

# HUNTER: CONSUMER PULSE CHECK

At HUNTER, we are #AlwaysHunting for insights and inspiration that helps us earn the attention of the consumers who matter most to our clients. HUNTER: Insights accomplishes this by keeping our fingers on the pulse of the consumer and the ever-changing cultural and communications landscape. Here's a summary of our latest consumer trends to help you supercharge your communication plans and programs.

## POOLING RESOURCES

As Americans continue to battle sticker shock at every turn, **Budgeting Wars** are rage on. From buying in bulk to pooling points, people are getting creative with ways to afford both household staples and summer splurges. Club stores have seen a surge in new members, especially among the younger generations, as roommates band together to buy in bulk and save some bucks. Families are also finding financial relief in bulk shopping solutions with multiple households sharing memberships to save on groceries. Meanwhile, 81% of summer travelers have shifted their plans or planning behaviors to be more budget conscious, according to [a recent survey by Vacasa](#). Many travelers are opting for road trips versus flights and choosing vacation rentals over hotels because of costs that can be split among many. Hotel companies like Hilton and airlines like JetBlue are tapping into this shared resource behavior with programs like Points Pooling – where friends and family can combine their points to unlock elevated experiences on the cheap. *What does this mean for brands? In the current economic climate, consumers shop on value, but that word means different things to different people. Whether quality, quantity, cost or convenience, understanding how your brand or service delivers the most value to your target audience is critical.*



## SOME LIKE IT [SWEET &] SPICY

**Stirring the Melting Pot** looked at how the outsized growth of the U.S. Hispanic population over the past decade has fueled mass adoption and affinity for Latin flavor profiles. Flavor experimentation continues to be a hallmark of the Millennial generation with Gen Zers following closely behind. In fact, Mintel reports that half of Gen Z consumers report trying more flavors since last year. The latest trend to ignite the attention of these flavor enthusiasts is “Swicy” a blend of sweet and spicy flavor profiles, that can be sampled across snack aisles and casual dining destinations. In just the past few months, we've seen the launch of [Coca-Cola Spiced](#), [Starbucks Spicy Lemonade Refreshers](#), [Lay's Sweet and Spicy Honey](#) chips and [Chik fil A's Maple Pepper Bacon Sandwich](#) among others. *What does this mean for brands? Leaning into the adventurous palates of younger generations can pay off in dividends. Low risk limited editions and collabs continue to drive awareness, trial, and headlines. If you build it, they will likely try it.*



## TRADING TUITION DEBT FOR TOOLBELTS

The next generation's American dream may not include a picket fence. Gen Zer's are also **Stirring the Melting Pot** by taking a more holistic view of happiness, which elevates family, freedom, and fulfillment over money, possessions, and power. This goal post shift may be why vocational schools have seen a surge in enrollment over the past year as high paying jobs for skilled tradespeople remain plentiful. The high costs associated with college degrees, an inflationary climate and uncertainty about the potential professional disruptions of AI technology are just a few of the reasons [Gen Z is turning to trade school](#). Not only are these jobs widely available, but they offer above average pay, allow workers to set clear boundaries between work life and personal life and provide significant growth opportunities including entrepreneurial potential which speak to the values that younger generations hold dear. *What does this mean for brands? Back to school may look different this fall for the older cohorts. Consider programming that speaks to secondary education beyond the 4-year institutions.*



## RUNNING IS LIFE

Run Clubs have become the latest manifestation of America's **Quest for Community**. Some sources argue that the collision of sober curiosity and digital dating fatigue has led co-eds to seek companionship IRL making running dates an easy, low-cost, low risk way to socialize. But romance is only one type of connection some members are seeking. Once frequented only by serious athletes looking to chase their next personal record, today's run clubs bring communities together for all different reasons. In fact, “inclusive run clubs” are popping up all over country to bring together people who share the same [political views](#), [health goals](#), [racial/ethnic or sexual identities](#) and even fandoms like [Diplo's Run Club](#). *What does this mean for brands? Identifying key passion points among your consumer target can open opportunities for connection in unexpected places. Don't be afraid to get creative in the ways you infiltrate the lives of coveted cohorts.*



## NOBODY PUTS GEN Z IN A CORNER

The world has never felt so chaotic, divided, opinionated, depressing, the list goes on. In the wake of this, Gen Zers refusing to **Walk the Line** are opting for experiences that dial-up loud, unapologetic fun in the now. We're seeing this from the widely shared mantras of [@sunday.scaries](#), which promote *slamming* your laptop shut and treating every weekend like you're a millionaire in Italy. To the meteoric rise of Charli XCX, who has followers embracing a [#BratSummer](#) filled with purposefully loud, ugly fashion and a promise for hedonistic indulgence (many [brands](#) are even getting in on the action). As well as the resurgence of Tinashe, whose highly viral and memed [Nasty](#) has become the definitive new anthem for letting your freak flag fly this summer. *What does this mean for brands? With the weight of the world feeling so heavy, we could all use a little reprieve. For those brands who are willing to double down, it's time to be a little bit loud, fun, and subversive this summer into fall.*

