

Voice of the Consumer 2024:

Regional findings



Ensuring retail success in the
Middle East:
**Trust, innovation, and climate
consciousness**



Executive Summary

Trust may be intangible, but it is a crucial motivation in consumer purchase decisions. Trust is not just a value; it is a strategic asset essential for business success. Consumers trust brands they love, value organisations that use their data responsibly and are loyal to businesses that address environmental concerns. With the rise of GenAI, trust is even more pivotal, as consumers need reassurance about data security and ethical AI usage. Trusted brands benefit from greater consumer engagement, enhanced personalisation in sales and strong brand advocacy.

To sustain and leverage trust, companies must, among other things, implement environmentally sustainable practices and pledge rigorous data protection measures. Our latest survey, "Voice of the Consumer 2024: Middle East," leverages insights from over 2,100 consumer responses across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Egypt and reveals six critical areas where trust gaps exist and offers insights into how consumer companies can bridge these gaps to maintain and grow market share.





Here are our key takeaways:

Trust and data protection

- In the region, trust is highest for the airline and healthcare industries, while social media companies rank the lowest.
- A critical factor for earning consumer trust is the responsible protection and use of their data.

Economic and environmental concerns

- For regional consumers, inflation ranks as the number-one risk that consumers think could impact their country over the next year.
- Climate change and macroeconomic volatility are also seen as the top threats, with nearly half of the consumers surveyed indicating that extreme weather conditions pose a huge risk for them.
- A significant number of consumers in the region are concerned about climate change and are keen to buy sustainable products. They are ready to pay a premium for products that are locally produced or have a low carbon footprint.
- There is notable interest in hybrid and electric vehicles, and strong support for enhanced public transport and infrastructure to reduce road traffic, with Millennials particularly favouring car-free city centres and drone usage.

AI and technology

- Middle Eastern consumers have expressed concern about AI's future impacts. Key worries include increased cyber threats, lack of regulation, and potential job losses, mirroring global concerns. Consumers value AI for its efficiency, particularly chatbots, but emphasise the importance of data privacy and security to build trust.
- Regional consumers shop online more frequently than their global counterparts and highly value self-checkout and mobile payments. They plan to increase spending on groceries, clothing, travel, and luxury products, preferring brands with positive ESG impacts.

Health and nutrition

- Consumers have increased fresh fruit and vegetable intake and a small but sizable number have reduced red meat.
- Support for sustainability initiatives and health-tracking technologies is strong, with generational differences in health preferences.

Social media and consumer behaviour

- Consumers demonstrate mixed feelings about social media: they enjoy using it for discovery, reviews, and purchases, especially Millennials and Gen Z. But despite its influence on brand discovery and purchase decisions through ads and influencers, there are trust issues around social media due to significant concerns about privacy, data sharing, and the reliability of social media companies.



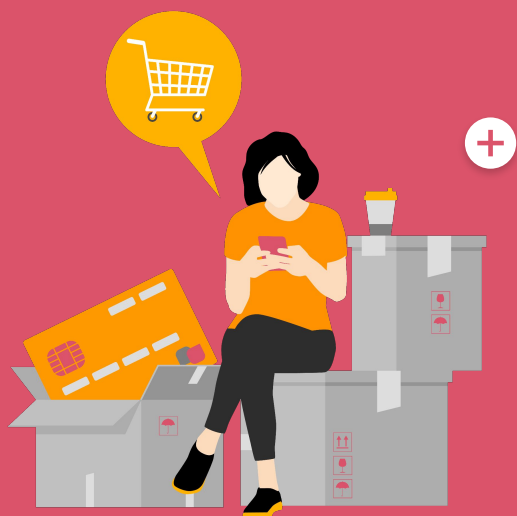
In this report we spotlight the perspectives of three distinct consumer types. Right-click each picture to open its report in a new tab



Voice of the
tech-savvy
consumer



Voice of the
climate-conscious
consumer



Voice of the
empowered
consumer



Action points for retailers

In the region's dynamic and transforming retail environment, there is a paradox in growing consumer spend and people's distrust in certain businesses. Middle Eastern consumers, known for their digital savviness and strong preference for technology-enhanced shopping experiences, demand more from retailers and consumer companies. They prioritise data protection, value transparency, and seek personalised and sustainable products. To succeed in this competitive market, retailers must address these needs comprehensively. Companies must know how to build and retain trust. They can strengthen the confidence consumers have in them by executing four key imperatives.



1

Prioritise data protection and transparency



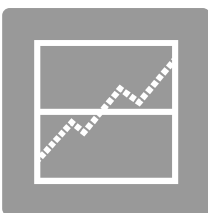
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Enhance e-commerce and mobile shopping experiences



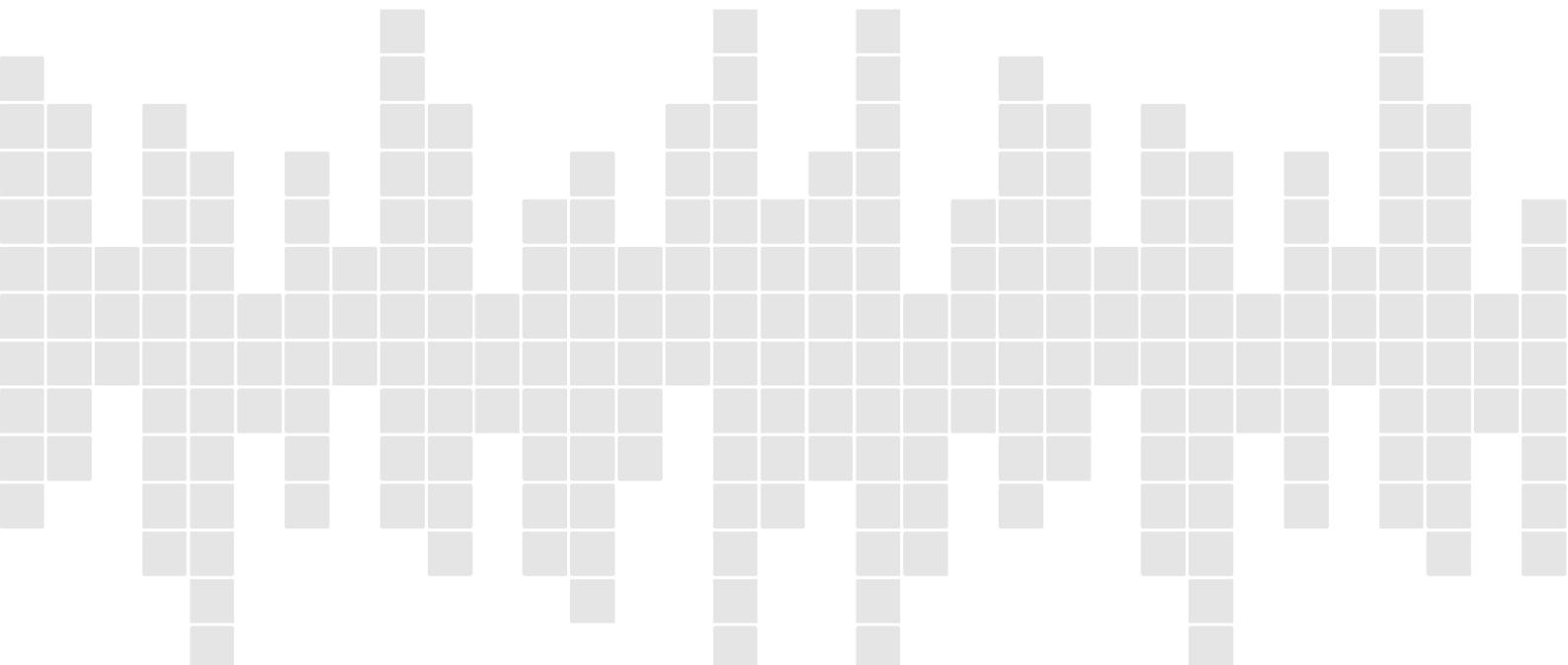
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Emphasise sustainability in product offerings



4

Leverage social media for brand engagement



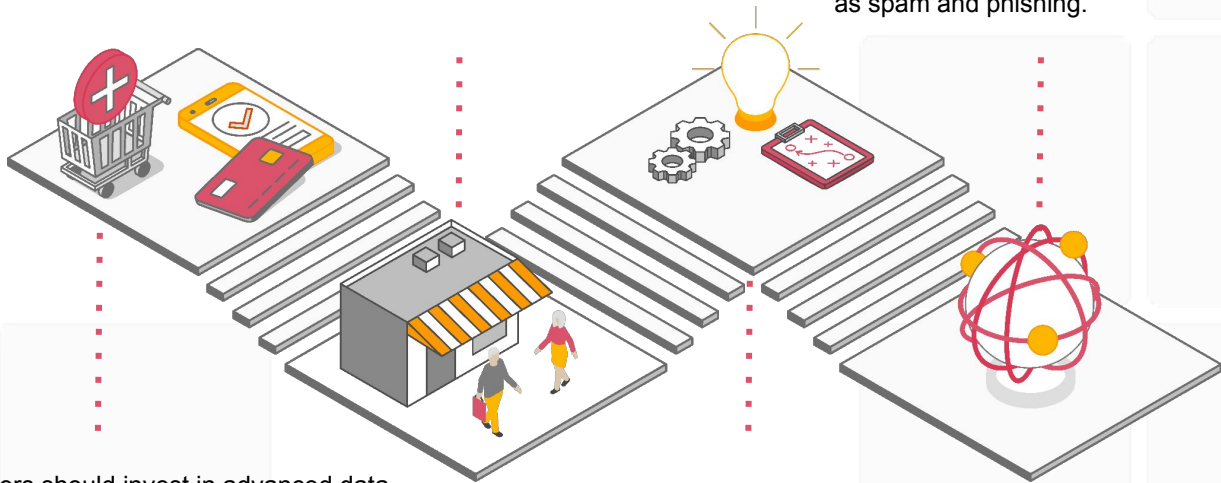


1

Prioritise data protection and transparency

They must also address generational differences when it comes to trust and technology use. They can tailor marketing and communication strategies to different age groups. For older consumers, retailers can emphasise data security, while for younger consumers, focus on innovation and convenience.

Despite the significant impact of AI, retailers must ensure all safety measures are in place to maintain trust. Retailers can invest in robust cybersecurity practices to build trust and alleviate digital security concerns, such as spam and phishing.



Retailers should invest in advanced data security technologies and regularly update consumers on data protection practices. Transparent communication about data usage and providing options for consumers to control their data will help build trust and loyalty among consumers.

It is critical to invest in AI-driven customer service solutions that are capable of solving complex problems and providing swift responses. Ensure chatbots are user-friendly and can seamlessly transition to human agents when necessary.



2

Enhance e-commerce and mobile shopping experiences

They must incorporate state-of-the-art technologies into their physical stores to enhance the shopping experience. Providing self-checkout options, personalised in-store promotions via mobile, and seamless mobile payment solutions can bridge the gap between digital and physical retail experiences.



Retailers must optimise their online platforms for mobile devices, ensuring a seamless and user-friendly experience. Investing in mobile apps, mobile payments, and fast-loading, responsive websites will help capture the growing number of consumers shopping online via mobile.

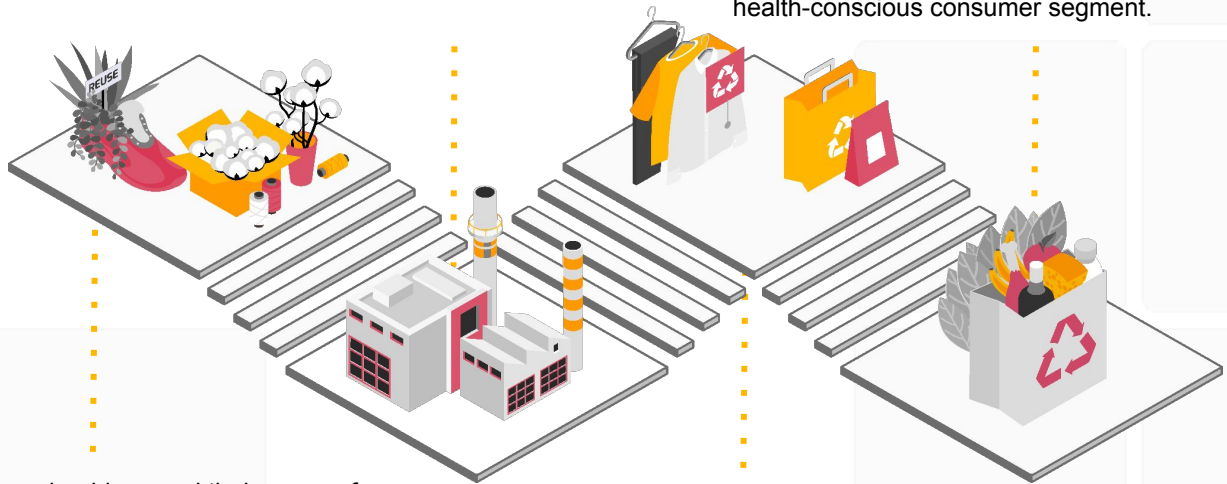


3

Emphasise sustainability in product offerings

They should also clearly communicate their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) commitments. Transparency in sustainability efforts, such as reducing carbon footprints and supporting conservation initiatives, will help build trust and loyalty among climate-conscious consumers.

Retailers must increase their range of health-focused and sustainable food products, providing clear nutritional information and promoting the benefits of these choices. Highlighting locally sourced and environmentally friendly products will appeal to the health-conscious consumer segment.



Retailers should expand their range of sustainable products, highlighting eco-friendly attributes in marketing and packaging. Offering locally produced goods and promoting products with a low environmental impact will resonate well with these consumers.

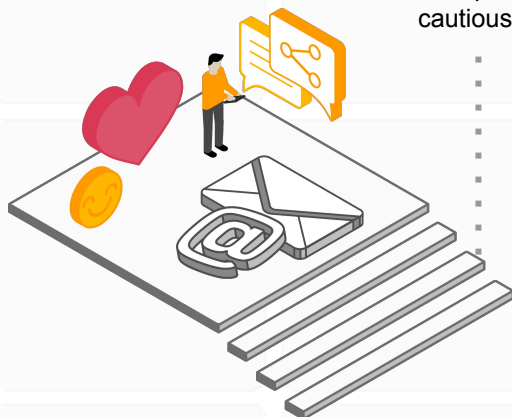
By incorporating sustainability themes into their marketing strategies, retailers can emphasise the tangible environmental benefits of their products. They can also introduce loyalty programmes or discounts for customers who make sustainable choices, such as opting for eco-friendly products or using reusable packaging. These incentives can encourage and reward climate-conscious purchasing behaviours.



4

Leverage social media for brand engagement

Retailers should actively engage with consumers on social media platforms, utilising influencer partnerships and personalised content to drive brand awareness and loyalty. Addressing privacy concerns transparently will also be key to building trust with consumers who are cautious about data sharing on social media.



By implementing these strategies, retailers can effectively meet the evolving needs of Middle Eastern consumers, driving growth and fostering loyalty in a competitive market.

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