

# Decoding the Romanian shopper:

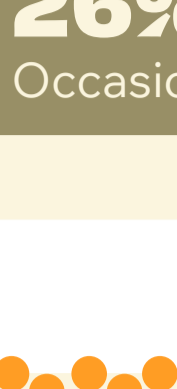
attitudes, habits & emerging trends



## Budget pressure in grocery shopping

In the current Romanian economic context, consumers seem to be under financial pressure, which is reflected in a higher tendency to actively trade down and optimize spending—over half frequently choosing cheaper options just to stay within budget.

More than half of consumers say that in the past month they have very often or quite often chosen the cheaper option to stay within budget



**22%**  
Very often

**44%**  
Quite often

**26%**  
Occasionally

Rarely  
Never

## Quality remains the anchor—even when budgets tighten

Budget pressure doesn't erode quality standards—it sharpens them. 73% of consumers rank ingredient quality as the #1 factor in their purchase decision, signaling that "what's inside" matters more than ever.

Only 54% associate higher price with higher quality—consumers are increasingly skeptical of price as a quality proxy, relying instead on tangible cues like ingredients, labels, and health credentials.

Rather than simply defaulting to cheaper options, 69% invest more time searching for quality—trading effort for value in a tighter financial context.

**73%**

say ingredient quality is the #1 factor in their purchase decision



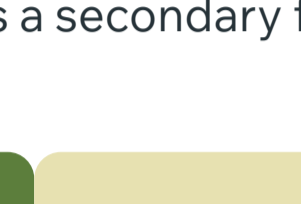
**69%**

invest more time searching for quality rather than compromise on standards



**54%**

believe higher price indicates higher quality



## General Shopping Attitudes

Health and familiarity anchor choices, while sustainability trails as a secondary filter.

**76%**  
Health & safety top concerns

Worry about additives and preservatives — food safety is top of mind, even under budget pressure.

**67%**  
Fresh, local, natural

Familiar criteria anchor all age groups, with younger consumers more open to organic and certifications.

**74%**  
Sustainability — aspirational

Most try to reduce food waste, but eco-friendly choices remain soft preferences, not hard purchase drivers.

## Big Brands vs. Private Labels the quality gap is narrowing

Emotional reassurance drives big brand loyalty, while rational value justification powers private label adoption. The perceived quality gap between them is shrinking fast.

### BIG BRANDS

*Trust, Familiarity & Superiority*

**50–60%**

Associate big brands with quality, safety & reputation

**45%**

Acknowledge higher prices are tied to quality — implicit acceptance

**Chosen when stakes are higher** — confidence, risk reduction, reassurance. Innovation and variety reinforce their role as category leaders.

### PRIVATE LABELS

*Smart Choice for Everyday Use*

**60–67%**

See private labels as pragmatic, everyday solutions

**"Good enough"**

Sufficient variety, quality & family suitability — no need to pay extra for the brand

**Chosen for routine, lower-stakes purchases** — bulk buying, daily use, budget optimization. The "no need to pay extra" mindset is normalized.

### Convergence Zone

Big brands still lead on trust and emotional equity, but private labels are closing the gap on perceived quality. This creates a trade-off decision rather than a clear hierarchy.

**58%**

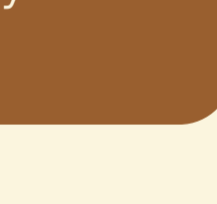
believe quality differences vs. big brands are small

## Why consumers resist food trends: price and trust, not curiosity

Adoption is held back by perceived value gaps (price, unclear benefits) and trust issues (too processed, "too marketing"), rather than lack of curiosity—meaning brands must justify the price and prove authenticity to unlock trial.

**30%**

They're too expensive / not worth the price



**26%**

Don't trust the promised benefits / it seems more like "marketing" to me

**21%**

They seem too processed / with too many ingredients

**20%**

They don't fit my habits / I prefer "homemade"

**17%**

Don't like the taste / I don't think they're as tasty

**15%**

I feel overwhelmed by too much information

**11%**

I'm not interested



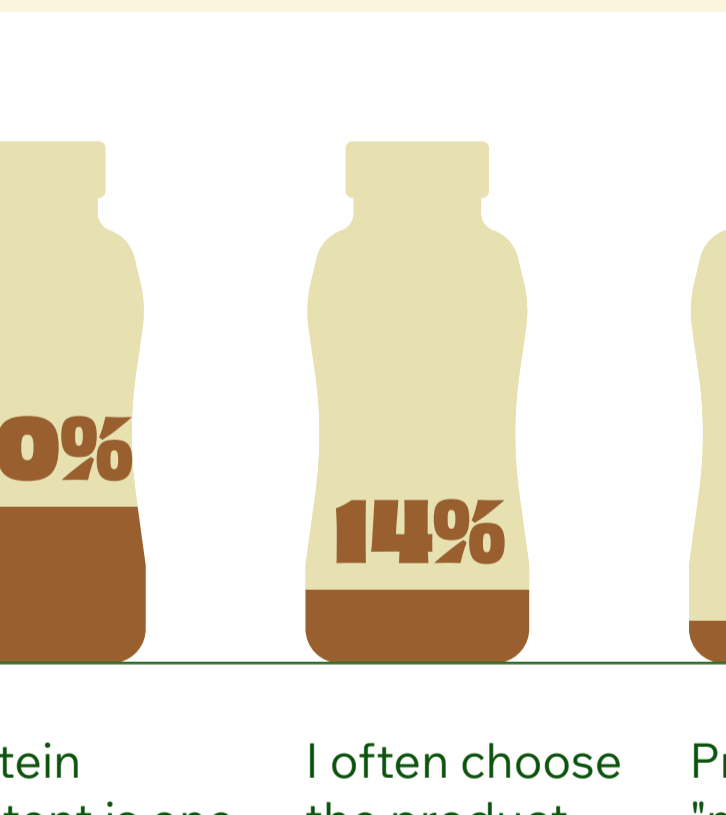
## Protein is visible, but rarely decisive in everyday food choices

While protein is on consumers' radar and consumed regularly, it rarely acts as a strong decision driver—most people engage passively rather than actively prioritizing it, highlighting a gap between awareness and true relevance in choice.

**Most consumers consume protein regularly, but not consistently at high frequency**

**21%**  
Less often / never

**13%**  
At 4–6 meals a week



**10%**  
At every meal

**26%**  
At 2 meals a day

**31%**  
At 1 meal a day

**15%**

When I choose a food, protein doesn't factor into my decision

**33%**

I sometimes look at protein content, but it rarely influences my choice

**30%**

Protein content is one criterion I consider, along with others

**14%**

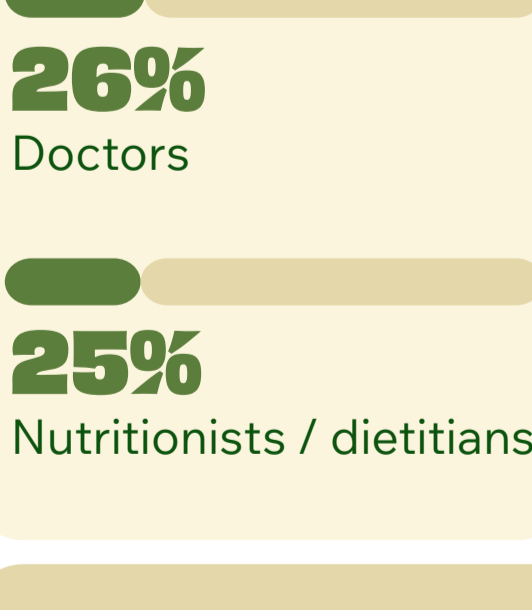
I often choose the product that offers more protein

**8%**

Protein is a "must" for me: I actively look for it and it plays a decisive role in my choice

## Doctors and personal circles circles lead online food influence

Credentialed voices outrank content creators; nearly 1 in 4 opt out of food content entirely.



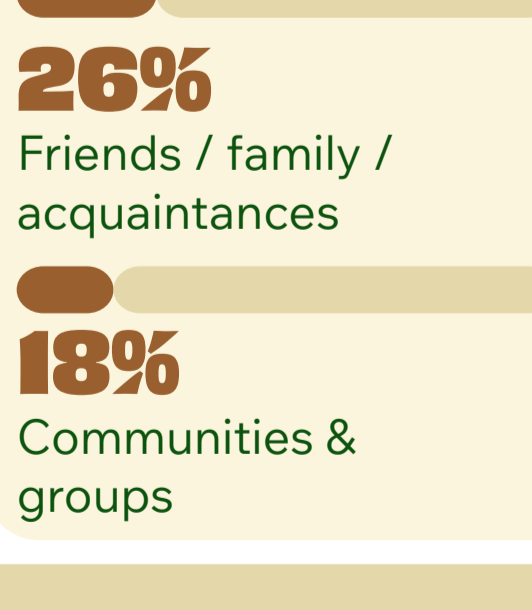
**TRUSTED EXPERTS**

**26%**

Doctors

**25%**

Nutritionists / dietitians



**PERSONAL NETWORK**

**26%**

Friends / family / acquaintances

**18%**

Communities & groups



**CONTENT CREATORS**

**22%**

Chefs / food bloggers

**15%**

Athletes / fitness creators

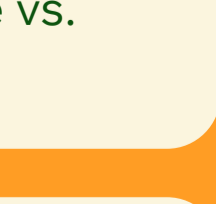
**11%**

Lifestyle influencers

**10%**

Retailers / brands

**26%**  
don't follow any food or nutrition content online



## Want the full picture? The complete report dives deeper into:

**Spending Under Pressure**  
Budget strategies & price-quality trade-offs

**How Shoppers Decide**  
Quality drivers, health concerns & sustainability

**Where Shoppers Go**  
Channel preferences, online vs. in-store dynamics

**Brands vs. Private Labels**  
Loyalty shifts, switching triggers & perception gaps

**Food Trends in Focus**  
Awareness, adoption barriers & trial drivers

**The Protein Opportunity**  
Sources, snacking moments & taste trade-offs

**Emerging Categories**  
Ready meals, plant-based & convenience drivers

**Media & Influence**  
Trusted voices, content types & digital skepticism

Ask consumer@starcomww.com for details

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