



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

AN EXPLORATION OF FOOD
INDUSTRY OPPORTUNITIES

COOKING & MEAL PREP

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Food for Thought: An exploration of Food Industry opportunities

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Cooking & Meal Prep

Changing Behaviours

As we saw above, consumers have been changing their meal plans to save money. We asked about any further changes due to the cost-of-living crisis.

As per the graphic summary below, 39% said they're planning more in advance / batch cooking, a further 23% are cutting their food portions and eating less to adapt to rising costs, and nearly 21% say they're substituting ingredients.

Have you had to adjust your meal plans due to the cost of living crisis? (select all that apply)

Planning more in advance / batch cooking

39.14%

No change

26.03%

Cutting portions / eating less

23.09%

Substituting ingredients / eating less

20.55%

Bulk buying more

20.35%

Planning in advance / less batch cooking

11.15%

Using different kitchen equipment

9.98%

Bulk buying less

9.78%

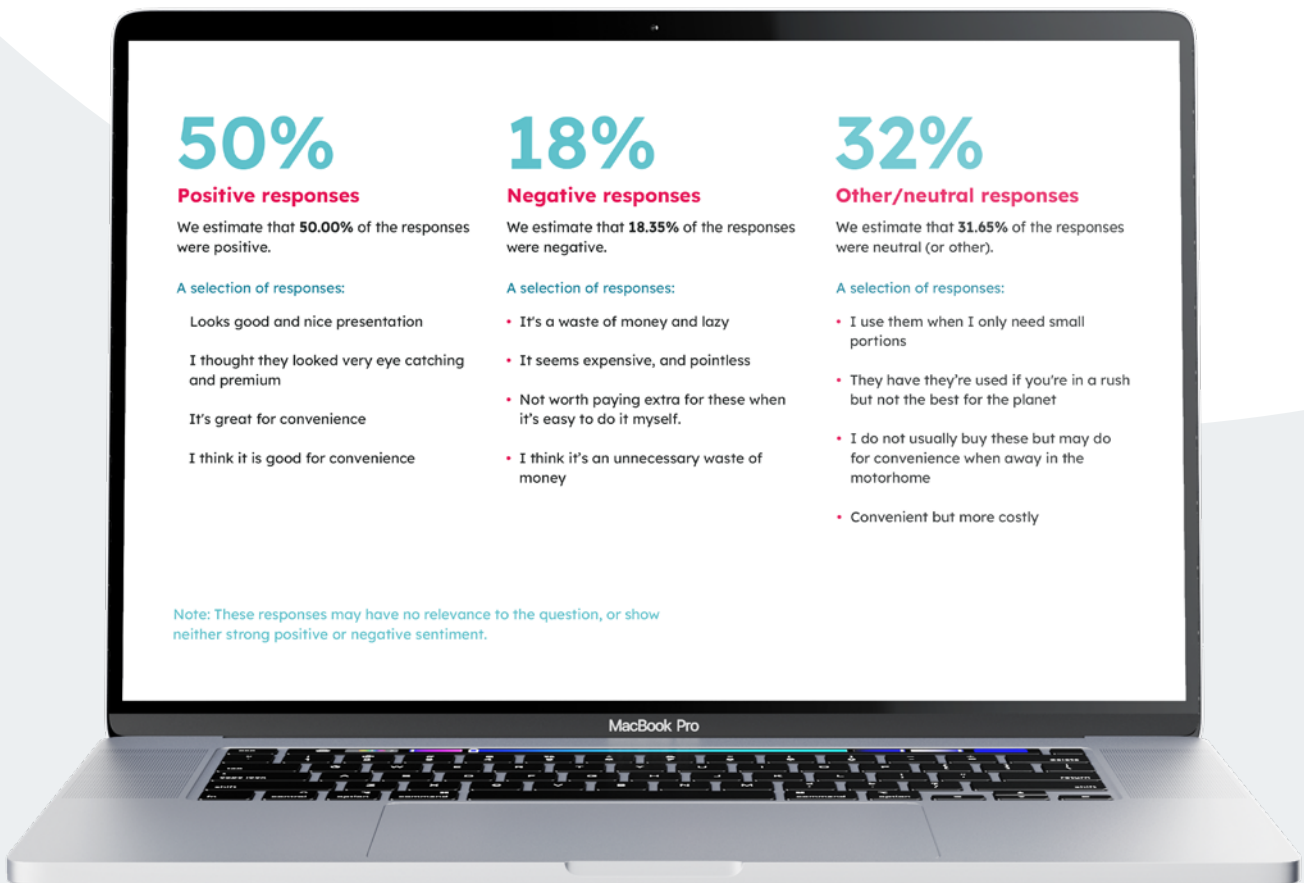


Extra insight: Thoughts on Pre-cut Veg

Consumers love the idea of conveniently cut vegetables / fruit for their meals and snacks, but some weren't willing to pay more for something they said could easily be done themselves. Also, more consumers are aware of the detrimental effects of extra packaging to the environment and the wasteful nature of such practises.

On the other hand, consumers who only need small portions thought they were better enabled to reduce their food waste through such products.

What are your thoughts on pre-cut and pre-packaged fruit / veg?

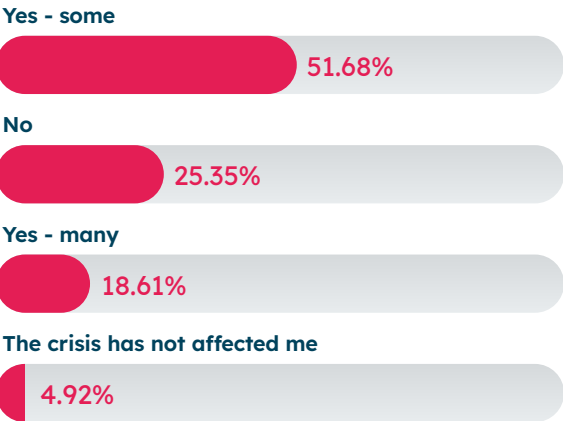


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Ingredients are also Changing

As we saw above, consumers are substituting ingredients as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. One way they're doing this is by switching to alternative brands such as supermarket own label ranges. Nearly 52% have switched to some alternative food brands already, and 19% have switched out many of them.

Have you had to switch to alternative food brands due to the cost-of-living crisis?



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Are you open to trying cheaper brands of food/drink products during the cost-of-living crisis?



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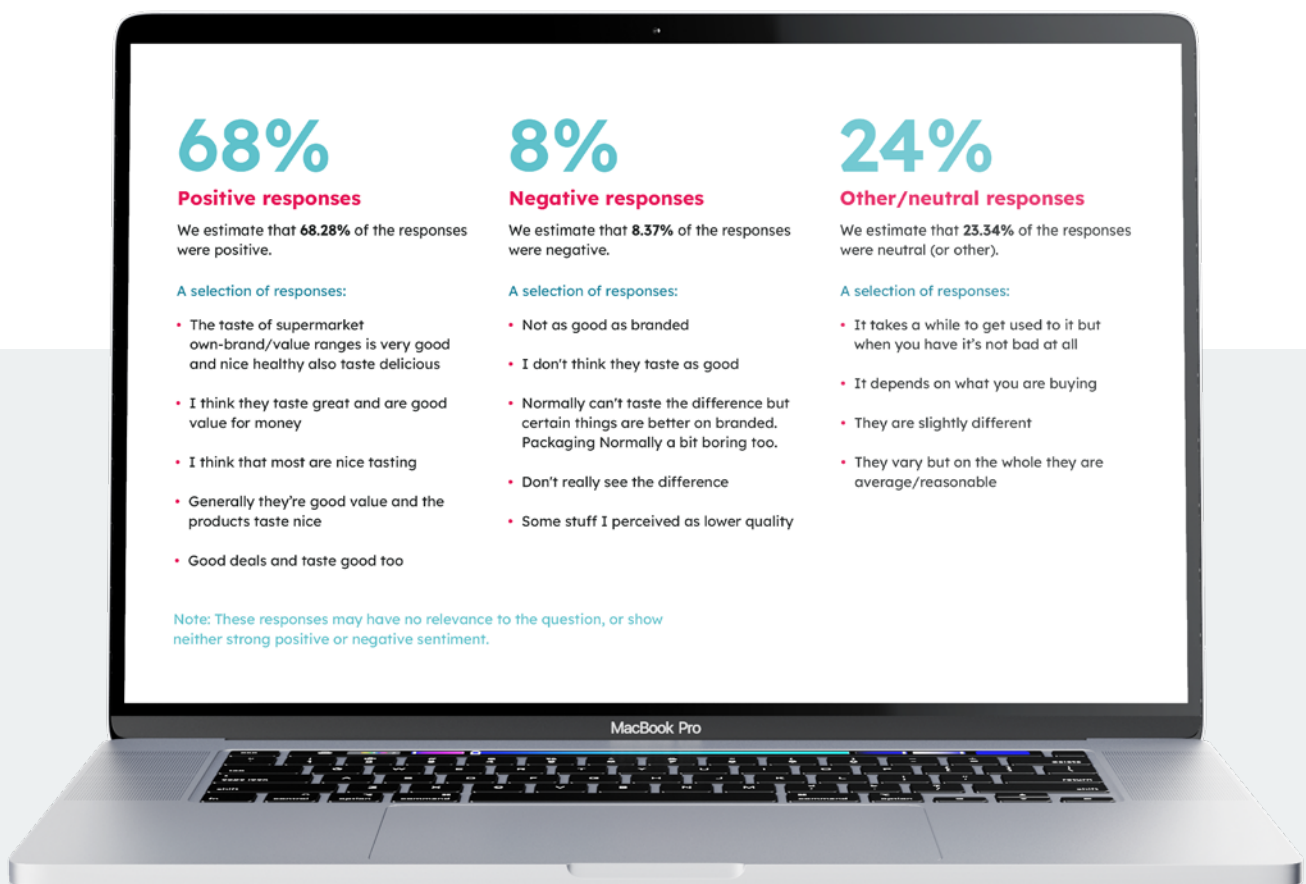
As expected in the food and beverage industry, brand loyalty on the whole is not as strong as in other industries. This is evident by the fact that nearly 50% of consumers in our sample were very open to trying cheaper brands of food / drink, and only 6.4% weren't open at all.

Ingredients are also Changing

As people continue to consume value products, and many even begin preferring these own-label names, brands will need to take action to ensure they can continue retaining customers.

Evidencing the above, value is no longer perceived as cheap quality like it may have been in the past. As we found in a sentiment analysis, nearly 70% of consumers perceive these products positively and only 8% felt negatively about them.

What do you think about the taste of supermarket own-brands / value ranges?



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They're also looking for more offers and discounts when shopping – 45% said they do this quite a bit, and only 15% said they're not.

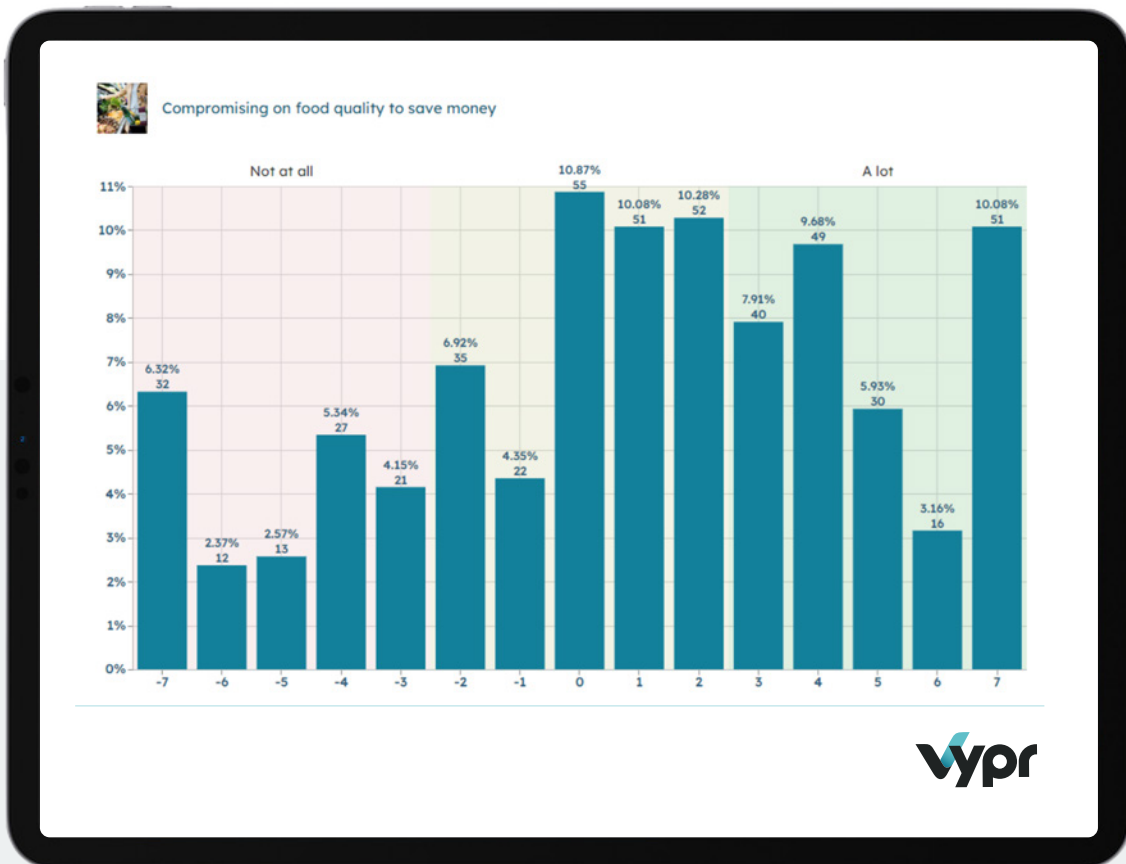
Want to see how consumer grocery shopping habits are changing over time? Check out our tracker here:

[Vybe Tracker Report](#)

Cutting Costs, not Quality

It's important to remember, though consumers are cutting down on spending, they still want quality – most consumers are not strongly willing to compromise on food quality to save money, as visible on the Vykert graph below with its rather scattered sentiment.

How much are you willing to compromise on FOOD QUALITY to save money at this time?



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Requests for Retailers

Consumers also want to see retailers taking more action to help them with the rising costs of food. A variety of actions they'd like stores to take are:

- More offers, discounts and price freezes
- Better loyalty reward schemes to keep costs down
- Removal of unnecessary packaging to reduce costs
- Expansion of supermarket own brand / value ranges
- Discounts for buying in bulk
- Recipe ideas for cheap meals available in store

And one comment mentioned frequently was that supermarkets should offer expiring food at significant reductions, or even for free at the end of the day, instead of letting that food going to waste.



“Supermarkets could give stock that is out of date away for substantially reduced prices or for free at the end of each day rather than throw it away. The current markdowns are often very small” - Male aged 35-44

“Yes I've noticed some supermarkets have a reduced section but only reducing cost by pennies when the sell by date is that day! Surely it's better to make them real bargains so nothing is wasted” - Female aged 55-64

“Keep portion sizes the same, many are being reduced to ridiculous sizes and the price staying the same, who wants that” Male aged 45-54

“Expand supermarket own brands with premium and cheaper alternatives to branded goods. It's a win win as they'd make more money, and we'd claw back some of the rising costs.” -Female aged 35-44

Convenience Wins Over

So far, we've discussed the rise in those cooking at home, but for some consumers this extra preparation comes at the cost of convenience.

Convenience is still valuable for many, and so we've also seen an increase in those buying ready-to-eat meals that offer this. As of February 2023, 78% of consumers say they buy ready meals. Of these, 26% say they eat them frequently and about 53% occasionally.

How often do you eat ready meals?

Occasionally

52.88%

Frequently

26.18%

Rarely

12.57%

Very Frequently

4.97%

Very Rarely

3.4%

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Do you buy supermarket dine-in meals? (e.g Dinner-for-Two boxes, Family dine-in)

Yes

67.78%

No

32.22%

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They're also buying ready-made supermarket dine-in meals that offer a higher quality experience, such as 3 course deals with drinks included. Some consumers have even stopped eating out to replace those experiences with these meals instead.

See some further reasons consumers buy these products in the quotes below.



"I like the mix and match elements, particularly like the ones that have a bottle of wine in the deal"

"Because you get the luxury of a restaurant without going to one"

"It's nice to have all three courses which blend together"

"We started doing it in lockdown and realised it was better than eating out"

More than Convenience

When we asked why consumers are purchasing these pre-packed meal products, we found most (69%) are buying them to save time, as predicted – but many also because they like the taste and variety on offer.

One-fifth of consumers also revealed that by using the microwave to prepare their meals, it helps them save money on their energy bills.

Why do you buy ready meals? (select all that apply)

They save time



They taste nice



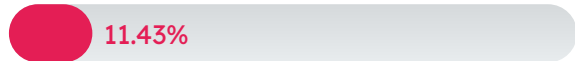
They offer variety



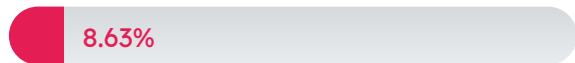
They save me money



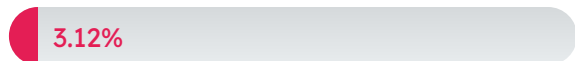
I don't cook / enjoy cooking



They are nutritious



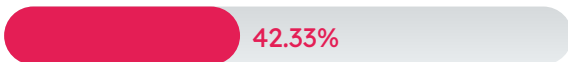
None of the above



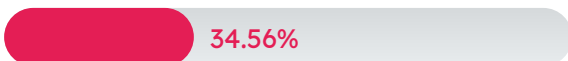
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Do you view ready meals as a healthy option for eating?

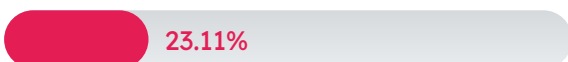
It depends on the product



No



Yes



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However, there is an assumption that ready meals are naturally unhealthy (only 23% view them as healthy options for eating), and so people choose not to eat these too frequently.

More than Convenience

This creates an opportunity – consumers want ready meals as they’re convenient and can even save them money, but many are not able to eat them frequently due to health concerns. They’re also concerned around the amount of ingredients and additives in them.



“Lots of additives flavourings emulsifiers gelling agents etc. It’s not healthy sometimes when you see all the additives.” - Female aged 55-64

If a product were to offer health and convenience along with being tasty (which most prioritise, as shown in the graphic below) it would no doubt set itself up to generate a lot of consumer demand, when marketed correctly.



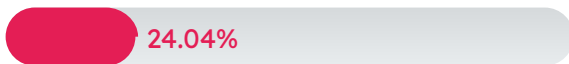
“I enjoy cooking so if there are ready made-up meals that are available that you can be cook from scratch, then I would prefer that, as meal would contain less processed food products as life-time shorter when ingredients are fresher within the set meals sold.” - Female aged 55-64

What is MOST important to you when choosing a ready meal to buy?

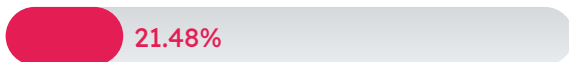
Taste



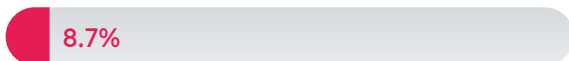
Cost



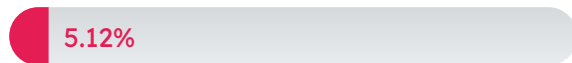
Quality



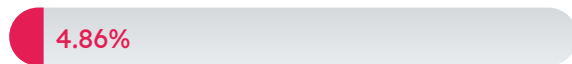
Health / nutritional value



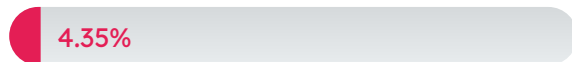
Trusted brand



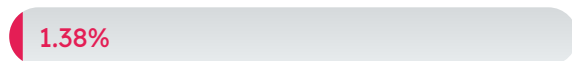
Convenience / availability



A clear / short ingredient list



None of the above



Sent to National Representative Sample

Convenient Meal Boxes

Not only are consumers looking for convenience in the form of ready meals, they're also enjoying boxes delivered to their door with all the ingredients they need to make meals from scratch.

These subscription services are growing in popularity, with 42% of our sample already saying they purchase these.

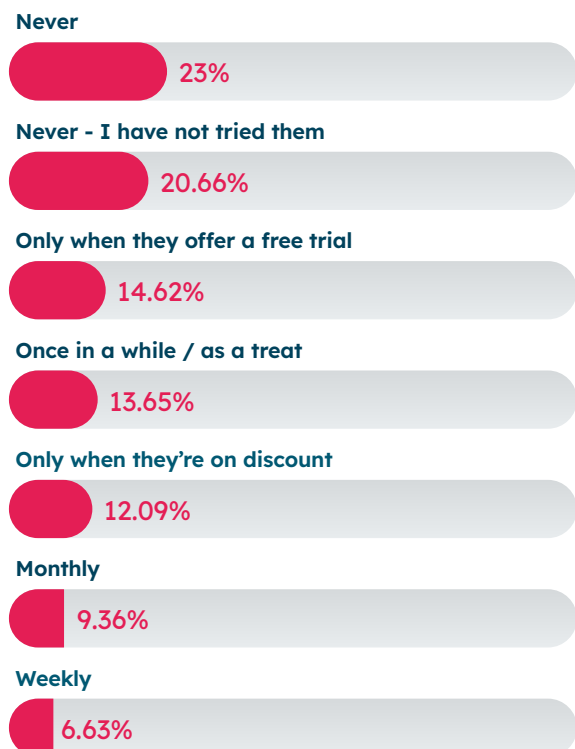
Do you purchase meal-kit subscription boxes? (e.g. Hello Fresh, Mindful Chef, etc)?



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We found that most of the population that has tried them only do so when they offer a free trial (nearly 15%), occasionally / as a treat (nearly 14%) or only when discounted (12%).

How often do you buy meal-kit subscription boxes (e.g. Hello Fresh, Mindful Chef, etc)?



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Convenient Meal Boxes

Following up with those who say they never buy them, we discovered some main reasons why:

- Too expensive / not cost effective
- They want to shop for local / fresh ingredients
- Delivery charges are off-putting
- They enjoy the process, from shopping to cooking
- The recipe choices are not appealing

All in all, many consumers are willing to pay more for convenience, especially as it can save them money on energy bills. However, others are prioritising keeping costs low by cutting out such convenience, finding cooking from scratch cheaper instead.

At a time when consumers are cutting their costs, many are finding comfort in the food they're choosing to eat, as we'll explore below.



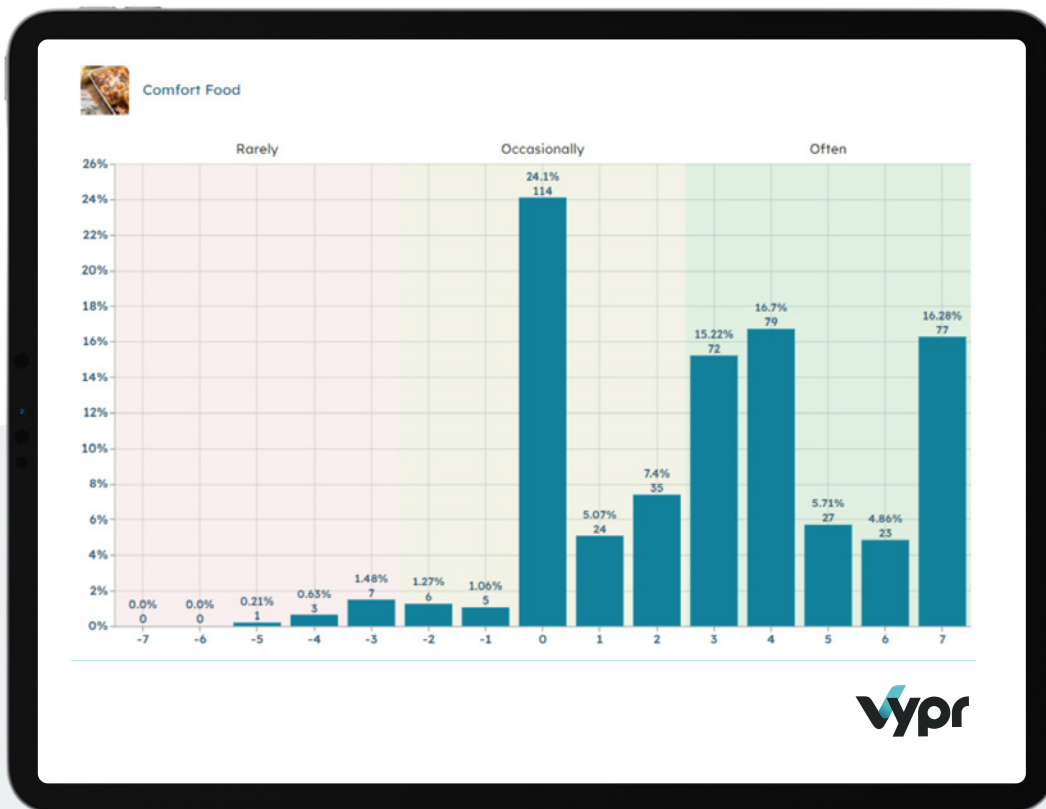
A Taste of Comfort

Comfort food invokes memories for many, having a nostalgic quality to them that consumers are loving now more than ever. <https://in-sight.symrise.com/article/the-new-nostalgia-of-foods>

The New Nostalgia of Foods (Symrise)

Nearly all our consumers – a huge 95% – say they have been eating comfort food. In the Vykert graph below, it's evident that the majority eat it occasionally and around 59% eat these foods often.

How often would you say you eat comfort food?



A Taste of Luxury

There has recently been a claimed growth in the number of consumers purchasing luxury-style products in the baked goods sector:

Top Bakery Trends 2023 (Bakery Info)

We followed up on this claim and found that 77% of people are indeed purchasing such affordable luxuries from places such as local patisseries, even during the current economic climate.

We found a variety of reasons why:

- The products look appealing and tempt them to buy
- They're perfect as a treat for a feel-good experience
- They prefer the freshly made taste
- They want to support local shops

60% of consumers say they're willing to pay more for better quality food / drink products – however it's important to remember that this is only a little more, as just 9% were willing to pay a lot more. Right now, value for money is ruling purchasing decisions in the food and drink industry, however there is some demand for affordable luxury.



Our product intelligence platform makes it easy to get these insights.



Vypr is an online self-service platform that allows you to run research with consumers, whenever you need it.

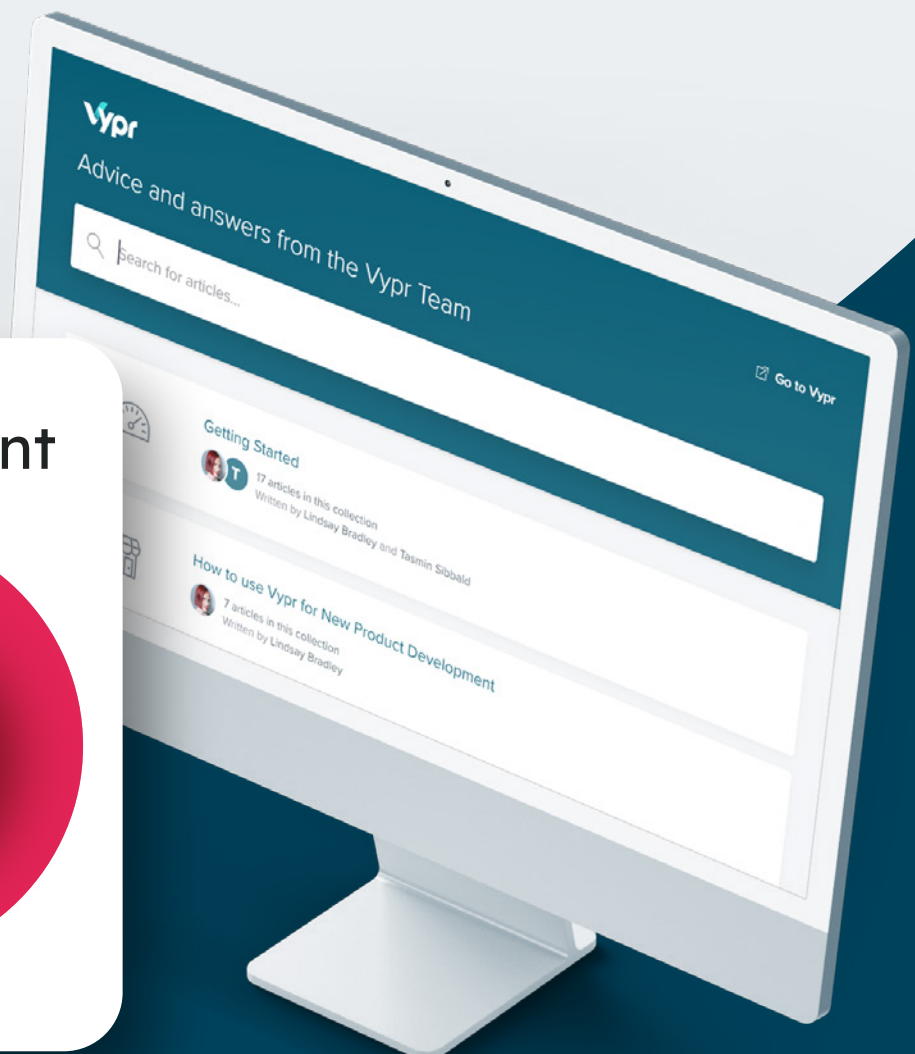
With Vypr, you get the consumer voice at your fingertips, meaning decision-making is rapid, robust and precise resulting in **better decisions, for winning products.**

Our service integrates effortlessly with current product processes, and our Steers (what we call research questions) take an average of 90 minutes to complete, so you can say goodbye to waiting for long-winded research reports, and **get insights when you need them, quickly and efficiently.**

Improvement

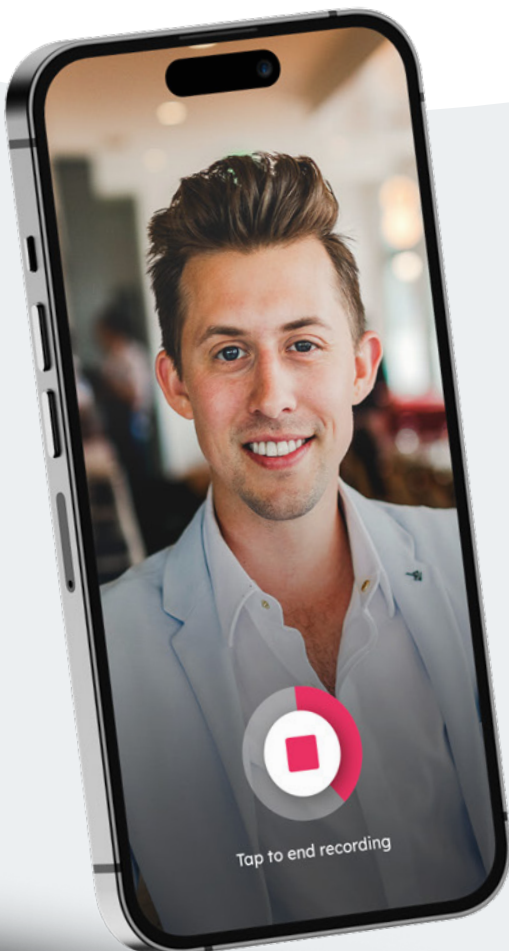
A graphic showing a red donut chart that is almost completely filled, with a white circle in the center containing the text "97%".

97%



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