

Shoppers Are Leading a **Wellness Evolution**

*6 Ways Shoppers
Are Pursuing Wellness*



SPINS®

What Does Wellness Mean to You?

Good test results from your last doctor’s visit? Low stress levels and good mental health? A diet free of chemicals? Clean air you breathe? An equitable society?

Wellness has no single definition, but it’s never been more popular. Today, wellness is subjective, and each person decides how they want to measure it. They decide what their goals are and how to achieve them.

If you’re in the wellness industry, redefining wellness might feel like a tidal wave that you can’t conquer—an event set to upend how we operate. Really, we’re not witnessing a revolution; we’re in the middle of an ongoing evolution.

We’ve identified 6 leading themes that shoppers are changing in the wellness landscape, and not one of them is brand new. Each one has hit a critical mass, however. These 6 macro themes overlay nearly every category and the trends happening within each category. Pay attention to these themes as they are key in driving shoppers to your store, website, and brand. With everyone talking about the “new normal”, understand that it is neither new nor normal; we can guarantee that they will look slightly different in a few years. What matters is that you’re paying attention and looking at quantifiable data that shows you what is happening and where it’s heading.



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A Plant-Based Expansion is Underway



Vegetarian and vegan diets have long been defined by what they don't include: meat and animal-derived products. The vegetarian portion of a restaurant menu—if there even was one—consisted of salad, a burger alternative, and side dishes. Store aisles carried burger alternatives, milk alternatives, and a scant offering of other items that didn't always have a great reputation for taste or texture, and non-vegetarians weren't tempted to try them. We're not predicting that animal-derived products are going away anytime soon (or ever). Instead, you can expect to see plant-based products to keep spreading across store aisles and become an umbrella for shoppers of all walks.

Every Customer Is a Plant-Based Customer

A lot has changed in recent years. Notably, the increasingly popular term plant-based emphasizes the ingredients in items as opposed to what's missing. It puts nutrition front and center, and as a result it appeals to a wider audience. For example, the Mediterranean diet is heavy on plant-based food with plenty of fish and dairy and less red meat and sugar. For many shoppers, it is an attainable way to eat nutritiously, and some research suggests it has health benefits.

Other environmentally minded shoppers are concerned about the effects that raising and killing livestock has on the environment. That's why plant-based items appeal to consumers of all walks: vegetarians, vegans, flexitarians, and climatarians. Some omnivores are incorporating plant-based items into their diet simply because they like how they taste. The plant-based shopper isn't any one demographic anymore; it's every shopper. With generations growing up exposed to these plant-based alternatives, the barrier of entry is being removed and it's barely even an eyebrow raiser to see a new plant-based innovation popping up in any store aisle. Even as shoppers of all ages adopt this lifestyle, millennials—as the biggest generation in history—are still the driving force in the demand for plant-based alternatives.

Brands Are Branching Out

An outdated assumption about a plant-based diet is that it's all leafy greens or tofu. (For the record, neither of those dietary staples are going away anytime soon, especially for a versatile protein like tofu.) However, brands have stepped up their offerings for every food occasion so that no shopper feels like they're missing out on an animal-derived counterpart. **Staples like plant-based burgers and meat crumbles remain popular with 30.8% in growth from 2019 to 2020**, and only a slight decline in 2021 as other plant-based options joined the market.

We're seeing manufacturers get better at replicating conventional texture and flavor in items like plant-based seafood, jerky, cheese, and milks to attract even non-exclusive plant-based shoppers. Plus, they're diversifying their ingredients to appeal to different diets and lifestyles. Shoppers following a Keto diet are watching their carbohydrates intake, so items made from quinoa or beans are nutritious but incompatible with their diets. Newer offerings, like Impossible meats, strive for nutritional parity with beef when it comes to protein and carbohydrate levels. This diversity in dietary needs and lifestyle preferences is why you need to assume every shopper is a plant-based shopper.

***Climatarians** want to reduce their carbon footprint and try to reduce their meat consumption. They are not vegetarians or vegans, but they are concerned about climate change and often devote a meatless day or meal each week.*

***Flexitarians** are semi-vegetarians. They avoid meat for most meals, but they are not rigid and will occasionally have a meat-based meal.*

Clean Label Keeps Ingredients Simple



You've probably heard the advice "If you can't pronounce it, don't eat it." Now, it's not guidance anyone should follow to the letter seeing as [the makeup of a banana sounds pretty menacing despite being all natural](#), and health experts consider some preservatives more harmless than others. It does, however, get at a commendable idea: review food labels and decide if you want those ingredients in your body. That's where clean label eating comes in.

Clean label has no standardized definition, but for most shoppers it means products with simple ingredients and no artificial ingredients. To many shoppers and manufacturers, clean is synonymous with using the fewest ingredients possible.

Clean Food and Beverage Promote Transparency

Many clean foods and beverages are simple to spot because the label announces it: No artificial ingredients! No preservatives! No added sugars! Some packaging even lists the simple ingredients up front to make it clear that you're familiar with everything inside (such as RXBAR). This has led manufacturers to replace artificial sweeteners with fruits or use 100% real beef instead of processed meat substitute.

The clean label designation brings transparency that empowers shoppers to make more informed decisions and navigate ever-changing food aisles. For example, a shopper who incorporates plant-based products into their diet because it is better for the environment might discover that their favorite seafood alternative doesn't fit within a clean diet. They can decide if one attribute is more important than the other or if they need to find a new option that satisfies both demands. This intersection between clean label and other lifestyles and diets also provides an opportunity for manufacturers to fill white space and retailers to cover their bases when stocking shelves. When you cover multiple key themes, you widen your potential customer base and increase the opportunity to gain loyalty.

Clean Label Pops Up in Body Care

Many conscientious shoppers consider the items that go on their skin as important as the foods they eat. That's why more body care products contain simple ingredients that don't have common allergens, irritants, and ingredients that trigger sensitivities. Shoppers are also avoiding environmentally harmful ingredients as well as carcinogens that build up within the body over time (bioaccumulation). Even gluten-free body care is gaining traction with brands and consumers alike, as is evidenced by [the growing popularity of clean oral care and skin care items](#).



Proactive Health Becomes the Standard



For many shoppers, the definition of health and wellness shifted once the pandemic upended the world and avoiding any ailments became the top priority. For the next year (and longer in some places), shoppers were cooped up indoors, tried to stay active, and dealt with stress. A healthy lifestyle stopped being just a number on a scale or a morning jog. Suddenly, it encompassed physical fitness as well as mental health, the immune system, a balanced diet, and cognitive functions. In other words, individuals defined what health and wellness meant for themselves.

Food as Medicine

Treating food as medicine isn't a novel concept: Who hasn't enjoyed a warm bowl of soup when they've had a cold? What has changed is how proactive shoppers have become with this idea. Since the beginning of the pandemic, shoppers started to add vitamins, supplements, and functional ingredients into their diets in hopes of preventing illness and improve daily life. Among the most popular were items containing Vitamin C and echinacea (thought to prevent colds), mushrooms (to boost immunity), melatonin (to aid sleep), and phosphatidyl serine (for cognitive health). **Vitamin C and echinacea saw 39.4% growth from 2019 to 2020 as preventative, functional ingredients grew in demand during the pandemic**, but as consumers focused on other areas of wellness, these experienced some decline in 2021. **Mushroom-packed products grew by 4.8%, sleep aids with melatonin increased 27%, and with consumers focused on fueling not only their bodies but their brains, phosphatidyl serine saw 87% growth.**

Every meal became a chance to improve wellness and hopefully stay out of the doctor's office. This new mindset also set a foundation for shoppers to uphold these habits for the long term because they aren't just reacting to sickness but rather improving how they feel and function on a daily basis and preventing sickness before it can even begin. The blurring between supplement and food has also accelerated, with functional ingredients playing a role in every aisle as convenience remains king.

Active Lifestyles for Everyone

Today, shoppers are maintaining an active lifestyle for many reasons. Social distancing and lockdowns turned daily life sedentary for even the most active person. That's why we saw at-home fitness equipment go out of stock and workers taking midday walk breaks just to get out of the house. The desire for overall wellness has put performance nutrition on every shopper's radar. Protein powder, supplements, and energy drinks aren't just for athletes anymore. Shoppers want their diets to help them stay healthy and energetic when they hop on their spin bike or do yoga.



Mission-Based Brands Matter



Shoppers and business owners built the wellness industry because they believed in choosing better products for a better life. For them, food and beverage was never just about their shopping cart. Today, it's about even more than a better life for themselves; it's about a better life for the people behind the scenes, the animals we share the planet with, and the planet itself.

Shoppers are ready to create a more equitable world.

Diverse Brands Get the Spotlight

Leadership at food and beverage brands have not always reflected the diverse demographics of their consumers. Shoppers are using their wallets to support businesses run by people who are underrepresented and marginalized. In recent years we've seen businesses run by BIPOC, LGBTQ, veterans, and women grow year over year. These business owners are messaging their stories to customers, both through marketing messages and also on the packaging. If a shopper is reaching for a pantry staple, why not choose the one that lifts up an underrepresented community? Shoppers are ready to create a more equitable world by supporting these businesses—and we can't overlook the satisfaction shoppers feel when they see businesses run by someone who shares their own identity. That's also why so many diverse brands leverage the power of social media—using these platforms to highlight the people behind the scenes, their mission, and connect with customers.

Shoppers Want to Improve Life

Using your shopping list to improve life might sound lofty, but that's what mission-oriented brands are promising. For consumers, every dollar that goes towards a manufacturer who pays their workers a good wage, a farm that raises their animals humanely, or a brand that uses biodegradable is better than a dollar that actively harms or even neglects quality of life. Some brands promote their ties to their community by donating products to local organizations, sourcing from local supplies, or employing nearby residents. Whatever approach they take, these brand leaders understand that shoppers want to know what happens to get that food on their table.

Dietary and Lifestyle Needs Aren't Negotiable



The line between dietary needs and lifestyle choices are blurring in a world with endless options. When someone says they don't eat gluten or don't drink alcohol, they might have to avoid those items for health reasons. Or they might just not want to partake in them. Either way, shoppers aren't going to abandon their dietary or lifestyle needs if stores are out of stock or don't carry the right products. Thanks to the mainstreaming of trends and endless online options, shoppers expect to find what they want when they walk down any aisle.

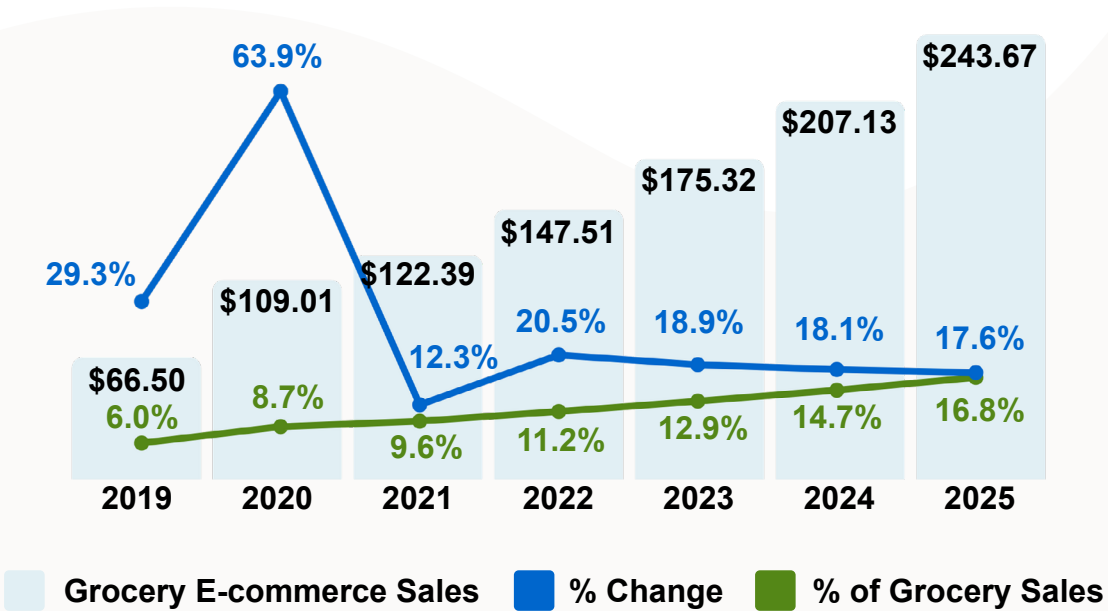
There's a Product for Everyone

Not too long ago, natural and organic products occupied a niche part of the market, and a few specialty stores were the only way to get these items. Now, these items are everywhere—even big box—and shoppers don't necessarily think of themselves as specialty shoppers anymore. This is just who they are. A gluten-free shopper might not buy any other wellness products, but this one attribute is a staple in every part of their diet. A plant-based body builder can find protein-packed entrees and snacks as well as a grab-and-go energy drink. Yet, a clean label vegan shopper might read packages for every item they buy, even body care and cleaning supplies. Today, each of these shoppers can find products that satisfy those needs no matter how specific they might be—and they know it.

Omnichannel is the Default

Unsurprisingly, online shopping grew once the pandemic began and shoppers opted for mail order, click-and-collect, or touchless delivery. Retailers had no choice but to adapt by offering these options and upping their online game. However, the trend was already in motion before lockdown happened. The pandemic simply accelerated internet shopping's adoption and established it as a permanent fixture. That's why a shopper who can't find vegan pizza or clean label detergent isn't going to choose any nearby substitute. Instead, they're going to see if the store offers a similar substitute, and if it doesn't, they will open up their phone's browser or another retailer's app to locate the product they need. Shoppers want to be loyal to stores that meet their needs, but they will always be loyal to their needs first. You need to ensure that you offer a seamless transition between buying in store or online.

E-comm vs Brick & Mortar Growth and Projections
(Billions, % Change and % Total Grocery)



Source: <https://www.emarketer.com/content/us-digital-grocery-forecast-2021>

Animal-Based Products Meet Sustainability



Animal-Based ingredients are leveraging inherent attributes that showcase what they are doing to promote sustainability.

Climate and environmental concerns lead many shoppers to choose plant-based options, but they also influence shoppers who buy animal-based products. Just because someone enjoys a steak doesn't mean they're disinterested in the conditions and processes that resulted in their dinner. As plant-based grows, we can't forget that most people still buy animal-derived products and that they are conscientious about how they spend their shopping dollars. There are certain attributes that only apply to animal-based products that can be leveraged to indicate the values that consumers are looking for.

Sustainability Is More Than Ingredients

Some product attributes, like organic, let shoppers know that the content of their food is free of potentially harmful substances. Other attributes, however, focus more on the production process and its effects on the nearby communities or climate. Brands are putting their sustainability practices front and center on packaging and through their websites to differentiate themselves from other manufacturers. Free range livestock have better living conditions than more constrained environments, but they also have a positive effect on the environment because they are able to feed on plants and insects that keep the ecosystem balanced. Brands that source their ingredients from local farms don't have to leave a large carbon footprint by transporting items across the country. Shoppers who focus on sustainability are like mission-based shoppers: they want to look beyond the ingredients list.





Stay Ahead with SPINS

For over 20 years, we have been on a mission to increase the presence and accessibility of Natural and better-for-you products that help people live their healthiest and best lives and drive sustainable production practices in North America.

From our founding in 1997 to now, our data and industry definitions have become the common language of the Natural Products Industry, helping brands communicate their growth to retailers to scale their distribution and helping retailers understand and maintain their points of difference. As the Natural Products Industry has emerged as a driving force of retail in the US, we have been thrilled to be part of a movement.



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