

Vypr

December 2024



Festive Trends to Know



Hand-made Art & Design

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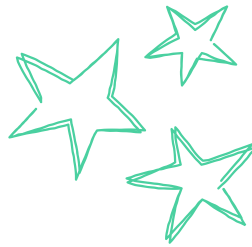
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This report has been brought to you using Vypr's latest insights, gathered from a proprietary consumer panel of 80,000 UK individuals representing the national demographic. The Frozen section was developed in partnership with the British Frozen Food Federation.



Highlights



Sustainability in Action - Pg 6

Nearly three-quarters (75%) of consumers are concerned about reducing food waste during the festive season, with 70% planning to upcycle leftovers – blending sustainability with nostalgia and cost-saving.



The Indulgence Factor - Pg 16

Nearly half of consumers (47%) increase their consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) during the holidays, with 24% admitting feelings of guilt – signalling for brands to innovate with healthier indulgent alternatives.



Frozen Foods on the Rise - Pg 12

Over 61% of consumers are willing to serve premium frozen food for special occasions, demonstrating a growing appetite for quality convenience during holiday celebrations.

Introduction

The festive season is a time of celebration, indulgence, and togetherness, but it also reveals evolving consumer behaviours that provide significant opportunities for brands and retailers. Across the four key areas explored in this report: **Sustainability and Circular Economy, Health and Wellness, Frozen Foods, and Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)**, a common thread emerges. Consumers are navigating the balance between tradition and modernity, indulgence and responsibility, and convenience and quality.

Sustainability is becoming increasingly integrated into festive practices, with many consumers prioritising reducing food waste, making eco-friendly packaging choices, and caring about the supply chain of their holiday products. Health and Wellness, while taking a back seat for most, remains a critical consideration for a niche but growing audience who demand inclusivity in festive catering.

Meanwhile, Frozen Foods continue to be a reliable favourite, offering convenience, affordability, and waste reduction – all qualities that resonate deeply during the busy holiday period. Lastly, indulgence reigns supreme when it comes to UPFs, though consumers remain mindful of health concerns, creating opportunities for guilt-free alternatives.

This report dives into these themes, unpacking the motivations behind consumer decisions and identifying actionable insights for brands and retailers to capture their attention this season.

Seasonal Sustainability and Circular Economy

The vast majority of consumers think about sustainability over the festive period, with a growing number caring a lot. Reducing food waste is one of the most pressing areas, with nearly three in four consumers keen to use, freeze, or upcycle leftovers. While sustainability plays a role, there could be multiple factors behind this finding. For example, using up food could help them save money over this expensive time of year. Or it could be partly due to nostalgic reasons, like memories of their parents' Boxing Day turkey curry or cold-cut lunches.

Other areas of sustainability are less popular but still significant. For example, almost two-thirds (64%) of consumers are interested in the supply chain of their festive foods and products. Over half (54%) of customers plan to use refillable packaging for food and drink, although it's unclear how much of their festive purchases this covers. This could involve small changes, such as using a travel mug for takeaway coffee, or a larger shift to refill stations for pantry staples. The overall trend reflects a desire to balance environmental consciousness with practical considerations.



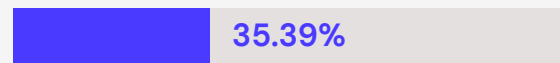
While sustainability is pressing on the minds of consumers this winter, it's likely mixed with a blend of other preoccupations such as cost-cutting and nostalgia. Retailers must navigate this complex interplay of motivations to deliver impactful messaging and product solutions.

Reducing Food Waste: Nearly three-quarters (75%) of consumers are concerned about food waste during the holidays, with one in six feeling "very concerned." Retailers could introduce leftover recipe kits, festive freezing tips, or upcycling ideas to inspire eco-conscious holiday habits.

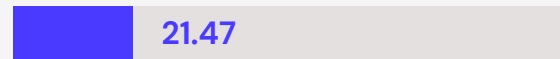
Sustainable Features vs Discounts: Almost twice as many consumers (43%) prefer sustainable features over discounts (23%). Younger shoppers (18–24), however, prioritise price, suggesting brands need to position sustainability as cost-effective.

How concerned are you about **reducing food waste** during the holiday season compared to the rest of the year?

I actively plan to reduce waste



Somewhat concerned, but I find it harder to reduce waste during holidays



Very concerned



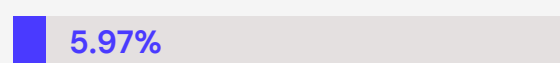
I don't actively think about food waste during the holidays



Not concerned, the holiday season is a time of indulgence



None of the above



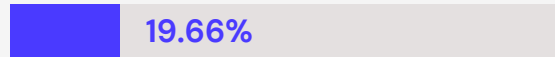


During the holiday season, how likely are you to **use refillable or reusable packaging** for food and drink purchases?

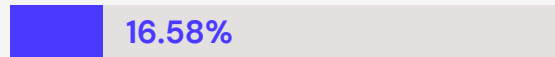
I actively plan to reduce waste



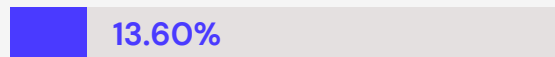
Very likely



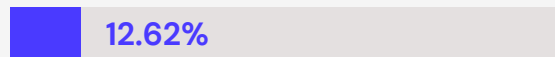
I don't use reusable/refillable options regardless of the season



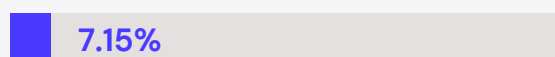
Unlikely, I prefer traditional packaging for holiday purchases



I actively seek out reusable/refillable options



None of the above



Supply Chain Transparency: Two-thirds (64%) of consumers care about the sustainability of supply chains, but only 24% actively prioritise it. Meaning educating shoppers on supply chain sustainability could strengthen brand trust.



Refillable Packaging: Over half (54%) plan to use refillable packaging during the holidays, with an additional 24% being “very likely” too. Retailers could experiment with festive refill campaigns or reward schemes to encourage adoption.

Recyclable Wrapping Paper: Most consumers favour recyclable wrapping paper, but younger shoppers lean towards affordability, reflecting a need for cost-friendly eco options.

Seasonal Sustainability



In Summary

The holiday season offers brands a chance to position sustainability as both achievable and emotionally rewarding. By addressing waste reduction, packaging solutions, and supply chain transparency, retailers can align with the multifaceted motivations of their audience. Balancing affordability and sustainability is key, especially for younger shoppers.

1. Link Sustainability with Traditions:

Nostalgia plays a powerful role during the festive season, and sustainability can be woven into these traditions. Highlighting ways to upcycle leftovers into classic holiday dishes, such as reinventing turkey into pies or curries, can connect sustainability with cherished family moments. Retailers can support this by offering recipe cards or digital guides to inspire creative reuse of festive ingredients. Brands can share these ideas through social media or packaging, making sustainability a practical and sentimental part of the holidays.

2. Highlight the Benefits of Sustainable Supply Chains

Consumers are increasingly interested in knowing the origins of their purchases. Brands can use storytelling to showcase their efforts, such as ethical sourcing or reduced carbon footprints, through packaging or online campaigns. Retailers can amplify these efforts with clear in-store messaging or dedicated sections for sustainable products, helping shoppers make informed choices while reinforcing the value of their purchase.

3. Encourage Refillable Packaging:

Refillable options can feel more festive and appealing with the right approach. Brands can introduce limited-edition holiday packaging designed for reuse and offer incentives like discounts or loyalty rewards for refills. Retailers can make this practical by setting up refill stations with festive themes or highlighting refillable options for everyday holiday essentials, such as baking ingredients or drinks.

4. Make Recyclable Wrapping Paper Easier to Choose:

Eco-friendly wrapping paper can become a popular choice if it is festive, affordable, and easily accessible. Brands can focus on attractive designs that communicate their recyclability clearly. Retailers can feature these products prominently in seasonal displays or bundle them with other holiday items, such as gift bags or ribbons, to make sustainable gifting effortless for shoppers.

Health and Wellness

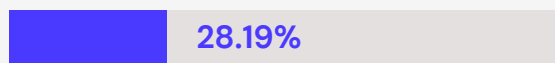


Generally, the festive season is a time when consumers relax their health goals and tend to start treating themselves. The majority (69%) do not consider fortified foods to be an essential part of the Christmas or New Year menus. However, there is a niche and growing market. Around a sixth (15%) of consumers will always opt for functional or free-from foods wherever possible, including holiday treats.

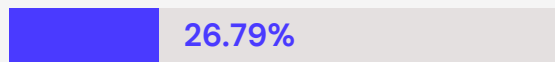
Hosting plays a significant role in influencing these behaviours. While only 27% actively purchase fortified or free-from products for their own use, 38% believe it is very important to cater for dietary needs when hosting. This reflects the increasing social expectation for inclusivity at festive tables, even among those who may not adhere to such diets themselves.

Do you actively seek out fortified products (e.g., vitamin-enriched, protein-enhanced) for Christmas...

Never



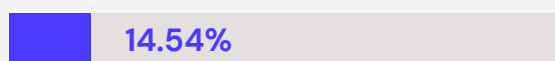
Sometimes



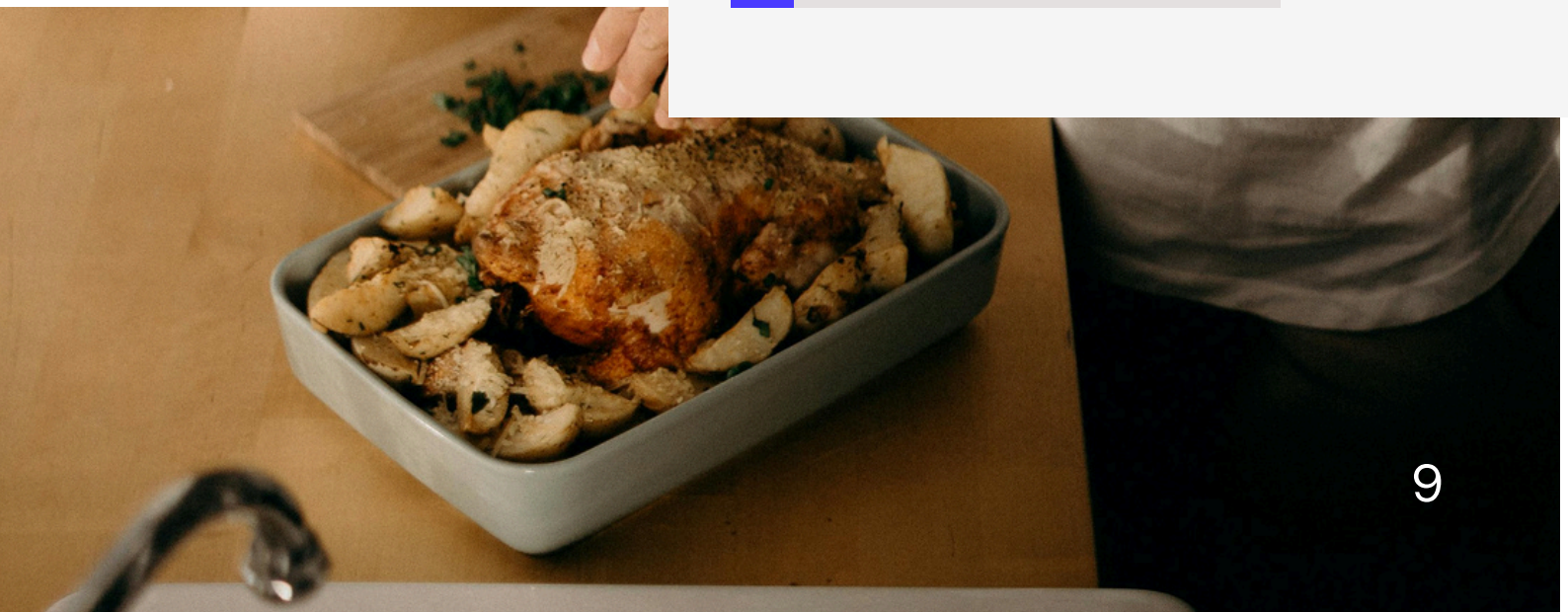
Rarely



Always



Yes



Niche Market Opportunity: Seven in ten (69%) consumers do not view fortified or free-from foods as an "essential" part of their holiday menus. Almost half (47%) rarely or never seek out fortified products when preparing for the festive season. However, a dedicated niche exists: one in six consumers (15%) consistently prioritise these options, reflecting a valuable market for targeted premium products and innovative holiday offerings.



Host Responsibility: Catering for dietary inclusivity is a divisive topic among consumers. A slight majority (38%) of hosts believe it is very important to provide free-from options for their guests. However, a significant proportion (35%) do not see it as important. This mix of perspectives highlights both growing social pressure to accommodate diverse needs and the hesitation some hosts feel about the effort involved. Retailers have an opportunity to make hosting easier with curated bundles or ready-to-serve free-from options

Consumers Split on Purchases: Despite an increasing awareness of the importance of dietary inclusivity, actual purchasing behaviours reveal a gap between beliefs and actions. Only a quarter of consumers (27%) buy fortified or free-from products for their festive gatherings, while the majority (35%) avoid these items entirely. These findings suggest that barriers such as cost, perceived complexity, or limited knowledge about how to integrate these foods into holiday menus may hinder adoption.



Health & Wellness



In Summary

While most consumers prioritise indulgence over health, there is a growing expectation for dietary inclusivity at festive gatherings. Retailers can use this to position fortified and free-from foods as both celebratory and essential for modern hosting. Social campaigns focused on dietary inclusivity could enhance appeal, even among those who do not regularly buy these products.

1. Promote Inclusivity:

Inclusivity is becoming an important value for modern hosts, and holiday marketing can reflect this shift. Campaigns that position free-from options as thoughtful and inclusive additions to the festive table can resonate with consumers who want to cater to diverse dietary needs. Brands can emphasise that not all dietary restrictions are visible, encouraging a "better safe than sorry" approach to hosting. Retailers can support this by offering dedicated free-from sections, prominently featuring holiday favourites like desserts, nibbles, and meal kits.

2. Showcase Free-From and Fortified Options Alongside Indulgent Treats:

Free-from products don't need to compete with indulgence – they can complement it. Brands can position fortified and free-from holiday options as versatile additions to traditional feasts, showing how they fit seamlessly into festive menus. Retailers can highlight these products in cross-promotional displays, such as pairing a free-from dessert with a traditional roast or wine. These subtle integrations help reinforce the idea that inclusivity doesn't mean compromise.

3. Educate Consumers:

A lack of awareness often prevents consumers from purchasing free-from products, making education key. Brands can invest in campaigns that highlight the benefits and versatility of these options, using real-life examples, festive recipes, and endorsements from trusted voices. Retailers can enhance this by offering in-store tasting events, recipe leaflets, or signage that educates shoppers on how these products can elevate their festive celebrations.

Frozen Foods and Seasonal Spending Habits

In collaboration with the **British Frozen Food Federation**, we explored how frozen foods remain a festive staple for consumers. With 52% of shoppers increasing their frozen food purchases during this time, the category is synonymous with convenience, affordability, and waste reduction – qualities that resonate deeply during the busy holiday season.

The top purchases include party snacks, particularly among those aged 45 to 65, who are often hosting festive gatherings. Classic Christmas desserts like berry meringue, Viennetta, or ice cream follow closely behind. Consumers are drawn to the convenience of frozen foods, with many also appreciating the savings, as 71% seek out discounts.

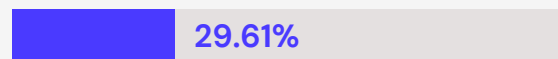
Beyond indulgent treats, frozen foods are a practical choice for time-strapped consumers, serving as meal prep aids or backups for fresh ingredients. Most consumers (61%) would even serve premium frozen foods for special occasions, provided the price is reasonable.

Would you consider buying premium frozen foods (e.g., organic, gourmet) for special holiday meals?

Maybe, if the price is right



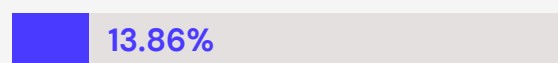
Yes, definitely



No, I prefer fresh for special occasions



No, I stick with standard frozen products



Increased Demand for Frozen Foods: Over half of consumers (52%) buy more frozen foods during the holiday season, filling their freezers with festive treats. While 27% stock up well in advance, the majority (43%) pick up frozen foods as part of their regular holiday shopping trips.

Party Food and Desserts: Party snacks lead as the most purchased frozen category (46%), followed closely by desserts (47%). Consumers aged 45–65 are the biggest buyers of party food, with two-thirds choosing these items to support their hosting responsibilities. Meanwhile, younger consumers (25–34) favour frozen versions of traditional holiday dishes, with 34% consistently purchasing alternatives like pre-made meals or frozen turkey.

Convenience is Key: Convenience drives frozen food purchases, with 68% of consumers calling it "very important." Over a third use frozen foods to save time on tasks like cleaning and chopping vegetables, while nearly half (48%) incorporate them into at least some dishes for festive gatherings. Around 25% also keep frozen versions as backups for fresh ingredients.

Premium Appeal with Price Sensitivity: Three in five consumers (61%) are willing to serve premium frozen foods for special occasions. However, price remains a critical factor, with 41% only considering premium options if they are affordable.

Sustainability and Savings Motivate Shoppers: Frozen foods are seen as a sustainable choice, with 75% of consumers believing they help reduce waste during the festive season. Discounts and promotions are also significant drivers, enticing seven in ten (71%) of shoppers. However, for 32%, only substantial discounts are enough to influence their purchasing decisions.



Frozen Food

In Summary



Frozen foods offer an unbeatable combination of convenience, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness. This season, brands and retailers have a unique opportunity to expand premium ranges, promote festive recipes, and emphasise the environmental benefits of frozen options to stand out in a competitive market.

1. Position Frozen Foods as a Waste-Reducing and Time-Saving Solution:

Frozen foods are increasingly seen as practical and sustainable options for the holiday season. Brands can highlight their role in reducing waste, showcasing how frozen ingredients and ready-to-cook meals minimise spoilage and support mindful consumption. Retailers can amplify this message through in-store signage or digital campaigns that emphasise frozen foods as the ultimate time-saver for busy hosts, making meal preparation easier without sacrificing quality.

2. Promote Premium Frozen Products as Festive Essentials:

Premium frozen options can be positioned as high-quality, stress-free additions to holiday celebrations. Brands can use festive packaging and targeted messaging to show how frozen desserts, appetisers, or meal components offer a touch of indulgence and convenience. Retailers can support this by creating dedicated festive frozen sections, pairing premium products with complementary items like wine or tableware to encourage bundled purchases. These placements reinforce the perception of frozen foods as suitable for special occasions.

3. Use Timely Discounts to Maximise Shopper Interest:

Strategic promotions can help capture shoppers as they prepare for the holiday season. Brands can time discounts on popular frozen products to align with key stocking-up periods, such as early December or just before major celebrations. Retailers can create (and should continue to create) freezer-friendly promotions, offering multi-buy deals or bundles that encourage customers to maximise their purchases without exceeding freezer space limitations. This ensures shoppers feel they are getting both value and practicality.

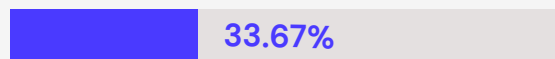
Ultra-Processed Foods and the Season of Indulgence

The festive season is marked by a noticeable increase in ultra-processed food (UPF) consumption, reflecting the prioritisation of indulgence and convenience during the holidays. While many shoppers embrace festive treats without concern, a significant portion experience guilt over their choices. This duality offers brands a chance to cater to consumers seeking indulgence while addressing their desire for healthier alternatives.

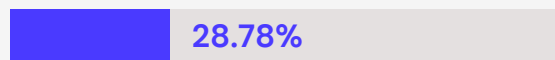
Additionally, festive cooking habits reveal a balance between tradition and practicality. Some consumers prefer the nostalgia of scratch cooking, while others turn to UPFs for the convenience needed during the busy holiday season. This highlights the growing opportunity for products that combine the ease of modern solutions with the appeal of homemade traditions.

How does your consumption of **ultra-processed foods** during the christmas season compare to the rest of the year?

My consumption stays the same



I consume slightly more during the holidays



I consume significantly more ultra-processed foods during the holidays



I try to avoid ultra-processed foods during the holidays



None of the above



Increased Consumption: Nearly half (47%) of consumers eat more UPFs than usual during the holidays, with 38% reporting a significant increase. This demonstrates the strong demand for indulgent and accessible options that fit seamlessly into festive routines.

Guilt vs Indulgence: While 46% of shoppers indulge without concern, 24% feel guilty about their choices, highlighting an opportunity for brands to create indulgent yet minimally processed festive treats that reduce feelings of regret.

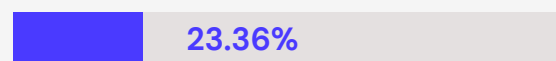
Convenience vs

Tradition: A balance exists between those who favour scratch cooking (17%) and those who rely on UPFs (15%) for convenience. This underscores the need for hybrid solutions, such as fresh ready-to-cook kits, that offer both ease and a sense of homemade quality.

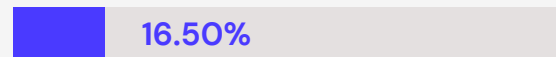


During the Christmas season, how likely are you to choose UPF (e.g., ready-made meals or snacks) for convenience rather than cooking from scratch?

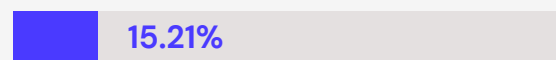
I mix convenience with homemade options



I prefer to prepare meals from scratch



Somewhat likely



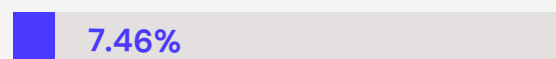
Very likely



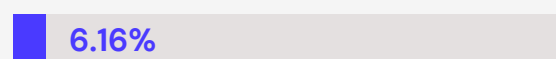
Unlikely



I prioritise convenience



I avoid ultra-processed foods, even during the holidays



None of the above



Ultra-Processed Foods



In Summary

The festive season allows brands to redefine indulgence by creating products that combine taste, convenience, and health benefits. Educating consumers about UPFs, promoting better choices, and offering guilt-free indulgences will allow brands to stand out while meeting diverse needs.

1. Educate Consumers on the Difference Between UPFs and Unhealthy Foods:

Many consumers use UPFs as a catch-all term for "unhealthy," which can create confusion and guilt. Brands can lead the conversation by highlighting that not all UPFs are inherently bad. For example, products like protein shakes or fortified foods can offer nutritional benefits.

Retailers can support this by providing in-store educational materials, recipe ideas, or hosting demonstrations to show how these products can fit into a balanced festive diet.

2. Introduce Minimally Processed, Ready-to-Cook Festive Products:

Time-strapped shoppers are looking for convenience without compromising on health or indulgence. Brands can create minimally processed options that are easy to prepare and feel special, such as pre-marinated roasts, ready-to-cook vegetable medleys, or fresh dessert kits. Retailers can spotlight these products in festive promotions, positioning them as quick yet wholesome solutions for the busy holiday season.

3. Offer Indulgent Yet Guilt-Free Treats:

With 46% of consumers prioritising enjoyment and 24% feeling guilty about their choices, there is a clear opportunity to provide festive treats that balance taste and health. Brands can innovate with lower-sugar, nutrient-enriched desserts or snacks that still feel indulgent. Retailers can feature these options in dedicated "guilt-free indulgence" sections, helping shoppers find products that align with both their cravings and their wellness goals.

In Conclusion

The findings of this report paint a dynamic picture of consumer behaviour during the festive season, revealing both traditional values and emerging priorities. Each section highlights distinct opportunities:

Sustainability: Consumers increasingly value sustainable practices like reducing food waste, using refillable packaging, and seeking transparency in supply chains. Brands that align with these values by offering practical, cost-effective, and emotionally resonant solutions will stand out.

Health and Wellness: Although indulgence dominates festive menus, inclusivity is gaining traction, with hosts feeling the responsibility to cater for diverse dietary needs. Retailers can lead by introducing fortified and free-from options that are versatile, celebratory, and easy to integrate into traditional meals.

Frozen Foods: The versatility of frozen foods cements their place as a festive essential. Their role in reducing waste, simplifying meal prep, and providing cost-effective options gives brands a unique chance to elevate their premium offerings and promote sustainable messaging.

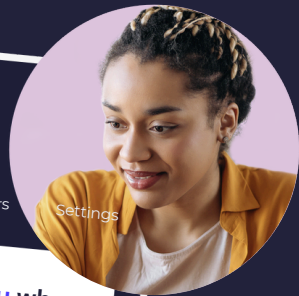
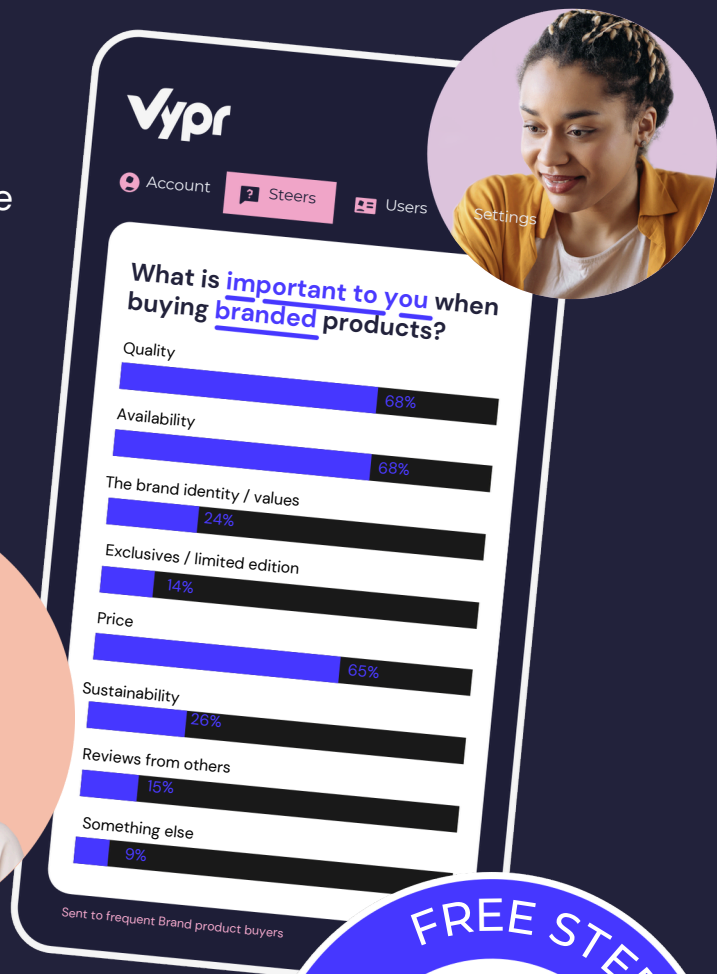
UPFs: The festive season is synonymous with indulgence, but consumer guilt about health remains a challenge. Offering minimally processed, convenient alternatives and educating shoppers about UPFs can create a powerful intersection of indulgence and responsibility.

This festive period represents a chance for brands and retailers to not only meet immediate seasonal demands but also build lasting consumer loyalty. By addressing the underlying motivations behind these behaviours (whether it's nostalgia, convenience, sustainability, or inclusivity), brands can position themselves as trusted allies in creating a joyful, thoughtful, and modern festive experience.



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