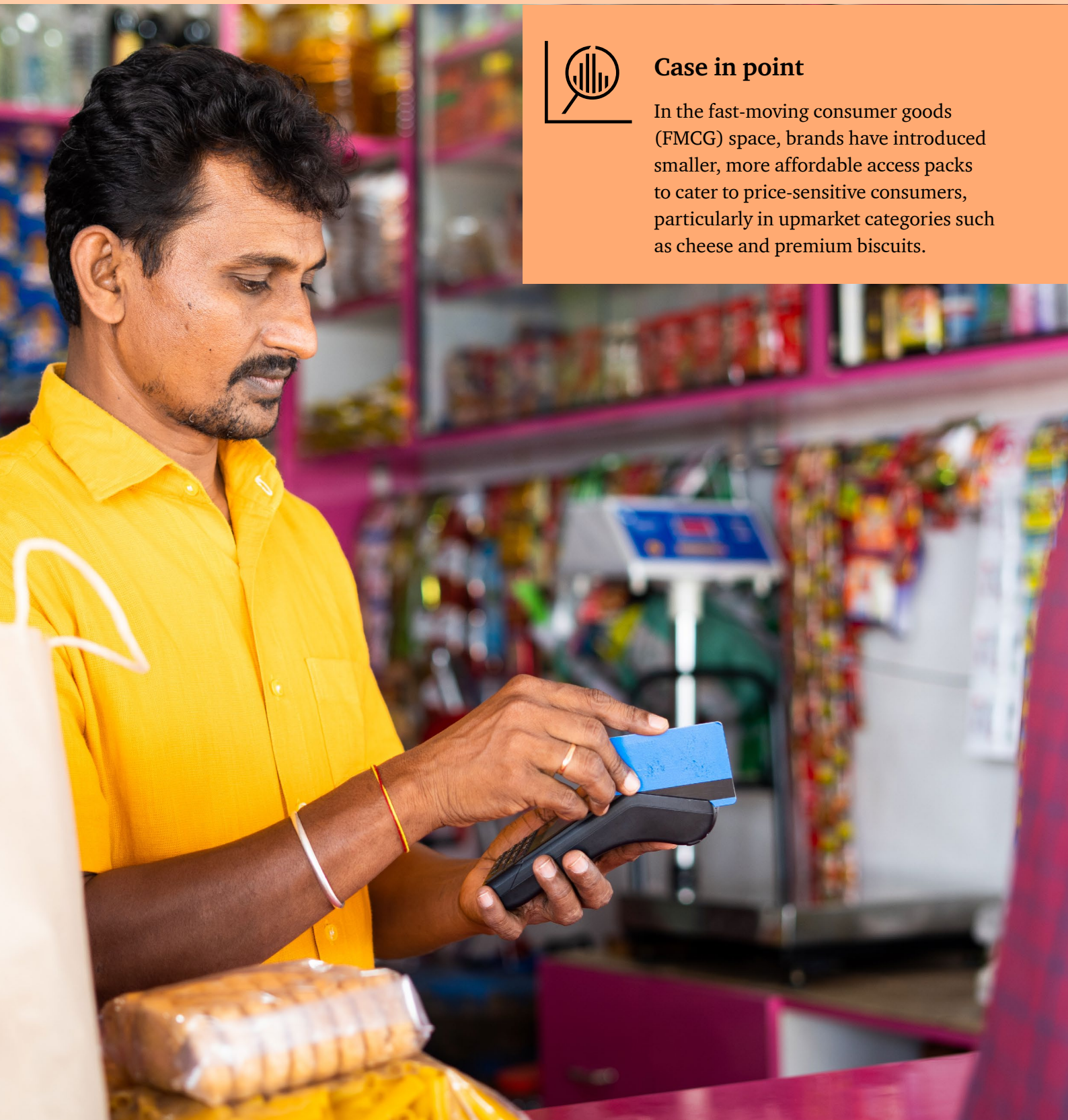
Brands must recalibrate their value propositions to better serve a consumer base that is increasingly cost-sensitive. With nearly 40% of consumers identifying as financially coping or insecure, affordability is no longer a differentiator – it is a baseline expectation. Strategic pricing, value-driven product portfolios, and targeted promotions will be critical in

maintaining relevance and driving volume. Moreover, with climate concerns top of mind for consumers, brands should actively promote their climate and sustainability efforts, especially through social media. This is the primary channel through which consumers in our study said that they learned about such initiatives.



Case in point

In the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) space, brands have introduced smaller, more affordable access packs to cater to price-sensitive consumers, particularly in upmarket categories such as cheese and premium biscuits.

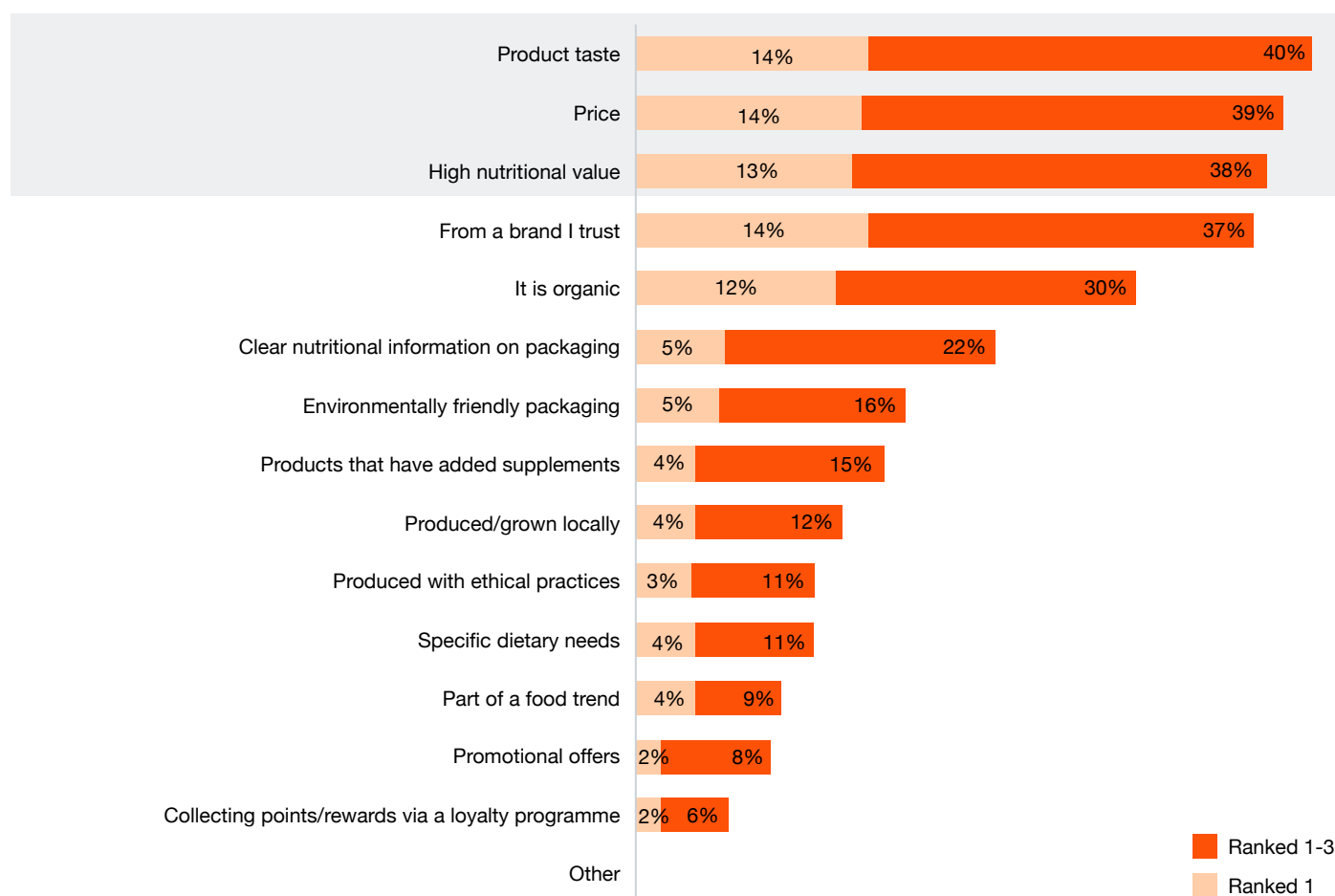


2) Taste, price and growing nutritional awareness are driving food choices

Taste, price and nutritional value are the primary factors when purchasing products. Health benefits, such as added vitamins, minerals and higher nutritional value, have emerged as the leading factor influencing consumers to switch food brands. This signals a growing demand for functional foods that support wellness goals. Taste and value for money are other key reasons consumers switch brands, reinforcing the importance for companies to deliver both sensory satisfaction and affordability.

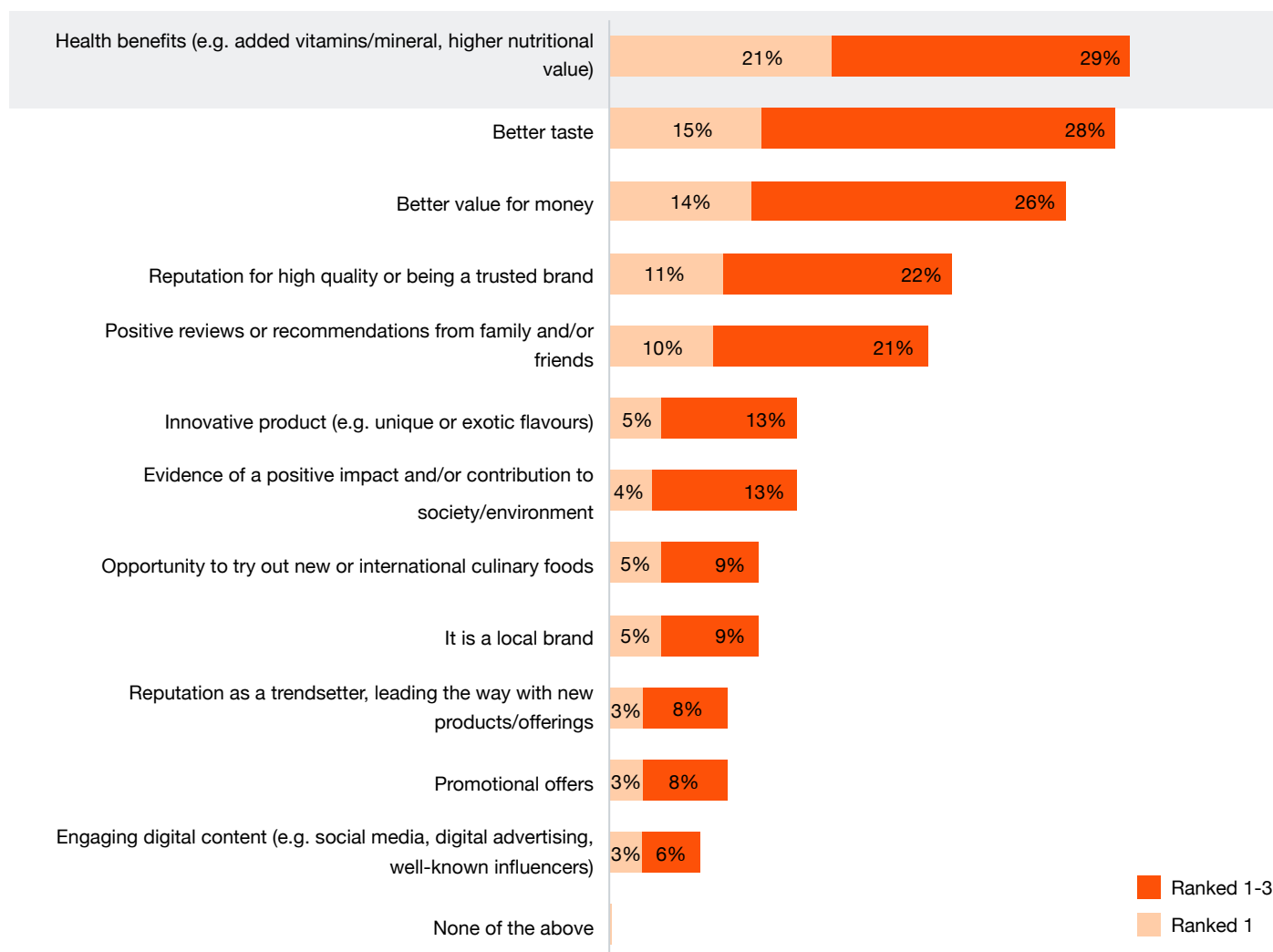
Most important factors when choosing which food items to buy

Q: When you're choosing which food items to buy, which factors are most important to you?



Factors which would encourage you to switch to a different food brand

Q: Which of the following factors, if any, would encourage you to switch from a food brand you usually buy to a different brand?



Key takeaway

The fact that traditional brand equity drivers such as reputation and word-of-mouth rank lower indicates a shift in consumer priorities toward product-led differentiation. To remain competitive, brands should clearly communicate health credentials and ensure pricing strategies reflect

perceived value. They can also invest in nutrient-rich innovation which in turn opens up possibilities for collaboration with cross-industry players to capture emerging value in this segment.



Case in point

Leading FMCG players have introduced or acquired brands targeting older segments, with more nutritious/functional ingredients and clearly established wellness benefits. Grocery chains too have rolled out nutritious health-focused private label options and wellness aisles. Consumer focus on health and nutrition is evidenced by the fact that sales of no-sugar and low-sugar drinks have doubled in India in 2024.⁶

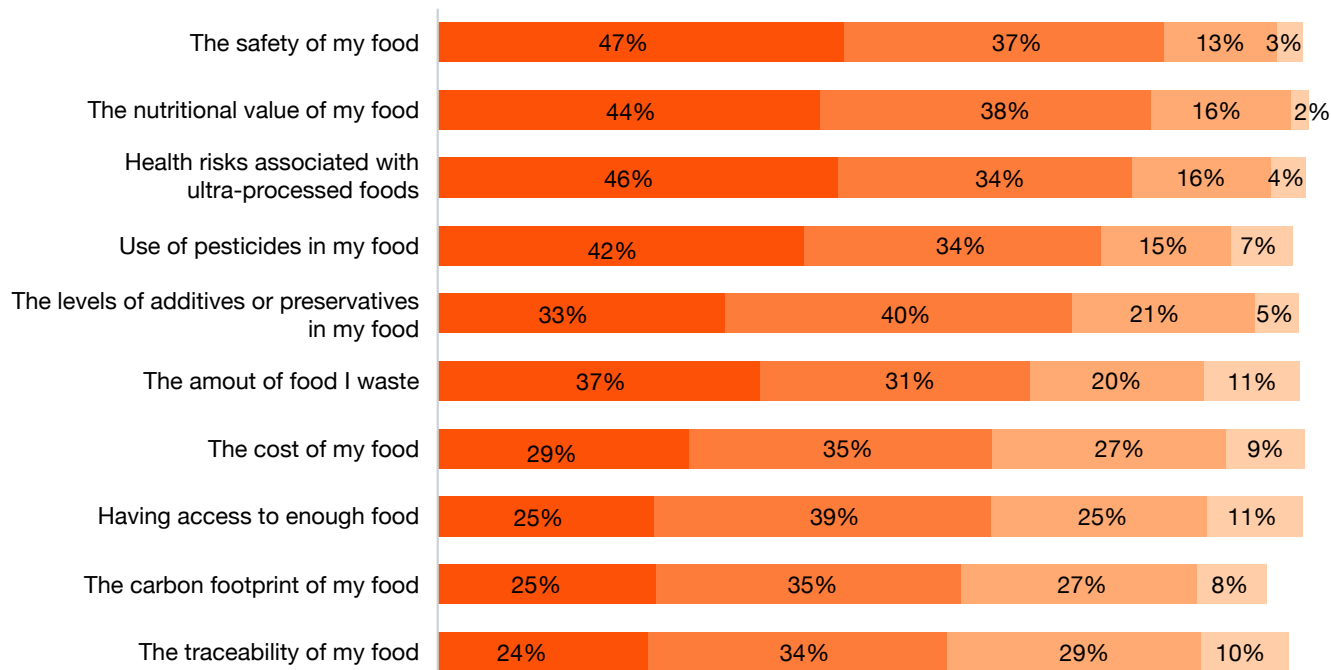


3) Food safety concerns outweigh cost constraints

Consumer expectations around greater food safety underscore the need for companies in the food industry to explore synergies with those in the health and wellness industry. In our research, concerns around food safety, nutritional value, food processing and pesticide use outweighed cost considerations.

Concerns around food

Q: How concerned, if at all, are you about the following?

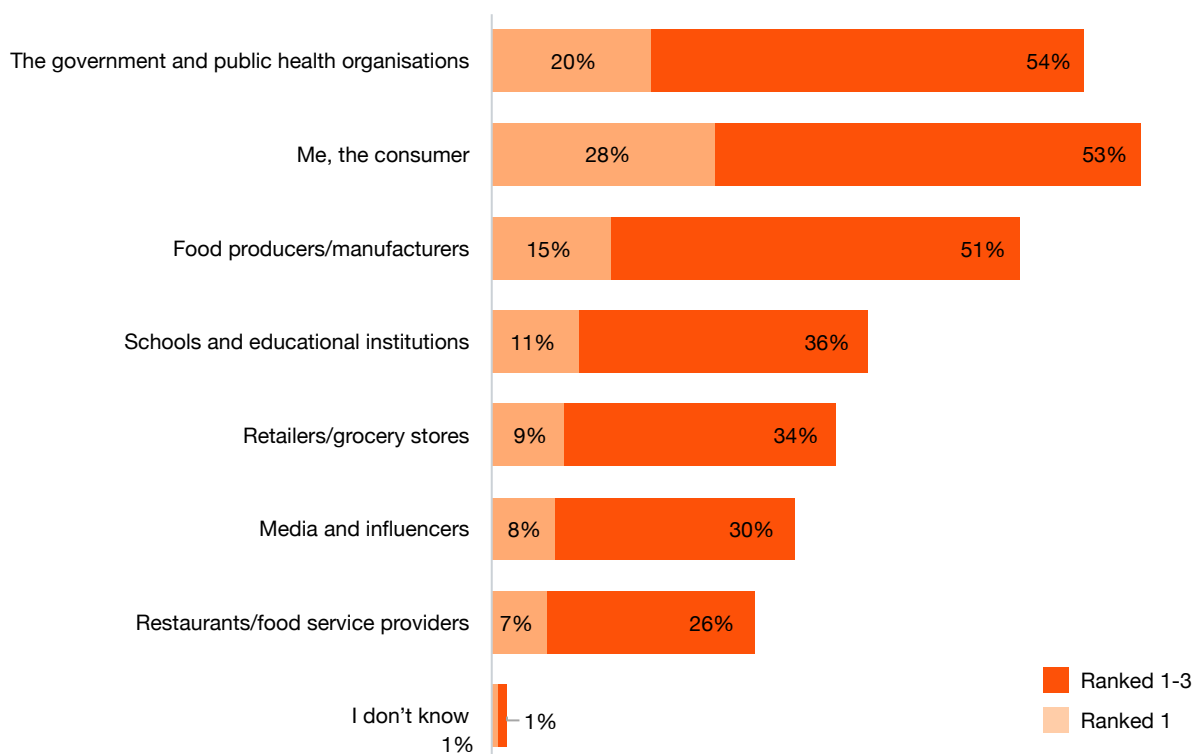


■ Extremely concerned
 ■ Very concerned
 ■ Somewhat concerned
 ■ Not at all concerned



Responsibility for encouraging healthy and nutritious eating

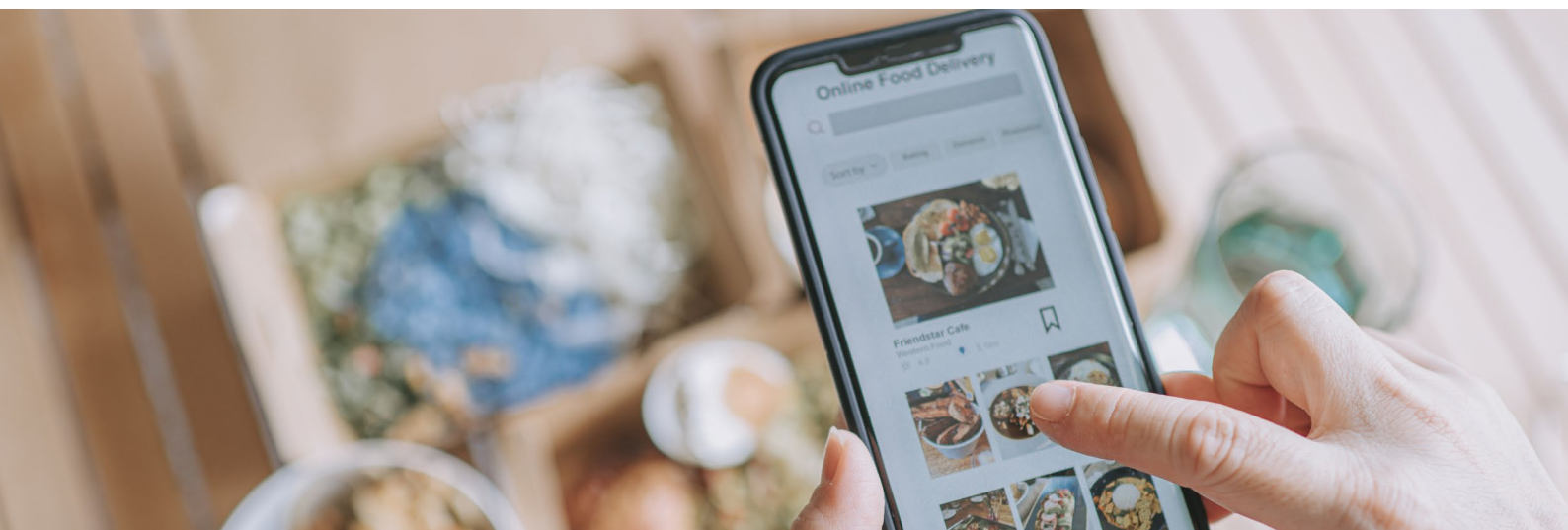
Q: Who holds the primary responsibility to encourage and incentivise healthy and nutritious eating?



Globally, consumers tend to take personal responsibility for healthy and nutritious eating. In India, however, 54% of consumers believe the government and public health organisations are responsible for driving healthy eating. This is followed closely by personal responsibility (53%) and food producers and manufacturers (51%).

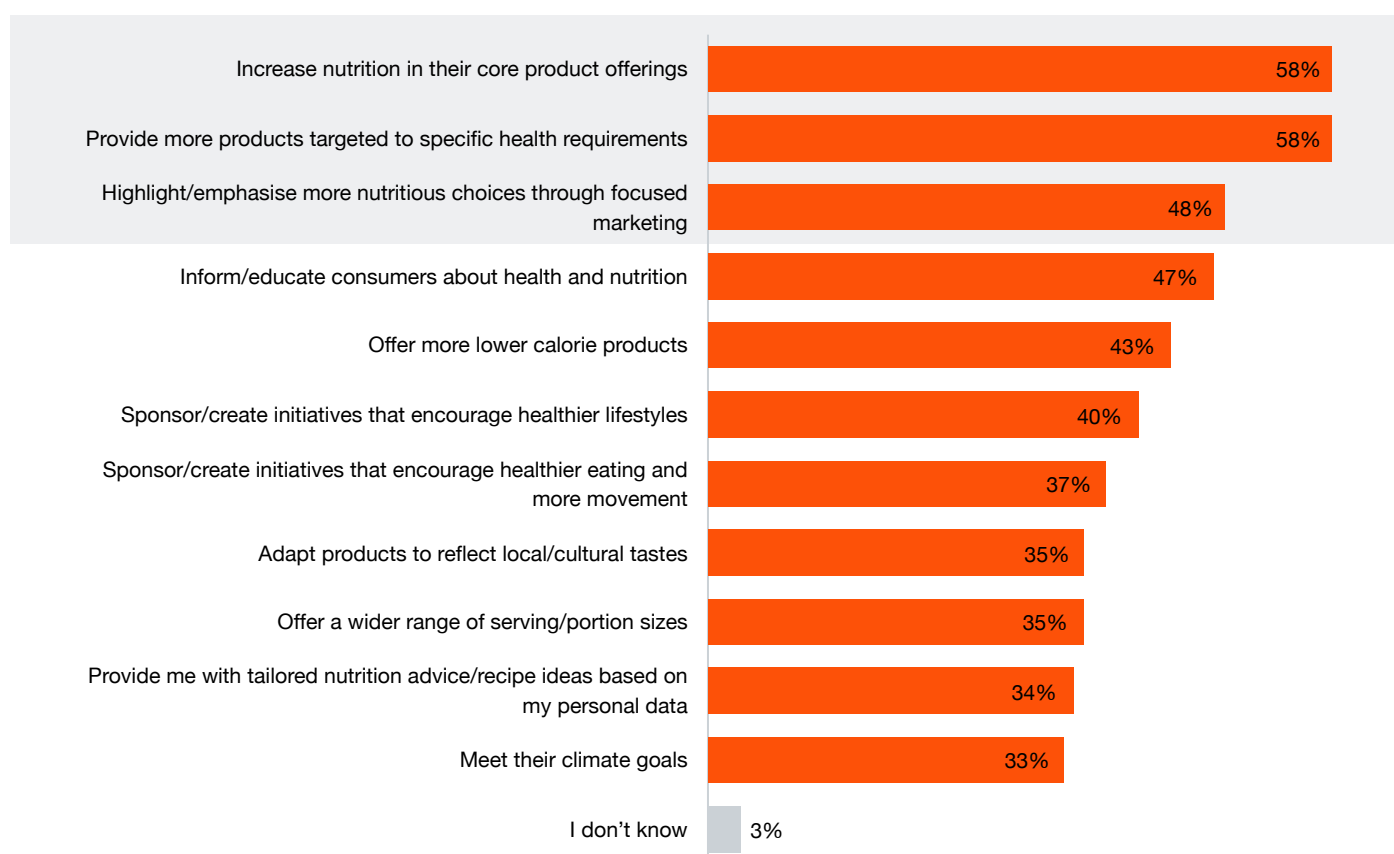
The GST rate cuts are expected to encourage healthier eating habits. Ultra high temperature milk will now be tax-free (down from 5%), while condensed milk, butter, ghee, paneer, and cheese have moved down from 12% to 5% or nil in some cases, ensuring daily nutrition remains tax-free. Dry fruits and diabetic foods have also seen a reduction from 12% to 5% in a bid to promote healthier dietary habits.⁷

⁷ GST 2.0 gets the green light: What gets cheaper and costlier from September 22?



Contribution of big food/beverage companies to improving health of consumers

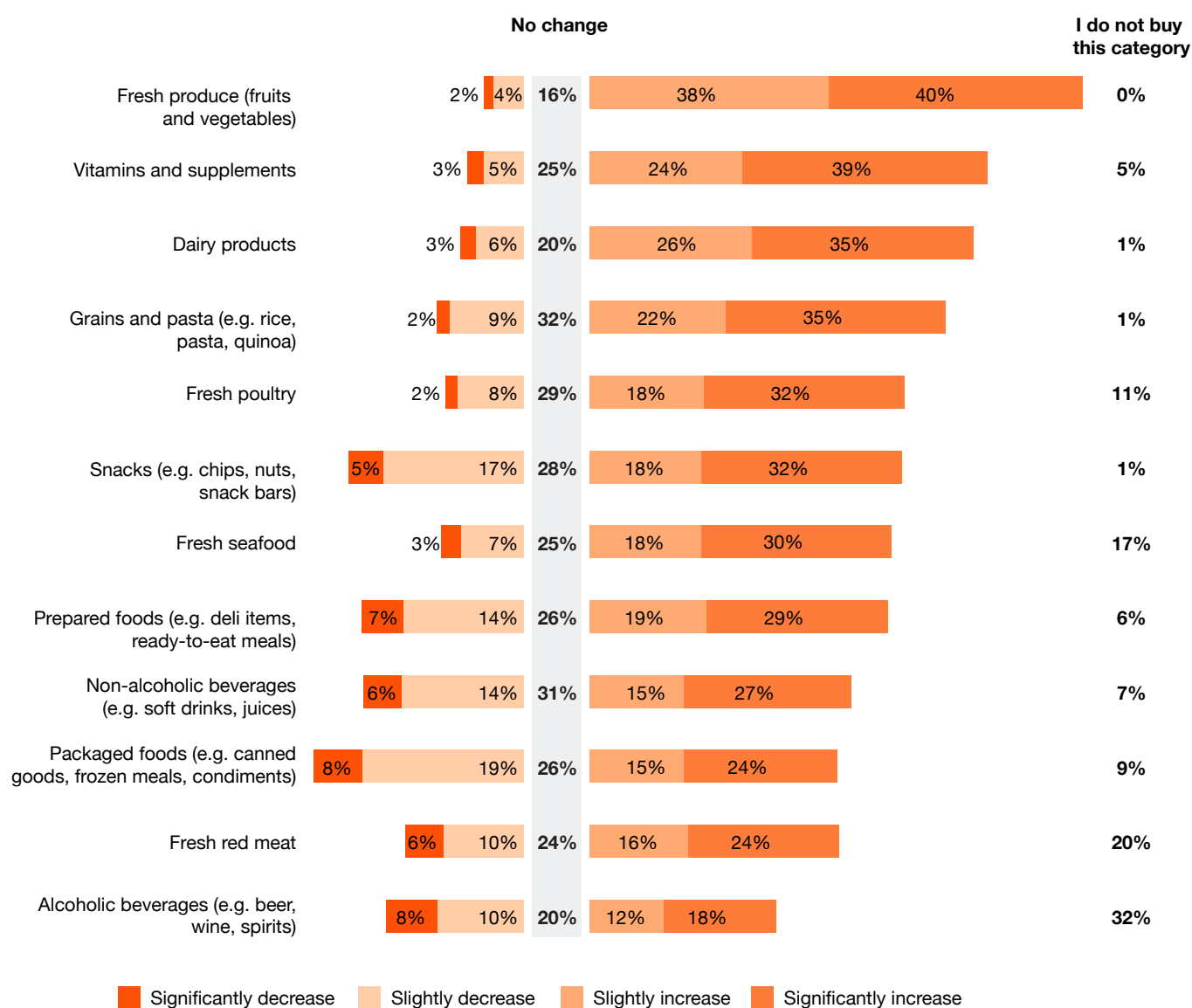
Q: In your opinion, how could big food/beverage companies contribute to improving the health and wellness of consumers?



When asked how major food and beverage companies can contribute to consumer health and wellness, consumers recommended that they should increase nutrition in their core product offerings, offer specific health-related products, and focus on marketing more nutritious choices. Companies could therefore look at enhancing the nutritional profiles of traditional products while also maintaining taste and affordability – the key drivers of consumer choices.

Expected changes in food consumed across specific categories

Q: Do you expect any change over the next six months in the amount you eat from the following categories?



Consumers' growing focus on nutrition is reflected in their shift towards fresh foods – 78% of consumers plan to increase their intake of fresh produce over the next six months. Rising interest in vitamins, supplements and dairy products further signals the need for brands to pivot toward health-centric portfolios.

Key takeaway

As concerns around food safety, nutritional integrity, and the presence of ultra-processed ingredients and pesticides intensify, brands must respond with a commitment to transparency through clean labelling, credible certifications, and clear communication of product benefits. This approach will help address immediate health anxieties and build long-term brand trust in a market increasingly driven by informed choices.

Moreover, consumers are increasingly expecting major food and beverage companies to play a proactive role in promoting public health. This marks a clear shift for brands: from broad wellness messaging to targeted product innovation and focused marketing that emphasises nutritional choices. By aligning offerings and communication with these expectations, brands can strengthen consumer trust and position themselves as everyday health partners.



Case in point

Low-calorie and low-fat snacks are seeing significant growth as millets are being increasingly used in India. In fact, one in five snacks being consumed is a healthy snack – low calorie, low fat or focused on gut health.⁸

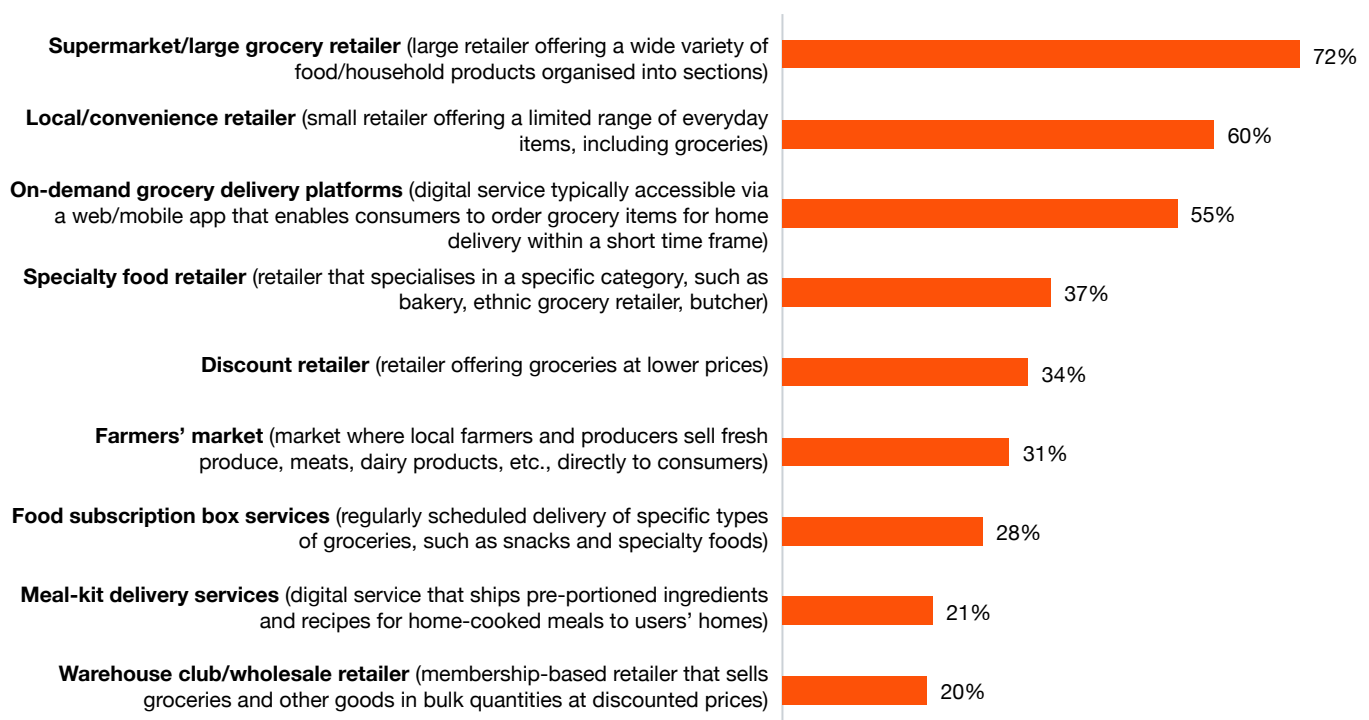
Consequently, companies are launching organic ranges or acquiring such brands. In addition, they are actively upgrading their packaging with QR codes, enabling end-to-end traceability for both processed foods and packaged fresh produce. The QR codes also provide access to reports from independent test labs confirming that products are free of pesticides.

4) Convenience is a growing area for value creation

The Indian retail landscape is witnessing a convergence of traditional and digital shopping channels. Consumers are availing of both in-store experiences and on-demand delivery platforms to optimise convenience and value. With 34% of consumers gravitating towards discount retailers, brands must innovate across both physical and digital touchpoints to deliver cost-effective solutions that align with evolving shopping habits.

Shopping for groceries in the last year

Q: Where have you shopped for grocery items in the last year?



Use of healthcare apps or wearable technology

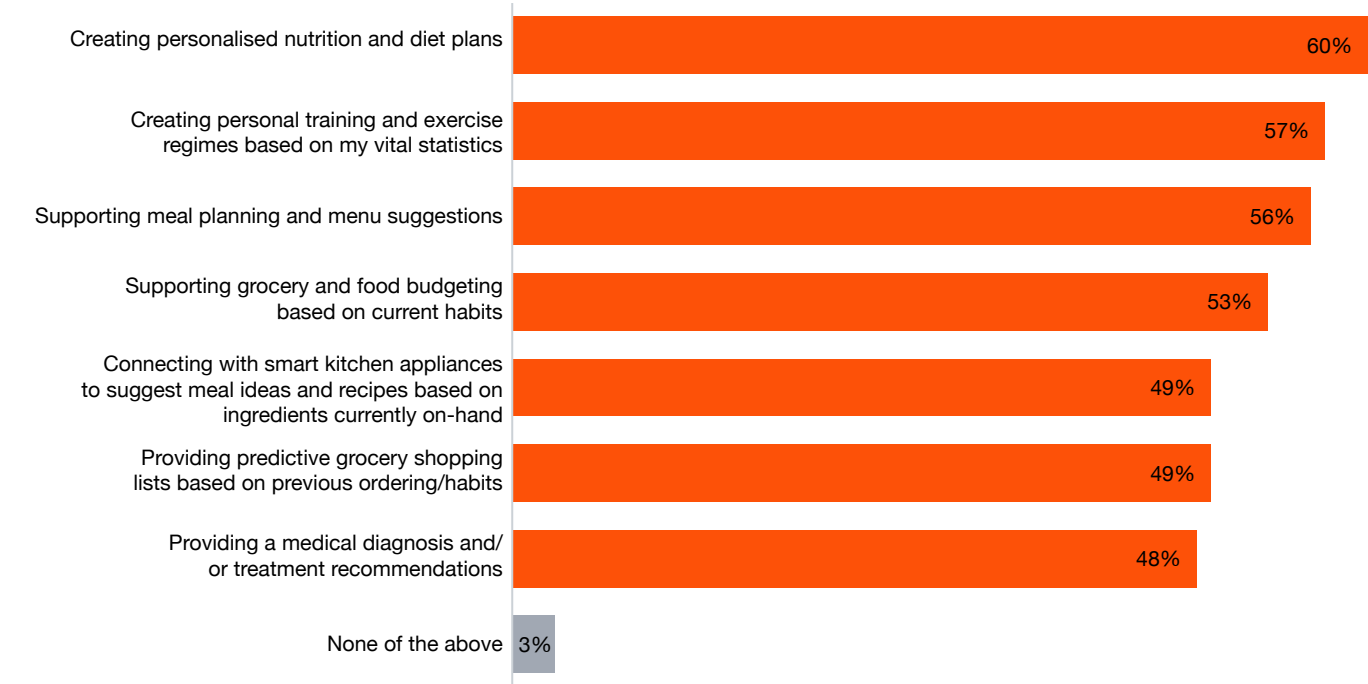
Q: Do you use healthcare apps (mobile applications that provide users with health-related information and services) or wearable technology (e.g. fitness trackers, smartwatches) for any of the following reasons/activities?



Digital health technologies are becoming central to personal wellness routines, with over 80% of consumers using at least one healthcare app or wearable. The most common use cases – exercise tracking, dieting, weight management, and healthy eating – are complemented by a growing interest in mental health and sleep monitoring. A majority of users reported changes in daily habits owing to the use of such technology, with nearly half experiencing significant transformation.

Comfort with GenAI performing activities

Q: Which of the following activities would you be comfortable allowing GenAI to perform?



Tech-savvy consumers are also reimagining the home food experience, leveraging GenAI to enhance their health and wellness journeys. Key areas of interest include personalised diet plans, customised training regimes based on vital statistics, and AI-supported meal planning and menu suggestions.



Key takeaway

There is a palpable shift towards proactive, tech-enabled health management. For brands in the health, wellness, and nutrition space, the opportunity lies in integrating with digital ecosystems and offering personalised solutions. Consumers' comfort with using GenAI also signals a growing appetite

for precision wellness solutions powered by intelligent technology. By integrating GenAI into consumer-facing platforms and enabling experiences that are tailored to individual health goals and lifestyle preferences, brands can drive engagement, differentiation, trust and loyalty.



Case in point

A leading digital health and wellness company has partnered with an **on-demand grocery delivery company** to let users **order meals that align with dietary advice** provided by its AI coach. The integration is available to smart subscribers and allows direct meal ordering recommendations through the app. It represents a clear **omnichannel integration** of nutritional advice with on-demand delivery.



5) Climate change is top of mind, but purchase impact is low

Although a majority of consumers are worried about climate change, climate and sustainability initiatives rank low when it comes to choosing food or switching to a new brand. Over half of the consumers are not regularly seeking information on food brands' climate and sustainability efforts, and a further 11% rarely or never seek this information. At a personal level, however, consumers are taking proactive steps to reduce their impact on climate change. Reducing personal food waste and cutting down on personal consumption were the most common actions taken to this end.

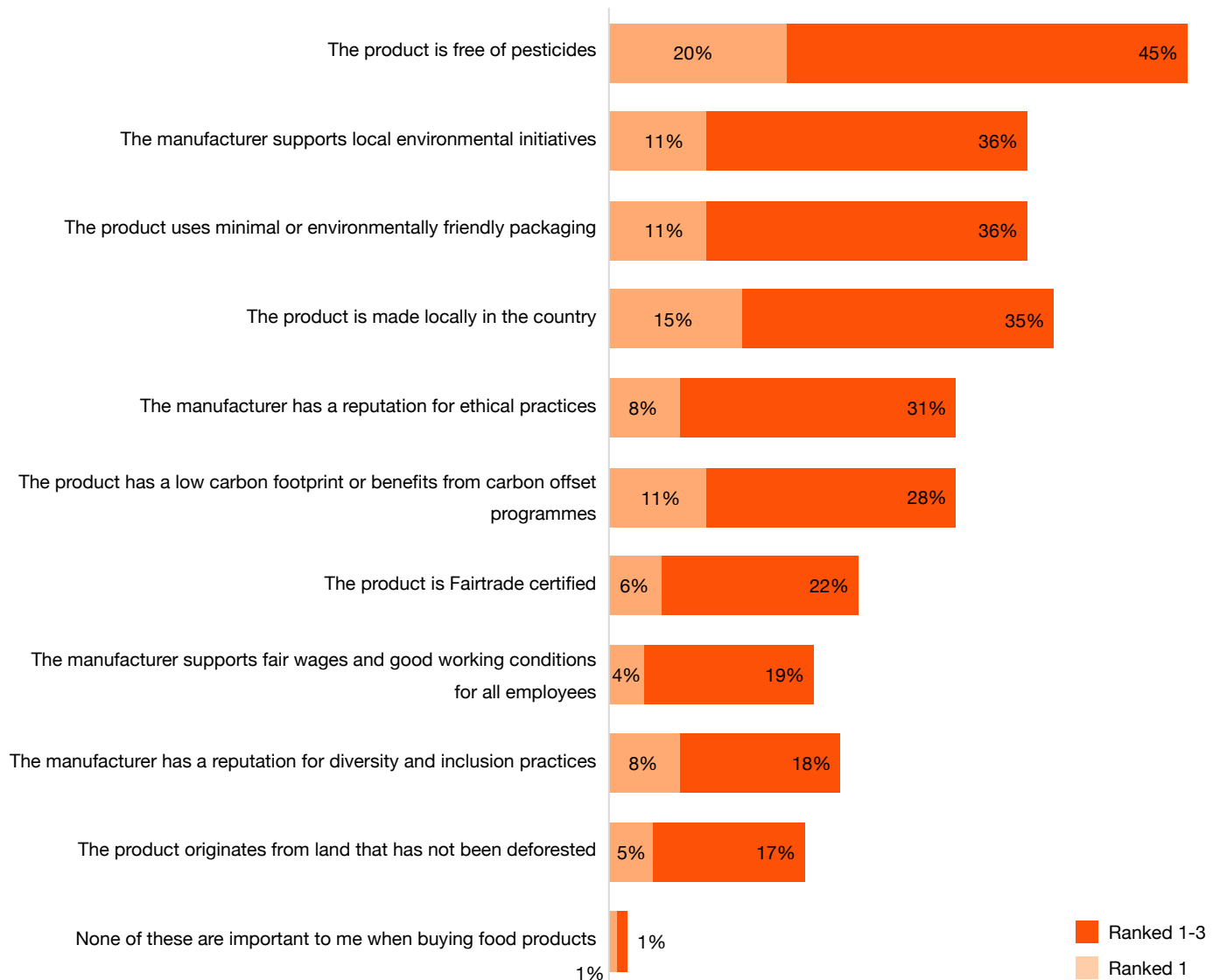
Actions taken to reduce impact of food on climate change

Q: Have you taken any of the following actions to reduce your impact on climate change with the food that you buy and eat?



Most important sustainability practices when buying food products

Q: When you buy food products, which of the following sustainable practices are most important to you?



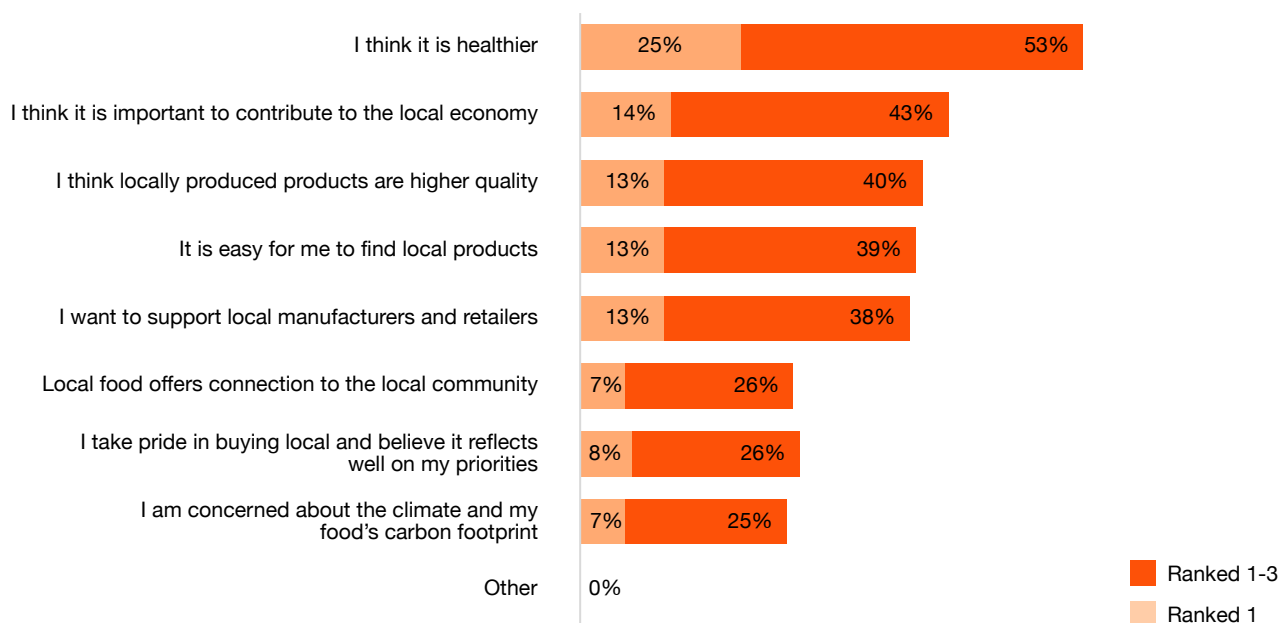
Pesticide-free products, supporting environmental initiatives and environment-friendly packaging were listed as the most important sustainability practices for food purchases. Additionally, 73% of consumers surveyed said they would be willing to pay more for their food to support and improve the health of the land. This reflects a growing alignment between consumer values and sustainable agriculture. For brands, this presents a clear opportunity to differentiate themselves through transparent sustainability commitments, backed by credible sourcing and impact narratives. Communicating the environmental value embedded in pricing can help justify premiums and build long-term brand equity in a purpose-driven market.

Environmental responsibility therefore is no longer a peripheral issue. It is becoming a core expectation. Brands must move beyond compliance and actively demonstrate their commitment to sustainability through transparent practices, measurable impact and consistent communication.



Reasons for buying locally produced foods

Q: You have noted that you typically buy food that is locally produced. What are the main reasons for that choice?



While globally consumers prioritise price over local production, the Indian consumer is more willing to pay a premium for locally produced foods. As per our survey results, 53% of Indian respondents (compared to 44% globally) prefer locally produced food even if it is more expensive.

Perceptions of better health, higher quality and a desire to support the local economy are drawing consumers to locally produced foods. This preference reflects a convergence of personal wellness and community impact. Brands should respond by strengthening local sourcing strategies and communicating the health and quality benefits of local products.

Key takeaway

While taste, price, nutritional value and trust in the brand remain the dominant factors influencing food choices, sustainability is emerging as a secondary but increasingly

influential consideration. Brands have an opportunity to shape consumer preferences by integrating sustainability narratives into product marketing.



Case in point

In the recent past, several mainstream brands have launched campaigns on water positive processing, EV delivery, pollution-free logistics, circular economy, plastic neutrality and tree planting per product sale. Online grocery platforms have announced initiatives to source local produce first wherever available, ensuring higher value for local farmers.

Recently, a mainstream brand launched a social media campaign highlighting its recyclable packaging and plastic waste collection efforts in India. The campaign directly ties environmental consciousness to product consumption – appealing to national pride and individual responsibility.



04

Adopting a domain-based approach

Our research sends a clear message. Consumer preferences are evolving rapidly, and companies must reinvent to meet growing demands for health and safety, transparency, convenience and affordability. A domain-based approach built on collaboration with ecosystem partners and innovative delivery formats is imperative. The following are three actions that can help companies make a domain-based play:⁹

Engage with adjacent industries

The food industry is dynamic and increasingly intersects with other areas. Our analysis shows that the top-performing consumer packaged goods companies are 1.2 times as likely as others to engage with adjacent industries, such as waste management, healthcare and logistics.¹⁰

By interacting closely with service providers, suppliers and logistics partners, companies can better cater to consumer demand for hyper-personalisation and convenience while finding innovative ways to cut costs. Boosting supply chain transparency improved margins for a UK retailer through reduced food waste and optimised inventory costs.¹¹

Cross-sector collaborations can enable companies to capture new value pools. Consider the value that can be seized by brands due to the growing consumer focus on nutrition. It is the top recommendation from consumers in our research, with a majority suggesting that food and beverage companies should increase nutrition in their core product offerings. Forward-thinking manufacturers are investing in research and development to cut down sugar content in their products while reducing the cost of ingredients.¹²

By collaborating with technology companies, food and beverage brands can integrate diverse expertise, from biotechnology to data analytics, to create innovative solutions. Partnerships with HealthTech organisations could enable AI-driven personalised dietary recommendations; leveraging AI-led simulations can help with material discovery and ingredient formulation.

There is also much value to be unlocked in the personalised nutrition space. Nutrition companies are leveraging genetic testing and data analytics to offer tailored dietary plans. Food and beverage companies have the potential to evolve into lifestyle ecosystems by helping consumers choose products aligned with their health goals.

⁹ This section is largely based on research by PwC's Research and Insights Hub.

¹⁰ PwC's Voice of the Consumer 2025

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.



Focus on AI-driven and agile co-innovation

Businesses must enhance their offerings to deliver both affordability and added value. Focus on innovation will be imperative in new product launches. Creating agile feedback loops with customers and key stakeholders could improve the innovation-to-sales ratio. Leveraging AI for faster iterations and deploying AI algorithms for smarter optimisation will reduce the need for prototyping, enabling companies to quickly adapt to market demands.

Apart from product development, packaging is another area where innovation is essential. It's important to note that consumers in our study listed buying products with environment-friendly packaging among their top sustainability practices. Therefore, companies could look at packaging solutions that reflect the healthier composition of products, ensuring they are appealing and informative. Moreover, brands could consider rolling out smart packaging, for instance, a QR code that allows a user to validate the safety of the product and access more curated content about the brand, ingredients and sourcing.

To sustain and foster a culture of co-innovation, brands could develop platforms to recognise and celebrate contributions from customers, ecosystem partners, internal teams and digital platforms that enable internal and external stakeholders to share and engage in innovation-focused discussions.

Design service-based models

New models, such as subscription and on-demand services, could cater to consumers' desire for personalisation and convenience. Companies could offer curated food subscriptions that support their health goals and also collaborate with health insurance companies to jointly offer tailored wellness insurance plans at discounted prices, helping customers benefit from their lifestyle choices. The power of robotics, AI, big data, ML, automation, digital twins and other manufacturing technologies can be leveraged to design and manufacture products. Through such commercially viable 'as-a-service' models, companies can offer curated food and beverages on a subscription basis.

About the survey

In January and February 2025, PwC surveyed 21,075 consumers across 28 countries and territories: Australia; Brazil; Canada; China; Egypt; France; Germany; Hong Kong, SAR; Hungary; India; Indonesia; Ireland; Malaysia; Mexico; the Netherlands; the Philippines; Poland; Qatar; Romania; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; South Africa; Spain; Thailand; the United Arab Emirates; Ukraine; the United States; and Vietnam. The respondents were at least 18 years old and were asked about a range of topics relating to consumer food consumption and trends, including grocery shopping and

food choices, the future of health, emerging technology, and climate and sustainability issues.

Interviews with industry executives took place in May 2025.

PwC Research, PwC's global centre of excellence for market research and insight, conducted this survey.

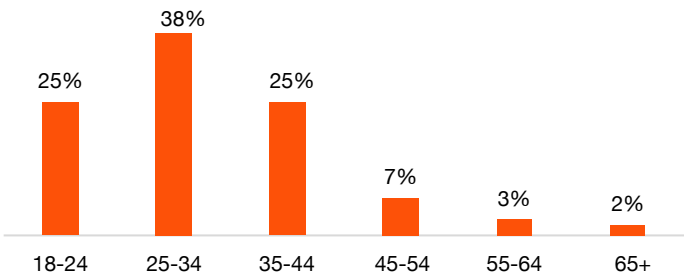
The survey of 1,031 Indian consumers included different age groups and represented working and non-working populations.

Representation across key demographics

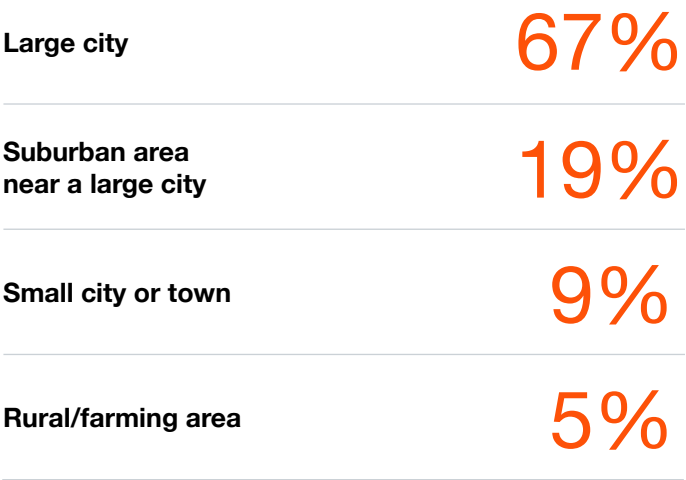
Gender



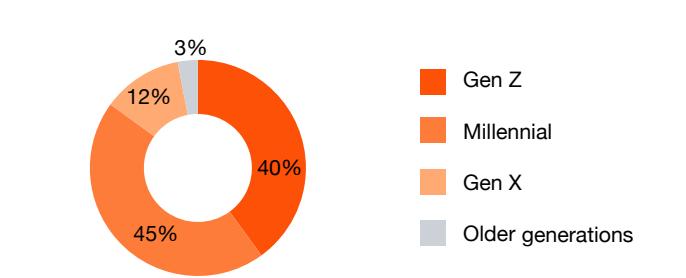
Age



Home location



Generation





1,031 consumer responses from all over India covering 21 states and 2 union territories



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