



Craft Final Research Project

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Research Methodologies

Primary Research

Quantitative

Survey

To learn about motivations of indulgence and what appear as indulgence

Qualitative / Non Traditional

*In-depth Interviews
Confessional Booth*

To explore in depth people's reasons for indulging.

Qualitative

Focus Group

To explore in depth people's reasons for indulging.

Qualitative

Vendor Interview

To gather vendor observations regarding when people seek indulgence.

Non Traditional

Indulgence Journal

To get a sense of indulgence

Secondary Research

Deck Research

Behavioral Research

To get us started in understanding snack trends

The Agenda

- Little Debbie's Heritage & Problem
- Setting the Scene: Consumers & Context
- Re-defining Indulgence
- Research Findings & Insights
- Strategic Reframing & Little Debbie's Advantage
- Conclusion

**Born in Hardship,
*Built on Comfort***



A family-owned legacy founded in the Great Depression
built on *resilience, affordability, and comfort.*

All-American Sweetheart

- Iconic products: Oatmeal Creme Pies, Swiss Rolls, Nutty Buddy
- 157B+ snacks sold to date
- Holds 34% market share in the snack cake category



The Challenge

Despite strong recognition and nostalgic equity, Little Debbie *struggles to stand out* in today's evolving snack market.

Little Debbie Needs to Ask

What is Modern Indulgence?

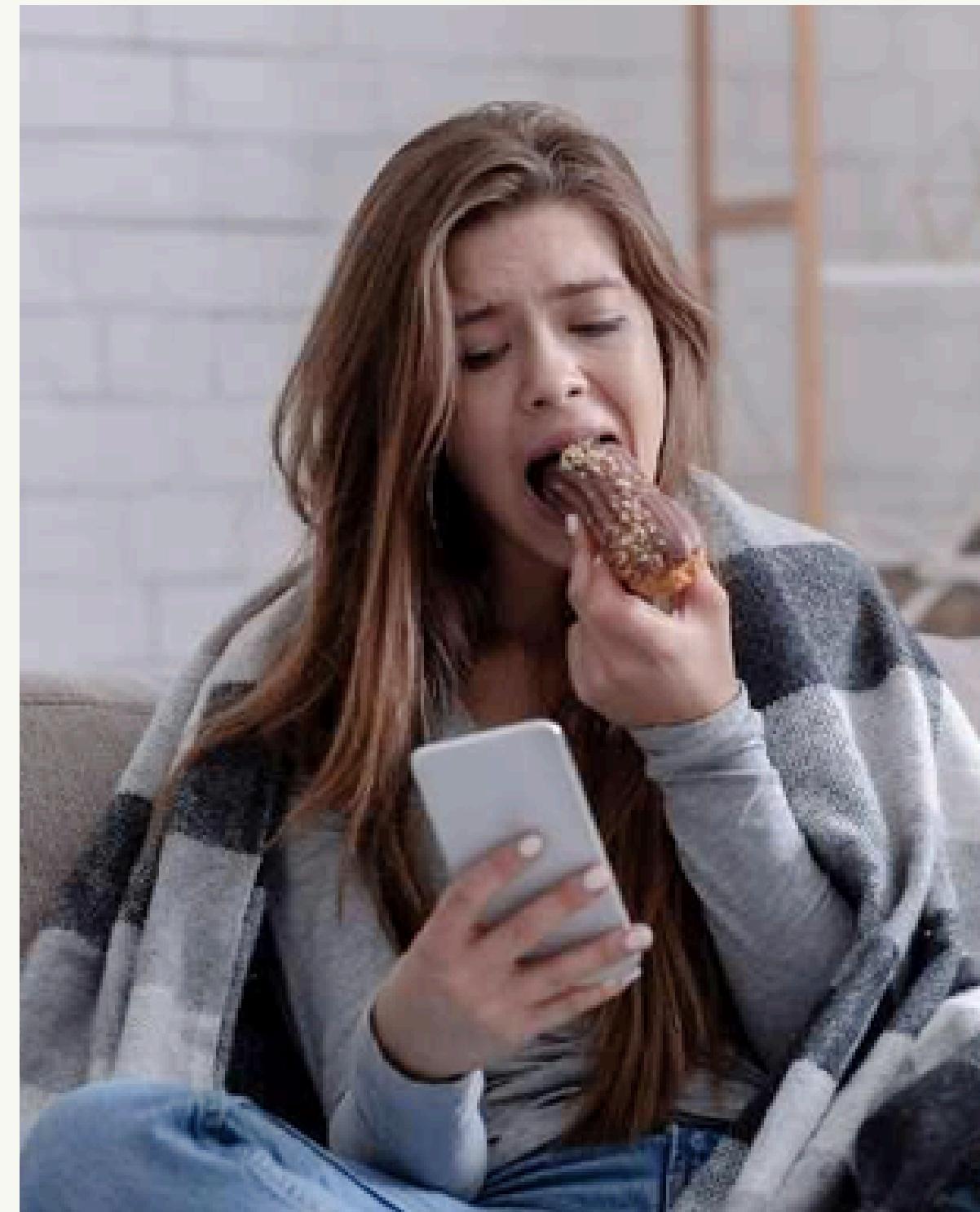
The Opportunity

Just as Little Debbie offered solace in an era of hardship, *she can once again be a source of comfort.*

Setting the Scene

Who is today's consumer?





The Indulgence Burn-Out

-  Students & Young Professionals (*Gen Z & Millennials*)
-  Constantly toggling between *high ambition* and *high exhaustion*.
-  Managing *stress*, *tight budgets*, and the *pressure* to keep up.
-  Food is one of the few outlets that can provide *comfort without overthinking*.

Because young adults are *the
engine of modern indulgence.*

77%

of 18-34 year olds say they
give in to their favorite cravings.

Key Traits

67% Stressed Out

of 18-34 year olds say they're so busy they can't finish everything they need to in a day

68% Seeking Joy

of 18-34 year olds believe life should be as much fun as possible

MRI Simmons

Culture & Context

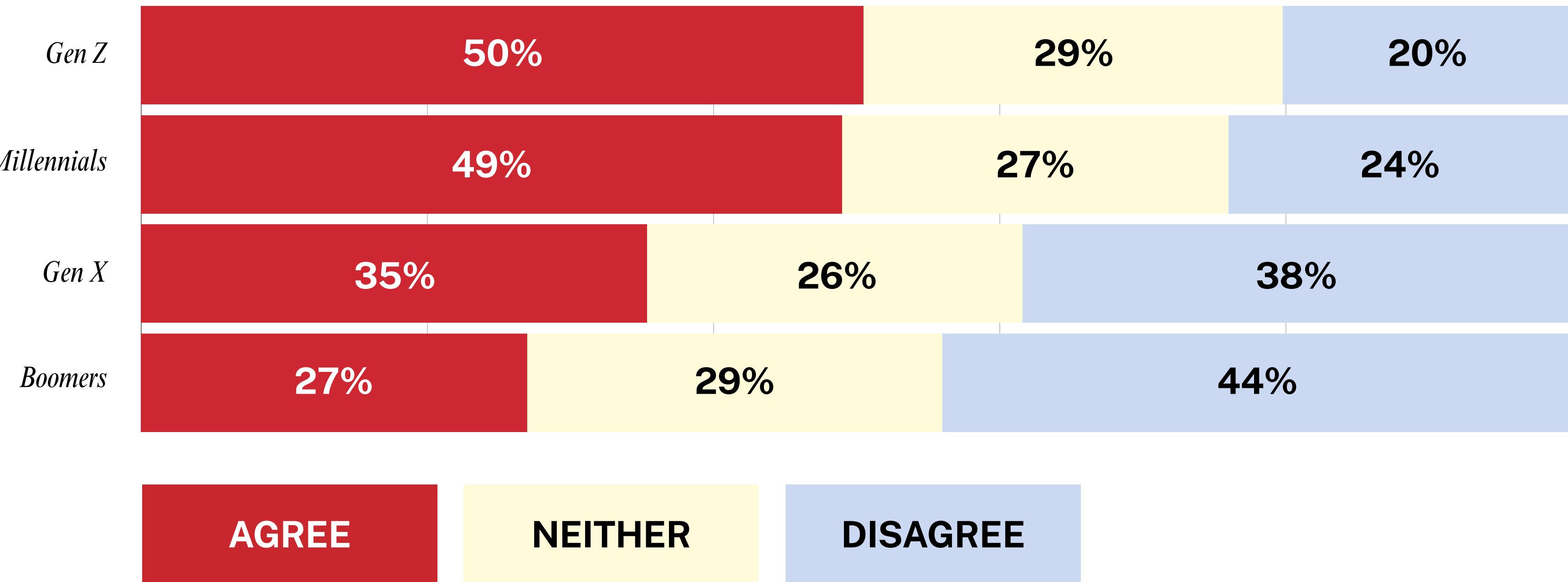
What shapes indulgence today?

People are Worried

Gen Z & Millennials are *more stressed* than older generations about *financial instability, the future, and mental health*

APA, MRI Simmons, Mintel

Is recent global uncertainty impacting your mental well-being?



Gen Z is Going Through It

91%

feel their mental health is challenged *at least* occasionally

More likely to report feeling *overwhelmed*



74%

report moderate to *severe stress*

What are they worried about and why?

Inflation and rising food costs disproportionately affect younger generations.

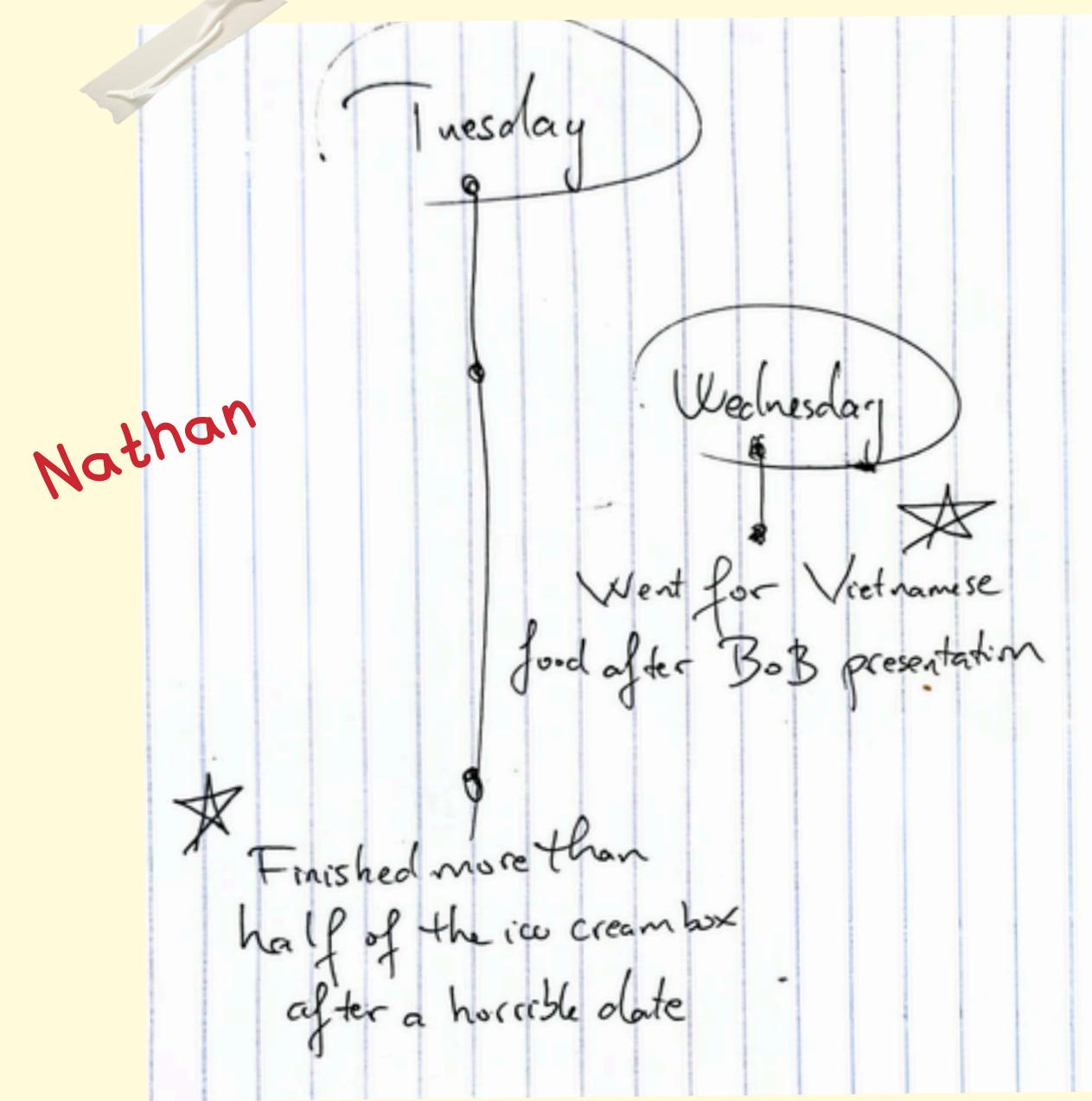
Gen Z is anxious about grades, careers, and the environment.

Millennials are stressed about work performance and career stability, and feel pressure to be constantly productive & compare achievements online.

Understanding Triggers

So how do people cope?

Indulgence Journals



Cliff

10/27, 6PM
Beer on the couch after a long day at Brandcenter

10/28, 7 PM
A beer and some popcorn during the Hannah Montana movie

11/1, 6:30 PM
I had a margarita, some enchiladas and a Tacos with some friends after a stressful morning and afternoon

11/2, 6:30 PM
Carryout pizza. Felt too tired to cook but had a great day

Zeke

Indulgence Journal

Monday: I enjoyed a chick-fil-a breakfast today. I would consider this a slight indulgence cause I know it'll keep me full for long enough. Ended up eating at Farley & Pigging out on cinnamon chicken wings.

Tuesday: No indulging for me. Mainly sustenance for closest thing w/ breakfast at night

Wednesday: Early payday led me to snacking on kettle corn as a reward for getting through the week. Also had extra time to enjoy 4/10 classics

Eva

10/27 LU+heal Phase

- Stella's chocolate cake

10/29 Halloween Candy

- 5 Kit Kats

11/4 Movie night

- Ice cream in a mug

10/27 10:15 PM

* Considered having a glass of wine after a LOOOONG day of class + meetings + chores + HW

↳ 10:22 PM cracking open raspberry surfside LOL

10/28 9:54 PM

* Craving sweet treats... nibbling on TruFru

div

Maslow's Heirarchy

Food has *always* been a source
of emotional comfort & safety
at the most basic human level.

Emotions and Food Consumption: Emotional Eating Behavior (NIH)

Re-defining Indulgence

Guilty Pleasure

Comfort must be earned. Indulgence is shameful and *tied to moral failings*.

Unapologetic Comfort

Indulgence is *necessary and deserved*. Feeling comfortable is *self-preservation*.

Stress Relief Snacking

62%

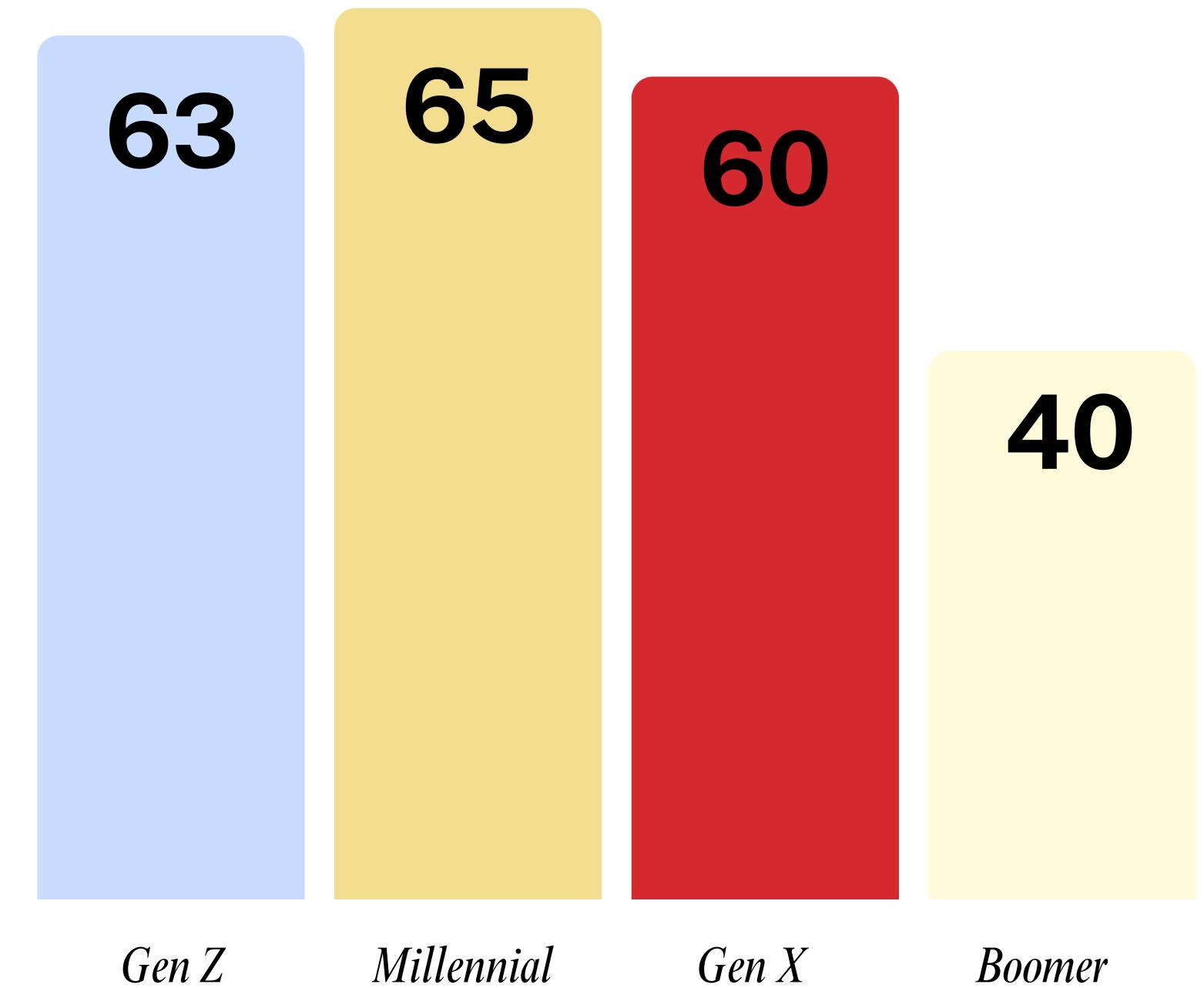
buy snacks as a way to
“treat themselves.”

42%

of Gen Z said they snack
to relieve stress

59%

of Gen Z said they snack
to take a break



Guilt-Free Pleasure

Indulgence is deserved.

Indulgence is self-care.

Indulgence is resilience.

Research Findings & Insights



A vintage-style illustration of a young girl with curly brown hair, wearing a straw hat and a white ribbon. She is smiling and holding a large, round cookie with colorful sprinkles. The background is filled with floating colorful balloons (blue, red, yellow) and confetti.

Insight 1

*Indulgence is a
coping mechanism.*

Survey Findings

Why do you indulge?

48%

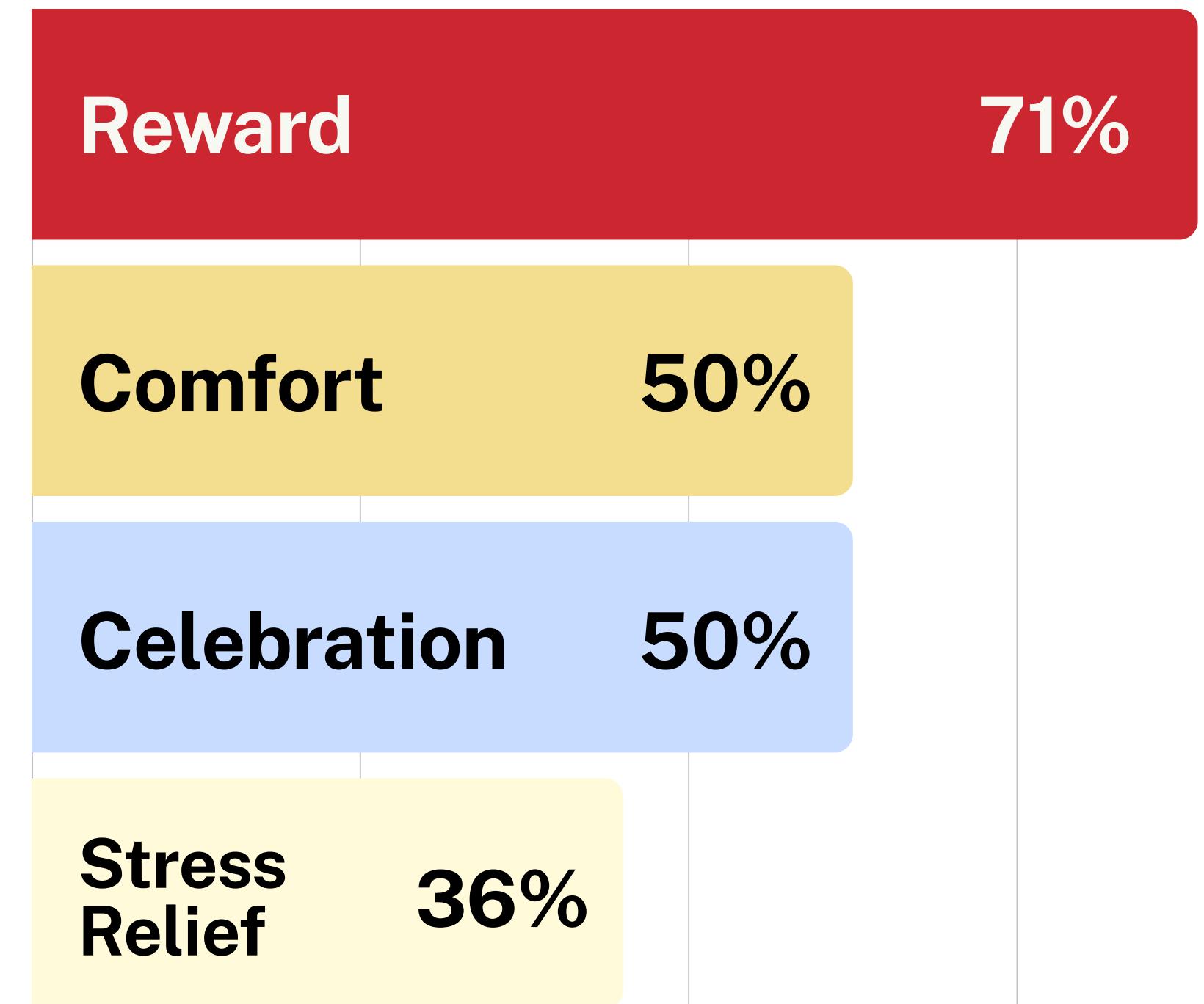
snack to reward themselves, de-stress, or for pleasure.

41%

say indulgence feels extra special when it's a reward.

43%

crave something sweet when stressed.



How Do You Define Indulgence?



I'd say salty snacks are more popular in the evening, and sweet ones in the morning. *Work hours in general.*

People lean on snacks to cope, especially to bring order to their days and ease stress.



The busiest times are the morning crowd and when everyone's heading home from work. *The peak hours.*



“If I’ve had a long week,
I just want to bed rot,
watch something stupid,
and eat a bad snack –
it’s like a reward.”

- Focus group member on the role indulgence plays in their daily life.



Insight 2

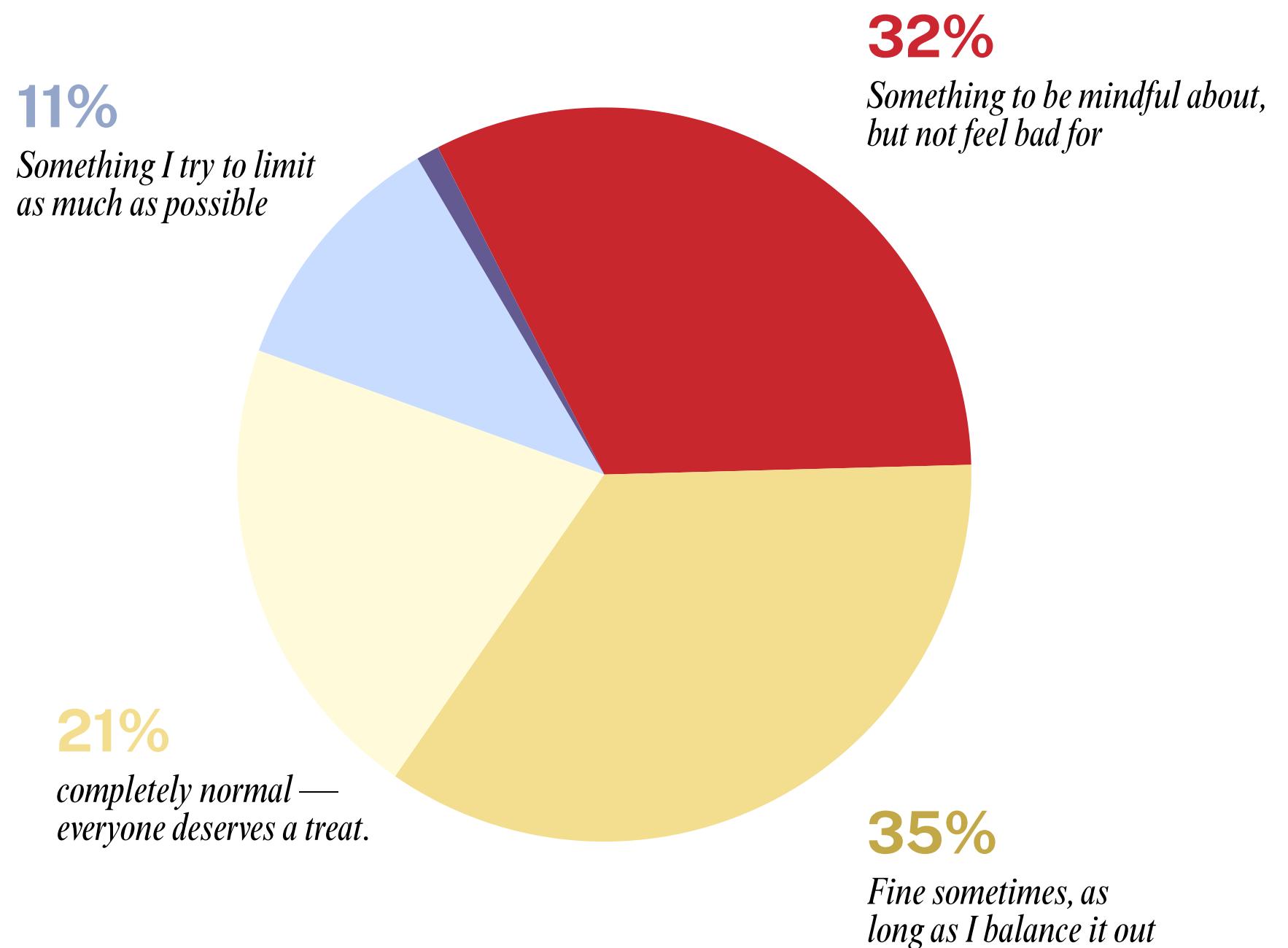
*People desire
full-fat indulgence.*

Flavor Matters

*Functional foods won't replace
comfort meals. **Flavor matters more**
than health when they're indulging.*

Survey Findings

How they feel about indulgence



82%

say flavor is what makes a snack feel ‘worth it.’

38%

agree indulgence is about enjoyment, not health



“If it’s something you
love? Oh, **100%.**”

Focus group member responding to the question, “When you’re snacking, is it worth the stomach ache?



Insight 3

*Nostalgia is the
shortcut to indulgence.*

Gen Z actively seeks low-pressure, predictable experiences

In uncertain times, nostalgia marketing thrives. When stressed, consumers don't just want sweetness; they want familiarity.



*“What makes me reach for a new flavor? Honestly, if it’s **tied to a brand I already trust, or if a friend lets me try it first.**”*

*“All of the snacks I like are the **same ones I liked as a kid.**”*

Interviews and focus groups revealed: when younger consumers do choose Little Debbie, it’s often because it makes them feel nostalgic, like a kid again.

Overarching Insights

Modern indulgence is something people feel they should *not need to justify to anyone but themselves.*

*Guilty
Pleasure*



*Necessary
Comfort*

The Strategy

*Little Debbie makes indulgence
easy, no justification required.*

Little Debbie's *Unique Advantage*

Nostalgia

Tied to childhood routines, lunchboxes, after-school treats, family traditions.

Accessibility & Affordability

Sold in all 50 states, countless retail stores, and over 75 product varieties.

Taste

Consumers will never sacrifice flavor for health. "Little Debbie's is the ultimate sweet treat."

Conclusion

Little Debbie is uniquely positioned to own indulgence as a symbol of resilience and transform from a guilty pleasure into a necessary comfort.

Conclusion

*In a volatile world, Little
Debbie isn't guilty.
She's comfort, unwrapped.*



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