



Creating Meaningful Experiences in Campus Dining

Menu
Matters

A photograph of a bustling restaurant interior. The space features exposed brick walls, large multi-paned windows on the left, and several large, dome-shaped pendant lights hanging from the ceiling. People are seen dining at tables and standing near the bar area. The overall atmosphere is warm and industrial.

WE SPECIALIZE IN HUMAN-
CENTERED INSIGHTS FOR THE
F&B INDUSTRY.

WE BELIEVE FOOD MATTERS.



We're always
looking for
indicators or
signals to drive
INDICATOR RESEARCH
insight

2024 CONSUMER NEED

Just take care of the
consumer.



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's face and hands as they eat spaghetti. The person has a wide-eyed, open-mouthed expression of surprise or delight. They are holding two forks, one in each hand, lifting a portion of spaghetti from a plate. The spaghetti is topped with a red sauce and melted cheese. The background is dark and out of focus.

2025 CONSUMER NEED

Give the consumer something
new.



What are the top three emotions you are feeling heading into 2026? (Please select up to three.)

Hopeful	46%
Optimistic	34%*
Excited	34%*
Anxious	30%
Uncertain	29%
Overwhelmed	26%*
Cautiously Optimistic	22%
Realistic	21%
Curious	19%
Frustrated	13%
Scared	12%
None of the above	1%

Gen Z was all over the place but hope and optimism paved the way.



2026

**42% of consumers were
unaware potato chips
were made from
potatoes**



941 comments



nae529nae

I wanna know why they now say "now made with real potatoes". Like what were you using before 🤔

2d

Reply



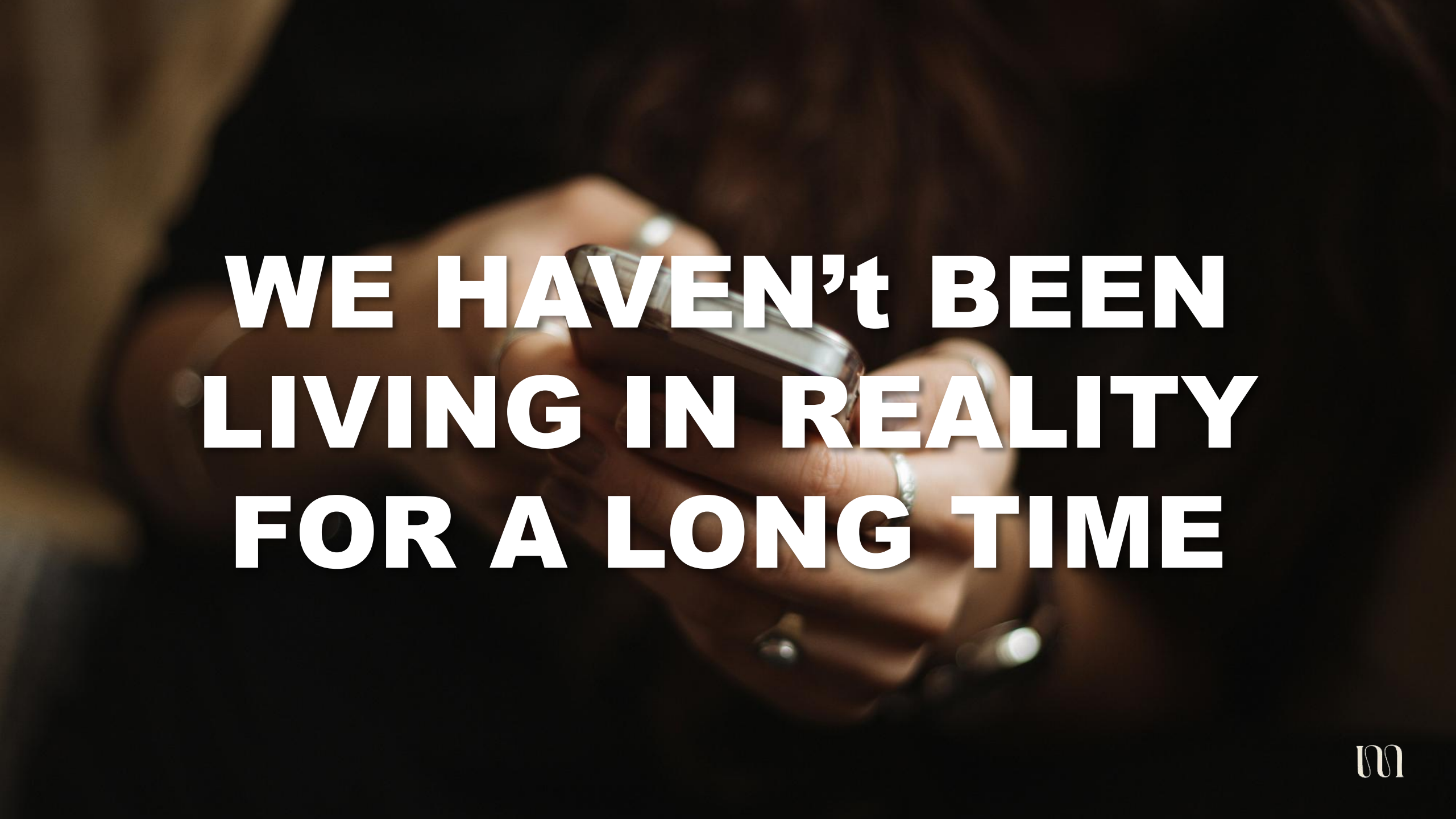
♡ 6,015



— View 36 replies ▾

POTATO CHIPS

NET WT. 8 OZ. (226.8 g)

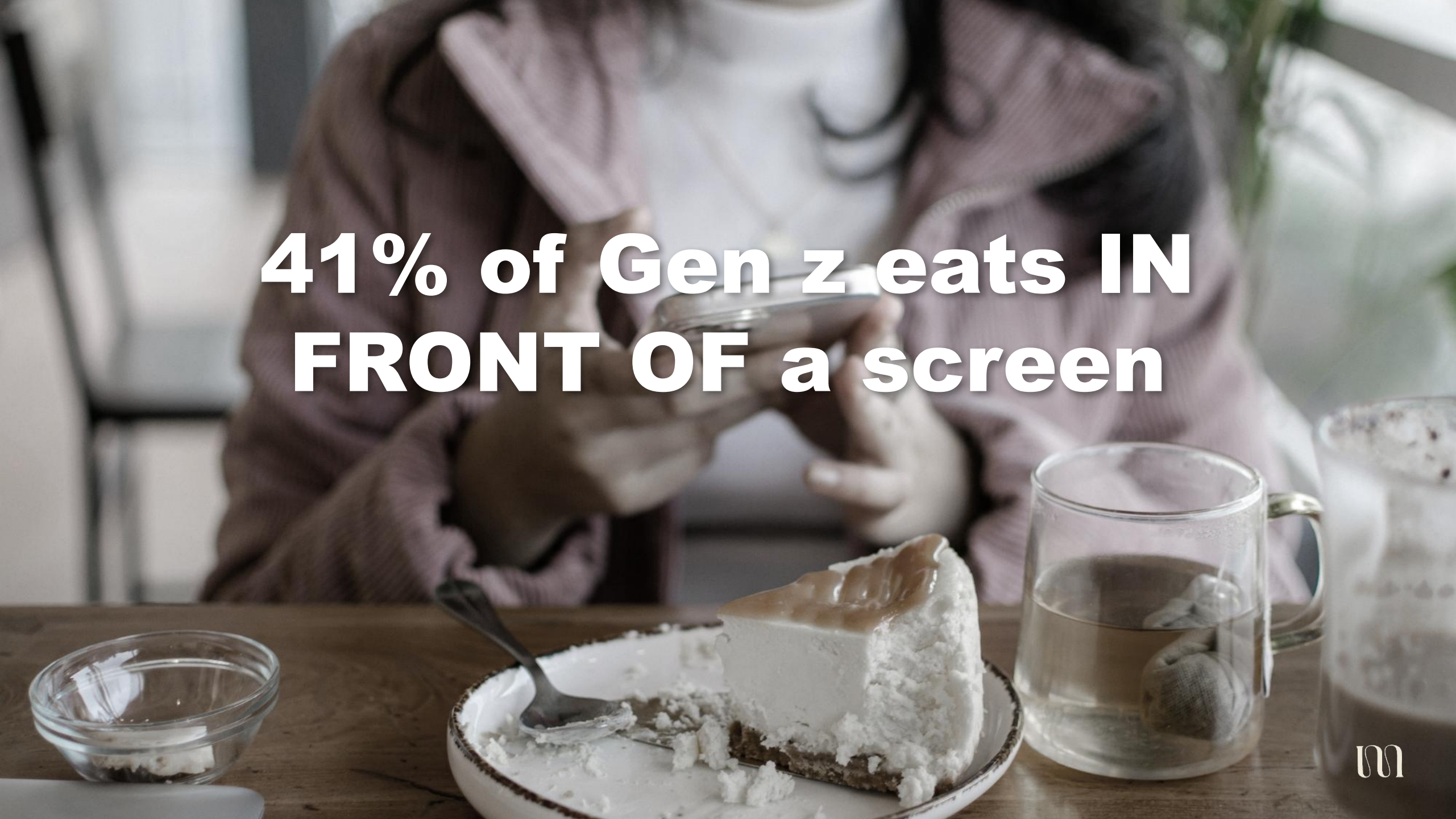
A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The person is wearing a dark, possibly black, long-sleeved garment. The background is dark and out of focus. Overlaid on the image is a large, bold, white sans-serif text that reads: "WE HAVEN'T BEEN LIVING IN REALITY FOR A LONG TIME".

**WE HAVEN'T BEEN
LIVING IN REALITY
FOR A LONG TIME**

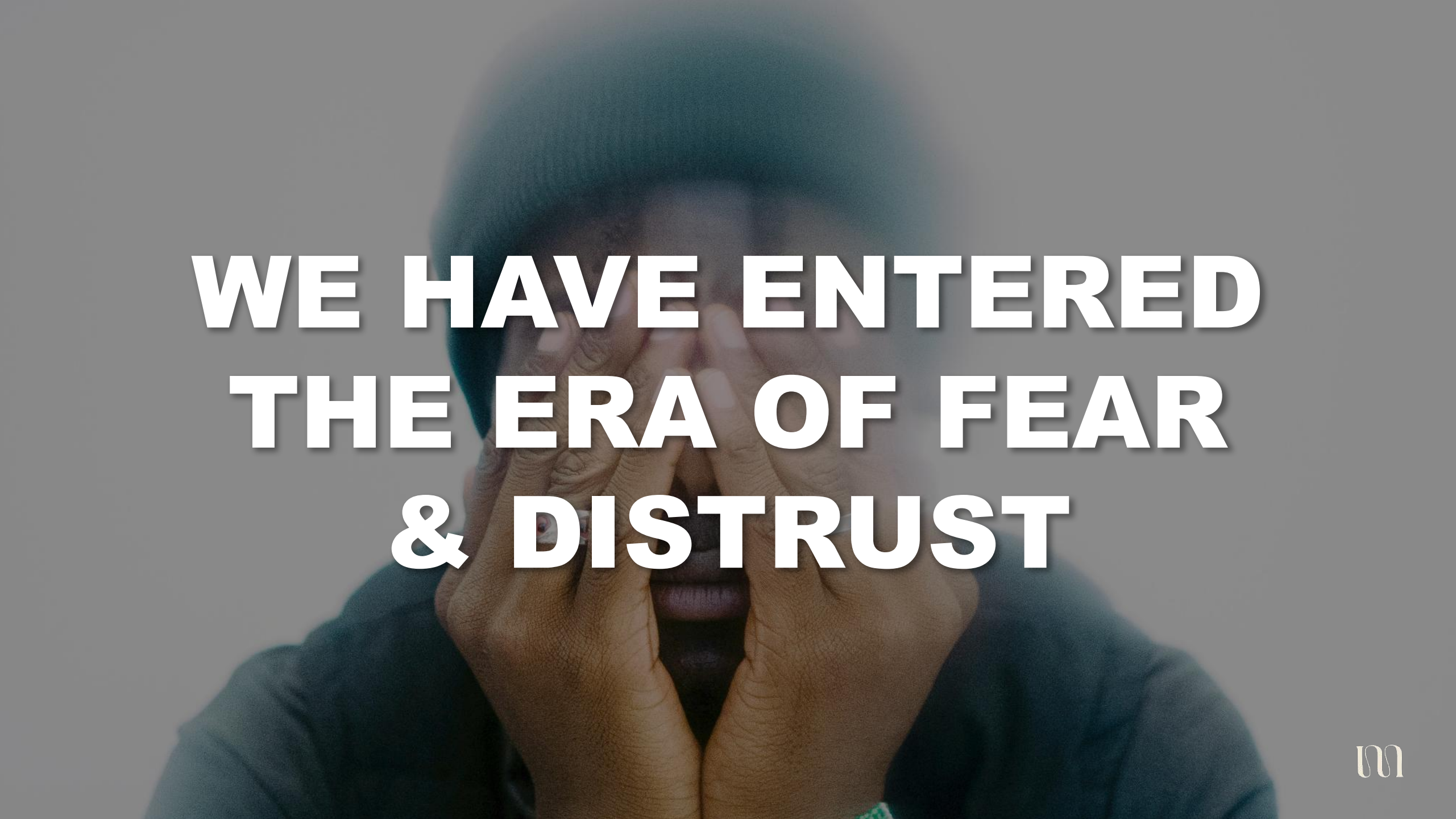
DATA REPORTAL

**The average Gen Z
spends about 9 hours a
day in front of a screen,
equaling over 22 years
of their lives.**



A person wearing a pink sweater is seated at a wooden table, holding a smartphone with both hands. In the foreground, on the table, is a white plate with a slice of cheesecake topped with caramel sauce, a glass mug of tea with a tea bag, and a small glass bowl. The background is softly blurred, showing a window and some indoor plants.

**41% of Gen z eats IN
FRONT OF a screen**

A person with dark hair and a beard is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark green shirt. They have their hands pressed against their face, covering their eyes and mouth, which conveys a sense of fear, anxiety, or distress. The background is a solid, muted grey.

**WE HAVE ENTERED
THE ERA OF FEAR
& DISTRUST**

A black and white photograph of a backyard at night. In the foreground, a large, dark trampoline sits on a grassy lawn. Four rabbits are captured in mid-air, jumping over the trampoline. The rabbits are light-colored, possibly grey or white, and their forms are slightly blurred due to motion. The background features a dark wooden fence and dense foliage, including trees and bushes. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source coming from the camera's flash, creating a high-contrast, grainy image.

**77% of internet
users say they have
been duped by AI**

PEARL / CENSUSWIDE

**41% of Gen Z say
they trust AI more
than humans.**



A person's arm is extended from the left side of the frame towards the center, reaching out towards several tall, thin stalks of grass with feathery seed heads. The background is a soft-focus field of similar grass under a hazy, golden-brown sky. The overall mood is contemplative and natural.

2026 CONSUMER NEED

Give Me Something Real



For young consumers,
every pressure is
amplified.

GALLUP & WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

**Only 47% of Gen Z
consider themselves
“thriving,” compared to
59% of Millennials and
57% of Gen X.**



CIGNA / MOMENTUM WORLDWIDE

**73% of Gen Z report
feeling lonely despite
being the most digitally
connected generation
in history.**



Thinking about how you make decisions about what to eat and drink, how would you describe the amount of information and options available to you today?

I feel confident in my decisions	45%
It's harder to know what's good for me	31%*
There are too many choices, it's overwhelming	27%*
I know where to find trustworthy information	28%
Everything looks the same everywhere	22%*
I'm always worked I'm being taken advantage of	21%*



Here's the surprise...

P W C H O L I D A Y O U T L O O K

**61% of Gen Z now
prefer to discover new
products in-store, a
reversal of every
assumption about
digital natives.**



TASTEWISE 2026 GEN Z HABITS

**“Cozy” is the only
emerging Gen Z
consumer need showing
both growth and scale...
comfort, warmth,
familiar sensory cues.**





12%
of Gen Z doesn't
believe they have a
clear personal
identity

Campus dining may be
the last true third
space

THOUGHT STARTER

**Be the cozy respite. How
does your space offer a
low-stim, comfort-
forward break?**



THOUGHT STARTER

**Offer students the
opportunity to learn
more about
themselves and
engage more with
others.**



THOUGHT STARTER

**By answering deeper
human needs, you
create a more loyal,
lasting relationship.**



HUMAN-FOCUSED INSIGHTS

Menu Matters

FOR THE F+B INDUSTRY



THANK YOU

MAEVE WEBSTER

maeve@menumatters.com
linkedin.com/in/maevewebster

MIKE KOSTYO

mike@menumatters.com
linkedin.com/in/mrkostyo

menumatters.com