Soda's Back, but Better

CMGT 587

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Marketing Research

Meet the Research Team



Yuqi Gong



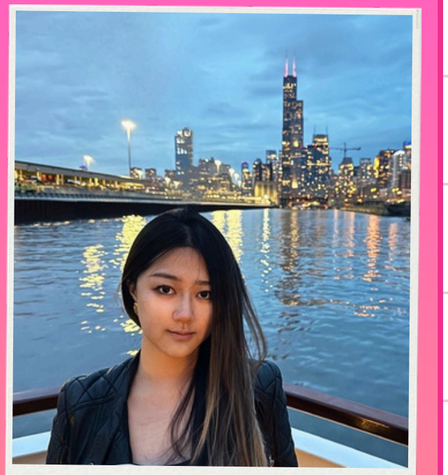
Zoey Zhang



Alyssa Xiao



Patrick You



Lynn Zhang

Agenda

1. Research Question Recap
2. Survey Insights
3. Focus Group Insights
4. Recommendations



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Research Question

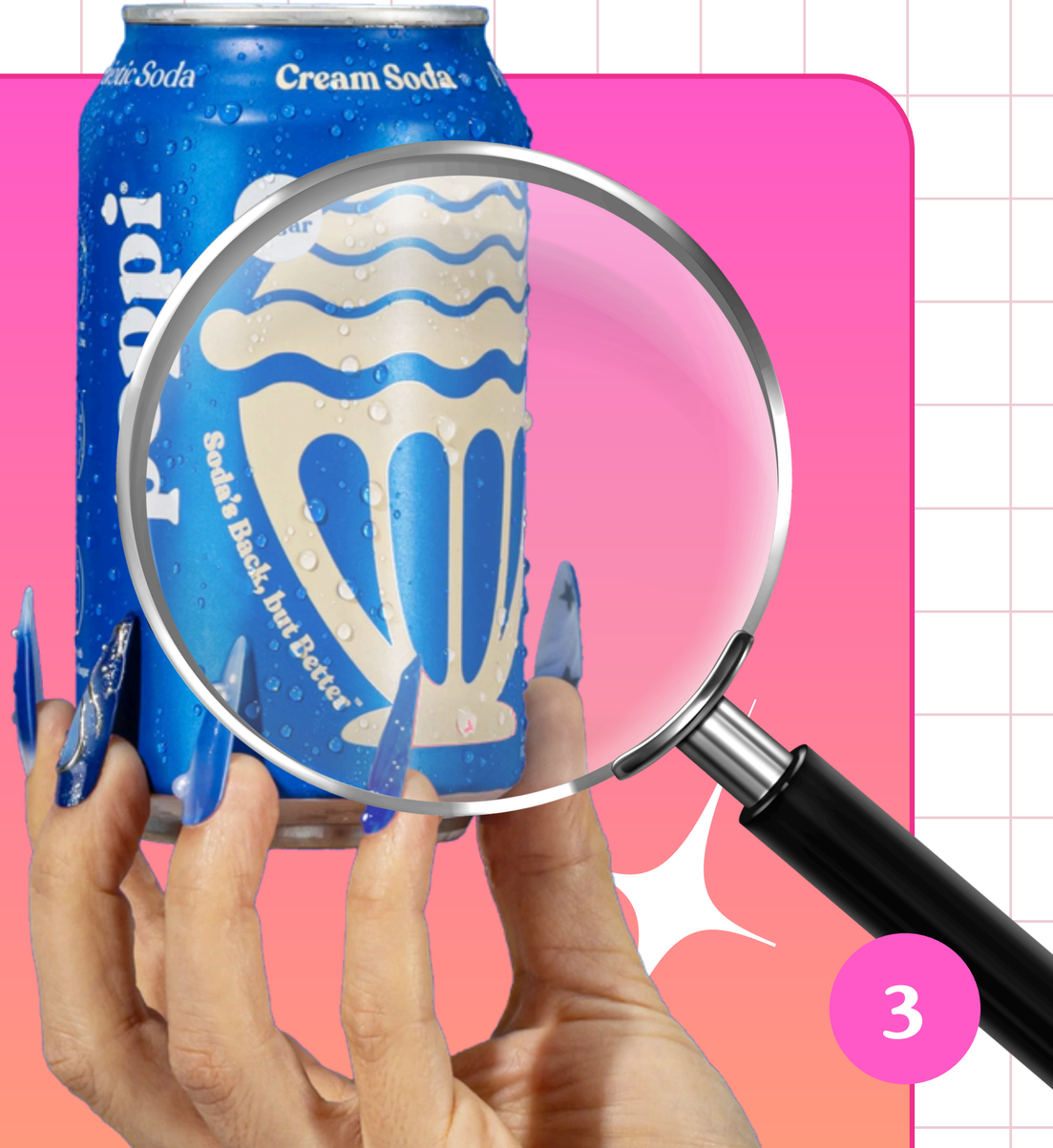
PART ONE

Which elements of poppi's brand (social virality, brand voice, better-for-you framing, visual styles, celebrity integrations, etc.) currently drive engagement and trial in Gen Z audiences.



PART TWO

How could poppi scale and adapt that internationally to places like the UK and China?



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Methodology

PART ONE

SURVEY

Survey Structure

- 6 key sections including screener, social virality, celebrity collaboration, visual style, better-for-you framing, and demographics

Respondent Demographics

- Ages 18–29 (Gen Z)
- Located in the U.S.
- Purchased beverages within the past 30 days



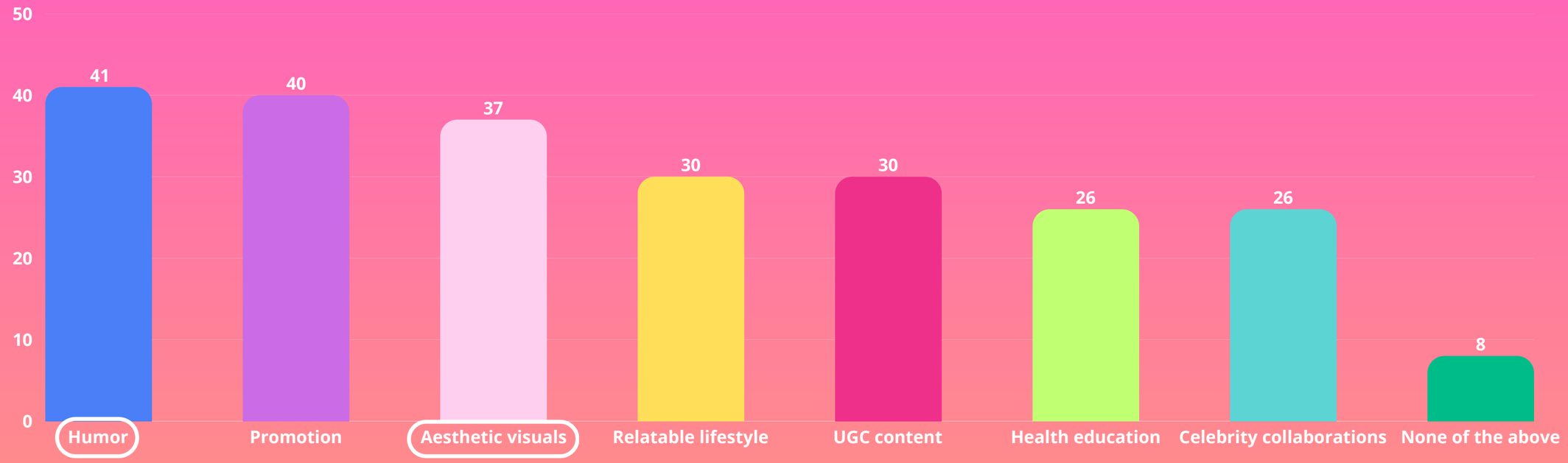
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Social Virality

Engagement is driven by entertaining and visually appealing content

What type of content from the brand's social media makes you more likely to engage?

N=102

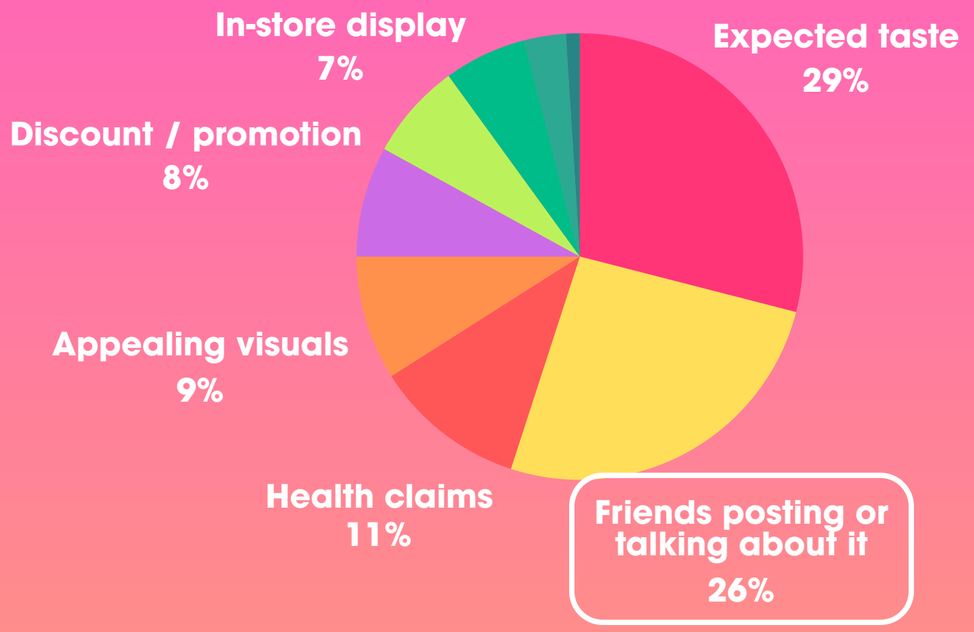


Implication: *poppi should focus on creating entertaining and visually aesthetic content*

Word of mouth within community is one of the strongest drivers of trial.

Which factor most strongly motivate you to try a new beverage?

N=100



The factors that increase purchase intent:

N=101

#	Scale Option	People's posts about it. Mean: 3.62	Popularity within community. Mean: 3.59	Social Media's exposure Mean: 3.43	Influencer posts. Mean: 3.13
1	Strongly disagree	3%	4%	2%	7%
2	Disagree	9%	9%	14%	19%
3	Neither agree nor disagree	24%	19%	26%	31%
4	Agree	51%	60%	55%	42%
5	Strongly agree	13%	8%	3%	2%
	Top 2 box	64 %	68%	58%	44%

***Implication**: poppi should prioritize UGC and peer-driven content strategies over traditional branding efforts*

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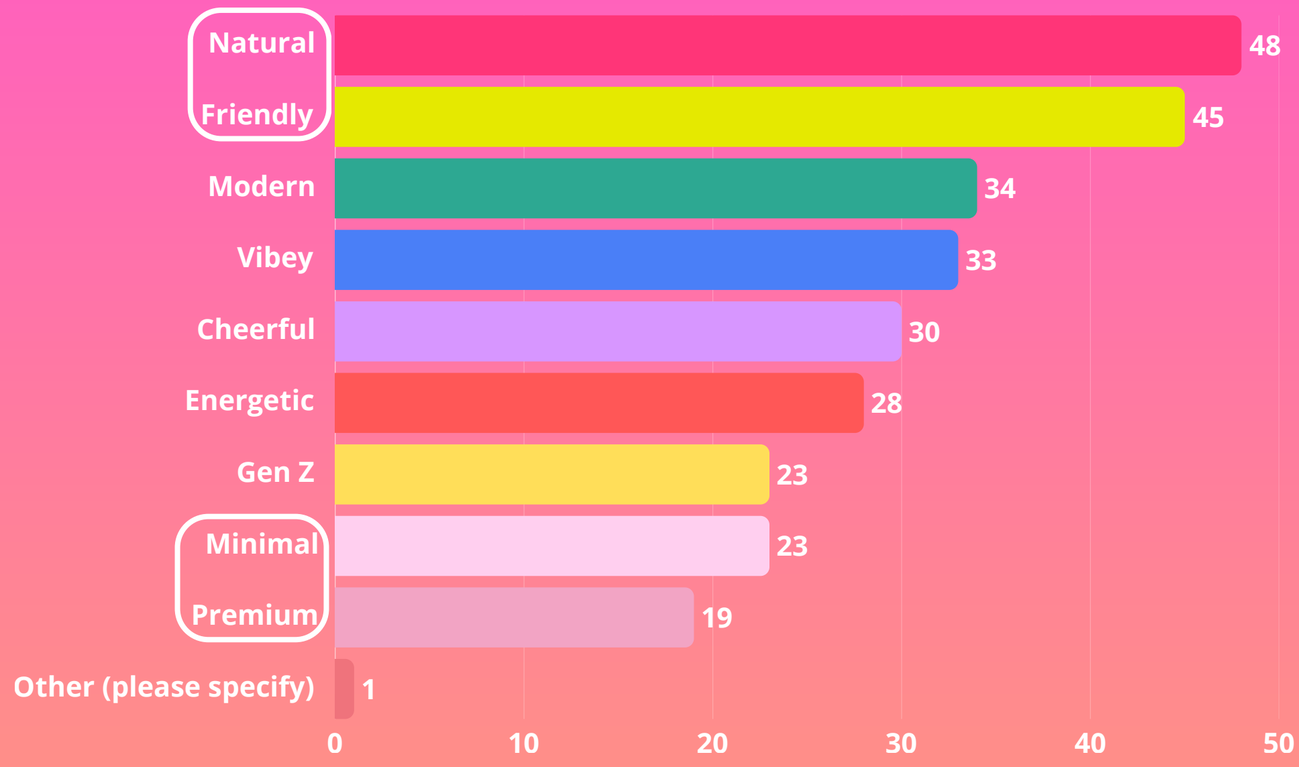
Visual Style



Gen Z clearly prefers “natural, friendly, and modern” visual styles

Preferred Visual Tones in Beverage Brands

N=101



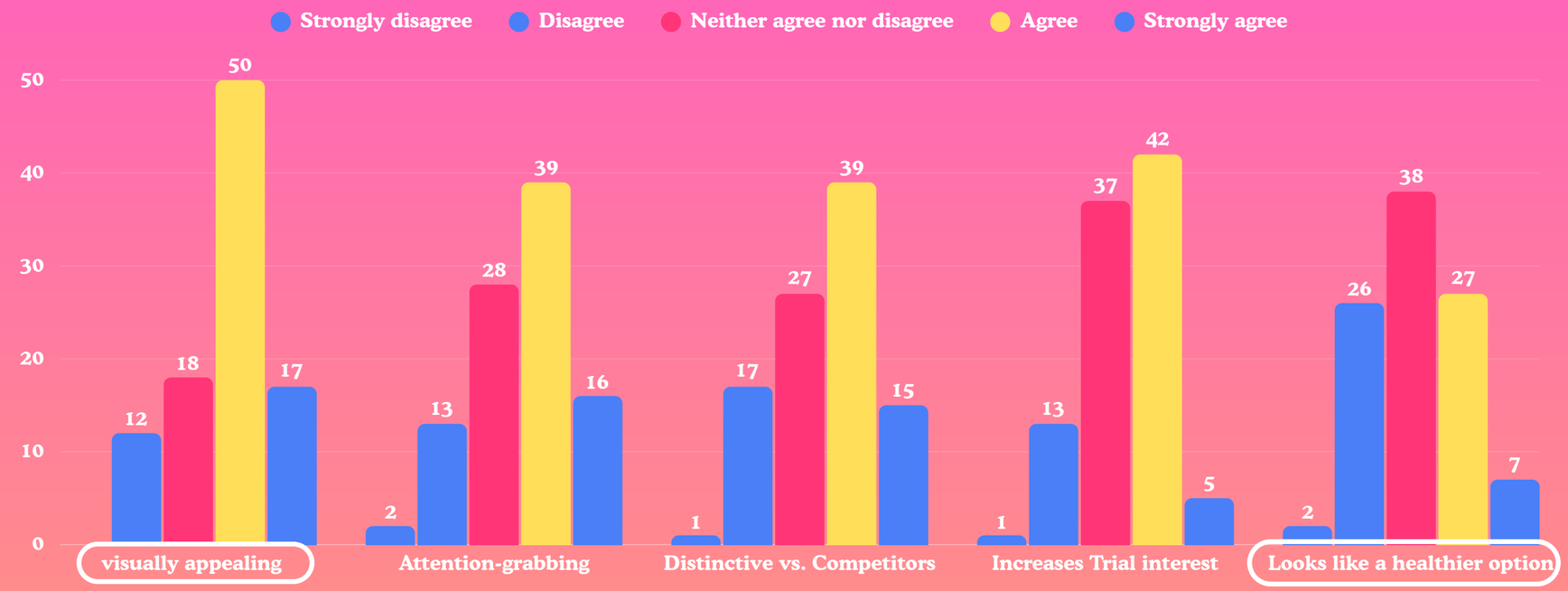
***Implication*: Design visuals that feel natural, approachable, and socially engaging to resonate with Gen Z preferences (especially on Instagram/TikTok)**

Packaging drives trial, but weakly communicates health benefits.

Based on this packaging, indicate your agreement with the following statements.

N=99





Implication: *Use packaging to capture attention, but reinforce health benefits through clear messaging (copy, creators, and education)*

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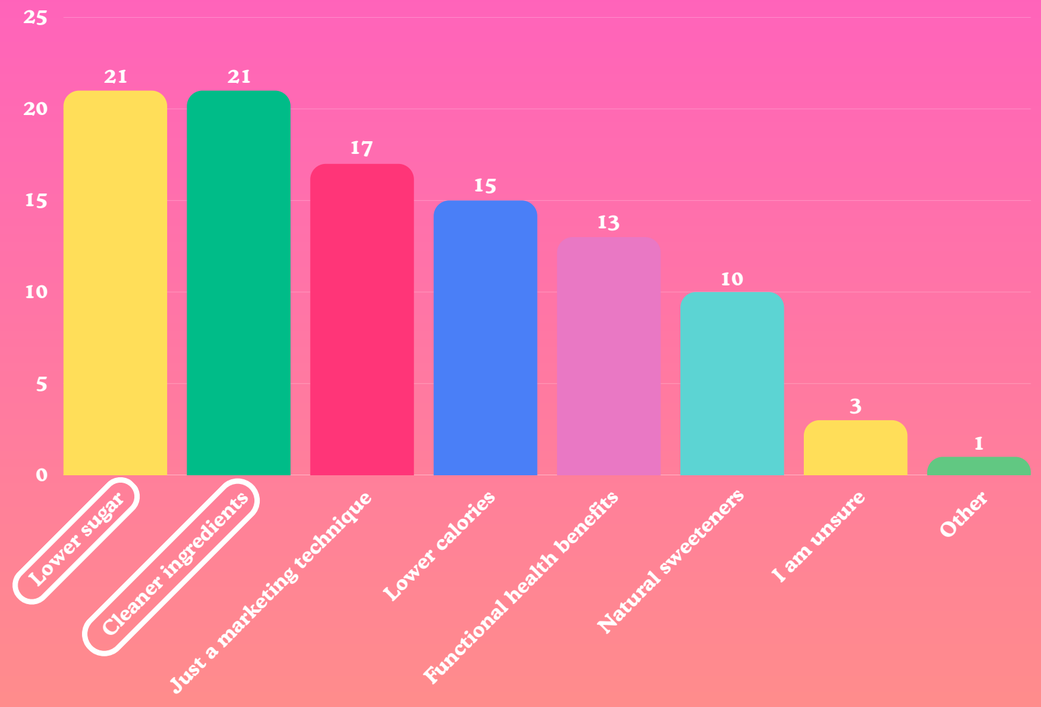


Better-for-you Framing

Packaging drives trial, but weakly communicates health benefits.

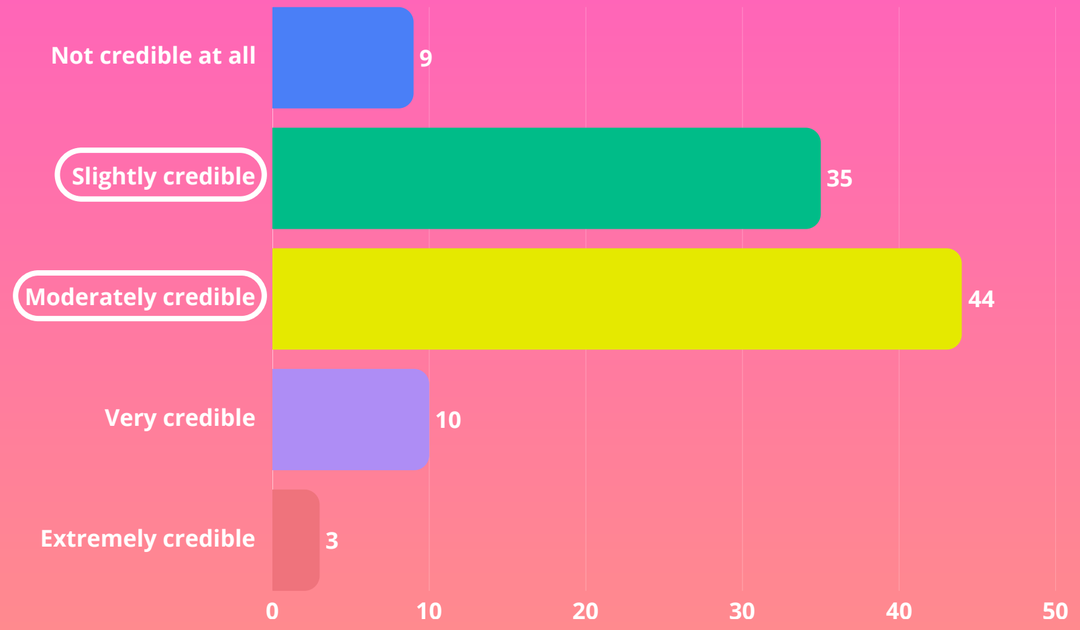
What Does “Better-for-You Soda” Signal to You?

N=101



Credibility of Prebiotic Claims in Sodas

N=101



Implication: *Focus on simple, easy-to-understand health cues like low-sugar and clean ingredients, instead of leading with functional claims like prebiotics*

Flavor and cultural relevance drive trial, while health is a baseline expectation

What Would Increase Your Likelihood of Trying a New Soda?

N=101

Scale Option	Lower sugar content	Bold, exciting flavors	Functional ingredients	Feeling culturally relevant	A brand message that makes soda feel “okay to enjoy again”
Not at all	4%	5%	7%	11%	12%
Slightly	15%	14%	21%	15%	20%
Moderately	27%	35%	36%	43%	40%
Strongly	36%	39%	26%	29%	22%
Extremely	19%	6%	9%	3%	7%

Implication: *Lead with bold flavors, culturally relevant content, and clear low-sugar cues (e.g., “5g sugar”), supported by strong visual appeal*

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Brand Voice

poppi feels fun.
But Gen Z wants authenticity more.

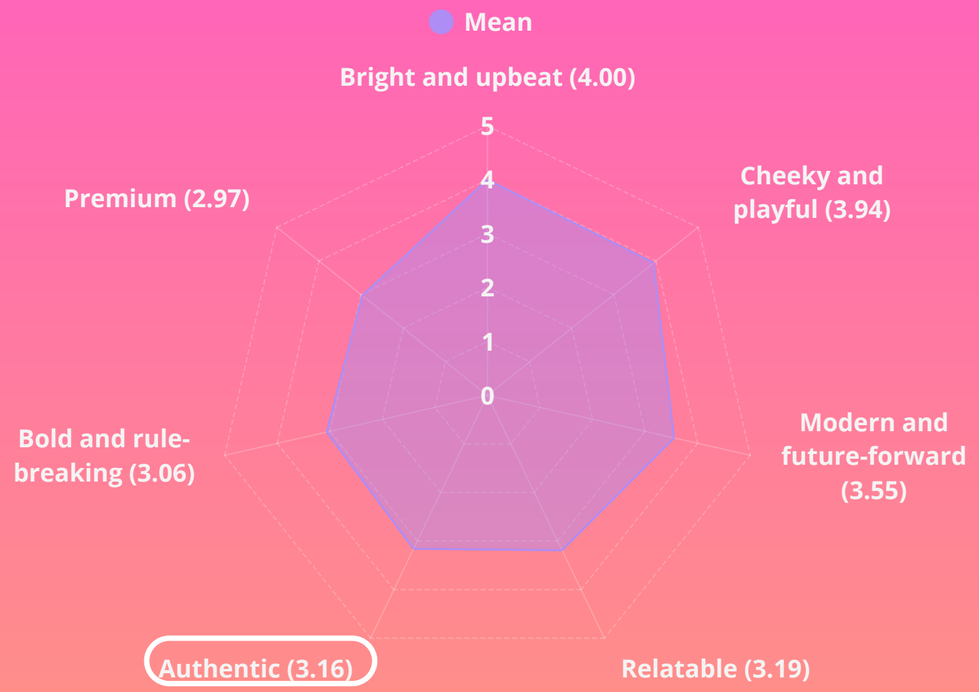
Most appealing brand voice styles

N=101



How Gen Z perceives poppi's voice today

N=31



<u>Implication:</u> Keep the fun, but ground it in authenticity.
Gen Z engages more with what feels real than what feels performed.

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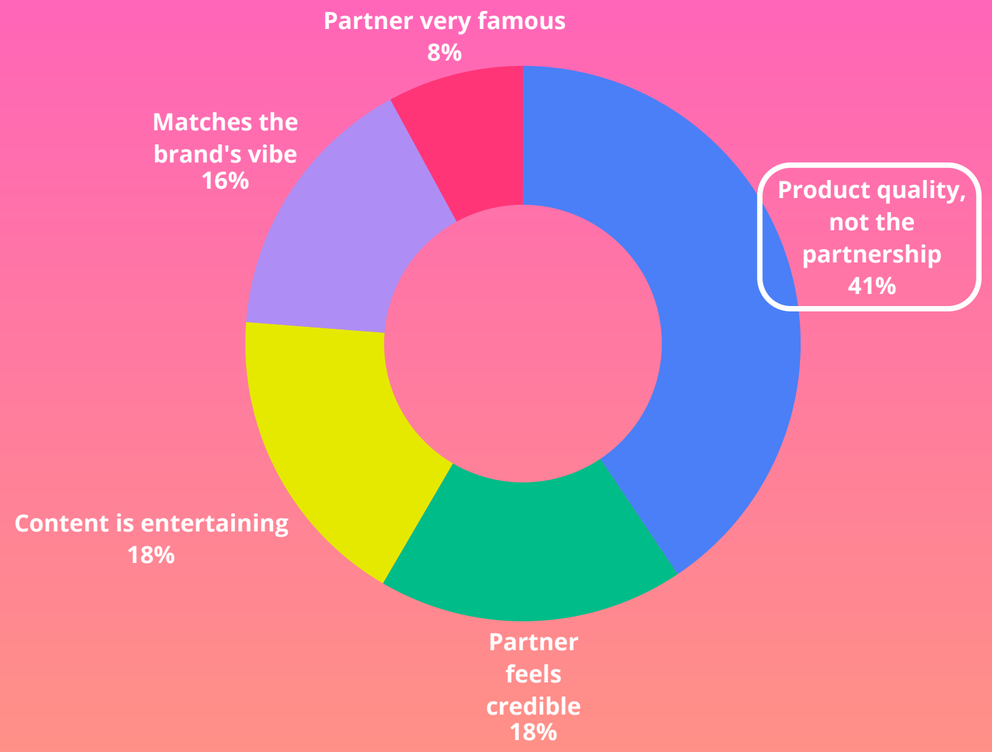


Celebrity / Influencer Integrations

Most people care about the product.
When they do notice the partnership, fit beats fame.

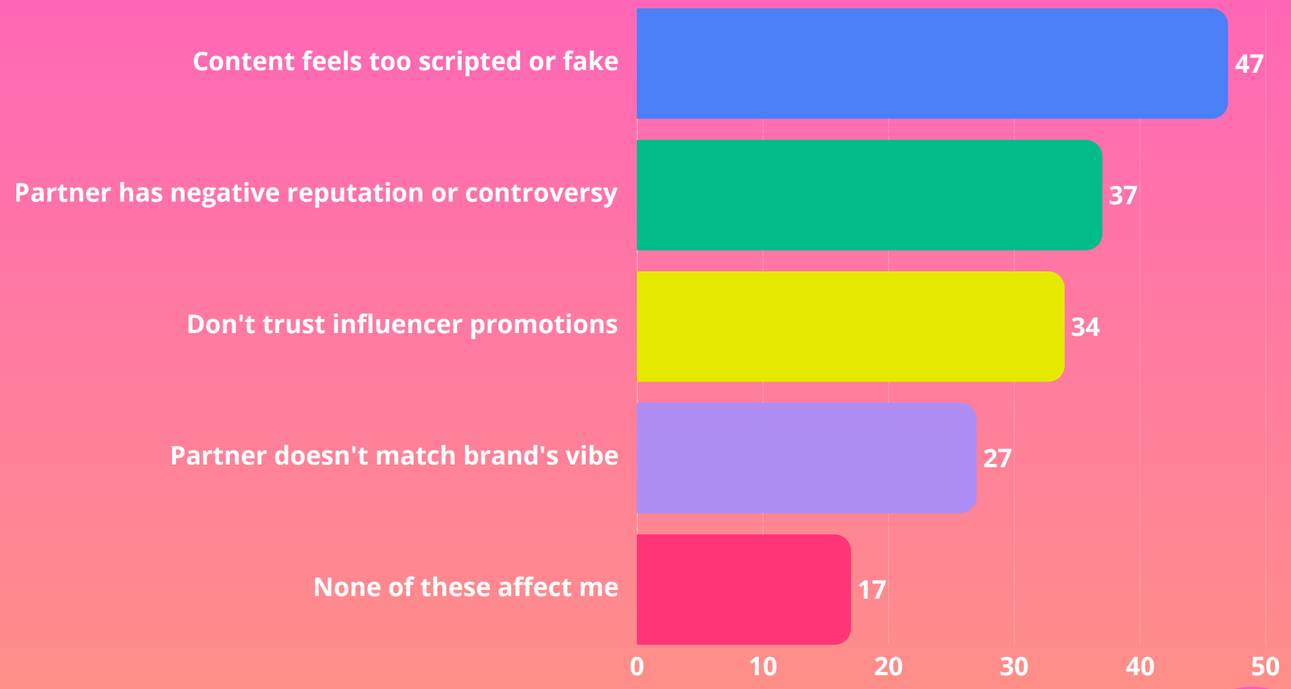
What matters most in a partnership

N=102



What turns Gen Z off in a partnership

N=101



<u>Implication</u>: Organic fit over paid fame. The most effective partnerships are the ones that don't look like partnerships.

Conclusion

Social virality drives engagement. Taste decides trial.

ENGAGEMENT ▶ TRIAL

Social Virality

Humor, giveaways, and aesthetic visuals lead engagement.

Brand Voice

Authenticity matters most. poppi reads as fun, but not real yet.

Taste

The **foundational threshold.** Nothing converts without it.

Better-for-You

Concrete cues drive trial; functional claims don't.

Celebrity / Influencer

Works on **fit**, not fame.

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Part II
Focus Group

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Methodology

PART TWO

Focus Group

Focus Group Structure

- Total 15 participants (3 focus groups with 5 participants each)
- Conducted online via Tencent meeting

Respondent Demographics

- Ages 18–29 (Gen Z)
- Live in China



Better-for-you Framing

Health is a baseline, not a differentiator

"Prebiotics sounds interesting."

"I would buy it if it said 'low sugar' or even 'zero sugar.'"

"5 grams of sugar sounds a lot!"



Insights

- Health and low sugar served as screening criteria, not purchase drivers
- Prebiotics sparked some interest

Implication

- Use clearer terms like "low sugar," "light," and "low calorie"
- Prebiotics as a China selling point

Positioning Health should not be poppi's primary selling point in China







Insights

- First impression: not health-forward
- Saturated visuals cue traditional soda
- Health positioning weakened; price expectations pulled down

Implication

- Highlight more flavor choices
- Promote occasion-based use (e.g., social drinking, cocktail mixing)

Social Exposure

Social media drives conversion; UGC builds trust.



Insights

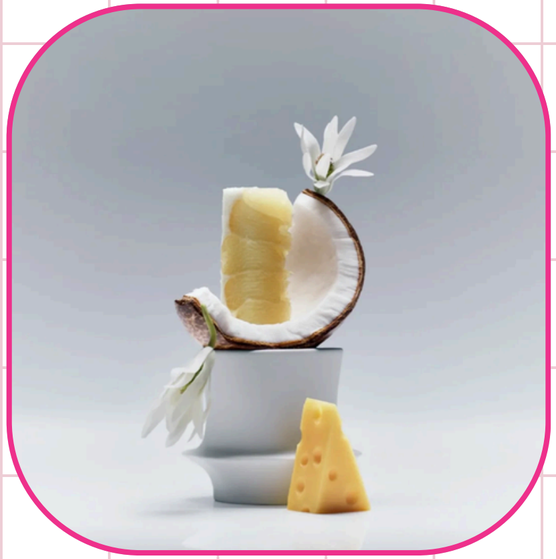
- Xiaohongshu and Douyin drive discovery
- UGC and creators are more trusted than ads
- Repeated exposure increases trial intent

Implication

- Focus on social-first marketing
- Activate peer-driven marketing to build trust

Taste

Consumers seek novelty within cultural boundaries







"I would expect some flavor like guava… it feels refreshing and familiar."



"I prefer light, fruit-based flavors like lemon or lychee."



"Dr Pepper flavors can feel artificial, almost like cough syrup."



Insights

- Flavor acceptance depends on cultural familiarity
- Chinese Gen Z show lower acceptance toward unfamiliar flavor profiles, such as Dr Pepper

Implication

- Develop flavors that are familiar yet differentiated to the Chinese customers
- Use gateway flavors (e.g., lime, lemon) to lower the barrier and drive initial trial

Aesthetic

Visual simplicity signals quality





"I like when the soda brand has a very interesting concept and copy that's creative and relatable."



"I prefer something more minimal and premium."







Too many bright, pop-style colors make the brand feel like a traditional soda.

Insights

- To Chinese Gen Z, simple and premium brand visual signals better product quality
- Chinese Gen Z are more drawn to relatable humor integrated in the concept-driven content.



Implication

- Focus on a premium visual expression to reinforce quality perception
- Integrate cultural cues and humor into concept-driven storytelling

Consumer Behavior

Chinese Gen Z's purchase decisions drivers

"I usually just grab drinks at convenience stores like 7/11 or Lawson. It's quick and easy."

"I use a grocery delivery service to buy drinks everyday."

"I thought it would be around 15 RMB ($2.5)."

"5 RMB ($0.7) sounds reasonable to me."



Insights

- Convenience stores are the primary purchase channel for Gen Z in China
- Price expectations vary and lack consistency

Implication

- Strengthen presence in convenience and delivery channels to capture immediate purchase moments
- Clarify value proposition and pricing logic to improve willingness to pay

Product Strategy

What Works in the U.S.

- Lead with bold, differentiated flavors to drive trial and first-time purchase
- Amplify social virality to maximize awareness and shareability

What Changes in China

- Prioritize localized flavor profiles to reduce adoption barriers
- Elevate premium and playful visual identity to signal quality and enhance brand desirability



Build trust through UGC and social-first content



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Thank you!