

Wunderkind

# U.S. Tariffs: Consumer Impact Survey Series

A special report following consumer  
purchase intent and behaviors

June 2025



# Market Alert:

## *Tariffs Are Reshaping Consumer Sentiment*

As U.S. tariffs continue to drive up costs across essential and discretionary product categories, consumer behavior is shifting rapidly in response. Price sensitivity is at an all-time high, prompting Americans to rethink not just what they buy, but also how, when, and where they make purchases. Shoppers are becoming more selective, seeking out deals, changing preferred retailers, and even delaying major purchases. This evolving landscape means brands must adapt quickly to meet new expectations and win loyalty in a value-driven market.

This mini-report equips brand marketers with the insights they need to align messaging and promotional strategies to evolving consumer expectations.

It is based on survey data collected between June 11 & 12, 2025, from 300 U.S. consumers, evenly split across genders and adult age groups.

Inside, we outline the new rules of engagement for brands navigating economic turbulence and planning for revenue resilience in the months ahead.

We plan to continue to poll U.S. consumer sentiment and behavior as long as tariffs persist in 2025.

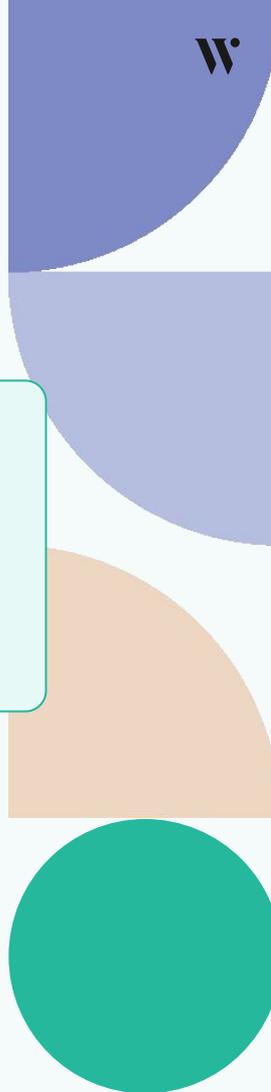
# Economic Sentiment:

## *A Window Into Consumer Mindset*

Consumer confidence in June 2025 reflects a landscape still unsettled by economic and tariff-related pressures. While 22% of respondents report feeling more optimistic about the economy compared to January, a nearly equal share (23%) feel less secure, and another 23% say they are spending more cautiously. 12% feel panicked, underscoring the broad impact of recent price volatility.

Demographic differences are pronounced. **Men (29%) and Millennials (27%) are the most optimistic** about economic conditions, whereas **Gen X (42%) and women (38%) express the highest levels of concern**. These divides highlight the importance of nuanced, data-driven marketing strategies.

For brands, tailoring messaging to match this emotional landscape is crucial. Value-based reassurance and empathy will resonate with Gen X and women, while aspirational and forward-looking campaigns should target Millennial and male audiences.



**58%**

**Well over half of consumers feel either cautious, pessimistic or panicked about the economy.**

# Shopping Behavior Shifts:

## *Navigating Tariff-Driven Change*

As tariffs and rising prices reshape consumer priorities, shopping behavior in 2025 continues to adapt at a rapid pace. A clear majority is changing how they approach everyday purchases, with deal-seeking emerging as the most common adjustment. **Over four in ten consumers (41%) report seeking deals more often**, a trend especially strong among Gen Z (45%), Millennials (44%) and women (44%). At the same time, significant portions of shoppers are cutting back. Specifically, **33% are shopping less overall** and **36% are buying fewer non-essential items**, with these actions most pronounced among Gen Z and Millennial segments.

Demographic distinctions stand out. **Gen Z leads in “shopping less” (40%)**, indicating higher price sensitivity among younger adults, while Boomers are the least likely to change their habits, **with 28% reporting no impact on their shopping at all**. Women are particularly engaged in deal-seeking and cutting discretionary spending, whereas men show slightly more resilience but are still affected.

These patterns point to an evolving marketplace where value—and the perception of savings—holds increasing sway over loyalty. Brands should emphasize aggressive promotional strategies, flash sales, and loyalty incentives, especially for younger and female audiences. Marketers who adapt quickly to these shifting behaviors with personalized offers and transparent savings will be best positioned to build ongoing engagement in a price-conscious climate.

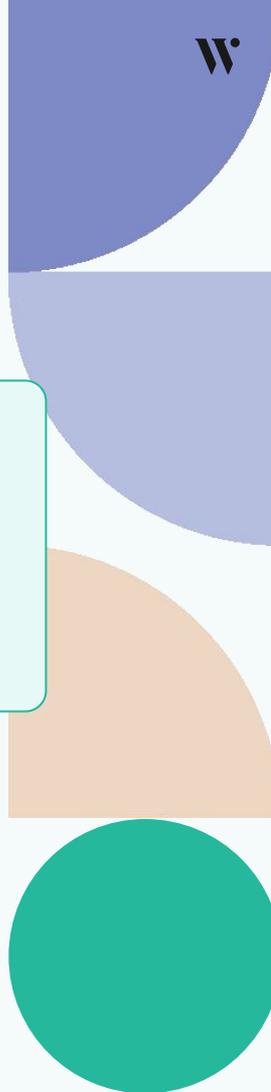
# Online Shopping Habits:

## *The Search for Value Intensifies*

Online shopping and research behaviors are evolving as consumers react to tariff-driven price pressures. **Visiting brand websites directly to find the best deals is comfortably the top response, chosen by 40% overall**, with Gen Z (45%) and women (43%) leading this trend. Younger shoppers are more likely to use browser extensions and price-tracking apps—**36% of Millennials and 32% of Gen Z embrace these digital tools, compared to just 7% of Boomers.**

Notably, subscribing to brand communications is gaining traction among Millennials and Gen Z, with 19% and 16% signing up, respectively, **yet only 12% overall subscribe to brand deals.** This highlights a significant opportunity: getting consumers into your database remains one of the most effective ways to drive future engagement, and a large untapped audience still awaits the right incentive.

For brands, the message is clear: invest in digital touchpoints and targeted promotions that reward research-driven shoppers.



40%

of consumers are visiting  
brand websites directly in  
the search for better deals.

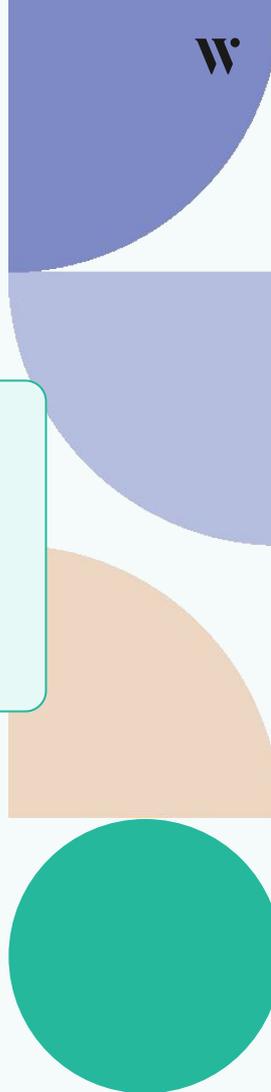
# Support for the Tariffs:

## *A Divided U.S. Consumer Landscape*

Consumer attitudes toward tariffs as a means to protect American jobs and industries remain sharply divided. Only **19% fully support tariffs despite higher prices**, with support highest among men (24%) and Boomers (24%). In contrast, **Gen X shows the most skepticism, with 46% saying they don't believe tariffs protect jobs or industries or are worth it at all**—a sentiment also strong among women (40%).

Most consumers are caught in the middle: 21% say they understand the intent but feel torn due to the financial impact, especially among Gen Z (28%). General support mixed with concern about rising costs is highest among Millennials and Gen Z.

For brands, these splits call for nuanced messaging. Appeals to patriotism or job protection may resonate with older or male shoppers, but for Gen X and women, focus on practical savings and direct value to overcome skepticism.



**19%**

**Less than a fifth of consumers fully support the tariffs to protect American jobs.**

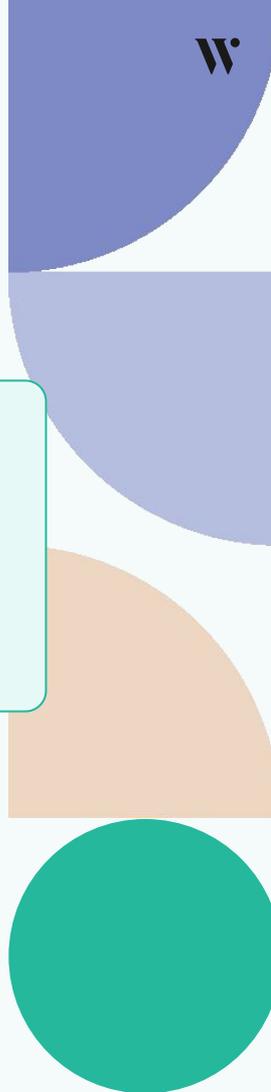
# Who Foots the Bill:

## *Perceptions of Tariff Impact*

Most consumers agree that they, as shoppers, bear the brunt of tariff-related price increases. **Over half (53%) believe consumers pay the largest portion of tariff costs**, with this perception especially high among older generations (Boomers 67% and Gen X 61%), and women (55%). Millennials, in contrast, are less likely to feel personally impacted, with only 41% pointing to consumers.

Other answers trail far behind—**just 10% think retailers absorb the cost and 13% believe it's brands or manufacturers**. Notably, a significant number of men (17%) and Gen Z (20%) point to exporting countries, showing some confusion or optimism about the true source of price increases.

For marketers, this sense of financial burden means empathy and transparency are crucial. Acknowledge consumer concerns, and highlight ways your brand is helping shoppers save or offset higher costs in every channel.



**53%**

**Over half of consumers believe it's U.S. consumers paying the financial costs for imported goods.**

# Shopping Concerns:

## *Price Pressure Takes Center Stage*

For shoppers in June 2025, the effect of tariffs and ongoing price increases is being felt acutely at checkout. **Higher prices remain the number one concern for over two-thirds (67%) of consumers**, with Gen X (74%) and women (69%) reporting the most anxiety. Price-related stress clearly dominates, shaping everything from product choices to frequency of purchases.

The older generations' heightened sensitivity stands out—not only are they most concerned about higher prices, **but half of Boomers (50%) and 45% of Gen X also point to unpredictable price increases as a major issue**. This sense of volatility is even greater among Gen Z, with 51% worried about fluctuating prices, highlighting how rapid shifts in cost are eroding confidence among the youngest shoppers.

Other issues, such as out-of-stock products (17%) and shipping delays (13%), are cited less often but still affect the overall shopping experience. Return restrictions (7%) and lack of promotions (12%) remain minor concerns, with the focus on the basics of price and availability.

For brands, the takeaway is clear: value and consistency must be at the forefront of every message. Transparent pricing, regular promotions, and inventory communication will be essential. Brands that show empathy and stability will connect best with Gen X and women, while digital solutions like price alerts can help reassure price-sensitive, younger consumers.

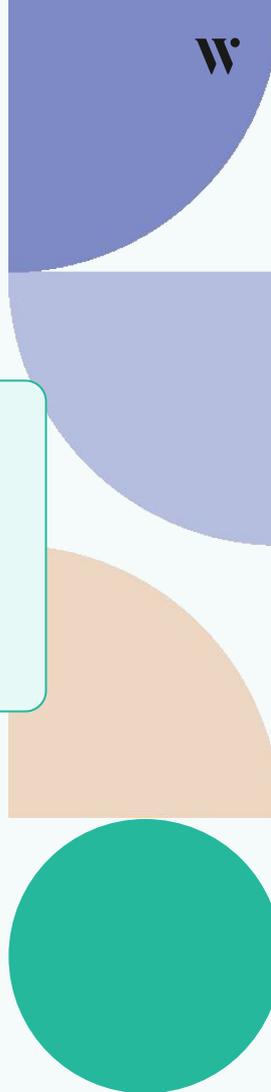
# Back-to-School 2025:

## *Adapting to Economic Headwinds*

Back-to-school is traditionally one of the most bumper shopping seasons for brands, but 2025 is set against a backdrop of inflation and tariffs, prompting many families to rethink spending. **Nearly a third of consumers (29%) expect to spend less, with Gen Z leading the cutbacks at 39%.** Millennials stand out for planning to shop earlier (24%), aiming to get ahead of potential price hikes, while Boomers are the least likely to change their habits.

Discount-driven strategies are also on the rise, **with 34% overall focusing more on deals, and essentials taking priority for 28%**—especially among Gen Z. Notably, just 31% expect no change, indicating most households are making adjustments.

For brands and retailers, this season demands targeted outreach. Early-bird promotions and bundle offers will attract Millennial planners, while aggressive discounts and essentials messaging are key for Gen Z and deal-seekers navigating tighter budgets.



**29%**

**Almost a third of consumers will spend less for back-to-school 2025 due to inflation and the tariffs.**

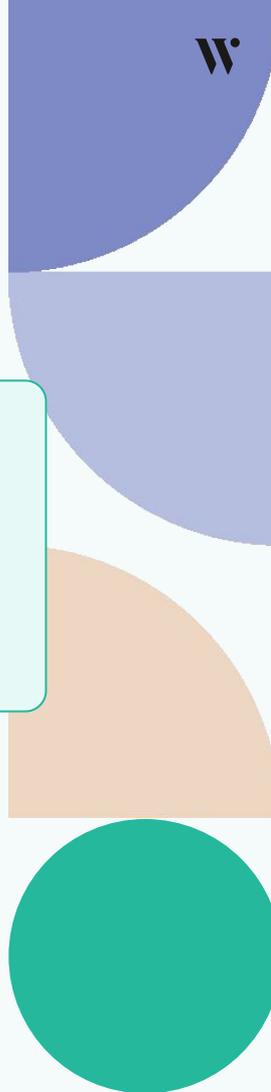
# Summer Travel Plans:

## *Economic Uncertainty Constricts Vacations*

Economic uncertainty and tariffs are reshaping how Americans plan their summer getaways in 2025. **A significant 42% report traveling much less, with this trend most pronounced among Millennials (52%) and Gen Z (51%)**—two groups feeling the squeeze most acutely. In contrast, Boomers stand out as the least affected, with 64% indicating no change to their travel plans.

Some consumers are making more modest adjustments—**19% are traveling a bit less**—while only 39% overall report no impact. Women are slightly more likely than men to cut back on travel, highlighting a broader trend of budget tightening among female and younger shoppers.

For travel and hospitality brands, flexibility and value will be key. Focus on targeted deals, family packages, and transparent pricing to appeal to price-sensitive groups, while loyalty perks and premium experiences can still resonate with unaffected Boomers.



**61%**

**of consumers are travelling less due to the economic uncertainty.**

# Price Increases by Sector:

## *Where Shoppers Feel the Pinch*

As tariff-driven costs ripple through the economy, consumers are keenly aware of price increases across key product categories. **Groceries top the list, with 72% of all consumers reporting major price hikes—especially pronounced among Gen X (80%) and women (81%).** This highlights the everyday impact of inflation and tariffs, as basic necessities take up a larger share of household budgets.

Electronics (42%) and home goods (34%) are also seeing widespread concern. **Gen X (47%) and Gen Z (52%) are especially likely to report higher prices on electronics**, while **44% of Millennials notice increases in home goods**. Apparel (37%) and footwear (25%) are other categories under pressure, with **45% of Millennials and 39% of Gen Z noticing higher clothing costs**—further squeezing discretionary spending for younger consumers.

Boomers, while less likely to notice increases in every category, are still affected: **66% report rising grocery prices and 32% cite more expensive clothing**. Interestingly, only 17% of Boomers say they haven't noticed any significant price increases—suggesting a small minority feels insulated from current economic pressures.

For brands, the message is clear: invest in value messaging, promotions, and loyalty strategies for high-impact categories like groceries and electronics. Help offset sticker shock with private label options, bulk offers, and targeted communications, especially for younger generations feeling the sharpest pinch.

# Finding the Best Deals:

## *Where Consumers Are Shopping Smarter*

In the wake of rising tariffs and ongoing inflation, consumers are increasingly strategic about where they seek the best deals on tariff-impacted products. **Discount or outlet stores are the top choice for 25% of consumers, with Boomers (33%) and women (29%) leading this trend.** These channels offer the tangible savings and trusted value many shoppers need in an unpredictable economic climate.

Online marketplaces such as Amazon and eBay are also highly popular, **drawing 22% of consumers overall and 25% of men and Millennials.** These digital platforms appeal to shoppers who crave convenience, price comparison, and a wide array of options. Meanwhile, big-box retailers like Walmart and Target (24%) remain a significant source of perceived value, especially among Boomers (30%) and men (27%).

Mobile-centric and digital push channels—including price alert apps, social media promotions, and email or text offers—lag behind traditional and digital retail channels. **Only 9% turn to mobile apps and just 5% to email or text offers, revealing a large opportunity for brands to better leverage these channels.** Notably, Boomers are least engaged with digital-first deal sources, preferring in-person or well-established retail formats.

For brands and retailers, this mix calls for a multifaceted approach: invest in outlet and marketplace presence, but also build stronger digital programs and loyalty communications to reach untapped segments looking for a better deal.

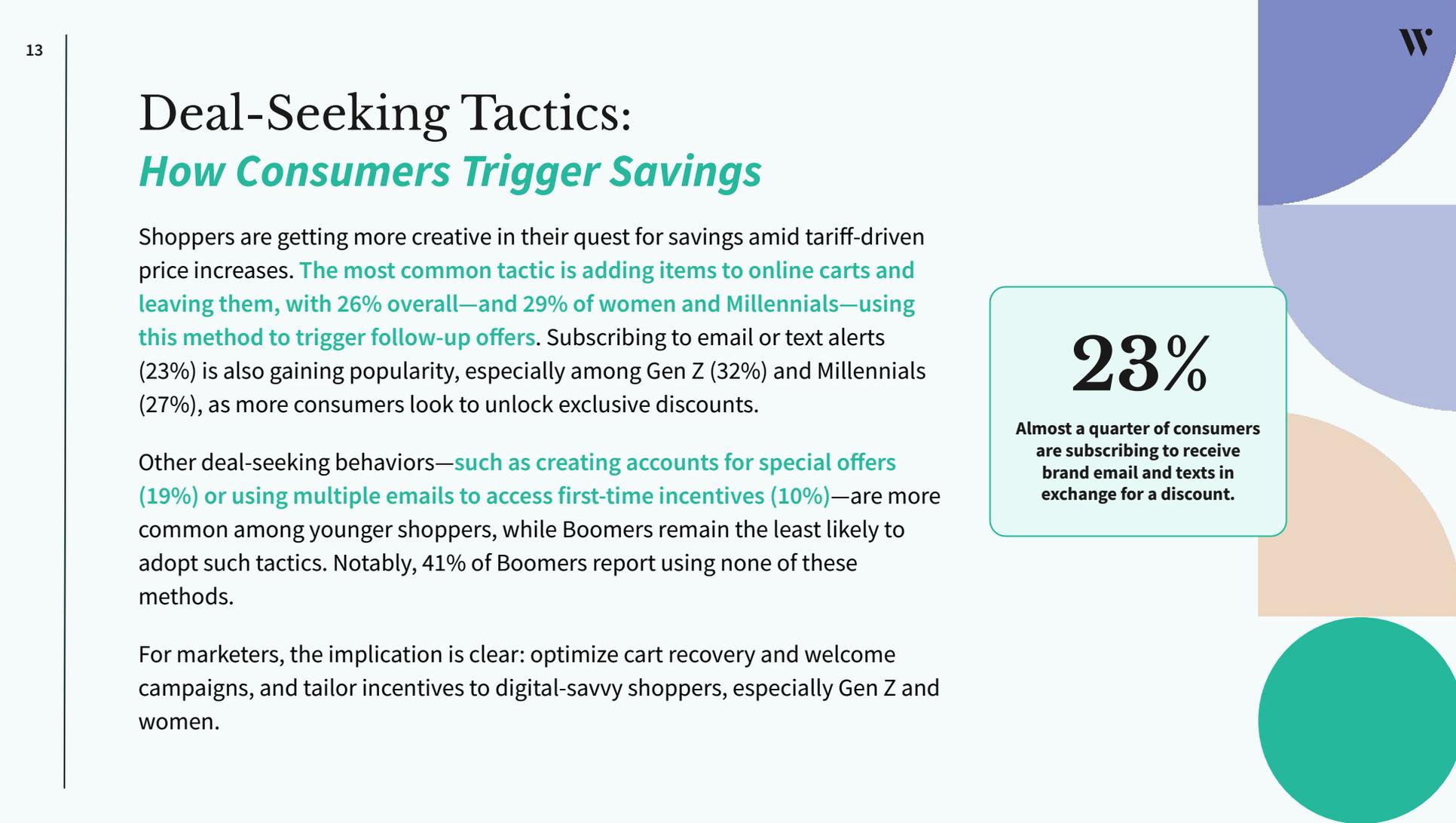
# Deal-Seeking Tactics:

## *How Consumers Trigger Savings*

Shoppers are getting more creative in their quest for savings amid tariff-driven price increases. **The most common tactic is adding items to online carts and leaving them, with 26% overall—and 29% of women and Millennials—using this method to trigger follow-up offers.** Subscribing to email or text alerts (23%) is also gaining popularity, especially among Gen Z (32%) and Millennials (27%), as more consumers look to unlock exclusive discounts.

Other deal-seeking behaviors—**such as creating accounts for special offers (19%) or using multiple emails to access first-time incentives (10%)**—are more common among younger shoppers, while Boomers remain the least likely to adopt such tactics. Notably, 41% of Boomers report using none of these methods.

For marketers, the implication is clear: optimize cart recovery and welcome campaigns, and tailor incentives to digital-savvy shoppers, especially Gen Z and women.



**23%**

**Almost a quarter of consumers are subscribing to receive brand email and texts in exchange for a discount.**

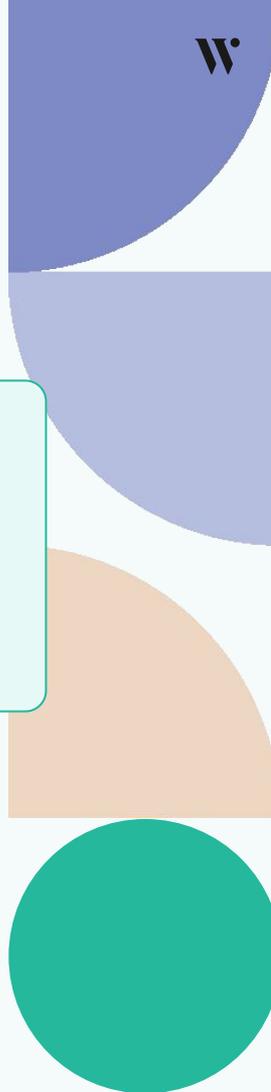
# Preferred Channels for Personalized Offers:

## *Email Reigns Supreme*

When it comes to receiving personalized deals, **email remains the top channel, preferred by 50% of all consumers—especially women (57%), Gen X (53%), and Millennials (53%).** This enduring preference underscores email's strength as the backbone of retention and offer strategies, particularly for older and female audiences who value direct, reliable communication.

**Text (29%) is rapidly gaining ground, especially among younger shoppers: 40% of both Gen Z and Millennials cite text as a favored channel,** reflecting the growing importance of mobile-first marketing. In-app notifications (18%) and website pop-ups (27%) appeal most to digital-native consumers, while physical mail and phone calls lag behind.

Notably, just 15% of consumers say they don't want marketing offers at all. The takeaway for brands is to prioritize a multichannel approach—lead with personalized email, but ramp up text and app engagement for younger segments seeking timely, direct communication.



50%

Half of consumers prefer to receive personalized offers from brands via email.

# Closing Insight:

Tariffs are reshaping more than just price tags—they're redefining consumer priorities. For marketers, this moment demands a strategic pivot:

## **Value and Price Sensitivity now Dominate**

Consumers across all demographics are increasingly price-focused, with deal-seeking and cautious spending most common among Gen Z, Millennials, and women. Clear value, targeted discounts, and loyalty offers are now critical to winning and keeping customers.

## **Digital Channels Must Work Together**

Email is still the overall preferred channel, particularly older consumers, while text, in-app, and digital alerts engage younger shoppers. Successful brands personalize offers across multiple channels, reaching each audience through the touchpoints they trust most.

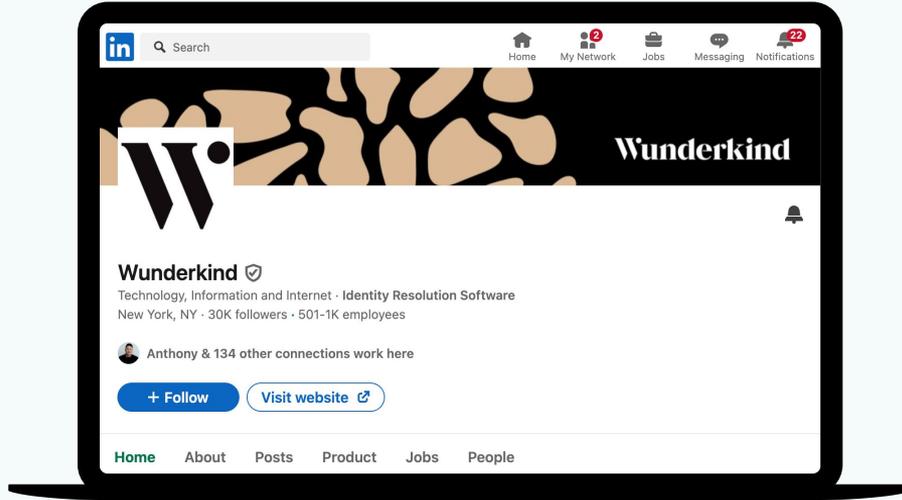
## **Consumers Are Adapting—and Expect Brands to Do the Same**

Shoppers are changing how they buy—subscribing to deals, comparing prices and abandoning carts to wait for a discount. Brands that respond with transparency and smart savings strategies will be better positioned to retain budget-conscious customers.

This isn't just a challenge—it's a chance to lead. Brands that adapt with speed, empathy, and strategy will emerge stronger, earning loyalty not through legacy, but through relevance.

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# Wunderkind

Wunderkind is the leading AI-driven performance marketing solution that collects consent-based, first-party data and identifies anonymous traffic for brands in order to scale hyper-personalized one-to-one messages. Brands lean on the Wunderkind Identity Network, a proprietary database recognizing 9 billion devices and 1 billion consumers, and observes 2 trillion digital transactions every year, to trigger the most impactful offers to their target audience at the right moment and in the right channel. This proprietary data is accessed by Wunderkind's Autonomous Marketing Platform, an AI engine that integrates seamlessly into a brands' existing ESP to boost performance across email, text and advertising channels.

Wunderkind is the only performance solution that guarantees a lift in revenue for its clients and delivers over \$5 billion in directly attributable revenue annually for brands across a number of industries, often ranking as a top 3 revenue channel in clients' own analytics platforms. Brands such as Harley-Davidson, Perry Ellis International and Wolverine Worldwide partner with Wunderkind to drive top-line revenue through its guaranteed results.



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